

**THE EXISTENCE OF A NOVOHISPANIC COLLECTIVE CONSCIOUSNESS IN  
*ALBOROTO Y MOTÍN DE INDIOS DE MÉXICO*  
LA EXISTENCIA DE UNA CONSCIENCIA COLECTIVA NOVOHISPANA EN  
*ALBOROTO Y MOTÍN DE INDIOS DE MÉXICO***

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**Abstract:** This research paper analyses how Carlos de Sigüenza y Góngora describes the pair fest-revolt in *Alboroto y motín de indios de México*. This study is divided into five parts. The first one takes as its starting point the concept of the *polis* and regulations for the common good. The second one alludes to the effect that Spanish splendor produces in the different members of the Novohispanic *polis*. The third part examines the active role of female Indigenous in the revolt's organization and development. Finally, in the fifth part, I propose the existence of a plebeian collective consciousness within the viceroyalty of New Spain.

**Keywords:** *Alboroto y motín*, Sigüenza y Góngora, fest-revolt, *polis*, female indigenous

**Resumen:** Este estudio examina la manera cómo Carlos de Sigüenza y Góngora describe el binomio fiesta-revuelta en *Alboroto y motín de indios de México*. La investigación está estructurada en cinco partes. La primera toma como punto de partida el concepto de *polis* y los órdenes que rigen el bien común. La segunda alude a la percepción del fasto desde las diferentes perspectivas de los miembros de la *polis* novohispana. La tercera parte analiza la importancia del letrado en la organización virreinal. En la cuarta parte se examina el papel activo de las indias en la organización y desarrollo de la revuelta. Finalmente, en la quinta parte, propongo la existencia de una conciencia colectiva plebeya en el virreinato de Nueva España.

**Palabras clave:** *Alboroto y motín de indios de México*, Sigüenza y Góngora, fiesta-revuelta, *polis*, letrado, indias

### **Introduction**

In his study about the limits of racial domination, Douglas Cope affirms that in the seventeenth century, New Spain and its capital seemed to epitomize the order, stability, and continuity of the colonial system. Even in the midst of Spain's collapse as a European power, a steady stream of peninsular bureaucrats maintained an imposing and virtually unchallenged state

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apparatus in Mexico (COPE, 1994, p. 125). The *pax hispanica* was seriously shattered twice, in the riots of 1624 and 1692. Both featured violence, destruction of property, and the frightening spectacle of thousands of people raging in the plaza mayor, shouting for the viceroy's blood. But the second one, known as the Corn Riot, offered a more direct and threatening challenge to the Spanish Authority. Recent studies of the 1624 riot suggest that it may have been encouraged by members of the elite as one move in an elaborate political struggle (COPE, 1994, p. 125). The riot of 1692 did not fit into any such framework of intra-elite conflict, seeming rather to reflect pronounced popular anger at the wealthy and at Spanish rule in general (COPE, 1994, p. 125). The main sources that describe what happened during the riot are Carlos de Sigüenza y Góngora's *Carta al almirante Pez*, known as *Alboroto y motín de los indios en México* and Antonio de Robles's *Diario de sucesos notables*. The first text expresses that plebeian wrath and pulque<sup>2</sup> were responsible for the insurrection. The second one also considers that pulque and popular dissatisfaction were at the base of the insurrection but states that it happened due to administrative shortages.

Taking into account Douglas Cope's considerations and with a desire to delve into the very nature of the Corn riot, this paper will focus on Sigüenza y Góngora's text and will examine how the uprising is represented by this Novohispanic polymath. In order to carry out this undertaking, I will essentially pay attention to how Carlos de Sigüenza y Góngora depicts the binomial fest-turmoil in *Alboroto y motín de los indios de México*, as well as his portrayal of the Novohispanic plebs. The article is divided in four parts. Firstly, I analyze the function of the *polis* and the binomial fest-turmoil within the text. Secondly, I allude to the double perception of pageantry in Novohispanic society: pomp is viewed as evidence of magnificence for the elites and as a waste of financial resources for improving the conditions of the plebs. Thirdly, I examine the active role of indigenous women in the revolt's organization. Finally, in the fourth and last part, I propose the existence of a Novohispanic collective consciousness, and I examine how Carlos de Sigüenza y Góngora supports the punishment of the rioters. This article is based on the hypothesis that, despite Sigüenza y Góngora's anti-plebeian perspective, *Alboroto y motín de los indios de México* shows that the Novohispanic plebs used violence to manifest their desire to obtain equal rights under the law for all Novohispanic people.

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<sup>2</sup> A Mexican alcoholic drink made by fermenting sap from the maguey.

## 2 The *Polis* and The Binomial Fest-Turmoil

Western socio-economic and political history has made of the *polis* a sort of idealized place, in which individuals are able to realize their potential and develop their capabilities. The issues about who must direct and govern the *polis* have been substantive since the ancient Greece, where the distinctions among *eunomia* or good order, *isonomia* or equal distribution and *dysnomia* or bad order were part of the terminology used to define the possible forms of the government's law and policy. In the particular case of *Alboroto y motín de los indios de México*, Carlos de Sigüenza y Góngora tries to demonstrate that the revolt produced an unforeseen interruption of the *eunomia*, resulting in a political crisis, which led to general chaos and destabilization that generated *dysnomia* in the Mexico City. Moreover, the author tries to convince his readers that —thanks to the intelligence and capacity of the viceroy Gaspar de la Cerda— the troublemakers were punished, and peace again reigned in Mexico.

los títulos y de primera nobleza, y también de inmensa plebe que, con disimulo o arrepentimiento de lo pasado, les deseaban vida en públicas aclamaciones, salieron los señores virreyes del convento de San Francisco y se vinieron a hospedar al palacio nuevo del marqués del Valle. 44 No constaba la disposición con que estarían los ánimos de los tumultuantes; y aunque hasta ahora se hallaba en arma la ciudad toda, nombró su excelencia sin dilación los cabos de milicia que le pareció convenir. Abriéronse listas para las dos compañías de caballería que estuviesen al sueldo para rondar la ciudad y presidir el palacio; distribuyéronse las del batallón donde pareció y, por último, se le imposibilitó a la plebe otro movimiento y, arrojando el barrio de Santiago luego aquel lunes y el siguiente martes algunas tropas, aunque lo hallaron despoblado, se aparejaron algunos indios; (y para proseguirlo después como se hizo con algún logro) se comenzó a recobrar parte de lo que habían robado. A los que se habían salido de la ciudad la misma noche del domingo, aunque les sobraba la ropa y dinero, no les acompañaba el sustento, y acometiendo a algunas canoas que venían navegando desde Chalco con provisión de maíz, las dejaron sin grano; pero con la actividad con que don Juan de Aguirre y don Francisco de Sigüenza, mi hermano, introdujeron, aquél en otras canoas y éste en la recuas que halló muy cerca, no sólo suficiente sino sobrado maíz, pudo abundar aquel día y quedar para otros en la ciudad, si su excelencia sin más consejeros que su caridad y misericordia no hubiera mandado que a todos, y con especialidad a la ingrata, traidora chusma de las insolentes indias, se les repartiese graciosamente y sin paga alguna cuanto hubiese entrado. (SIGÜENZA Y GÓNGORA, 1984, p. 133)

It is obvious that Sigüenza y Góngora constructed his text by taking into account the fact that, according to the western tradition of political theory, the search for an organizational framework to guarantee the *salus* of the *polis* has led to the alternation of periods marked by the conviction that putting power in the hands of the aristocracy or the financial elites was the best guarantee of stability and moments in which the masses demanded their active participation in civil

society and political life. The heterogeneity of a city's inhabitants influences the history of political thought and the patterns of behavior of those who, with or without citizens' rights, are members of the *polis*. Accordingly, political rituals, patronal feasts, religious festivals, revolts, and plundering are social phenomena that have been endlessly repeated in world history, which has witnessed the shift between forms of the festive atmosphere with the spirit of sedition since early times.

Analyzing the correspondence between the urban ostentation of imperial splendor and the mob's violent reactions against social injustice, Javier Sologuren concludes that —since the time of the Greeks until today— the city has always been the most visible manifestation of human beings' demiurgic intervention. Although it cannot be said that in *Alboroto y motín de los indios de México* the citizens exercise an autonomous creative force or decisive power, the text reveals a complicated dialectical relationship between the viceregal officials and the Novohispanic plebs. Among the range of mechanisms to control the inhabitants of Mexico, Carlos Sigüenza y Góngora implies that Novohispanic authorities make use of the 'bread and circuses' equation to create an appearance of *eunomia* within Novohispanic society.

Distribuyéronse las máscaras por los gremios y, emulándose unos a otros en galas propias, en libreas a los lacayos [...]. Hicieronse corridas de toros, sainete necesario en españolas fiestas. ¡Con qué acierto! ¡Con qué magnificencia! [...] ¡Qué regocijada la plebe! ¡Qué gustosos los nobles! ¡Con cuanta complacencia los tribunales! ¡Qué alegre por todo esto nuestro señor virrey! (SIGÜENZA Y GÓNGORA, 1984, p. 101).

Closely related to this, Stephanie Merrim considers that *Alboroto* inscribes itself in the long-lived, exalted, and exalting genre of the festival chronicle. *Alboroto* begins by invoking the joyous festival of May 1692 in which Mexico City honored the marriage of Spain's Carlos II. An "august stage" for demonstrating fidelity to Spain, the May festival glaringly contrasts with the insurrection that occurred the next month on the holiest Sunday of the holy Corpus Christi festival. As the riots executed by the collective *castas* parody the ideal imagined community that official festivals strive to advance (MERRIM, 2012, p. 244). The officially-desired collectivity thus turns into a hydra-headed monster that throws into a carnivalesque bedlam everything that hegemonic spectacles seek to fortify (MERRIM, 2012, p. 244). The tumults that overthrow official structures rescript *Alboroto*'s Mexico City from Sigüenza's treasured occulted city into a shocking carnivalesque entity (MERRIM, 2012, p. 244). Bodily needs for food, rather than yearnings for the divine Eucharist that Corpus Christi celebrates, kindle the riots. Pulque, instead of food, fuels the rebels'

bodies and leads to the city's undoing. The *pulquerías* or taverns that become a template for the disordered city at large were the breeding ground for a transgressive activity that upends the established order, a site where diverse ethnic groups fraternize to the default of social regulation, the *pulquerías* symbolize the Babelic Zócalo of the riots (MERRIM, 2012, p. 244).

Concurring in many respects with Merrim, I also consider that in *Alboroto*, social peace is represented through the theatricalization of Carlos II's marriage, which embodies the balance of political, religious and economic powers in the Viceroyalty. This event is described as a key part of the gear that allows the hierarchical coordination within the human group. It offered a possibility to the subjects to adhere to the status quo, ratifying — from the perspective of Carlos de Sigüenza y Góngora— the social, economic and political restraint of the empire. Conversely, the demonstrations of rejection by the Novohispanic plebs are reflected in the moral criticism towards the speculation undertaken by the authorities in connection with the price of grain; in the recourse to a pagan religiosity and the use of fetishes; and, certainly, in the turmoil *per se*.

In his effort to discredit the populace, Carlos de Sigüenza y Góngora makes of proletarian plebeians the internal enemies of the crown. They vent their loathing not only with the use of terrestrial violence but try to undermine Spanish power by acting against the Christian tradition. The totems found in the ditches prove, according to the text, not only the plebeian refusal of allegiance to the monarchy of Spain but show the existence of a criminal anti-Spanish constellation that makes use of sinister rituals to collude against the Spaniards. Specifically, *Alboroto* refers to a case of plebeian Novohispanic animadversion towards the Spanish Monarchy, which is considered a foreign occupying force. The frantic populace, primarily the *indiada*, is dominated by the animosity. Sigüenza y Góngora describes a monstrous and unbridled human mass, inebriated by the pulque and bloodshed.

Mucho tiempo antes de ir abriendo la acequia nueva [...]. Halláronse muchísimos cantarillos y ollitas que olían a pulque, y mayor número de muñecos o figurillas de barro y de españoles y todas travesadas con cuchillos y lanzas que formaron del mismo barro o con señales de sangre en los cuellos, como degollados. (SIGÜENZA Y GÓNGORA, 1984, p. 117)

Bearing the foregoing in mind, it is clear that in *Alboroto*, *eunomia* and *dysnomia* are represented by the binomial fest-turmoil, which has been defined by Yves-Marie Bercé as an unstable rapport between the elements that are contained in a repetitive social ritual that leads to a

breakdown in law and order throughout the viceroyalty (BERCÉ, 1994, p. 65-69)<sup>3</sup>. The revolt of 1692 follows the same scheme that most of the social protest demonstrations adopted in the seventeenth century: it transmutes the festival into an event of rejection of the Novohispanic authorities, leading to a series of acts of extreme violence directed against members of the elite and the attack of the most significant architectural monuments of the city. The fact that a Catholic liturgical solemnity like the feast of Corpus Christi became an insurgency could indicate that Novohispanic society required the inclusion of plebeian citizens in the active life of the *polis*. In *Alboroto*, the religious festivity takes on a very particular dimension, because it becomes a theater of conflict and insurrection. Sigüenza y Góngora refers to it as an infamous day in which the mob rules and takes ownership of the city: ¡Vamos con alegría a esta guerra, y comoquiera Dios que se acaben en ella los españoles, no importa que muramos sin confesión! ¿No es esta nuestra tierra? Pues, ¿qué quieren en ella los españoles? (SIGÜENZA Y GÓNGORA, 1984, p. 123).

Notwithstanding the animosities of Carlos Sigüenza y Góngora against the plebs, the active role played by the rabble assumes a literary value in *Alboroto*. *De facto*, the text shows that even if this uprising cannot be considered a victorious insurrection that culminates in a festive ritual, it allows us to interpret how the pair fest-revolt was significant for the Novohispanic political scene. Beneath the complexities of this event lie revolutionary elements. In fact, the Corn riot provides the enduring imagery for a broader phenomenon as we will try to demonstrate in this essay.

### 3 The Double Perception of Pageantry in Novohispanic Society

Inadvertently, *Alboroto* places in evidence the Habsburg monarchy's failures of a politico-ethical nature due to the aspiration of meeting the collective need by embodying the glory of the *polis* in a single person: the king or, in the case of the overseas territories, the viceroy. Furthermore, it also implies that the decline of Spanish absolutism is related to inefficient transatlantic bureaucracies that have forgotten their obligation to meet the needs of all the subjects of the Spanish crown. The text shows that the edification of lavish magnificent palaces, piazzas, churches and monuments has failed to transmit an idea of pageantry. Instead, the plebs' anger took on extraordinary proportions, leading to the destruction of the viceroyalty iconic buildings. In fact, the

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<sup>3</sup>In *Fête et révolte. Des mentalités populaires du XVIIe au XVIIIe siècle*, Yves-Marie Bercé suggests that the link between fest and revolt/turmoil is possible only through a third element: the popular mentality (1994, 58).

contrast between building the imperial order and destroying it constitutes a key concept in *Alboroto*. In this text, the exercise of the constructive arts upon the edifices and creations of the viceroyalty is intimately connected with imperial power; religious worship; instruction and intellectual-moral-social advancement of the *polis*, even if the practice of building also involves demolishing the houses of low-ranking people:

Excedió a esta empresa hallarse hoy la Metropolitana de México con el seminario que, para la buena crianza de la juventud, mandó erigir el sagrado concilio de Trento en las catedrales. ¡Oh válgame Dios y cuántas dificultades se debieron de vencer y aun atropellar para conseguirlo! [...] lo que parecía imposible se hizo accesible y mucho más, cuando, echando mano su excelencia de una barreta, comenzó a demoler las casas que ocupaban el sitio donde debía de erigirse. No con menos empeño y resolución se afana este príncipe con ilustrar a México. (SIGÜENZA Y GÓNGORA, 1984, p. 99)

By contrast, it is also clear that in *Alboroto* imperial flamboyance was rejected by Novohispanic plebeians. They considered it necessary to destroy the urban, architectural and artistic realizations of the Spanish empire that, in their opinion, contributed to an "official" perpetuation of structural inequalities. The Novohispanic agitators wanted to make a break with Spanish hegemony to take possession of their *polis*. They aspired to extinguish the traces and symbols of the Habsburg presence in the territory.

Principióse el incendio (no sé el motivo) por el segundo cajón de los que estaban junto a la puente del palacio sin pasar a otro; y siendo solo azúcar lo que tenía dentro, fue desde luego la llama vehemente y grande. Siguióse la puerta del patio, donde están las Salas de Acuerdos y de las dos Audiencias, las Escribanías de Cámara y Almacenes de Bulas y Papel sellado; después de esta, la de la Cárcel de Corte, que había cerrado el alcalde al principiarse el ruido y quien o los que en su cuarto asistían no pudieron estorbarlo a carabinazos; luego, la del patio grande en que está la vivienda de los virreyes, la Factoría, Tesorería, Contaduría de Tributos, Alcabalas y Real Hacienda, la Chancillería y Registro, el Tribunal de Bienes de Difuntos, el Almacén de Azogues y Escribanía de Minas y el Cuerpo de Guardia de la Compañía de Infantería [...] (SIGÜENZA Y GÓNGORA, 1984, p. 125-126)

In *Alboroto*, the lowest members of society wish to destroy the city to eradicate the authorities improper use of power. The text shows that there is a strong tension between the elite and the plebs. Dismantling the city allows proletarian plebeians to exteriorize their wrath. It is a sort of vengeance against Novohispanic social stratification. Their desire to extinguish the *polis* is related to the idea of forcing a reorganization leading to a new order in the Viceroyalty of New Spain. In this forced attempt is crucial the role performed by indigenous women, who according to

the text were the actual organizers of the revolt. *De facto*, as discussed further in the next section, they took an unconventional role for the time.

#### 4 Indigenous women

It is a fact that indigenous women, primarily the street vendors of maize, played a leading role in the revolt. In *Alboroto*, they are portrayed as schemers and criminals who act against the viceregal authorities. However, the text does not manage to outshine their prominence. Indigenous women's agency was essential in the uprising. These *indias*, in spite of their lack of education, try to be taken in consideration by means of violence, showing that they aspire to play a role that goes beyond their traditional functions as *tortillas* vendors or “laying hens” that give birth to tamed subjects of the King of Spain. They incarnate a sort of plebeian radicalism that promotes rights-related changes in the Novohispanic racial, economic, legal and administrative codes. Although Carlos de Sigüenza y Góngora represents them as bandits and criminals, his discrediting tactics fail to minimize the errors made by the authorities and to dismiss the agency of indigenous women.

Creo que, instigándolos las indias y calentándolos el pulque, sería el primero quitarle la vida luego el día siguiente al señor virrey, quemarle el palacio sería el segundo; hacerse señores de la ciudad y robarlo todo, y quizá otras iniquidades, los consigüentes, y esto, sin tener otras armas para conseguir tan disparada y monstruosa empresa sino las del desprecio de su propia vida que les da el pulque y la advertencia del culpabilísimo descuido con que vivimos entre tanta plebe, al mismo tiempo que presumimos de formidables. (SIGÜENZA Y GÓNGORA, 1984, p. 119)

Additionally, indigenous women are opposite to another feminine figure present in *Alboroto*, namely Elvira de la Cerda. She is represented as a figurehead; whose main value lies in the fact that she is Gaspar de la Cerda's wife. The vicereine is a mere spectator of the revolt. She is an allegorical signifier of the Spanish imperial power: “el balcón grande y hermosísimo de la señora virreina” (1984, p. 126). Similarly, other ladies who represent the courtly life, explicitly “las dueñas y damas” (1984, p. 129) are minor characters and passive supporters of the *status quo*.

#### 5 A Plebeian Novohispanic collective consciousness

According to the facts already exposed, it is, in my view, obvious that *Alboroto* tries to minimize the existence of a Plebeian Novohispanic collective consciousness, which, according to



Robert Mandrou, widely supported popular uprisings against absolute monarchies over the course of the Modern Era (MANDROU, 1959, p. 759). While it is true that the Corn Riot in Mexico City cannot be considered as a successful manifestation of the plebeian political force, it cannot be denied that it places in evidence the popular group solidarity, which goes beyond racial differences. The shouts and demonstrations of public outcry against institutions representative of Spanish Absolutism in New Spain and the plebs' rejection of Gaspar de la Cerda are symptoms of hatred and despair that manifest themselves in violent acts during the riot. Even though Carlos de Sigüenza y Góngora belittles the riot's ideological coherence, it is evident that the revolt —like the others that took place in different Spanish territories along the XVII century— was a spontaneous class grouping.

Al instante que se cerraron las puertas y se halló la plebe sin oposición alguna, levantó un alarido tan uniformemente desentonado y horroroso que causaba espanto, y no solo sin interrupción pero con el aumento que los iban entrando nuevamente a la plaza grande y a la del volador le daban por instantes, se continuó con asombro de los que lo oían hasta cerrar la noche. Parecióme hasta ahora, según la amplitud de lo que ocupaban, excederían el número de diez mil los amotinados; y como después de haber dejado al Señor arzobispo en su palacio, depuesto el miedo que al principio tuve, me volví a la plaza, reconocí con sobrado espacio (pues andaba entre ellos) no ser solos indios los que allí estaban sino de todos colores, sin excepción alguna, y no indios los que allí estaban sino de todos colores, sin excepción alguna, y no haberles salido vana a los indios su presunción cuando para irritar a los zaramillos del Baratillo y atraerlos al mismo tiempo a su devoción, pasaron a la india que fingieron muerta por aquel lugar. Se prueba con evidencia que por allí andaban. (SIGÜENZA Y GÓNGORA, 1984, p. 124-125)

The Corn Riot proves is a reaction of moral economy (THOMPSON, 1971, p. 77). It is an epiphenomenon that shows that Novohispanic plebeians did not trust the authorities who were responsible for the general dissatisfaction. This mob violence forms part of a model of protest that synthesizes the overall situation of the Spanish Empire during the XVII century. It is part of a dissenting opinion that is present in the Flemish Region, in the Italian Peninsula, in the Iberian territories and the West and East Indies. The multiethnic plebs followed a revolt paradigm known for the Spanish authorities, their shared, universal cry: ¡Muera el virrey y el corregidor, que tienen atravesado el maíz y nos matan de hambre! ¡Muera el virrey y cuantos los defendieren! ¡Mueran los españoles y gachupines! (1984, p. 123), presents common features and demonstrates the reciprocal influence of the plebeian protests across the length and breadth of the Spanish Empire<sup>4</sup>.

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<sup>4</sup> I refer to the exclamations “Viva el rey de España, muera el mal gobierno”, “Viva il re di Spagna e morte al cattivo governo”, etcétera.

The lack of maize was not the detonator that activated a conflict between the mob and the authorities. It was part of the crisis of an empire that could not struggle with the uncontrolled emergence of insurrectionist movements which called into question the apparent *Pax Hispanica*.

Hispanic plebeians adopted a strategy of tension that aimed at destabilizing the local authorities in order to provoke an imperial paradigm shift. In fact, it is easy to draw precise analogies among the Mexican Corn Riot and the different riots that occurred in all the Spanish territories, including the revolts of the United Provinces of Flanders that led to the birth of the Netherlands; the Revolt of Catalonia, which prompted demands for Catalan autonomy; the Rebellion of the Alcabalas in Quito; the Revolt of the Comuneros in the Iberian Peninsula; the revolt of Masaniello; the revolt of Messina; among others insurgencies. These popular uprisings show the explosive potential of the plebs and they also show the methods used by the authorities to placate the plebeian *hybris*.

*De facto*, the Corn Riot also shares with the above-mentioned violent protests the fact that its dynamic of insurrection led to the cornering of certain ethnic and social groups, which served as an example to demonstrate the viceregal's punitive power. In *Alboroto*, the punishment of those who have participated in the revolt is part of the social dynamic of Gaspar de la Cerda's good governance. While it cannot be said that Carlos de Sigüenza y Góngora carries out an aestheticization of the guilty plebeians, his text places in evidence the fact that the mortal chastisement of the rioters is part of a public spectacle to tame, impress, and terrify the turbulent plebs.

Habiéndose cogido cuatro indios en los mismos cuarteles del palacio al ponerles fuego y confesando, sin tormento alguno, haber sido cómplices en el tumulto y cooperado en el incendio, menos a uno que con veneno la noche antes se mató a sí mismo; ahorcaron a cinco o seis, quemaron a uno y azotaron a muchos en diferentes días, y juzgo que se va procediendo contra otros que se hallan presos. (SIGÜENZA Y GÓNGORA, 1984, p. 134)

In *Alboroto*, punishing insurgents is important for the Novohispanic *civitas*. It has a lively sense within the public *salus*. As Douglas Cope points out, after offering both the causes and consequences of the revolt, Carlos de Sigüenza y Góngora presents the solutions brought by the authorities: physical and humiliating punishment of indigenous; a campaign against pulque; the segregation of plebeian indigenous who are forced to live in the outskirts (COPE, 1994, p. 127). The back pages of *Alboroto* indicate that the capital of the Viceroyalty could eradicate the plebeian impertinence. The Viceroyalty of New Spain not only could restore order, first in the capital city,

and then at other cities and villages, but also managed to put an end to the circle created by the pair fest-revolt by means of a social drama whose *ecce homo* is the indigenous plebeian, without financial resources.

## Conclusions

From the first pages, I have tried to illustrate that The Corn Riot was a sort of reducing valve and a representative sample of the confrontational temperament of Novohispanic multiethnic masses. This significant event forms part of several attempts made throughout the colonial period to demonstrate the potential of plebeian social force. Whereas it is undeniable that the scarcity of grain was the catalyst of popular wrath, it is also true that it would be restrictive to reduce it to the category of mechanical conflict. In fact, it is important to stress that on the day of June 8<sup>th</sup>, 1692 there were very clear manifestations of social unrest that went far beyond the immediate physiological need of hunger. The Corn Riot demonstrates that Novohispanic subjects rejected what they considered an outrage to the viceroyalty's moral economy. In fact, although Carlos de Sigüenza y Góngora tries to hide the significance of this revolt, the Corn Riot uncovers the plebeian desire to engage actively in the political life of the *polis*.

The Corn Riot of 1692 denounces the decay of viceregal power. It places in evidence the will of the plebeian people to participate actively in the life of the *polis*. Carlos de Sigüenza y Góngora, for his part, uses the uprising to say that proletarian plebeians do not possess sufficient virtue for self-government. They only have bickering skills. This is the excuse used to support the traditional order. In other words, granting more power to the plebs would not be correct, for the simple reason that it would not be conducive to *isonomia*, but it would lead to *dysnomia*. Plebeians do not have the capabilities to be an active participant in the civitas. *Alboroto y motín de los indios de México* is not simply a report on the riot, but it is a sort of theoretical philosophy about the Novohispanic social sectors and the necessity of avoiding any possibility of popular prominence, inasmuch as the plebeian lack of virtue turns the masses into vectors of violence that blaze trails of destruction through the *polis*. Accordingly, the last pages of the text suggest that repression is the only way to guarantee the *Pax hispanica*.

In the same way, it is evident that this turmoil arose from the fact that the Spanish empire did not want to believe that the perfect *polis* could not be built with pageantry, but by maximizing the welfare of their inhabitants. The revolt of 1692 was much more than a plebeian adventure or a political Shrovetide. Beyond the grotesque aspect that is placed in evidence by Carlos de Sigüenza y Góngora, the turmoil puts forward the idea that Novohispanic plebeians cried out for the *isonomia* of the *polis*, including the need to integrate indigenous women in the active policy of the *polis*.

For my part, after analyzing diverse aspects related to *Alboroto y motín de los indios de México*, I conclude that what happened on June 8<sup>th</sup>, 1692 is about more than just turmoil produced by plebeian hunger. It represents a conceptual alternative to the Novohispanic civitas. Additionally, it shows that the Novohispanic seventeenth century concluded chaotically: the Hispanic masses were restless, discontented and full of anger. They demanded to be active members of the *polis*.

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