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Religious Art and Brotherhoods in 18th Century Mining District of Sultepec, Mexico

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The first findings of mineral deposits discovered after the Spanish Conquest of the Americas (1521) took place in the so-called “*Silver Province*” [Provincia de la Plata] composed of four mining districts, some of the first established in the New World: Taxco (State of Guerrero), Temascaltepec, Zacualpan and Sultepec (State of Mexico). In the case of Sultepec, twenty silver mills were already working by 1597. Nevertheless, on the first half of 18th century, production declined and eventually that glorious past would be forgotten and overshadowed by other districts in the states of Guanajuato, Hidalgo and Zacatecas. At the end of that century and the beginning of the 19th, a new bonanza started, but after the Independence War (1810 - 1821), although some foreign capital tried to continue silver extraction, production was far from the Spanish times. This decline led people to abandon mining activities to engage in the manufacture of shawls [*rebozos*] and muleteers [*arrieros*].

Historical studies about Sultepec have described mainly economic aspects, but the religiosity of the population has been relegated. This conference tries to regain the presence of the brotherhoods in the 18th century and its relationship to its artistic heritage. Most of the information was taken from a document written by Archbishop José Pérez LANCIEGO Y EGUÍLUZ describing his visit made in 1717. It provides details about brotherhoods and the type of population that founded them: mulattos, Spanish or Indians. This documents also points out the particular devotions in the village especially those related with workers in the mines looking for divine protection.



Fig. 1: Our Lady of Sorrows Chapel in the village Diego Sánchez. Sultepec. 18th century