

Article

Family Dynamics in Colonial La Rioja: A Case Analysis of Five Generations

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Abstract: This study constitutes a preview of a broader research project on kinship, family, and society in colonial La Rioja. In this context, the results obtained from the study of five generations of the Villafaña and Guzmán family are presented. Various aspects such as family organization, inheritance system, conflicts between families, the construction of a distinct identity, and the strategies that allowed this family to preserve its heritage and maintain a prominent status in the local elite are examined and analyzed in detail.

Keywords: family; society; kinship

1. Introduction

The transmission of norms and values, vital for societal cohesion, involves a complex interplay among socialization agents, often marked by competing perspectives (Corbacho 1998). Among these, the family stands as a fundamental agent, forging connections between individuals and society while shaping their identities (Pérez 2007). The Spanish conquest of the Indies, primarily orchestrated by men from diverse social strata, witnessed a migration that disrupted family structures, necessitating their reconfiguration in the American context (Presta and Noack 2018).

In the early colonial era, the family was pivotal—a union intertwining power and wealth, with marriage serving as the primary conduit for recruitment, establishing control over progeny and resources (Ferreiro 2008). Women's circulation among family groups during this process led to the formation of diverse economic, social, and political alliances (Estruch 2009). The oldest known member of the lineage for whom we have information was Álvaro (Ares) García, a native of Santiago del Molinillo, León. His wife was Doña Elena de Villafaña Flórez. A legitimate offspring of this marriage was Don Lázaro de Villafaña, who married on 9 June 1580, at the Church of Santa Marina (León) in his first marriage to Doña María de Benavides y Gavilanes. They were the parents of Ramiro, Antonio, Isidro, and Manuel (Serrano Redonnet 1967). It is worth noting that, in accordance with the prevailing custom in those days, he consistently carried the surname and coat of arms of the house of Villafaña. Although colonial society was complex, some ideas about the circulation of women and their role in forming marital alliances are rooted in simpler societies and shed light on these aspects. In this dynamic, wives were not chosen for their personal qualities but for opportunities created by networks of alliances and obligations within their communities of origin, as well as the timing in the marital cycle (Boixadós 2000). Unlike generalized exchange systems, women did not move to the husband's community; instead, their circulation occurred between their community of origin and another. The Indian law, based on Castilian law in this context, defined the community as the family unit. Through this circulation, strategic ties were established between groups, regardless of the individual preferences of the spouses (Bascary 1997). The result was the creation of a theoretically independent new family nucleus that played a crucial role as the basic unit in the economic and business structure of the dominant sector of the Spanish elite. During this period, local elite families were those whose founders and main members had participated



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in the conquest of native peoples. Due to the accumulation of merits and services in favor of the Crown, the Spaniards were in a position to request just remuneration from the King: *encomiendas* of indigenous people and land ownership. Through *encomiendas*, the Spaniards had access to indigenous labor, from which they obtained various services, including work, tributes in spun goods, and a share of the produce from the communal lands of indigenous villages (Boixadós 2001b).

Migration dynamics introduced a variety of social actors differentiated by gender, social, cultural, ethnic, religious, regional, and fiscal origins. These variables did not act unidirectionally on an individual's identity. Spaniards, indigenous people, legitimate or illegitimate mestizos, blacks, castes, and foreign Europeans with fictitious identities influenced family units, giving rise to different models of family construction and coexistence. The concept of family ranged from the "domestic unit" to the "populated house" and varied according to local, regional, urban, rural, religious, professional, and social factors, influenced by miscegenation and cultural diversities. The family was an institution in constant flux and negotiation, beyond its existence, reproduction, and demographic stability.

The trajectory of the Villafañe family, partially unveiled through the research efforts of Roxana Boixadós (Boixadós 2003, 2001b) unfolds from the late 17th century in León to the first half of the 18th century in the province of La Rioja, Argentina. This research sheds light on the enduring advantages linked to territorial conquest, facilitated by various mechanisms, notably grounded in community bonds and familial connections, with a specific focus on matrimonial alliances. The primary goal is to elucidate the discernible influence wielded by this family in the sociopolitical spheres of La Rioja during this extensive period.

In the 16th century, the García de Villafañe were lords of Santiago del Molinillo and Ribera de Orbigo in León (Villafañe 2022). Like many regions in the northern submeseta, it was a land abundant in nobility, akin to neighboring towns such as Llamas de la Ribera, San Román de los Caballeros, and Quintanilla, where the Quiñones Ossorio and Gavilanes held their estates, kin to the Counts of Luna and the Marquises of Astorga. Statements in the legal proceedings of Luis de Villafañe y Barba Guzmán suggest that the García de Villafañe originally descended through the male line from the Torre de Santa María de Ordás. Álvaro García, born in Santiago del Molinillo, adopted the surname Villafañe through his wife, forsaking the Ordás lineage. It was common for many descendants to use the names of the female branch due to their distinguished origin, sometimes sidelining other no less illustrious names. A devout Christian and a well-known noble, Álvaro García held council positions and enjoyed various privileges in Santiago del Molinillo. His wife was doña Elena de Villafañe Flórez. Before making the momentous decision to emigrate to America, his son Lázaro de Villafañe was a lord and resident of the town. The septennial censuses for the land tax record him, on 15 January 1608, as a well-known noble of a recognized lineage. It appears evident that Lázaro solidified the use of the Villafañe surname, which his descendants would forever combine with Guzmán, originating from his first wife, doña María de Benavides y Gavilanes, belonging to the illustrious lineage of the lords of the AVECILLA or AVECILLAS estate. María was the daughter of Lope Rodríguez de Gavilanes and doña Lucía Flores de Guzmán y Benavidez. They were the parents of Ramiro, Antonio, Isidro, and Manuel. This marriage would be the clearest evidence of the lineage's growing social ascent in Castile. We know that after the conquest and colonization of the Viceroyalty of Peru, the elite families of La Rioja required three generations to solidify. In the early 17th century, Captain Lázaro de Villafañe arrived in Tucumán with Governor Luis Quiñones Osorio, who was a relative of his wife. In 1614, he married for the second time to doña Agustina Florencio, widow of Valeriano Cornejo. They were the parents of Captain Isidro de Villafañe y Florencio. Lázaro passed away in La Rioja on 14 July 1625. The origins of patrimonial creation were similar, although the process of patrimonial consolidation proceeded at different paces. In the case of the Villafañe and Guzmán family, the patrimonial consolidations achieved through various matrimonial alliances were much more significant, reaching fruition between the second and third

generations. Significant patrimonial incorporations occurred in the Villafañe family through various marriages, highlighting the importance of matrimonial alliances and dowries as strategies and mechanisms that favored the construction and consolidation of estates. Throughout the 17th century, descendants of the Villafañe and Guzmán house monopolized the institution of *encomienda*, encompassing the most productive lands, and secured access to military positions and chapter offices. This allowed them to navigate the intricacies of local life by exercising governance, administration, and judicial functions. In parallel, they actively participated in the commercial networks connecting the economic circuit of colonial Tucumán with the Peruvian space. They managed credit and exchange networks, had agents and representatives in various cities, and often acted on their own behalf, representing personal or familial interests. The vast distances separating the Crown from the colony meant that positions within the *Cabildo* granted families almost limitless power, providing the councilors with the opportunity to act as both judge and party in conflicts and even to forgive debts. The study scrutinizes the strategies employed by the family over five generations to establish a robust family heritage and attain prominence in colonial Riojan society (Boixadós 1996). Additionally, it delves into the internal dynamics of the family organization using the concept of the extended family, providing insight into the construction of a family identity rooted in a common origin and the transmission of attributes and qualities through kinship. The research also addresses family conflicts that marked daily life in colonial La Rioja, such as clashes between the Villafañe and Guzmán families and the Bazán family in the early 18th century.

2. Analysis of Family Development Dynamics

To carry out the classification and structuring of the data relevant to the Villafañe and Guzmán family members, we have adopted the theoretical model proposed by Fortes in 1974 (Fortes 1974), which focuses on the analysis of domestic group development cycles in homogeneous societies. The aforementioned author outlined three stages of development in the evolution of these groups: (a) expansion, (b) dispersal, and (c) substitution, which gave rise to the formation of new domestic groups within the community. When applying this model analogously on a larger scale, taking into account the five generations that comprise the Villafañe family, we can identify development stages with distinctive characteristics. Each of these stages spans one or two-generational cycles and has an approximate duration of forty to fifty years.

To characterize and define the main qualities of each stage of development, we have considered a series of interrelated variables that influence both family composition and the socio-economic context in which they developed. On the one hand, we have taken into account the number of descendants and the family units that were formed in each generation. On the other hand, we have assessed the degree of concentration of economic resources (including access to commissions, properties, etc.) and the occupation of relevant positions in the local public sphere (both military, ecclesiastical, and governmental) (Boixadós 2004). Additionally, within each stage, mechanisms of internal circulation of heritage assets (inheritances, dowries, acquisitions, donations, successions, among others) and marital strategies and practices have been observed (Boixadós 2001b).

It is important to note that the stages are operational categories that allow us to characterize development and group a series of changes that took place in the family cycle over several generations. The boundaries between one stage and another are not rigidly defined but are perceived from a process-oriented perspective. The lack of sharp divisions between one stage and the next is related to the increase in the number of children in each generation; a time difference of ten or fifteen years between the oldest and youngest child extends the influence of the same generation, overlapping with the next. Therefore, we have chosen to establish approximate time boundaries based on a comprehensive assessment of indicators (Rey Castelao and Cowen 2017).

The first phase commences with the arrival of Lázaro (García) de Villafañe in La Rioja in the early 17th century, encompassing the generation of his children. This family founder

hailed from the nobility of León and migrated to the American colonies as part of the entourage of Tucumán's governor, Luis de Quiñones Osorio, who was a relative of his wife and also a Leonese noble. The motivations behind his migration from his homeland, despite his advanced age of over 50 years, are not documented. However, it can be inferred that this migration was a planned family project, as three of his four children born from his first marriage to doña María de Gavilanes y Guzmán followed him on his journey. They all adopted the compound surname Villafañe and Guzmán. In the 16th century, the García de Villafañe family held lordship titles over the towns of Santiago del Molinillo and Ribera de Orbigo in León, regions characterized by the presence of abundant nobility, as were the neighboring towns of Llamas de la Ribera, San Román de los Caballeros, and Quintanilla, where the Quiñones Osorio and Gavilanes, relatives of the Counts of Luna and the Marquises of Astorga, resided (Villafañe 2022; Serrano Redonnet 1967).

Upon arriving in Tucumán, Lázaro de Villafañe was appointed lieutenant of La Rioja and its jurisdiction by Governor Quiñones Osorio, a position of great importance in the government that required a person of "quality" and trust, detached from the discord among the inhabitants participating in the Cabildo. At that time, La Rioja was a small village in need of extensive development. Conflicts and disputes among captains, lieutenants, encomenderos, and settlers persisted in the attempt to control indigenous populations. In addition to his appointment as a lieutenant, Lázaro de Villafañe received the encomienda of Quilmitambos, in the western area of La Rioja, from Governor Quiñones Osorio. This region was distant and inhabited by rebellious indigenous groups, and, as such, it did not represent a significant source of economic income. Nevertheless, it granted full citizenship rights and the possibility of becoming part of the cabildo (Serrano Redonnet 1944).

Lázaro de Villafañe settled definitively in the city when he married Agustina Florencio, the widow of Captain Valeriano Cornejo, a conquistador and founder of the region. This marriage granted him access to a house, land in the city, and an encomienda that encompassed groups in the Andalgalá valley, which were already under control. Lázaro had to choose between both encomiendas and decided that his wife would retain hers but requested its reassignment for two lifetimes, thus allowing some of his children to inherit the benefit (Serrano Redonnet 1944).

Like any inhabitant of the region, Lázaro de Villafañe had two clear objectives in these lands: to obtain an encomienda grant, representing the main source of sustenance for prominent families, and to create the necessary conditions for his children to also access an encomienda. By the year 1624, the probable date of his death, he had successfully achieved both objectives.

The children of Lázaro constituted the second generation of the family. Three of them were born in Spain (Ramiro, Isidro, and Manuel, from his first marriage), while one, Isidro, was born in La Rioja. Ramiro, the eldest, inherited his father's encomiendas and settled in San Juan Bautista de la Rivera with his family. In 1632, during the Diaguita uprising (Aníbal Montes 1998), Ramiro fought under the command of Jerónimo Luis de Cabrera and lost his life while defending the city, and his children passed away shortly after, ending the line of succession. On the other hand, his brother Isidro chose to enter the priesthood, and although there is limited information about his life, it is known that he lived and died in La Rioja.

Once established in the city, Manuel married Petronila de Ávila y Villarroel, the only daughter of Baltasar de Ávila Barrionuevo, one of the most influential figures in the region, who owned encomiendas in the Catamarca Valley and the Chumbicha estate. Manuel received extensive powers from his father-in-law to manage his affairs, allowing him to control one-third of his father-in-law's encomiendas, which came under the administration of his wife. Additionally, he inherited the estate and other assets. Manuel skillfully capitalized on a series of tragedies that befell his family during the indigenous uprising, such as the death of his brother Ramiro, the burning of the Chumbicha estate, and crop losses. In 1646, he obtained the encomiendas of Pisapanaco and Caustine as a favor granted by his former protector, Governor Acosta y Padilla (Moyano Aliaga 2003).

Thanks to his solid economic standing, Manuel generously contributed to the war campaigns in the Calchaquí Valley that took place in the following decades. He also actively participated in these campaigns alongside his eldest son and his half-brother Isidro. In 1657, he obtained a Royal Decree granting him the title of Royal Standard Bearer and Dean Regidor of the Cabildo of La Rioja. He held both positions for 26 years, and later, they were inherited by his descendants. Manuel also served as mayor and lieutenant governor of La Rioja, just like his father. In 1683, he passed away at his Chumbicha estate at an advanced age, leaving a significant legacy in the region.

The youngest member of the generation, Isidro, born in La Rioja, inherited an estate from his mother in the city, where he also had a house adjacent to that of his half-brother Manuel. In 1632, leveraging his influence, Isidro managed to obtain the encomienda that had previously belonged to his half-brother Ramiro, thus reintegrating this encomienda into the family sphere. When the indigenous uprising ended, these groups were displaced from their original settlements, leading Isidro to acquire land in Guaco to establish his encomendados (Boixadós 2011). In this place, he founded a ranch dedicated to cattle breeding and wheat cultivation.

Isidro's economic prosperity was associated with production within the sphere of the two encomiendas he held. Wine, brandy, and wheat came from the estate located outside the municipal jurisdiction, where 16 families of denaturalized Yocavil indigenous people from the Calchaquí Valley were settled, which he had obtained through a composition encomienda in 1665 (García 2017). Wheat, but especially cotton textiles, and both large and small livestock came from the Guaco ranch. These products were transported to neighboring jurisdictions for sale in the market. For this purpose, he had several carts, oxen, and horses; his will recorded 500 arrobas of wine, ready for commercialization.

During his lifetime, Isidro de Villafañe played all the roles of his time: a man of arms, of government, and business; encomendero, "master" of slaves and servants, lord of his household. He also fulfilled the duties of a family father, although he did not have children from his marriage to Francisca de Vergara: he sponsored, raised, and provided for several orphaned girls as part of his charitable works and took care of nieces and nephews. For example, his will includes a clause in favor of his nephew Francisco de Villafañe, the second son of Manuel, who was established in Santiago del Estero. Under the condition that he settled in La Rioja with his wife and children, Isidro bequeathed him the city estate and the Yocavil encomienda since he had no opportunity to succeed his father in an encomienda (Farberman and Boixadós 2006).

After Isidro's death, his wife became the universal heir of his assets, but shortly after her passing, she also died. Then, Manuel de Villafañe and the Vergara family, siblings, and nieces and nephews of Francisca, initiated a legal dispute over the inheritance. The litigation extended over several years until the parties finally reached an agreement: the Vergara family retained the Guaco ranch, while the Villafañe family retained the rest of the assets (García 2018).

In summary, Manuel and Isidro de Villafañe y Guzmán emerged as central figures in the genealogical chronicle, skillfully capitalizing on the prerogatives inherent to their father's legacy. Both succeeded in the most relevant positions in the governmental sphere of La Rioja and San Juan Bautista de la Rivera, holding the positions of lieutenant governors, first-vote mayors, and rotating councilors. Through these roles, they were allowed to become familiar with and actively contribute to significant matters related to politics, public administration, economics, civil litigation, and criminal cases that impacted the jurisdiction. Furthermore, in the performance of their official duties, they received active collaboration from their descendants, relatives, and associates.

The second phase of this family's development involves the seven descendants of Manuel de Villafañe y Guzmán, constituting the third generation. All of these individuals played significant roles in society, and three of them chose to embrace the priesthood. During this period, the family managed to consolidate significant economic wealth. However,

tensions emerged among the siblings in the realm of personal relationships, leading some of them to decide to leave La Rioja.

During this generation, concurrent forces promoting both cohesion and intra-family dispersal manifested themselves. Cohesion primarily centered on the eldest, Baltasar, due to the accumulation of prerogatives and responsibilities inherent to his position. Prominent among these prerogatives was the right to succeed his father in the encomiendas and council positions. Responsibilities imposed on him the task of equaling or even surpassing his progenitor in merits, prestige, and service to the Crown. Baltasar embraced this role with determination, dedicating most of his life to estate matters and actively participating in military and political affairs from an early age. After his father's death, he emerged as the "head of the family" and inherited the entire family documentary archive and certifications, forming a valuable treasure trove of family memory. This archive encompassed wills, dowry letters, encomienda certificates, visitation records, Indian census lists, official appointments and certifications, sales receipts, land contracts, and concessions, among others. Baltasar jealously guarded this archive in a chest at the Chumbicha estate until his passing.

Baltasar's siblings played different roles within the family. While the estate remained undivided, they were united and committed to collaborating to ensure the prosperity of shared businesses. However, simultaneously, the quest for encomiendas motivated several of them to explore opportunities in other jurisdictions, distancing themselves from their family environment and hometown. Francisco, Damián, and Martín de Villafañe y Guzmán remained intermittently in La Rioja, where they eventually became members of the local council, but ultimately settled in other locations after the division of the inheritance. This initial intra-family dispersal can be interpreted from a different perspective: those who lacked clear opportunities to attain a position in their place of origin were compelled to seek fortune elsewhere. Over time, in these new locations, they also assumed the role of heads of families bearing the Villafañe y Guzmán surname, leaving a significant legacy of descendants. In this sense, one can recognize a family expansion strategy that transcended the main reference center, La Rioja, where the elder brother of the generation resided on the family estate. This openness facilitated and extended kinship ties, establishing connections with influential families in San Miguel, Santiago del Estero, and Córdoba. In these cities, economically linked to La Rioja, the Villafañe family became significant figures in matters related to family economic interests. These signs highlight the dynamic and mobilizing nature of the family, as well as its capacity to evolve into a primary network that initially formed through the dispersal of the siblings (Mercado Reynoso 2004; Zelada 2017).

The principle of mutual aid and solidarity, which often prevails in families, especially among siblings, manifested itself when collective interests were threatened, either by external individuals or rival families. However, within the same group, this principle came into conflict with the pre-established role structure, in which each child occupied a virtually fixed position. This tension became evident at crucial moments in the family's development stages, such as the death of the parents and the division of assets. Faced with legal provisions requiring the equitable distribution of the inheritance among all legitimate children, which jeopardized the preservation of the estate, Baltasar managed to concentrate the portions of most of his siblings under his ownership. The three religious brothers received an early portion of the inheritance and later renounced claiming a share in the estate. Martín and Damián relinquished their rights to the Chumbicha estate to Baltasar, as evidenced by the documents found among the assets inventoried after Baltasar died in 1718. Only Francisco, the second of the siblings, apparently resisted the sale of his portion. Nevertheless, it is clear that in this generation, the members reached an internal consensus to avoid economic losses resulting from the division of the lands.

Competitions for the encomiendas represented another sphere that aroused tensions and controversies among the siblings. The elder brother, who already had his encomienda, competed for vacant encomiendas after his father's death with two of his brothers, Francisco and Damián. Due to the privilege conferred by direct linear succession (primogeniture),

the governor granted the encomienda to Baltasar's eldest son, also named Manuel. As a result, Francisco, the main contender, was excluded from the succession.

In the third phase of family development, a series of tensions and conflicts were observed that culminated in an extensive intergenerational lawsuit. In this context, the focus is primarily on the eldest children of Baltasar, members of the fourth generation. Most of the children of his siblings had settled in other cities, although occasionally some were in La Rioja. The descendants of Baltasar and doña Mariana Ramírez de Velasco, the legitimate great-granddaughter of La Rioja's founder, Juan Ramírez de Velasco, comprised 12 children.

The functioning dynamics of this generation underwent notable changes due to the presence of eight female children, who entered into marriages with members of prominent families both in La Rioja and in other locations, as well as newcomers from Spain. They received dowries as an advance on their inheritance, and several of them chose to remain in La Rioja.

The death of their father, Baltasar, significantly impacted the family's role organization. Despite living at an advanced age, he was able to oversee and care for his children and properties for several years. Before his passing, he urged his children to peacefully divide the inheritance, and indeed, the property division took place through mutual agreement among the parties. However, within just ten years, the internal solidarities of the family broke down, initiating a prolonged conflict for exclusive control of the inheritance, and weakening their estate.

During this crisis, a series of events unfolded: the father, Baltasar de Villafañe y Guzmán, passed away in 1718, one year after his son Santos, who left only one heir. Lucas, the younger brother, died in 1720, leaving two illegitimate but recognized mestizo daughters as heirs. The eldest son, Manuel, died in 1726, and his heirs were two from his first marriage and six from the second. Among the siblings, only Isidro survived the others, and upon his return to La Rioja, he assumed responsibility for the estate, property management, debts, and family businesses. The tension that the previous generation of siblings could tolerate erupted in this generation when Isidro faced his nephews in a civil lawsuit over the possession of the inheritance. While they claimed the legitimate recognition of their rights, Isidro argued that, from a legal standpoint, the estate should remain under his dominion, undivided. The dispute between successive generations (uncle/nephews) continued among cousins, and members of the fifth generation, after Isidro's death.

It is not feasible to exhaustively explore the stages of this complex family conflict here, but it is pertinent to highlight two significant aspects. First, the problem repeats from one generation to another, where some family members seek the division of the inheritance or shared ownership, which always generates problems, while others aspire to keep it undivided, under the control of a single person and their lineage. Second, if in the third generation, the conflict was avoided through internal agreements within the family group, in the following generation, the rupture was inevitable when involving members of successive generations.

A detailed analysis of the testimonies from the Chumbicha inheritance lawsuit reveals that, in addition to the particular interests at play, this conflict also reflects an implicit challenge by the nephews to the family representation authority that Isidro de Villafañe y Guzmán was attempting to exercise as the administrator of the common heritage and as the "head of the family". As mentioned earlier, Isidro assumed this position after the death of his brother Manuel, the eldest of the generations. However, his position as the family head was contested by Manuel's sons, especially the eldest, Luis de Villafañe y Texeda.

Throughout his life, Isidro de Villafañe y Guzmán forged his context of legitimacy from which he defended his position and argued against his nephews, who accused him of trying to usurp their inheritance rights. Indeed, in the documentation related to the inheritance dispute, certain unusual maneuvers carried out by Isidro can be identified, now supported by his influence, prestige, and personal relationships. As a counterpart, it can be

inferred through indirect references and letters written by Isidro that he was not the eldest of his generation and that he had to play a particular role throughout his life until all his brothers passed away. We have been able to reconstruct some aspects of Isidro's journey using various sources. Despite its length, we believe that narrating a part of his history will help us understand his perspective and the tenacity he demonstrated in his fight to obtain the Chumbicha estate.

Isidro de Villafañe y Guzmán left La Rioja at a young age while still unmarried. For years, as his siblings enjoyed a certain tranquility in their hometown, he endured sixteen years of hardship on the waterfront, stationed at the San Miguel de Tucumán military outpost (Anibal Montes 1958). It was there that he married and had his first children, but his personal and military efforts in this region were never rewarded with an encomienda (Huespe Tomás 2022). When he returned to his "homeland", he had to relocate to Yavi to take charge of the estate of one of his uncles, the priest Lázaro de Villafañe. This journey and the necessary legal procedures took him a year and a half of back-and-forth trips. In 1715, he carried out official missions in Jujuy, from where he returned once more to La Rioja. Here, he had to secure a private loan to travel to Córdoba and face a dispute with a local convent over the guardianship of his two orphaned nieces. This matter was particularly delicate as the mother of the girls, one of his sisters, had been murdered by her husband. Faced with this painful situation, Don Baltasar had entrusted him with bringing the minors, his granddaughters, to Chumbicha, where he would marry them when the time came. Back in La Rioja, he found that his brothers Manuel and Lucas were involved in separate disputes with the Bazán family. He had to assist in defending his brothers despite himself, lamenting that they were wasting time on disputes instead of attending to their estate. In 1718, we find him again in Jujuy and later in the Royal Audiencia of La Plata, where the appeals for his brothers' disputes were being heard. On this occasion, he had to post bail money to release his brother Lucas, who was in jail. In the statements recorded in the family inheritance lawsuit, Isidro de Villafañe y Guzmán complained multiple times about the expenses he incurred under protest to defend his contentious brothers, expenses that were never reimbursed. Given that this personal history is characterized more by sacrifices than rewards, it is not surprising that, after the death of his brothers, Isidro sought to assert his new position as the head of the family in front of his young nephews. They encountered an uncle tired of playing a secondary role, incurring debts that were never repaid to help his relatives; over the years, he had become determined to prevent control of the Chumbicha estate from slipping through his fingers. He likely also thought about the fate of his children, who would otherwise be quite unprotected.

In summary, the analysis of each generation of the Villafañe and Guzmán family highlights two significant elements. First, primogeniture emerged as a robust principle of internal organization within the Villafañe and Guzmán families. However, this principle was not without conflicts among the siblings. Furthermore, this dynamic became even more complex as it clashed with another important organizing principle: generational hierarchy. It can be observed that Luis de Villafañe y Texeda, despite respecting his uncle Isidro de Villafañe y Guzmán due to his seniority, vehemently disputed his authority, pointing out arbitrary actions and abuse of power. Amidst this dispute, Luis also defended some of his cousins, especially the illegitimate daughters of Lucas de Villafañe, whom his uncle Isidro tried to deny inheritance rights by arguing that they were "only mestizas". Luis protected them due to their status as orphans, minors, and women, assuming this responsibility as the eldest male of his generation.

The present study focuses on the investigation of the longitudinal development of five generations within the Villafañe and Guzmán family. To conduct this analysis, the theoretical framework proposed by Fortes is adopted, to shed light on the family's evolution over time. In particular, the study highlights the dynamics of changes and adaptations that characterize their historical trajectory, with an emphasis on the consolidation of their family patrimony and the forging of a unique and distinctive family identity.

The noble founder of the family established an initial differentiation from other families in the region by passing down his surname unchanged through generations. The notable actions of family members and their positions in colonial society further strengthened this family identity. Additionally, shared land ownership reinforced their sense of belonging.

However, conflicts over land inheritance caused internal divisions within the family, signaling a deeper process of change. From the fifth generation onward, male children began to combine surnames, indicating an evolution in family identity. Matrimonial alliances and personal choices also influenced this transformation.

By 1730, the family had expanded horizontally, broadening the basis of kinship and diversifying family identity. Despite these changes, essential identity traits associated with the Villafañe and Guzmán surname remained throughout the colonial period in Tucumán.

Starting from the fifth generation, the family unit delineated over more than a hundred years became more diffuse, and new strategies were devised to study changes and continuities within the family. Despite these changes, certain sections of the Villafañe descendants managed to maintain their privileged position in the Rioja elite even after the colonial period.

3. Kinship Networks: Unraveling the Threads of Family Ties

During the colonial period, family elites played a paramount role in the organization and operation of economic activities, as well as in the dynamics of social and political relationships. These elites conferred upon individuals a sense of stability or mobility, in addition to influencing their social status and classification (Saguier 1993). In this context, the concept of “family” was inevitably associated with elements that transcended consanguinity boundaries, encompassing the notion of kinship that encompassed interpersonal relationships, rituals, and economic and political alliances (Carbonari and Baggini 2004). The analysis of the development of the Villafañe and Guzmán families over five generations as a cohesive entity allows us to examine the profile of an extended family. This mode of the family organization includes individuals related by both blood and affinity ties and its structure is characterized by flexibility, as it involves direct and collateral relatives across different generations. Within this collectivity, the concepts of recognition, proximity, and belonging play a central role.

One distinctive feature of extended families, according to some experts, is common cohabitation. However, in this context, it is necessary to address this concept in a broad sense, as there was a tendency to reside in the city of La Rioja in adjacent lands or houses, some of which even maintained communication with each other. This also applied when the family shared territorial properties over several generations with inheritance rights, which led to, especially when parents lived to an advanced age, some of their married children temporarily sharing the family residence. Although the unity of the domestic group predominated as a form of coexistence, at times, unmarried adult children, widowed daughters, or orphaned nieces and nephews also lived in the same household.

The structure of the extended family follows the principles of filiation, especially in Western societies, where the bilateral or undifferentiated principle predominates, recognizing descent from both the paternal and maternal sides, ensuring equitable recognition of relatives in both family lines. This principle is clearly manifested in the inheritance system of Castilian culture: all children not only have equal rights in the family inheritance but also inherit the assets of both father and mother separately. However, there are specific situations where preference is given to inheritance or succession through the male line, as in the case of territorial property, encomiendas, and municipal offices. It is relevant to note that, unlike some other prominent families in La Rioja, such as the Bazán de Texeda, Bazán de Cabrera, and Brizuela families, the Villafañe and Guzmán families did not establish entailments on their lands, at least for two generations, opting instead for alternative strategies that concentrated ownership in a specific member.

Primogeniture played a significant role in this family, as mentioned earlier. The first-borns exercised leadership in the extended family of each generation, a status recognized

not only by family members but also by the local society as a whole. For example, Don Manuel de Villafañe y Guzmán, from the third generation, was referred to in contemporary documents as the “trunk and head of the Villafañes”. This position conferred decision-making power within the family group, which extended not only to direct blood relatives but also sometimes to brothers-in-law, sons-in-law, and third-degree relatives. Each first-born and their descendants could trace a main lineage in genealogy, while their siblings and their descendants constituted collateral branches that established connections with families from other jurisdictions at earlier stages. The line of primogeniture persisted in La Rioja in terms of properties, houses, encomiendas, and offices, even up to the fifth generation.

This close association between lineage, a surname, and property was a common feature in the families of the Spanish provincial nobility, known as “linajes” or “casas”, depending on the type of family and the region of origin. The founder of the family, Lázaro de Villafañe, belonged to this social stratum and made efforts to gather the necessary elements in La Rioja to establish a family with similar characteristics. During the early colonial period, “nobility” was primarily an acquired status, earned through participation as first conquerors and founders. The descendants of Lázaro combined both attributes, as, in addition to having a noble origin that they always highlighted on every official occasion, they also contributed through their participation in the conquest wars.

To maintain this distinctive identity, the men of this family persisted in transmitting the full surname, Villafañe y Guzmán, without alterations, for both men and women. This trait, emphasizing patrilineality, created a sense of belonging to a lineage and coincided with the phase of development and consolidation of this family’s identity. This was facilitated by the fact that the first two generations consisted exclusively of men.

The predominance of men in those generations allows us to examine other associated characteristics. On one hand, the “principle of unity among siblings” supported everyday relationships among the brothers, who relied on, assisted, helped, and protected each other in various situations. This was particularly evident in the political sphere, where factional divisions revolved around the recognition of units formed by the core of the siblings. However, as mentioned earlier, fractures were common in this unity due to the emphasis on the organizational structure of the eldest brother, which disrupted the principle of balance. In each generation, a horizontal association formed by the group of siblings was observed, guided by the vertical transmission of authority to the eldest brother.

The principle of generational precedence also established hierarchy codes within the extended family. The relationship between uncle and nephew had a duality similar to that observed between the firstborn and the other siblings. The older siblings could use their preeminence and authority to outdo their siblings in various aspects, but they also had the responsibility to protect them, especially if they were younger or orphaned. Meanwhile, uncles could be powerful adversaries, but they also acted as benevolent and protective surrogate parents, especially if they had no children of their own.

In the third generation, there is a genuine expansion of the extended family as a result of the numerous offspring of Baltasar de Villafañe y Guzmán. His sons and daughters, in turn, expanded the parental base of the family by marrying prominent members of the city and governance. In general, these spouses came from the first conquering and colonizing families, such as Texeda y Guzmán, Argañaraz y Murgia, Tula Bazán, Luna y Cárdenas, and Ramírez de Sandoval, among others. However, marriages also began to be recorded between daughters and newly arrived Spaniards in La Rioja. Four of the daughters, with certainty, married and raised their children in the city. Furthermore, we must consider the children of their brothers and cousins. A genealogical chart would reveal the remarkable number of members of this family who coexisted in the same city at the same time. This extended not only to linear and collateral blood relatives but also involved political relatives of various degrees.

In the realm of local politics, the influence of the family becomes evident, including siblings, cousins, brothers-in-law, uncles, and nephews, who monopolized positions in the council from 1670 onwards. Some of them accessed their positions through purchase or

inheritance, while others were elected by vote. Three prominent members of the Villafañe and Guzmán family, along with their close relatives, achieved the status of lieutenants of the city due to their importance, wealth, and prestige. The Villafañe and Guzmán families, along with their allies, played a central role in the significant events of the city's social, political, and economic life. Internal alliances, such as groups of relatives, made them a closely interconnected network through which conflicts were managed and resolved.

This mode of family organization comprises a central core composed of one or two generations and a periphery with diffuse boundaries. Bilateral norms of descent include brothers-in-law, in-laws, and second and third-degree cousins around this core (Boixadós 2001a). According to these same norms, each individual could belong to or identify with more than one extended family at the same time, a characteristic accentuated by endogamous marital practices among the families of the local elite. In this way, Riojan's extended families were interconnected not only by kinship relationships but also overlapped with each other. Anyone could consider themselves a member of more than one network of relatives.

In a time when local politics demanded an affiliation almost equivalent to family factions, as during the disputes between the Villafañes and the Bazanes, the family identity of individuals structurally located in intermediate areas of one or another network of relatives concerning a core had to be constantly updated (Boixadós and Farberman 2015). The only relationships that did not need to be proven in these contexts of conflicts with "enemies" were the closest and linear consanguineous ones, such as father and children, siblings and cousins, and uncles and nephews. Maternal parallel cousins and paternal cross-cousins occupied an ambivalent position within the extended family, as they could be linked, like brothers-in-law and second cousins, to cores of other extended families albeit closely related. In these cases, only the level of conflict and individual interests could define the loyalties and commitments acquired through an alliance with one family or another (Ferraris 2016).

The analysis of the conflict between the Villafañe and Guzmán families over five generations reveals a complex network of family and political relationships in colonial La Rioja. This conflict between families intertwines with the social and political history of colonial La Rioja and reflects how family dynamics can have a significant impact on society as a whole. Furthermore, it demonstrates the complexity of family relationships and the strategies used to maintain power and cohesion in a society where the extended family is a key unit.

4. Discussion

Membership in a renowned family played a fundamental role in shaping the social structure, contributing significantly to its development. However, it is important to note that this influence does not exclude the existence of mixtures with various ethnic groups, nor does it suggest that the social structure was inflexible, contrary to previous assumptions. During the final phase of the colonial period, the accumulation of wealth allowed for social recognition that transcended mere consideration of skin color. Moreover, it is undeniable that the relationships established between families provided substantial advantages for achieving a prominent social position. This study has identified several interesting and complex issues that warrant further exploration:

The concept of an "extended family" emerges as pivotal for understanding family dynamics in the colony. However, its extent varies contextually, prompting questions about the universality or contextuality of this structure. The demographic model supporting the idea that cultural norms promoting altruism, especially among co-descendants, can enhance overall altruism acknowledges the potential complexity of reality. Assumptions such as the proportionality of expressed altruism and relatedness, female monogamy, and uniparental transmission of cultural traits offer valuable insights but underscore the need for exploring realistic scenarios considering demographic variability and individual factors (Stucky and Gardner 2022).

The evolution of generations in the Villafañe and Guzmán families has been observed, with a focus on the continuity of identity through the paternal surname. This raises the question of how family identities are maintained or evolve and how this relates to property and inheritance.

Variability in family morphology and the diversity of terms used to describe it have been highlighted, depending on factors such as the inheritance system, relationships with relatives, loyalty, and paternal authority.

The Villafañe and Guzmán family is distinguished by its noble identity and its connection to the early settlers of La Rioja. This raises the question of how identity and belonging to a family relate to the history and narrative of the region in which they reside.

Family conflicts and changing loyalties within the family have been explored in detail. The dynamics of family relationships are influenced by genealogical distance, prompting the question of how loyalties are established and maintained within an extended family.

The study suggests that marital alliances and kinship relationships are more complex than commonly assumed, with loyalties that may not align with blood or affinity relationships. This raises the question of how marital alliances influence family dynamics and how they intertwine with family loyalties.

While this case study lays a strong foundation for future research on family dynamics in the Ibero-American colonial context, certain limitations warrant acknowledgment. The intricate nature of variability, adaptation, and complexity within family relationships, as explored in this study, necessitates a multidisciplinary approach for a comprehensive understanding. However, the generalizability of findings may be constrained by the specificity of the colonial context studied, emphasizing the need for caution when extending conclusions to broader historical or geographical settings. Additionally, the evolving nature of our understanding of cultural traditions and their evolutionary roles implies that ongoing attention and more detailed investigations are imperative to refine and expand upon the insights provided by this study.

5. Conclusions

This case study provides a solid foundation for future research in the field of family dynamics in the Ibero-American colonial context. The variability, adaptation, and complexity of family relationships emphasize the importance of a multidisciplinary approach to fully understand these phenomena. Furthermore, comparison with other contexts and regions can shed light on similarities and differences in family structures during the colonial period.

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