Abstract: mining centers were common places for indigenous migration during the colonial period, because of the high demand on foreign indigenous labor, mainly due to the low sedentary indigenous population in the mining regions. A literature review on the recent work of several borderlands scholars on indigenous migration patterns into mining centers sheds new light on related topics, such as forced migration, displacement and captivity, which relate to violence. It also sheds knowledge on topics such as women’s roles in these type of processes. One thing to consider are the different approaches taken by experts on this topic, and thus, the different set of findings.

Keywords: Landscapes. Mining. Captivity. Displacement. Migration.

The present article covers a literature review on topics and discussions related to current theoretical and comparative approaches to Borderlands Studies. The arguments will be presented along with case studies. The main theme will revolve around the study of independent indigenous groups. Related secondary topics will also be approached, such as the environment, migration patterns, displacement, captivity, gender, agency, negotiation and violence.

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Borderlands Studies have gone through a long trajectory and transformation since their creation. Recent historiographical trends are interested in capturing the silent voices of the archive. They intend to give agency to subaltern people, such as Indians and women, who have been traditionally ignored by historians. In terms of methodology, these transformations involve the adoption of ethno-historical research. By doing this type of history, borderlands scholars now interpret their sources differently, and pay attention to non-traditional sources. This has opened the way to an interdisciplinary study of the past, in which geography has become an integral part of history. Cynthia Radding describes “geography as a central and powerful force in shaping human culture and society” (2005, p. XVI).

The environment and the landscape have also become a significant part of this trend. As Juliana Barr and Edward Countryman point out (2014, p. 24), in order to identify the transformations that took place in colonial frontiers, it is first necessary to reconsider “Indian landscapes” as places with “their own history, before and after contact”. Indian landscapes are linked to the borderlands because they are part of them. Barr and Countryman define the term “borderlands” as “metaphors” created by historians in relation to the study of colonial frontiers. Other similar terms related to this topic are “middle ground, and native ground” (2014, p. 24). For Pekka Hämäläinen (2014, p. 60), North American borderlands were spaces where power was “intensely contested”, and where “intergroup relations became grounded in violence”. Cynthia Radding describes them as “contested spaces” (2014, p. 141). Chantal Cramaussel refers to them as “enclaves located in the middle of unconquered territories” (2014, p. 185).

There are however, some historiographical debates among borderlands scholars in terms of the direction that this field should take. The objective of this article is to present a literature review on Borderlands Studies, in order to examine and contrast the debates that are taking place, and to reflect on the following questions: What are the most effective approaches to the study of borderlands? What is the relationship between the study of colonial mining centers and peace policy negotiations? And, what are the most recent discoveries being done in this field?

THEORETICAL AND COMPARATIVE APPROACHES

According to Pekka Hämäläinen, there is currently so much research being done about the colonial frontier, that it seems to have been fragmented into many categories, and this has resulted in scholars specializing in their topics to such a degree that limits their historical lens and only allows them to analyze a single category. His suggestion goes in terms of analyzing Colonial American history as a whole, and to relate all categories (HÄMÄLÄINEN, 2014, p. 31). In terms of space, Matthew Babcock (2014, p. 175) follows the same line of reasoning and recommends to adopt a wider geographical lens. By applying this methodology to North American borderlands, he suggests that the study of Sonora and New Mexico as a whole region in terms of peace negotiations can provide a wider historical perspective. The study of two places as a region is one way to seek for a wider lens. However, in other cases, where two places with similar characteristics aren’t able to constitute a region because of geographical distance, the solution might be a comparative study approach.

Cynthia Radding does a comparative study between the regions of Sonora in Northern New Spain and the Chiquitanía in South America, in her monograph
titled *Landscapes of Power and Identity: Comparative Histories in the Sonoran Desert and the Forests of Amazonia from Colony to Republic*. As part of her methodology for this work she consults Jesuit mission records, such as ledgers, which enable her to make an economic analysis on this type of religious institution. One of her main objectives is to find out how the different natural environments of both regions impacted the Jesuit missions that were established there, and what the impact was on the missions in both regions (RADDING, 2005, p. 87). One difference, of course, was mining, which became a primary economic activity in Sonora, but was not relevant to the Chiquitanía.

Another one of her publications is *Colonial Spaces in the Fragmented Communities of Northern New Spain*, which is a chapter of an edited book on borderlands. Part of her methodology on this work consists in using colonial documents such as “mundane correspondence, formal reports, and maps”, in order to have “temporal and spatial lenses through which to view the mixed populations of indigenous, African and Hispanic descent” in northern New Spain (RADDING, 2014, p. 116). Some of these documents are “scattered archival published references to sermons and military service records” (2014, p. 137).

David Weber also does a comparative study in his monograph titled *Barbaros: Spaniards and their Savages in the Age of Enlightenment*, in which he studies several American borderlands, from northern New Spain’s Apachería, to South America’s Araucanía, including places such as the Mosquito coast of Central America. Therefore, while Radding (2005) focuses her study on a colonial religious institution such as the mission, Weber (2005) centers his work on a colonial military institution, the presidio. Chantal Cramaussel (2014, p. 184), however, suggests that recent studies done by Mexican researchers have started a trend which involves studying the relationship between missions, presidios, mining centers and haciendas, as opposed to previous studies, which approached each one of these Spanish institutions separately.

Indigenous Migration Patterns into Mining Centers

One of Cramaussel’s works is a book chapter titled *The Forced Transfer of Indians in Nueva Vizcaya and Sinaloa: A Hispanic Method of Colonization*. As part of her methodology she applies her expertise on demographic studies and local archives, and analyses censuses and parish records related to four colonial mining centers, focusing on baptisms and marriages where indigenous peoples were registered. She also focuses on the places of origin of the different indigenous groups to prove one of her main arguments: that most of the Indian migration into northern New Spain’s colonial mining centers constituted a type of forced servitude (CRAMAUSSEL, 2014, p. 186).

Cramaussel’s study is spatially focused on mining centers in northern New Spain, but she links them to other institutions and to other places by studying indigenous labor and migration patterns into these mining centers, focusing mainly on Parral, El Rosario, Alamos and Chihuahua (CRAMAUSSEL, 2014, p. 188, 195, 198, 204). Cynthia Radding’s work also studies the connections between the province of Ostimuri and Nueva Vizcaya, and indigenous labor migration patterns between both places. Among the mining centers approached in her work are: Alamos, San Ildefonso de Ostimuri, and San Miguel Arcangel (RADDING, 2014, p. 115-41).

Cramaussel’s and Radding’s regions of study overlap each other, yet, both historians take different geographical approaches. In the same direction as Hämäläin-
en’s proposal, Radding studies the provinces of Ostimuri and the northern part of the province of Sinaloa as a whole region, even though she refers to it only as Ostimuri (RADDING, 2014, p. 121). Therefore, her work goes beyond the established colonial geo-political boundaries. She supports this approach by stating that in administrative terms, Ostimuri was an area between the Yaqui and Mayo river valleys. However, socially and economically, it went beyond this jurisdiction. She suggests that Alamos was part of the southern boundary of this region (2014, p. 136).

Cramaussel also takes into account the different administrative, economic and geo-political boundaries. Her comparative work suggests that historical studies should be done by considering this area as a wider region, overcoming colonial political demarcations, as well as current ones. However, she doesn’t go as far as regarding the northern part of the Sinaloa province as part of Ostimuri. She instead links the province of Sinaloa to the southern province of Culiacán and emphasizes their proximity to Nueva Vizcaya (CRAMAUSSEL, 2014, p. 187-9).

Another difference between Cramaussel and Radding is on how they analyze ethnical boundaries. Cramaussel’s approach is very specific. According to her, during the colonial period there wasn’t an ethnic distinction between Yaquis and Mayos (CRAMAUSSEL, 2014, p. 198). Radding on the other hand, does make a distinction between both indigenous groups (1997, p. 22).

Cramaussel’s and Radding’s works also contrast in terms of how they characterize labor regimes. One of Cramaussel’s main arguments (2014, p. 188), is that most of the Indian migration into Northern New Spain’s colonial mining centers was not voluntary, but actually constituted forced servitude that can be compared to slavery. The exception to this pattern would be Alamos, where according to Cramaussel, it wasn’t necessary to enforce “Indian slave labor” because there was a significantly high indigenous population there, which constituted free wage labor (2014, p. 200). Radding, on the other hand, depicts labor regimes in a wider spectrum. According to her, migration was comprised of free workers, repartimientos, and enslaved people. A point in which both authors coincide is in stating that captive indigenous peoples were part of the working force inside the mines (RADDING, 2014, p. 138).

Following the same trend, but in a different time period and region, Dana Velasco Murillo studies the mining center of Zacatecas. Her work is mostly focused on the formation of Indian barrios in this place, which were transformed into Indian pueblos later on, with their own political representation. One similarity between Cramaussel’s and Velasco’s works is that both of them study the characteristics of indigenous migration to mining centers (VELASCO, 2016, p. 12). Cramaussel writes about the formation of Indian barrios or small ranches, mostly Yaquis, in Parral and Chihuahua (2014, p. 194, 205). She doesn’t seem to mention these type of migrant settlements in El Rosario and Alamos, which might imply that foreign Indians such as the Yaquis were not living congregated as a community there, but were instead scattered in these mining populations. It could also be that since El Rosario and Alamos were part of the same geographic region, the Pacific corridor, Yaquis could have been assimilated into these communities more easily than in the case of the mining towns of Nueva Vizcaya.

One difference is that Cramaussel refers to Indians as residents of a barrio (2014, p. 194), which doesn’t necessarily translate to the Spanish term vecinos, used by Dana Velasco Murillo (2016, p. 2). Velasco’s use of the term Indian vecinos should be approached with caution, so as not to confuse it with, or equate it to, the Spanish sta-
tus of vecino, which was applied to non-Indians. In regard to this topic, Velasco’s work doesn’t seem to take into account the existence of two different jurisdictions during the colonial period: The “Republic of Spaniards” and the “Republic of Indians”. This implies that Indians were separated legally and physically as much as possible from Spaniards, and they had their own legal category (OWENSBY, 2008, p. 24-25), which makes problematic the use vecinos in reference to indigenous people.

In regard to the formation of indigenous towns, Cramaussel doesn’t seem to accept the idea that Indian barrios transformed into pueblos. This can be inferred because she quotes the Spanish term “pueblo” as was written on primary sources, but refers to it as a barrio, and never translates it into town (2014, p. 194). She also doesn’t mention the creation of indigenous town councils. In this sense, it can be inferred that residents of Indian establishments at New Spain’s far north didn’t necessarily have as much political representation as did the ones at the historical north, such as Zacatecas.

Another term that seems problematic in Velasco’s book (2016, p. 2) is precisely how she uses the term urban. This term raises the following questions: Should indigenous settlements that were located near mining centers, be considered as urban settings? If this is the case, then what about places that were constituted as missions? An example to contrast this assumption can be the missions in the Chiquitianía region studied by Radding. Some of those missions had a significant population of several thousands of people, and still aren’t regarded by her as urban settings (RADDING, 2005, p. 253). A difference could be the category of these populations as missions. However, in the borderlands of the early modern period even locations with the title of cities didn’t necessarily constitute urban settings. An example is Arizpe, in the province of Sonora, which during the late eighteenth century shifted its status from mission town to city and gained relative political and administrative significance. Its population and infrastructure didn’t correspond to an urban setting at all, and this scenario didn’t change over time (RADDING, 2005, p. 263, 317). Another scholar that applies a similar concept to Velasco’s “urban Indians” is Ernesto Bassi. He uses the term “cosmopolitan Indians” to characterize native immigrants in Caribbean ports. Bassi suggests that the Caribbean Indians’ physical mobility and ability to navigate enabled them to have a cosmopolitan worldview. He also calls them “maritime Indians” (BASSI, 2017, p. 87).

Going back to the topic of mining centers, a difference among the Ostimuri mining towns and the ones at Zacatecas is that in the Northwest, the struggle for workforce was between miners and missionaries, where as in Zacatecas this wasn’t necessarily the case, or at least that struggle wasn’t apparent. Even though Zacatecas had missionaries from diverse religious orders, they weren’t in charge of mission towns. Also, the foreign Indians in Zacatecas weren’t escapes from the missions. As Velasco mentions (2016, p. 55, 203), they mostly had a previous urban background from central Mexico, and many of them decided to migrate to Zacatecas to take advantage of the tax exemptions that were prescribed there.

It would be interesting to have a comparative study that approaches both Parral and Zacatecas. This could shed light on the similarities between both regions, and on the possible social networks between them. In any case, even though both authors take different approaches and analytical frameworks, it is clear that major colonial mining centers required and attracted indigenous migration from diverse and distant regions. In both cases there seems to be a dominant migrant group. In Parral, it was the Yaquis, Cahita speakers (CRAMAUSSEL, 2014, p. 184-207), and in Zacatecas, the
Mexicans, a term to refer to people from central Mexico that spoke Nahua (VELASCO, 2016). Both works point out that these languages became *lingua francas* among indigenous peoples in these mining centers. Velasco even explains that in Colonial Zacatecas, Nahua became the predominant language because it was more commonly spoken than Spanish (VELASCO, 2016, p. 66).

In regard to the topic of language and identity, linked to migration, one of Cramaussel’s historiographical contributions is that she sketches an ethnic border between Yaquis and Tepehuanes. By looking at parish records and censuses, she notes that while Yaquis migrated to different areas of Sonora, Sinaloa and Nueva Vizcaya, they don’t appear in the records of Durango, where instead there is a predominant presence of Tepehuanes (CRAMAUSSEL, 2014, p. 206). Thus it can be inferred that the ethnic border between both Indian groups was between Parral and Durango. It is likely that distance played an important role in the establishment of this boundary.

**Indigenous Captivity and Forced Migration**

It is also important to note that migration movements were not always done voluntarily. The demand for labor force in the mining districts invites to think about the possibility of forced migration movements. In this scenario, forced migration could be directly linked to the practice of taking captives. As will be further explained later on in this article, Ned Blackhawk (2014, p. 278-9) suggests that the adoption of equestrianism by indigenous groups triggered the practices of raiding and captive taking in the borderlands. Hämäläinen (2014, p. 63) suggests that the major markets for slavery in North America were “New Mexico, Virginia and the Carolinas”, from where “thousands of captives were either incorporated into local labor regimes or sold to the mining and sugar districts in tropical America”. Therefore, if it is possible to infer from Blackhawk and Hämäläinen that some equestrian independent Indian groups were able to incorporate the practices of raids and the trafficking of captives into their subsistence economies, it can also be inferred from Weber, that raiding and captive taking affected and transformed vecino communities along the borderlands. According to Weber, these practices were so common that Spanish frontier societies became accustomed to collecting money among their residents, in order to establish a fund for ransoming their relatives in bondage. Funds from the *presidios’* budgets were also used for this purpose (WEBER, 2005, p. 227).

For indigenous people, ransoming their loved ones was a priority as well. Babcock points out that one of the main reasons for Apaches to establish in peace encampments was to free their relatives held in captivity. Apache Chief Compa’s case serves as an example for northern New Spain. He established himself on the peace encampment of Bacoachi in order to reunite himself with his family (BABCOCK, 2014, p. 169). In any case, indigenous people could also end up in peace encampments by being taken captive themselves. Both Babcock (2014, p. 171) and Cramaussel (2014, p. 203) mention that captive Indians were made to serve for ten years in *presidios*, which can be interpreted as serving as auxiliary soldiers in incorporated indigenous companies, or as scouts on peace encampments.

It is possible that in most cases, however, indigenous captives would end up in a situation of servitude that could be considered as quasi-slavery. In regard to Sonora, Radding introduces the term *Nijora*, commonly used to refer to captive people taken
from Yuma indigenous bands, in northwestern Sonora. She even presents the case of a woman that was registered as a slave in an ecclesiastical census (RADDING, 2005, p. 155). Even though it is not likely to find the denomination of slave attached to people registered in such documents of northwestern New Spain, this case invites borderlands historians to reconsider that slavery in Sonora might have been a much more common practice than what is usually thought. In New Mexico, the scenario appears to have been the same. As Blackhawk (2014, p. 292) mentions in the descriptions of the hide painting called Segesser I, which will be analyzed further on, a common denomination for this type of captive in that region was Genízaro. In the case of Nueva Vizcaya, Cramaussel (2014, p. 206) also states that some Apaches in captivity were put to work in the silver mine of Parral. Babcock (2014, p. 172) explains how sometimes Apache men were even sent as far as Cuba to work in the fortification of Havana.

Indian captives were not the only ones going into forced servitude. As Cramaussel explains for the case of Nueva Vizcaya, indigenous peoples could change their identity to mulattos to avoid being subject to paying tribute. This identity shift could also benefit mission Indians who intended to migrate to other places and to work outside of the mission complexes. It also benefited church officials because mulattos were required to pay for religious services, while mission Indians were exempt from this obligation. The possibility of shifting identity was a double edged sword for Indians, however, because it could also enable miners or hacienda owners to keep them in forced servitude (CRAMAUSSEL, 2014, p. 203). Shifting identity could also result in the Indians’ loss of access to communal lands.3

Landscapes, Places and their Effects on Indigenous Displacement

Heidi V. Scott’s work approaches migration movements related to colonial mining in South America, focused mainly on the mining center of Potosi, although it also mentions Huancavelica. Scott studies the colonial negotiations over the landscape in the Andes by analyzing written sources, such as administrative and ecclesiastical documents. One of her objectives is to find out how the landscape was “experienced and perceived” by the people of the Andes (SCOTT, 2009, p. 10). This relates to pre-Hispanic religious beliefs that remained in post-contact Andean communities. One of their sacred practices was to worship huacas, which had different forms and sizes. Therefore, Andean Indians were related to landscapes through the worship of rivers and mountains (SCOTT, 2009, p. 64-5).

In the same manner, but with a focus on North America, Keith Basso’s contemporary ethnographic study on Western Apaches’ practices of place-making describes this practice as “retrospective world building”, and he explains that it implies to recognize that “certain localities” bring to mind “entire worlds of meaning”. According to him, Western Apaches give special meanings to natural places that form part of the landscape, such as mountains and rivers (BASSO, 1996, p. 5). One of the main contributions of Basso’s work is that it explains the Apaches’ perception of events primarily in terms of the places where they occur, and secondarily in terms of temporality (1996, p. 31). Western Apaches’ contemporary perception of “place” enables historians to understand better the impact of displacement on Independent Indians such as the Apaches or other native groups that migrated to mining centers or were incorporated into missions, peace encampments, or haciendas.
Scott applies the term “vertical landscape”, based on John Murra’s (1975, p. 60) term “vertical archipelago”. Later on, Jeremy Mumford (2012) constructs his work, based on both terms. By “vertical landscape”, Scott (2009, p. 79) refers to the overwhelmingly rugged topography of the Andes, which obviously had a significant impact on these type of migrations. One thing to take into account is the quick and drastic change in climate and vegetation that a “vertical landscape” produces. This environmental setting had stimulated pre-Hispanic seasonal migration patterns that generated diverse agricultural practices, which in turn, enabled the establishment of communication networks among indigenous peoples from different Andean regions. In this sense, migration practices were common in the Andes before the arrival of the Spaniards, and so was the mita labor draft system, which sustained the Inca Empire. What Scott’s work suggests is that these migration patterns were transformed during the colonial period, and that the way in which the landscape was perceived and experimented, forged a negotiation process between colonial authorities and indigenous peoples (SCOTT, 2009, p. 164).

Scott’s work focuses on the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries’ indigenous migration movements. Some of them were constituted by forced migration through the policy of reducciones. Native people would be displaced from their original villages and resettled at towns designed by colonial authorities, in the form of a grid pattern, so that they could enforce more control and surveillance on the natives. Another type of indigenous forced migration was done by the mita labor draft system, in which natives were forced to travel to other regions under their own expense, and work in activities such as mining. A common destination for the mita labor draft was the silver mine of Potosí. Working conditions were detrimental, in part because of mercury poisoning, which resulted from working on the silver smelter (SCOTT, 2009, p. 126). The mita draft was also intended for the worst working places, such as the mercury mine at Huancavelica (SCOTT, 2009, p. 71), therefore, it should be noted that being sent there to serve could be compared to a slow death sentence.

It is no surprise then, as Scott’s work suggests, that indigenous people from the highlands started to migrate to the tropical lowlands of the Amazon, to which colonial authorities were not very familiar, in order to avoid the mita labor draft. It is difficult, however, to consider this type of migration as voluntary, since it was in response to the enforcement of the mita draft system. In any case, this type of migration did affect the colonial regime by means of a decrease in population, in silver extraction and in tax or tribute recollection, which in turn made Spanish authorities reassess indigenous migration policies (SCOTT, 2009, p. 128).

Gender and Agency

Another approach to consider for Borderlands Studies is gender. In terms of traditional economic activities related to the frontier, such as ore extraction, it is common for women to be left out of the picture. To this matter, women’s labor is not usually considered in the study of mining towns. According to Velasco, primary sources don’t give much information on women working directly in the silver mines. However, she does point out that women contributed to the mining industry by performing important tasks in the mining centers, such as “running stores, owning stakes in mines and labor teams, and working as domestic servants” (VELASCO, 2016, p. 7).
They also worked at haciendas (VELASCO, 2013, p. 10). Velasco also mentions that in Potosí, “indigenous women washed ore and […] refined it in […] small furnaces”. They also extracted the “leftover pieces of ore near mine entrances” (VELASCO, 2013, p. 10). She even suggests that this last activity could also have been practiced by indigenous women in the mining centers of Zacatecas (VELASCO, 2013, p.10). Velasco’s point related to mining extraction by indigenous women in Potosí is important because Scott seems to have left out women from the main objectives of her study.

Even though Scott suggests that spatial practices, geographical imagination and perception of the landscape were experienced differently from women’s perspectives, she doesn’t approach that topic in her work. One of her arguments for not doing so is that the historical texts from where she draws her information were written by male authors. She admits that her focus is “primarily on the writing of those whose voices are heard more insistently in the colonial archive” (SCOTT, 2009, p. 10). The problem with this type of approach is that Scott is trying to capture indigenous agency, and even though she does analyze “indigenous-authored sources”, most of the texts available will inevitably be Spanish-authored. Therefore, if she only focuses on the voices that are more “insistently” in the archive, this leaves out the possibility of doing an ethnography of the archive, or a re-interpretation of colonial archives in order to de-colonialize them. This implies that to a certain degree, she may have left behind the subaltern groups, and thus, she didn’t take completely into account women’s agency, as well as indigenous agency.

Weber’s work also relates to agency. One of his main contributions to this topic is that he takes into account the implications of Spanish authorities negotiating peace policies with autonomous Indian groups. He debates in terms of whether this type of negotiation implied the recognition of Indian sovereignty. However, as Weber explains, this wasn’t always the case. For some European Empires such as the Spanish, the British and the French, their international law allowed them to negotiate peace with Indian nations without recognizing the Natives’ independence. In this sense, it is plausible to consider that Spanish authorities regarded independent Indians at peace as their subjects (WEBER, 2005, p. 179-220).

Weber also suggests that some of these independent groups decided to negotiate and agree to peace policies because they were forced by circumstantial reasons, such as epidemics and famine. In this case, their status as historical agents seems to be contested; after all, they appear to have opted for the lesser evil and thus, didn’t actually have much choice but to take a strategy that would allow them to survive, which would hardly be considered agency. However, Weber also mentions that in some cases, Spanish authorities were also forced to negotiate peace by special circumstances, such as the imminent threat of invasion from another European empire. If the same logic was to be applied to these cases, then, even Spanish authorities would seem to lack historical agency. In any case, it is evident that the need to establish alliances went both ways, which implies a certain degree of reciprocity between both parties (WEBER, 2005, p. 199-200).

His work is also rich in that it analyzes the rhetoric on several documents written by Spanish authorities in regard to the peace encampments. One of them is a complaint that was made against the economic support of the reservations. One official considered that giving rations to the Indians at peace was equal to paying them tribute. In this regard, Weber raises an important point, he states that in essence, peace policies
involved Spanish authorities to take tribute from incorporated indigenous groups, and to pay tribute to independent indigenous groups in exchange for their peace (WEBER, 2005, p. 192).

Such an idea could even be confused and reinterpreted as if the Spaniards were subjects of the Indians at peace. For this reason, this point should be approached cautiously and should be balanced by the fact that in cases such as the peace encampments of northern New Spain, Indians at peace were required to settle near presidios, as part of peace negotiations, and required a passport to leave the perimeter surrounding the reservations. Weber even mentions the case of a cacique that agreed to peace negotiations and had to leave one of his sons with the Spaniards, as guarantee (WEBER, 2005, p. 202). Thus, by being denied physical mobility and by having members of their families taken literally as hostages by the Spaniards, independent Indians can hardly be considered as historical agents, and most likely seem to fall into the category of subjects or hostages themselves.

Even under the effects of these restraining circumstances, however, they did have the possibility to break their peace pacts and fly to the mountains, which they eventually did. Even though in this case it might seem as if the Indians that fled the reservations had agency, it is important to consider that breaking a pact in and of itself doesn’t constitute agency, unless you can effect change through this threat. In contrast, Scott’s work (2009, p. 193–4) seems to suggest the presence of indigenous agency regarding the Indians of the Andes who fled to the Amazon lowlands to evade mandatory labor in the mines, and in turn forced Spanish authorities to question if the mita labor draft system was actually beneficial or detrimental to the crown’s interests.

Determining what constitutes indigenous agency and what doesn’t is tricky. In this sense, the analysis of Weber’s monograph is a reminder for historians to approach the documents with caution and with a certain degree of skepticism, taking into account that written sources may be, and usually are biased, and they generally leave out the indigenous version of the story, which complicates the task of attributing historical agency to independent Indians. This however, doesn’t deny the possibility of Indian agency, as can be inferred by Scott’s monograph mentioned before. In any case, indigenous agency should be analyzed in a moderate way, that takes into account both parties’ ability to negotiate peace in their own terms and within a certain time frame.

Women as Historical Agents

Another way of determining what constitutes agency can be by analyzing the roles of people that gave shape to historical processes, and therefore became historical actors themselves. This type of analysis can also include gender. In regard to women’s agency, for instance, Radding’s work (2014, p. 133) mentions that during the early peace negotiations between Jesuit missionaries and indigenous leaders of Ostimuri, women played a central role as messengers. This implies that women were historical agents in the formation of mission pueblos in Northwestern New Spain, because they were shaping Spanish-Indian relations, something that is usually ignored by historiography.

Matthew Babcock also analyses women’s participation during peace negotiations. He points out that some women participated as scouts as well. These were mostly former captive Spanish women, or the daughters of Indian chiefs, which according
to Babcock (2014, p. 168), were “as resourceful as their male counterparts”. Women however, also aided men in war. Weber mentions that Apache and Comanche women were part of their communities’ “reserve corps” and they also took care of the horses during Apache raids or during the time of war. In regard to other tasks performed by Apache women, Babcock also mentions that in addition to raising their children and “harvesting mescal”, they were also farmers. In the cases of Apache prisoner women, they “worked as laborers in Spanish households and businesses from Chihuahua to Mexico City” (BABCOCK, 2014, p. 172).

However, these labor roles practiced by indigenous women weren’t necessarily the same before European contact. David Weber states that equestrianism brought several gender role transformations. He presents the examples of the Araucanians, and to a certain degree, the Creeks, who “replaced women with horses as baggage bearers”. Nevertheless, in the cases of other indigenous groups, like the Cherokees, gender roles apparently didn’t go through such transformations (WEBER, 2005, p. 81).

Equestrianism, Violence and Captivity

Following on Weber’s transformations caused by equestrianism, Ned Blackhawk discusses the effects of equestrianism on native societies. He points out that it was one of the elements that generated colonial violence, which in some autonomous indigenous groups triggered raiding and captive taking (BLACKHAWK, 2014, p. 278-279). According to him, a topic that hasn’t been studied enough is the transformation of indigenous pedestrian societies from the Great Plains and the impact that equestrianism had on indigenous warfare, “bison economies” and captivity (BLACKHAWK, 2014, p. 287). Equestrianism also shifted power relationships in many of these groups (BLACKHAWK, 2014, p. 288).

Blackhawk analyses two hide portraits known as the Segesser Paintings in honor of Jesuit missionary Phillip Segesser, who during the eighteenth century sent these hides from northern Mexico to his family in Switzerland. The first painting analyzed by Blackhawk is called Segesser II, which is interpreted as a depiction of a battle between French forces from Canada and their Indian allies, against Spanish forces from New Mexico with their Indian auxiliary troops. What’s striking about this painting is that Spanish troops are on horseback, while the French and their native allies are on foot. Therefore, this is an artistic representation of the time when equestrianism wasn’t adopted yet by some native groups of the North American plains such as the Comanches (BLACKHAWK, 2014, p. 283). It is supposed to relate specifically to the battle where Spanish Military Officer Pedro de Villasur and his troops were outnumbered, defeated and killed (BLACKHAWK, 2014, p. 280-281).

In regard to the other painting, titled Segesser I, Blackhawk suggests two ways of interpreting it: It could be the depiction of a raid being executed by equestrian Apaches, in which New Mexicans are being attacked and women are being taken as captives (BLACKHAWK, 2014, p. 289). It might also represent the return of women that had been previously held captive. In any case, captivity seems to be the main point of Segesser I, which approaches the topic of “enslavement and displacement” along the borderlands (2014, p. 298). Enslavement and displacement are central to the study of borderlands because as stated by Blackhawk, “indigenous captives in sum provided many of the social ties within and between overlapping borderlands communities across the American continent” (2014, p. 291).
A critique that could be made to Blackhawk’s work is that he makes too many assumptions. It’s not to say that these hide paintings are not trustworthy sources, but while his interpretation could have significant artistic value, he over-interprets the paintings’ historical data. This is due to the lack of information he actually has regarding these paintings. He ignores who the authors are. He doesn’t even identify if both paintings were done by the same author, or if they were the product of the work of multiple artists. He also lacks sufficient proof to demonstrate that the authors were actually part of these accounts, and to assume that they were in fact witnesses wouldn’t necessarily imply that they were Natives, which would debunk one of his main arguments, in that he regards these hides as indigenous accounts. He also fails to explain how Phillip Segesser got possession of these hide paintings. In terms of artistic work related to the history of the borderlands, it is possible to find other examples on the works of Cynthia Radding (2005), David Weber (2005), and Sylvia Sellers-García (2014, p. 70), who use lithographic paintings of colonial landscapes and map-views, although they were all made by European travelers.

In terms of contributions, Blackhawk’s interpretation (2014, p. 292) of the hides highlights the impact of equestrianism on North American borderland societies during the eighteenth and first half of the nineteenth centuries, or as he calls this period, the “century of equestrianism”. Blackhawk also suggests that equestrianism was one of the elements that generated colonial violence (BLACKHAWK, 2014, p. 278-279). Hämäläinen (2014, p. 62) explains violence in the borderlands in a different order, relating it to two elements: the lack of imperial power, and slavery. Hämäläinen also points out that in places in North America, subject to Native dominance, violence regulated political relations, as well as trade and tribute collection (HÄMÄLÄINEN 2014, p. 61).

Hämäläinen’s approach is problematic, because it generalizes and makes no distinction among the diverse types of indigenous societies in the borderlands, for example sedentary or semi-nomads, equestrian and non-equestrian. It also focuses too much attention on violent Native dominance, and too little on imperial powers as generators of violence. Blackhawk on the other hand (2014, p. 278), writes about colonial violence and about the “terrifying silences” related to it, which have been kept out of historical documents. Another historian that works on the topic of violence is Lance R. Blyth. He studies comparatively the interactions among Chiricahua and Janos, regarding violence as one of the means of social reproduction in Hispanic and Apache societies (BLYTH, 2012). At the end, Babcock settles this historiographical debate. He is against focusing too much attention on the cycles of violence. According to him, it is incorrect to assert “violence and indigenous trauma” as the most significant trends to study the borderlands previous to U.S. expansion to the west. The focus should be on how both Apaches and Spaniards managed to reduce violence and “to overcome deep-seated mutual distrust” (BABCOCK, 2014, p. 167).

CONCLUSION

Colonial mining centers and peace negotiations in the borderlands are topics that closely relate to each other. Beyond Weber’s approach to peace negotiations as survival strategies for Spaniards and indigenous groups, it is crucial to consider the possibility of a negotiated peace in the borderlands, promoted by mining interests. After all, peace provided a steady working population into mining centers. Paradoxically, mining extraction also
benefited from violence, to a certain extent. Mining was actually one of the activities that generated violence in the frontier, by means of demanding forced labor, which came in the form of forced indigenous migration and displacement, as was presented in this paper.

Following on the works of Radding and Cramaussel, in regard to the debate that revolves around considering or not considering indigenous labor in the mining centers as “Indian slave labor”, it is evident that although not all indigenous workers were forced to work, forced labor did take place in the mines, whether it be classified as slavery or in any other term. This debate invites for future research on the topic of slavery in the borderlands. It is necessary to approach this topic by analyzing the different categories that entail forced labor, as well as its link with ethnicity and identity. As an example, with the exception of a few studies, there seems to be a gap on the topic that involves the sale of captives as slaves in remote places of Spanish America. My position is that studies on this topic should focus on captivity and ransom, but also on forced labor and slavery, which even though at first glance they don’t necessarily appear in the archives, occasionally there are documents that point to such practices.

In terms of gender, just as Borderlands Studies currently focus on giving voice to the subalterns, such as indigenous groups, they should also focus more on women’s participation, which was observed to be present both during peace negotiations and in war making, as well as in the mining economy. I make this suggestion regardless of the fact that most historical documents were written by male authors. Nevertheless, while giving historical voice to women, it is also important to take into account that indigenous gender roles were transformed after Spanish contact, by practices such as equestrianism.

Finally, in regard to Babcock’s study on peace negotiations, in addition to his suggestion of focusing less on violence and more on the practices taken to reduce violence, I suggest to focus on the economy that revolved around the establishment of peace policies. In order to get a wider picture of the scenario in which peace was negotiated along the borderlands, it is necessary to take an economic approach to the study of peace policies. After all, someone had to profit from peace negotiations in order for them to take place. While peace encampments represented a cost to the royal treasury, they also represented profit to others, besides the indigenous groups that benefited from the supplies they received. In other words, in order for violence to be reduced, peace had to become a business.

**CATIVEIRO, DESLOCAMENTO E MIGRAÇÃO ENTRE INDÍGENAS NAS FRONTEIRAS MINERADORAS**

Resumo: os centros de mineração foram destinos comuns para a migração indígena durante o período colonial devido à alta demanda de mão de obra indígena que para lá se deslocava principalmente pela quase inexistência de indígenas sedentários nas regiões mineradoras. Uma revisão da bibliografia recente de vários estudiosos sobre os padrões de migração indígena em centros de mineração aborda tópicos afins, como migração forçada, deslocamento e cativeiro, relacionados à violência. Conhecimentos acerca temas do papel das mulheres nesse tipo de processos também constituem problemas das pesquisas relacionadas. As diferentes abordagens adotadas por especialistas neste tópico e, portanto, um conjunto de descobertas diferentes, também devem ser consideradas.

Notas

1 According to Brian Owensby, “no one piece of legislation enshrined this outcome”. Instead, this “policy of segregation” evolved over the second half of the sixteenth century to protect indigenous peoples from the abuses and excesses of Spaniards.

2 This could be one of the reasons why Velasco refers to them as “urban Indians”.

3 According to Cynthia Radding, Opata Indians from Sonora maintained their ethnic identity until the mid-nineteenth century, when their communal lands were divided (RADDING, 1997, p. 144). Therefore, it seems that communal lands were a reason for indigenous peoples not to shift their identity.

4 For Sonora, Radding presents lithographic paintings done by John Bartlett. For Chiquitos she presents paintings from Alcide d’Obirgny.

5 Weber also presents paintings of d’Obirgny.

6 Sellers-García presents map-views of the Guatemalan landscape drawn by an unknown artist that accompanied archbishop Cortés y Lazar during his visit.

7 Blyth defines the Chiricahuas as a people and Janos as a composite community.

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