

From the beginning of colonial times, gold and silver were prioritised because of their European economic role. Both metals were important, because from that time until the 20th century, they were the currency and the means of exchange of our economy.

With the discovery of the rich mines of Potosí (present-day Bolivia, in 1545), the silver cycle began until 1650, so much so that the quantity of this metal exported surpassed the imagination of the first conquerors.

Later, the Spaniards discovered and began to exploit new mines: in 1537, the gold and silver deposits in Lucanas and Parinacochas; in 1539, the silver mines in Jauja and Huancayo; in 1544 and 1545, gold in Jaén and Carabaya; and in 1553, the mines of Chacas, Sandia, Carabaya and Cajamarca. From then on, Peru became a mining country.

Technologically, the wayras continued to be used, although in 1571 the technique of mercury amalgamation was introduced.

In terms of fuel, charcoal was ideal for its high calorific value and its ability to dissociate the ores. In addition, taquia (camel dung), ichu and the carob tree were also used.