SMARTHISTORY OF ART XIC - LATIN AMERICA 1500 TO 1900



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This text was compiled on 11/23/2025

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Licensing

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CHAPTER OVERVIEW

1: A beginner's guide

The Americas to 1900

Explore art made in North and South America from prehistory to 1900.

c. 14,000 B.C.E. - 1900 C.E.

1.1: Introduction to the Spanish Viceroyalties in the Americas

1.2: Latin American art- an introduction

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1.1: Introduction to the Spanish Viceroyalties in the Americas

Introduction to the Spanish Vicer**oyalties in the Americas**

***by** DR. LAUREN KILROY-EWBANK*



Figure **1.1.1**: Juan Baptista Cuiris, image of Christ made with feathers, c. 1590-1600, 25.4 x 18.2 cm (Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna)

"In 1492, Columbus sailed the ocean blue." These opening lines to a poem are frequently sung by schoolchildren across the United States to celebrate Columbus's accidental landing on the Caribbean island of Hispaniola as he searched for passage to India. His voyage marked an important moment for both Europe and the Americas—expanding the known world on both sides of the Atlantic Ocean and ushering in an era of major transformations in the cultures and lives of people across the globe.

When the Spanish Crown learned of the promise of wealth offered by vast continents that had been previously unknown to Europeans, they sent forces to colonize the land, convert the Indigenous populations, and extract resources from their newly claimed territory. These new Spanish territories officially became known as viceroyalties, or lands ruled by viceroys who were second to—and a stand-in for—the Spanish king.



Figure **1.1.2**: Girolamo Ruscelli, "Nveva Hispania tabvla nova," engraved map of New Spain, 1599, 19 x 25 cm (**David Rumsey Historical Map Collection**). Note that at its height, the Viceroyalty of New Spain also included Central America, parts of the West Indies, the southwestern and central United States, Florida, and the Philippines.



Figure **1.1.3**: Folding Screen with the Siege of Belgrade (front) and Hunting Scene (reverse), c. 1697-1701, Mexico, oil on wood, inlaid with mother-of-pearl, 229.9 x 275.8 cm (Brooklyn Museum)

The Viceroyalty of New Spain

Less than a decade after the Spanish *conquistador* (conqueror) Hernan Cortés and his men and Indigenous allies defeated the Mexica (Aztecs) at their capital city of Tenochtitlan in 1521, the first viceroyalty, New Spain, was officially created. Tenochtitlan was razed and then rebuilt as Mexico City, the capital of the viceroyalty. At its height, the viceroyalty of New Spain consisted of Mexico, much of Central America, parts of the West Indies, the southwestern and central United States, Florida, and the Philippines. The Manila Galleon trade connected the Philippines with Mexico, bringing goods such as folding screens, textiles, raw materials, and ceramics from around Asia to the American continent. Goods also flowed between the viceroyalty and Spain. Colonial Mexico's cosmopolitanism was directly related to its central position within this network of goods and resources, as well as its multiethnic population. A ***biombo***, or folding screen, in the Brooklyn Museum attests to this global network, with influences from Japanese screens, Mesoamerican shell-working traditions, and European prints and tapestries. Mexican independence from Spain was won in 1821.



Figure **1.1.4**: Lands governed by the Viceroyalty of Peru, c. 1650

The Viceroyalty of Peru was founded after Francisco Pizarro's defeat of the Inka in 1534. Inspired by Cortés's journey and conquest of Mexico, Pizarro had made his way south and inland, spurred on by the possibility of finding gold and other riches. Internal conflicts were destabilizing the Inka empire at the time, and these political rifts aided Pizarro in his overthrow. While the viceroyalty encompassed modern-day Peru, it also included much of the rest of South America (though the Portuguese gained control of what is today Brazil). Rather than build atop the Inka capital city of Cusco, the Spaniards decided to create a new capital city for Peru: Lima, which still serves as the country's capital today.

In the eighteenth century, a burgeoning population, among other factors, led the Spanish to split the viceroyalty of Peru apart so that it could be governed more effectively. This move resulted in two new viceroyalties: New Granada and Río de la Plata. As in New Spain, independence movements here began in the early nineteenth century, with Peru achieving sovereignty in 1820.



Figure **1.1.5**: Pictorial Otomí catechism (pictorial prayer book), 1775-1825, Mexico, watercolor on paper, 8 x 6 cm (**Princeton University Library**)

Evangelization in the Spanish Americas

Soon after the military and political conquests of the Mexica (Aztecs) and Inka, European missionaries began arriving in the Americas to begin the spiritual conquests of Indigenous peoples. In New Spain, the order of the Franciscans landed first (in 1523 and 1524), establishing centers for conversion and schools for Indigenous youths in the areas surrounding Mexico City. They were followed by the Dominicans and Augustinians, and by the Jesuits later in the sixteenth century. In Peru, the Dominicans and Jesuits arrived early on during evangelization.



Figure **1.1.6**: Convento San Agustín de Acolman, mid-16th century

The spread of Christianity stimulated a massive religious building campaign across the Spanish Americas. One important type of religious structure was the ***convento***. *Conventos* were large complexes that typically included living quarters for friars, a large open-air atrium where mass conversions took place, and a single-nave church. In this early period, the lack of a shared language often hindered communication between the clergy and the people, so artworks played a crucial role in getting the message out to potential converts. Certain images and objects (including portable altars, **atrial crosses**, frescoes, illustrated catechisms or religious instruction books, prayer books, and processional sculpture) were crafted specifically to teach new, Indigenous Christians about Biblical narratives.



Figure **1.1.7**: Aztec deities, Bernardino de Sahagún and collaborators, *General History of the Things of New Spain*, also called the *Florentine Codex*, vol. 1, 1575-1577, watercolor, paper, contemporary vellum Spanish binding, open (approx.): 32 x 43 cm, closed (approx.): 32 x 22 x 5 cm (Medicea Laurenziana Library, Florence, Italy)

This explosion of visual material created a need for artists. In the sixteenth century, the vast majority of artists and laborers were Indigenous, though we often do not have the specific names of those who created these works. At some of the *conventos*, missionaries established schools to train Indigenous boys in European artistic conventions. One of the most famous schools was at the *convento* of Santa Cruz in Tlatelolco in Mexico City, where the Franciscan friar Bernardino de Sahagún, in collaboration with Indigenous artists, created the encyclopedic text known today as the ***Florentine Codex***.



Figure **1.1.8**: Church of Santo Domingo and Qorikancha, Cusco, Peru (photo: **Håkan Svensson**, CC BY-SA 3.0)

Strategies of Dominance in the Early Colonial Period

Spanish churches were often built on top of Indigenous temples and shrines, sometimes re-using stones for the new structure. A well-known example is the Church of Santo Domingo in Cusco, built atop the **Inka Qorikancha** (or Golden Enclosure). You can still see walls of the Qorikancha below the church.



Figure **1.1.9**: Great Mosque of Córdoba, Córdoba, Spain, begun 786, cathedral added 16th century (photo: **Toni Castillo Quero**, CC BY-SA 2.0)

This practice of building on previous structures and reusing materials signaled Spanish dominance and power. It had already been a strategy used by Spaniards during the Reconquest, or *reconquista*, of the Iberian (Spanish) Peninsula from its previous Muslim rulers. In southern Spain, for instance, a church was built directly inside the **Great Mosque of Córdoba** during this period. The *reconquista* ended the same year Columbus landed in the Americas, and so it was on the minds of Spaniards as they lay claim to the lands, resources, and peoples there. Some sixteenth-century authors even referred to Mesoamerican religious structures as mosques, revealing the pervasiveness of the Eurocentric Reconquest attitude they brought with them.

Throughout the sixteenth century, terrible epidemics and the cruel labor practices of the *encomienda* (Spanish forced labor) system resulted in mass casualties that devastated Indigenous populations throughout the Americas. *Encomiendas* established throughout these territories placed Indigenous peoples under the authority of Spaniards. While the goal of the system was to have Spanish lords educate and protect those entrusted to them, in reality it was closer to a form of enslavement. Millions of people died, and with these losses certain traditions were eradicated or significantly altered.

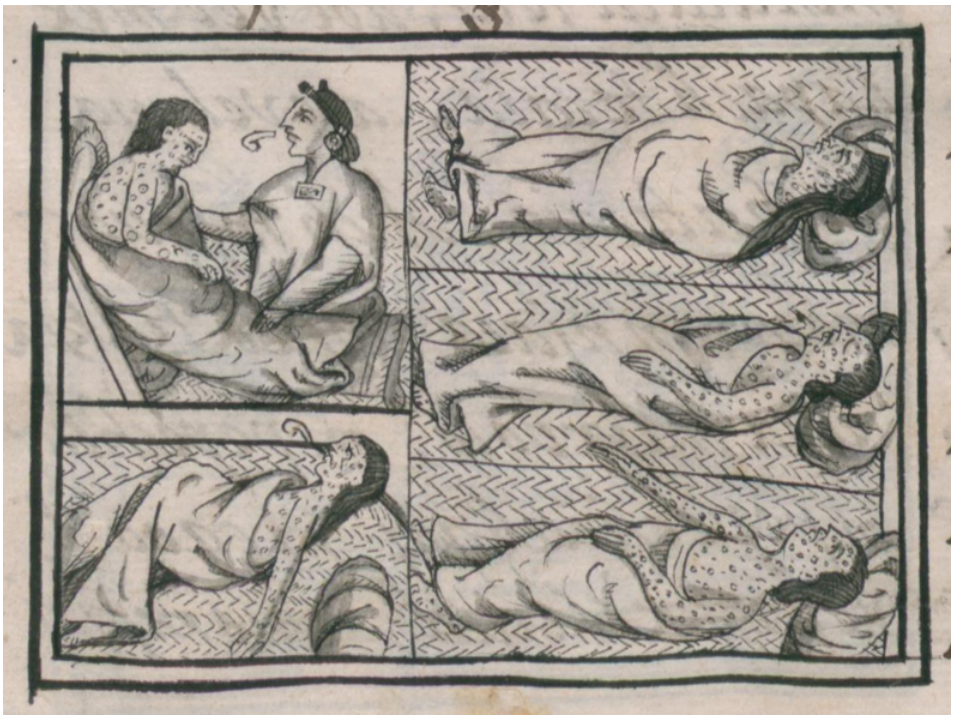


Figure **1.1.10**: People of Tenochtitlan suffering from *cocoliztli* (smallpox), detail from Bernardino de Sahagún and collaborators, *General History of the Things of New Spain*, also called the ***Florentine Codex,*** 1575-1577, **Book 12**, p. 54 (Medicea Laurenziana Library, Florence, Italy)

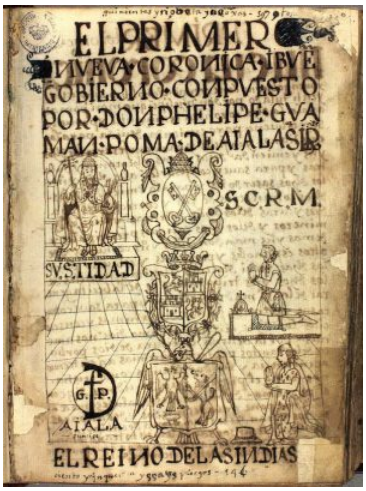


Figure **1.1.11**: Title page from Felipe Guaman Poma de Ayala, *The First New Chronicle and Good Government*, c. 1615 (The Royal Danish Library, Copenhagen)

Nevertheless, this chaotic time period also witnessed an incredible flourishing of artistic and architectural production that demonstrates the seismic shifts and cultural negotiations that were underway in the Americas. Despite being reduced in number, many Indigenous peoples adapted and transformed European visual vocabularies to suit their own needs and to help them navigate the new social order. In New Spain and the Andes, we have many surviving documents, lienzos, and other illustrations that reveal how Indigenous groups attempted to reclaim lands taken from them or to record historical genealogies to demonstrate their own elite heritage. One famous example is a 1200-page letter to the king of Spain written by **Felipe Guaman Poma de Ayala**, an Indigenous Andean whose goal was to record the abuses the Indigenous population suffered at the hands of Spanish colonial administration. Guaman Poma also used the opportunity to highlight his own genealogy and claims to nobility.



Figure **1.1.12**: Saint John the Evangelist, 16th century, featherwork (Museo Nacional de Arte, Mexico City)

Talking about Viceregal Art

How do we talk about viceregal art more specifically? What terms do we use to describe this complex time period and geographic region? Scholars have used a variety of labels to describe the art and architecture of the Spanish viceroyalties, some of which are problematic because they position European art as being superior or better and viceregal art as derivative and inferior.



Figure 1.1.13: Juan Baptista Cuiris, image of Christ made with feathers, c. 1590-1600, 25.4 x 18.2 cm (Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna)

Some common terms that you might see are "colonial," "viceregal," "hybrid," or "*tequitqui*." "Colonial" refers to the Spanish colonies, and is often used interchangeably with "viceregal." However, some scholars prefer the term "colonial" because it highlights the process of colonization and occupation of the parts of the Americas by a foreign power. "Hybrid" and "*tequitqui*" are two of many terms that are used to describe artworks that display the mixing or juxtaposition of Indigenous and European styles, subjects, or motifs. Yet these terms are also inadequate to a degree because they assume that hybridity is always visible and that European and Indigenous styles are always "pure."

Applying terms used to characterize early modern European art (Renaissance, Baroque, or Neoclassical, for instance) can be similarly problematic. A colonial Latin American church or a painting might display several styles, with the result looking different from anything we might see in Spain, Italy, or France. A Mexican **featherwork**, for example, might borrow its subject from a Flemish print and display shading and modeling consistent with classicizing Renaissance painting, but it is made entirely of feathers—how do we categorize such an artwork?

It is important that we not view Spanish colonial art as completely breaking with the traditions of the pre-Hispanic past, as unoriginal, or as lacking great artists. The essays and videos found here reveal the innovation, adaptation, and negotiation of traditions from around the globe, and speak to the dynamic nature of the Americas in the early modern period.

Additional resources:

Arts of the Spanish Americas, 1550–1850 on The Metropolitan Museum of Art's Heilbrunn Timeline of Art History

Vistas: Visual Culture in Spanish America, 1520-1820

Spanish Colonial and 19th century art at LACMA

The Garrett Mesoamerican Manuscript Collection at Princeton University Library

Girolamo Ruscelli's "Nveva Hispania tabvla nova" map in the David Rumsey Historical Map Collection

The *Florentine Codex* at the World Digital Library

Juan Baptista Cuiris's featherwork at the Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna

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1.2: Latin American art- an introduction

Latin American art: an introduction

by DR. MAYA JIMÉNEZ



Figure **1.2.1**: Jorge González Camarena, *Presencia de América Latina*, 1964-65, acrylic, 35,2 x 6 m (Universidad de Concepción, Chile) (photo: **Farisori**, CC BY-SA 3.0)

Why is it important to study Latin American art today?

The study of Latin America and Latin American art is more relevant today than ever. In the United States, the burgeoning population of Latinos—people of Latin American descent—and consequently the rise of Spanish (and Spanglish) speakers, Latino musical genres, literature, and visual arts, require that we better understand the cultural origins of these diverse communities. Even beyond our borders, Latin American countries continue to exert influence over political and economic policies, while their artistic traditions are everyday made more and more accessible at cultural institutions like art museums, which regularly exhibit the work of Latin American artists. In many ways, Latin American and Latino culture is an inescapable reality, thus it is up to us, for the benefits of appreciation and integration, to tackle the difficult question of what it means to be from Latin America.

For many of us Latin America is not an entirely foreign concept, in fact our knowledge of it is most likely defined by a particular country, food, music, or artist, and sadly, it is also sometimes clouded by cultural stereotypes. What many of us often overlook, is the diversity of what it means to be Latin American and Latino. Interestingly, Latin America is not as different from the United States as we tend to think, since we both share in the history of conquest and imperialism, albeit from different perspectives. Thus the study of Latin American art should not necessarily be thought of as a narrative that is entirely separate from that of the United States, but rather as one that is shared.



Figure **1.2.2**: Félix Parra, *Episodes of the Conquest: Massacre of Cholula*, 1877, oil on canvas, 65 x 106 cm (Museo Nacional de Arte (INBA), Mexico City)

What do we mean by Latin America?

Latin America broadly refers to the countries in the Americas (including the Caribbean) whose national language is derived from Latin. These include countries where the languages of Spanish, Portuguese, and French are spoken. Latin America is therefore a historical term rooted in the colonial era, when these languages were introduced to the area by their respective European colonizers. The term itself, however, was not coined until the nineteenth century, when Argentinean jurist Carlos Calvo and French engineer Michel Chevalier, in reference to the Napoleonic invasion of Mexico in 1862, used the term “Latin” to denote difference from the

"Anglo-Saxon" people of North America. It gained currency during the twentieth century when Mesoamerican, Central American, Caribbean, and South American countries sought to culturally distance themselves from North America, and more specifically from the United States.



Figure **1.2.3**

Today, Latin America is considered by many scholars to be an imprecise and highly problematic term, since it prescribes a collective entity to a conglomerate of countries that remain vastly different. In the case of countries that share the same language their cultural bond is much stronger, since despite their potentially different pre-conquest origins, they continue to share collective colonial histories and contemporary postcolonial predicaments. Spanish-speaking countries are therefore known as Spanish America or Hispanoamérica, while those that were colonized by the Iberian countries of Spain and Portugal, fall under the broader category of Iberoamérica, thus including Brazil. In addition to these Latin-derived languages, indigenous tongues like Quechua, spoken by more than 8 million people in South America, are still preserved today. When discussing countries such as the French-speaking Haiti and Spanish-speaking Mexico, the similarities become much harder to articulate.



Figure **1.2.4**: Oswaldo Guayasamín, *The Workers*, oil on canvas, 1942, oil on canvas, 170 x 170 cm (Fundación Guayasamín, Quito, Ecuador)

That said, the collective experiences of the conquest, slavery, and imperialism—and even today, those of underdevelopment, environmental degradation, poverty, and inequality—prove to be an undeniable unifying force, and as the artworks of these countries demonstrate, the idea of both a collective and local experience exists among the selected countries. For the purposes of clarity, the term Latin America is used loosely, whether referring to the pre- or post-conquest era. At the same time however, this term will be challenged in order to demonstrate both the limitations and benefits of thinking of Latin American art as a shared artistic tradition.

It is anachronistic to discuss a Latin American artistic tradition before independence, and as a result pre-Columbian and colonial art are discussed according to specific regions. However, it is best to approach the art of the 19th and 20th centuries as a whole, in large part due to the emergence of Latin Americanism and Pan-Americanism (a twentieth-century movement that rallied all

American countries around a shared political, economic, and social agenda). Contemporary artists working in a globalized art world and often times outside of their country of origin give new meaning to what it means to not necessarily be a Latin American artist, but rather a global one.



Figure **1.2.5**:(Zemi), c. 1000, Dominican Republic, wood, shell, 68.5 x 21.9 x 23.2 cm (**The Metropolitan Museum of Art**)

Geography

While the countries of Latin America can be categorized by language, they can also be organized by region. Before 1492 C.E., the regions of Mesoamerica, the Isthmus (or Intermediate) Area, the Caribbean, and the Andes shared certain cultural traits, such as the same calendars, languages, and sports, as well as comparable artistic and architectural traditions. After colonization, however, the borders shifted somewhat with the creation of the viceroyalties of New Spain, Peru, New Granada, La Plata, and Brazil. After independence (and still today), the countries stretching from Mexico to Honduras form part of the region of Mesoamerica (also known as Middle America since the Greek word “meso” means “middle”). Parts of Honduras and El Salvador, Nicaragua, Costa Rica, and Panama, which lie to the south of Middle America, make up Central America, while all the countries to the south of Panama form part of South America. The Caribbean is sometimes considered part of Central America or at times entirely excluded. The United States also factors into this discussion of Latin American art—through the work of Latino, Chicano, and Nuyorican artists.

Lastly, it is important to note that when discussing specific Latin American countries, the geographical scope in question will correspond to the current, rather than former borders. While these linguistic and geographical parameters lend clarity to the study of Latin American art, they often obscure cultural differences that are not border specific. The coastal cultures of Colombia and Venezuela for instance, are closer to those of the Caribbean than to their mainland counterparts. This is reflected not only in the similar climate, diet, and customs of these particular areas, but also in their artistic production. The islands of the Caribbean, however, are also a geographical region (delineated by the Caribbean Sea), thus the distinction between regions depends on how and where you draw the borders—reminding us of the flexibility and variety of labels that can be employed to describe the same region.

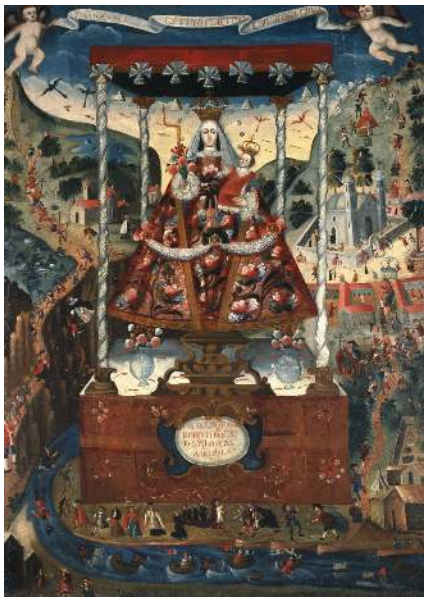


Figure 1.2.6: Our Lady of Cocharcas Under the Baldachin (Cuzco School, Peru), 1765, oil on canvas, 198.8 x 143.5 cm (Brooklyn Museum)

A similar distinction occurs in South America, where cultures vary greatly not necessarily across countries, but rather according to geographical landmarks, the two most prominent of which are the Andes Mountains and the Amazon Rainforest. Stretching from Chile to Venezuela, the Andes traverse the western portion of South America. At impressive heights and in snow-covered peaks, the Andean cultures of South America share irrigation techniques, textile traditions, and native languages, such as Quechua, the former language of the Incas that is today spoken by millions, that continue to this day. The Amazon, the world's largest tropical rainforest, is contained mostly in Brazil, although it stretches into the bordering countries of Bolivia, Peru, Ecuador, Colombia, Venezuela, Guyana, Suriname and French Guiana. Just these two landmarks, without mentioning the Pacific and Atlantic coastal cultures of South America, reveal the geographical, and thus cultural diversity of the area.Latin America is a useful, but by no means perfect term to describe a vast expanse of land that is historically, culturally, and geographically diverse.

From networks of exchange to a global trade network

From as early as the pre-Columbian era, there existed networks of exchange among the early civilizations of Latin America, through trade networks that stretched from Mesoamerica to South America. Limited by technology and transportation, forms of indigenous contact were mainly restricted to the American continent. With the arrival of European conquistadores (Spanish for "conquerors"), the panorama changed entirely. Starting in the sixteenth century, and now exposed to Africa, through the Atlantic Slave Trade, and Asia, through the trade network of the Manila Galleon, Latin America entered into an era of global contact that continues to this day.



Figure **1.2.7**: The Manila Galleon trade brought Japanese screens to Mexico inspiring locally made objects like this. Folding Screen (biombo) with the Siege of Belgrade (visible) and Hunting Scene (reverse), c. 1697-1701, Mexico, oil on wood, inlaid with mother-of-pearl, 229.9 x 275.8 cm (Brooklyn Museum)

With the nineteenth-century struggles for independence, collaborations across countries increased, not to mention alliances were formed, that although unsuccessful, nevertheless tried to articulate the idea of a collective Latin American entity. During the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, namely as a result of socio-political transformations, migration, exile, and diaspora (the dispersion of people from their homeland), travel became a trademark of modern art, further contributing to the internationalism of Latin American art. As a result of these networks of exchange, which began before colonization and continue to this day, Latin American art is difficult to categorize. It is in fact hybrid and pluralistic, the product of multi-cultural conditions.

"Non-Western" art?



Figure **1.2.8**: Alfredo Jaar, *A Logo for America*, as installed in 1987 (reprised 2014) Digital animation commissioned by The Public Art Fund, Times Square, New York, April 1987 © Alfredo Jaar

It is critical to also consider the negative impact of the artificial insertion of Latin American art into Western and non-Western narratives. While the term "Western art" refers largely to Europe and North America, whose artistic tradition looks back to the Classicism of the ancient Greeks and Romans, the term "non-Western art" includes everything else. This distinction has plagued Latin American art, since—except for pre-Columbian art—it mostly fits in the category of Western art history. This categorization however, is debatable, with some scholars positing that Latin American art is a non-Western artistic tradition that owes more to its pre-Columbian roots, than to its European influences. Often, when Latin American art is discussed in a Western context, it is

usually presented as derivative of European or North American art, or simply treated as the “other,” meaning different from the artistic mainstream.



Figure **1.2.9**: Frida (Frieda) Kahlo, *Frieda and Diego Rivera*, 1931, oil on canvas, 100.01 x 78.74 cm (San Francisco Museum of Modern Art)

This notion can be countered by exposing the many ways that artists adopted, rather than imitated, these outside influences, and by demonstrating the manner through which these forms of exchange were reciprocal—rather than unilateral—as is usually discussed. A case in point can be seen in the work of Diego Rivera and Frida Kahlo (right), who are usually included in textbooks on either Western or Modern art, but whose presence is marginalized in comparison to their European and North American counterparts.

A survey of non-Western art would surely include indigenous Latin American art, but it might not include any artworks from the sixteenth century (conquest) onwards. As a result—and depending on the context in which you study Latin American art—one can end up with an entirely different and fragmented view of its artistic tradition. This is even made more complicated when considering the artistic selections in the pre-Columbian and Colonial sections versus those in the Modern sections, as evidenced by the number of ritual objects (considered artworks as a result of their aesthetic qualities and craftsmanship). Only from the broader perspective of Latin American art can individual artistic traditions be better appreciated. The plurality of meaning and the inability to neatly title or categorize Latin American art is precisely what makes this area of study so unique, and therefore interesting. A living and constantly evolving field of study, Latin American art will continue to surprise you with its multifaceted and multilayered history.

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CHAPTER OVERVIEW

2: New Spain (Spanish colonies)

New Spain consisted of Mexico, much of Central America, parts of the West Indies, from California to Florida, and the Philippines.

c. 1521–1821 C.E.

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2.1.1: New Spain, an introduction

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by DR. LAUREN KILROY-EWBANK and DR. STEVEN ZUCKER



Video **2.1.1.12**: An introduction to the Viceroyalty of New Spain

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2.1.2: Prints and Printmakers in Colonial New Spain

by DR. EMILY FLOYD

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Figure **2.1.2.1**: Samuel Stradanus, *Indulgence for donation of alms towards the building of a Church to the Virgin of Guadalupe* (modern facsimile impression), 1608 (facsimile 1930–40), engraving, 43 x 28 cm (**The Metropolitan Museum of Art**)

One of the earliest representations of the Mexican **Virgin of Guadalupe**, today patroness of the Americas and an important symbol of Mexican national and religious identity, is an **engraving** printed in 1608. The engraving depicts the Virgin of Guadalupe at the top of the page, seemingly hovering above an altar. Candles and hanging lamps illuminate her while ex-votos shaped like body parts testify to her powers of intercession.

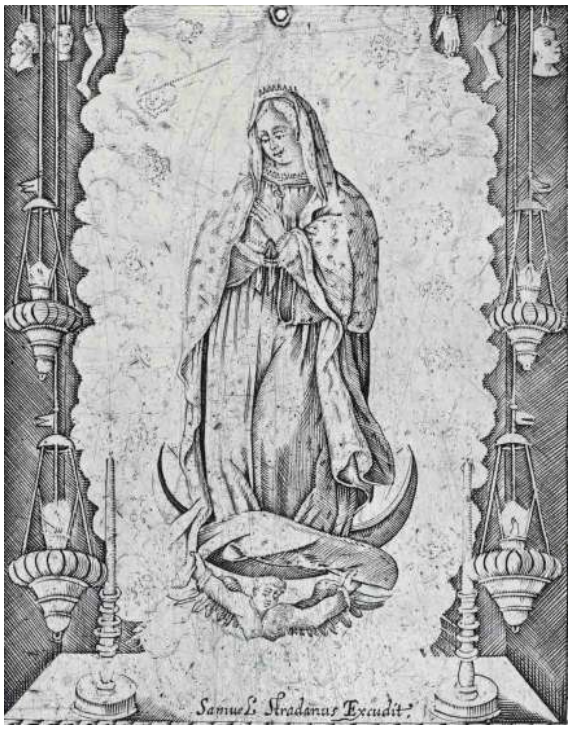


Figure **2.1.2.2**: Samuel Stradanus, The Virgin of Guadalupe, detail of the *Indulgence for donation of alms towards the building of a Church to the Virgin of Guadalupe* (modern facsimile impression), 1608 (facsimile 1930–40), engraving, 43 x 28 cm (**The Metropolitan Museum of Art**)



Figure **2.1.2.3**: Samuel Stradanus, border scenes of miracles associated with the Virgin of Guadalupe, detail of the *Indulgence for donation of alms towards the building of a Church to the Virgin of Guadalupe* (modern facsimile impression), 1608 (facsimile 1930–40), engraving, 43 x 28 cm (**The Metropolitan Museum of Art**)

The borders of the print incorporate small scenes narrating miracles of the Virgin, each with its own minuscule descriptive text. Prints like this one, produced in multiples by inking an **engraved copperplate** and then running it through a roller press so that the ink transferred from its surface onto the paper sheet, allowed for wide diffusion of an image. They became important vehicles for

the promotion of religious devotions, but also for the propagation of political propaganda and for the transmission of news and scientific knowledge.

A printed indulgence

The 1608 engraving of the Virgin of Guadalupe was cut by **Samuel Stradanus**, one of the most important early Mexican engravers who was originally from northern Europe. He even signed it "Samuel Stradanus Excudit" (published by Samuel Stradanus). The print served as an indulgence certificate issued by Mexican Archbishop Juan Pérez de la Serna. The money raised from the sale of the indulgences was used to finance the construction of the new sanctuary of Tepeyac (where the Virgin of Guadalupe first miraculously appeared, just north of Mexico City), which was consecrated in 1622.

The printed indulgence provides testimony to the early material culture surrounding devotion to the Marian advocation. Purchasers of the indulgences received a printed image that they could keep for their own use, perhaps displaying it in their homes or place of work. Prints like this one might then become objects of prayer themselves, or even used to enact miraculous cures. The faithful lit candles before devotional prints like this one, pressed them to injured body parts, and carried them on their persons for protection.

Mexico City was the first and most important center for printing in **Spanish colonial Latin America**, publishing far more books and printed images than any other city in Spain's American dominions. The first typographic press was established in Mexico City in 1539, and 73 engravers are known to have worked in Mexico City over the course of the colonial period in **New Spain**. During this period, prints served the needs of both the church and laity in the region, promoting state and Church orthodoxy but were also manipulated by printers to meet a devout market that did not always adhere to official conventions.

The Inquisition and Mexican prints

Religious orthodoxy was critical during this period of the **Counter Reformation,** and was enforced by the Holy Office of the Inquisition in Mexico City. Some Mexican Inquisition cases reveal the varied and complex ways in which inhabitants of the city engaged with these prints [1]. Many of the Inquisition cases involving prints centered on faulty inscriptions associated with those printed images. These cases reveal the complex ways in which religious prints in particular might be produced, circulated, and engaged with by viewers. For example, in 1572, Juan Ortiz, a blockcutter who produced carved woodblocks for impression, appeared before the Inquisition under suspicion of **Lutheranism**. He had cut a block of the Virgin of Rosary that then appeared printed alongside an inscription promising "perpetual grace" to its purchasers. The Inquisitors condemned the inscription and expelled Ortiz from the Americas, arguing he had added the text for financial rather than devotional reasons. Printed images that promised spiritual benefits to their owners demonstrate the intertwined nature of devotional and financial motives: prints claiming to have greater spiritual power might sell better on the market.

In another instance, in 1690, the Inquisition investigated prints available for sale in the town of Puebla depicting Bishop Juan de Palafox y Mendoza and the nun Catalina de San Juan (known as the "*china poblana*"), both popular holy figures. Both Catalina de San Juan and Bishop Palafox were uncanonized and thus not officially recognized by the Catholic Church as sanctioned subjects of devotion. The prints violated the Church's prohibitions against devotion to unapproved figures. They also demonstrate the power of popular piety and the ability of prints to promote this kind of devotion. In response to these prints, the inquisition released an edict reiterating the prior prohibitions on images of the two figures.



Figure **2.1.2.4**: Rafael Ximeno y Planes, *Portrait of Jerónimo Antonio Gil*, late 18th or early 19th century, oil on canvas, 81 x 116 cm (**MUNAL**, Mexico City)

Mexican printmaking and the Academy of San Carlos

One of the key factors that distinguishes New Spanish printmaking from printmaking in other parts of the Spanish Americas is the 1783 foundation of the **Royal Academy of the Three Noble Arts of San Carlos**, the first art academy in the Americas. The Spanish engraver Jerónimo Antonio Gil came to New Spain in 1778 to serve as the chief engraver to the Royal Mint. He initially established an engraving school at the mint before eventually founding the Royal Academy of San Carlos, where he also taught engraving and trained students in the **Neoclassical style**, popular at the time in Europe. He would serve as the Academy's director general until his death.

Gil and his academy introduced a new kind of artistic training and production to New Spain—one grounded in **Enlightenment** ideas of good taste and careful study of prototypes from Greco-Roman antiquity as well as of the life model. Engravings produced by academy artists employed a precise linear syntax to reproduce works of art made in other media, such as painting. Their works used **linear perspective** to convey buildings and illusionistic spaces, and demonstrate a strong knowledge of human anatomy and the use of light and dark to model forms. They also exhibit a new aesthetic of clean lines, reduction of **Baroque** ornament, and influence of Greco-Roman architecture and idealized representations of the human body. Gil's influence can be seen in the engravings produced by his disciples as well as in the work of artists who emerged from the Academy [2].

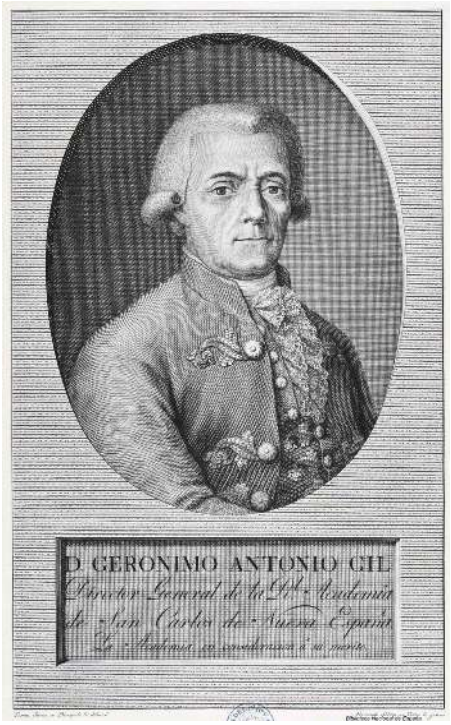


Figure 2.1.2.5: Fernando Selma, *Portrait of Jerónimo Antonio Gil*, c. 1783–98, engraving, 30.3 x 21.2 cm (Biblioteca Nacional de Madrid)

The Academy [presents this portrait] in recognition of his merit.

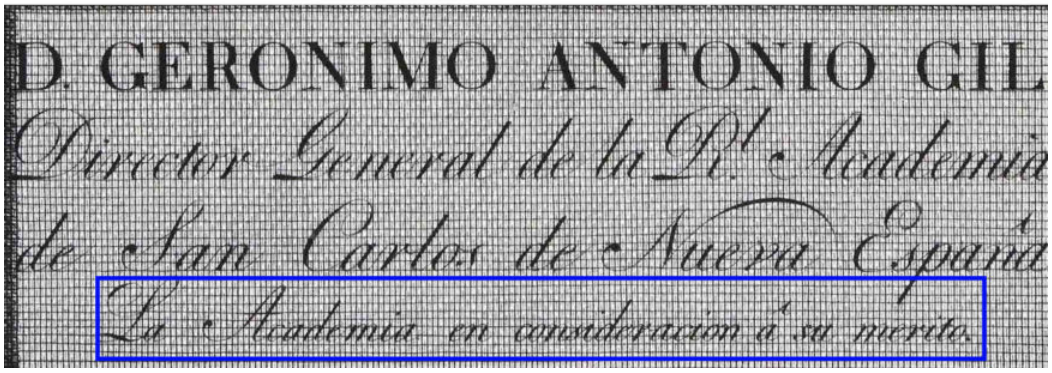


Figure 2.1.2.6: Fernando Selma, inscription, detail of *Portrait of Jerónimo Antonio Gil*, engraving, 30.3 x 21.2 cm (Biblioteca Nacional de Madrid)

We have two portraits of Gil, a 1796 painting by Mexican artist Rafael Ximeno y Planes and a 1793 engraving by Fernando Selma (Gil's son-in-law) after Tomás Suria. In both, Gil is recognized for his central role in founding the Academy and portrayed as a gentleman of the Enlightenment. Selma's engraving shows Gil gazing forthrightly out at the viewer, and he wears a fashionable wig and coat.

The text below his portrait declares Gil the Director General of the Academy and gives the reason for the production of the portrait as "The Academy [presents this portrait] in recognition of his merit" (*La Academia en consideracion â su merito*). Prints of important personages were frequently produced to adorn texts in their honor or for distribution to the public. Gil himself engraved numerous portraits of Mexican luminaries.



Figure 2.1.2.7: José María Montes de Oca, title page for *Vida de Felipe de Jesus protomartir de Japón y patrón de su patria México*, 1801, engraving, 22.5 x 16 cm (**The Metropolitan Museum of Art**)

One of Gil's students, José María Montes de Oca, merits special mention for a book he self-published in 1801 immediately after leaving the Academy. The book, *Life of Saint Philip of Jesus, protomartyr of Japan and Patron of His Home Nation of Mexico* (*Vida de San Felipe de Jesus Protomartir del Japon y Patron de su Patria Mexico*), is exceptional in the whole of colonial printmaking in that it consists entirely of full-page etched illustrations without typeset text. Furthermore, all thirty etchings were designed and executed by Montes de Oca himself.

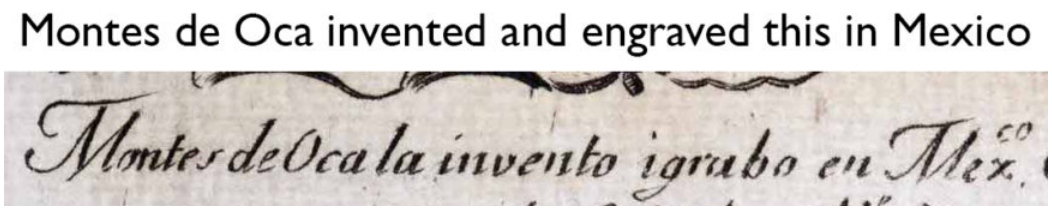


Figure 2.1.2.8: José María Montes de Oca, inscription with Montes de Oca's signature, detail on the title page for *Vida de Felipe de Jesus protomartir de Japón y patrón de su patria México*, 1801, engraving, 22.5 x 16 cm (**The Metropolitan Museum of Art**)

Montes de Oca names himself as not only the artist but the "inventor" of the images, which narrate the life of Felipe de Jesús, a sixteenth-century martyr who had been born in Mexico but died in Japan. In naming himself "inventor," Montes de Oca defined himself as the creator of the iconography and compositions, not simply the producer of the plates.



Figure **2.1.2.9**: José María Montes de Oca, Felipe de Jesus with an eagle on a cactus, in *Vida de Felipe de Jesus protomartir de Japón y patrón de su patria México*, 1801, engraving, 22.5 x 16 cm (**The Metropolitan Museum of Art**)

In the best-known image from Montes de Oca's text, Felipe de Jesus stands in glory on the back of an eagle that has perched, a snake in its beak and wings spread, on a nopal cactus, while allegorical representations of Mexico and Spain kneel before him. Felipe de Jesús opens his arms as if to embrace these allegorical figures from afar. Prints like Montes de Oca's Felipe de Jesús series allowed for the repetition and broad circulation of images of potential saints, promoting familiarity with their remarkable deeds and admirable virtues and thus encouraging the development of devotion to them.

Why prints mattered

Printed images produced in colonial New Spain allowed for the circulation of local religious imagery and promotion of such diverse figures as the Virgin of Guadalupe and Felipe de Jesús, and the controversial Bishop Palafox and Catalina de San Juan. In the eighteenth century, with the arrival of Jéronimo Antonio Gil and the establishment of the Royal Academy of San Carlos, engraving became an important medium for promotion of new styles and modes of taste. Throughout the colonial period, this ephemeral, multiple, and reproductive medium allowed for the wide circulation of images and their corresponding ideas to a broad public, creating a shared religious and political culture.

Notes:

[1] Kelly Donahue-Wallace, “Prints and Printmakers in Viceregal Mexico City, 1600-1800” (Dissertation, University of New Mexico, 2000), chapter 6.

[2] Kelly Donahue-Wallace, *Jerónimo Antonio Gil and the Idea of the Spanish Enlightenment* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2017), chapters 4–6.

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2.1.3: The Bug That Had the World Seeing Red

by AMY BUTLER GREENFIELD

Page ID

179560



Figure **2.1.3.1**: Page from the *Codex Zouche-Nuttall*, 1200–1521 C.E., Mixtec, painted deer skin, 19 x 23.5 cm (photo: **The British Museum**, CC BY-NC-SA 4.0).

The power of red

Once there was a color so valuable that emperors and conquistadors coveted it, and so did kings and cardinals. Artists went wild over it. Pirates ransacked ships for it. Poets from Donne to Dickinson sang its praises. Scientists vied with each other to probe its mysteries. Desperate men even risked their lives to obtain it. This highly prized commodity was the secret to the color of desire—a tiny dried insect that produced the perfect red.

How could a color be so valuable? In culture after culture, red commands the eye. We are drawn to its power, and to its passion, its sacrifice, its rage, its vitality. It's not an accident that this coveted color is red: It turns out that we humans are unusually susceptible to scarlet hues. Studies show that the color quickens our pulse and breath, perhaps because we link it with birth, blood, fire, sex, and death.

The quest for a color

But for much of human existence, broad mastery of the color crimson was elusive. Only a few natural substances produce red dye. Henna, madder roots, brazilwood, archil lichens, and fermented stews of rancid olive oil, cow dung, and blood numbered among the sources over the centuries, but most of them fell short—faltering as dyes for textiles and setting into corals, russets, and persimmons instead of true scarlets. The worst of them faded fast into dull pinkish browns. True reds proved rare, and the evocative pigment became even more prized.

Thousands of years ago, however, **Mesoamericans** discovered that pinching an insect found on prickly pear cacti yielded a blood-red stain on fingers and fabric. The tiny creature—a parasitic scale insect known as cochineal—was transformed into a precious commodity. Breeders in Mexico's southern highlands began cultivating cochineal, selecting for both quality and color over many generations.

The results were spectacular. The carminic acid in female cochineals could be used to create a dazzling spectrum of reds, from soft rose to gleaming scarlet to deepest burgundy. Though it took as many as 70,000 dried insects to make a pound of dye, they surpassed all other alternatives in potency and versatility.



Figure **2.1.3.2**: Illustration of cochineal collection in José Antonio de Alzate y Ramírez, *Memoria sobre la naturaleza, cultivo, y beneficio de la grana…*, (Essay on the Nature, Cultivation, and Benefits of the Cochineal Insect), 1777, colored pigment on vellum (photo: **Newberry Digital Collections for the Classroom**, Edward E. Ayer Manuscript Collection, VAULT Ayer MS 1031).

Cochineal spread through ancient Mexico and Central America, where it was used for the quotidian and the sacred. Textiles, furs, feathers, baskets, pots, medicines, skin, teeth, and even houses bore the brilliant red dye. Scribes colored the history of their people with its crimson ink.

Cochineal comes to the world

When the Spanish conquistadors **landed in Mexico**, they were struck by the stunning scarlets of the New World. The exotic source of the dye became a sensation back in Europe, where it was deemed the “perfect red.” The Spanish would go on to ship tons of the dried insects back to the Old World and beyond. Their monopoly on the color’s source made it one of their most valuable exports from Mexico, second only to silver.



Figure **2.1.3.3**: Dried cochineal insects (photo: **H. Zell**, CC BY-SA 3.0)

Europeans largely used cochineal on textiles, where it produced red fabrics of an unmatchable sheen and intensity. (It could also be used to make shades of peach, pink, purple, and black—but the reds were what made cochineal famous.) To see this magnificent red was to see power. Court gowns and royal robes were made with cochineal, as were the **uniforms of British officers**. The scarlet dye even found its way back across the ocean, into the "broad stripes" of **the embattled banner over Fort McHenry that inspired the U.S. national anthem**.

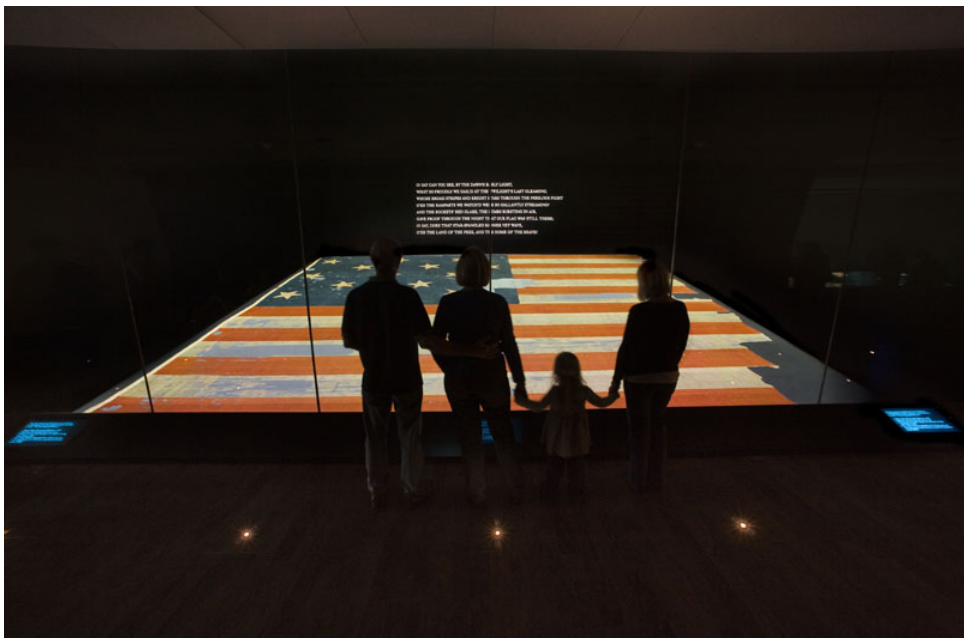


Figure **2.1.3.4**: Original "Star-Spangled Banner" seen by Francis Scott Key (photo: **Smithsonian National Museum of American History**, CC BY-NC-SA 2.0).

Painting and pitfalls with the new red

Cochineal also found a spot in the artist's paint box. If you were a European artist on a tight budget, you could procure your cochineal from shreds of dyed cloth, but fresh-ground insects yielded much better results. Artists usually combined their cochineal with a binder, creating a pigment known as a lake.

It’s impossible to tell with the naked eye which painters used cochineal to make their reds. But recent advances in chemical analysis have confirmed its presence in numerous masterpieces. Among those works is Rembrandt’s ***The Jewish Bride***.



Figure **2.1.3.5**: Rembrandt van Rijn, Portrait of a couple as Isaac and Rebecca, known as *The Jewish Bride*, about 1665–69, oil on canvas, 121.5 × w 166.5 cm (Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam)

Between the muted browns and golds, the bride’s red gown draws the eye. A combination of vermilion base and cochineal glaze allowed Rembrandt to give the dress its great depth and luster. Other painters of the period also loved to use cochineal lakes to paint glowing red fabrics, such as the shimmering scarlet silks in Anthony van Dyck’s ***Charity*** and possibly in the *Portrait of Agostino Pallavicini* as well.



Figure **2.1.3.6**: Anthony van Dyck, *Portrait of Agostino Pallavicini*, c. 1621, oil on canvas, 85 1/8 × 55 1/2 inches (The J. Paul Getty Museum)

Eye-catching though these cochineal lakes were, they had one great drawback. Unlike cochineal dye on cloth, which usually holds fast to its color, cochineal pigments in paint tended to fade with exposure to light. This was especially true of watercolors. J. M W. Turner's cochineal-reddened sunsets, for example, literally pale in comparison to what he originally set down.

Cochineal could be fugitive in oils too. A lake made with minimal cochineal, or cochineal of poor quality, faded in a matter of years. Even quality cochineal has dimmed over the centuries. The dowdy jacket in **Thomas Gainsborough's *Dr. Ralph Schomberg*** and the blotchy pastel backdrop of **Renoir's *Madame Léon Clapisson*** both are pale versions of the original.



Figure **2.1.3.7**: Thomas Gainsborough, *Dr. Ralph Schomberg*, c. 1770, oil on canvas, 233 x 153.5 cm (The National Gallery, London, CC BY-NC-SA 4.0)

Yet while *Dr. Schomberg* is consigned to his discolored suit for the foreseeable future, *Madame Clapisson* recently was given new life. A team at Northwestern University and the Art Institute of Chicago analyzed the cochineal that remained in the portrait and digitally recreated the painting in all its glory. Regard the original and the restoration, and you can see both the force of cochineal and its weakness.

When new artificial reds like alizarins made from coal tar became available in the late 19th century—ones more lasting and less expensive than those created by the naturally occurring insect—artists eagerly picked them up. By the late 20th century, artists had abandoned cochineal. Dyers, too, turned to cheaper alternatives. Even in its homeland, the insect nearly disappeared.

A red reborn

Today, in a surprising turn of history, the cochineal market is booming again—thanks to contemporary demand for safe food and cosmetic coloring. See names like carmine, carminic acid, crimson lake, Natural Red 4, or E120 on a label, and you may be looking at a modern manifestation of the color once fit for kings.

A few artists and dyers, too, have been tempted back by its revival—drawn to its intensity and sheen, its historical and cultural resonances. One is Elena Osterwalder, **whose stunning installations** employ both cochineal and the amatl bark-paper used by Mesoamericans before the Conquest.

In Oaxaca, once the epicenter of the cochineal trade, you can still find traditional weavers breathing new life into the ancient color.



Figure **2.1.3.8**: Cochineal yarn used in a weaving in Teotitlán del Valle, Oaxaca (photo: Sarahh Scher, CC BY-SA 3.0)

Though the high era of cochineal may have ended, the power conveyed by its potent hue remains. Over centuries and continents, we humans have always been drawn in by red. After all, it's in our blood.

This essay first appeared in ***the iris*** (CC BY 4.0).

Additional resources:

Read about the Star-Spangled Banner at the New York Times

Read about Renoir's colors in *Madame Clapisson* at the New York Times

Read more about the uses of cochineal at Wired

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2.1.4: The Medici collect the Americas

by DR. LAUREN KILROY-EWBANK

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179561



Figure 2.1.4.1: Woodcut of the Wunderkammer room, from Ferrante Imperato, “Dell’historia naturale…” Libri XXVIII (Naples, 1599) (photo: Wellcome Collection, CC BY 4.0)

Americana and cabinets of curiosities

After Christopher Columbus landed on the Caribbean island of **Hispaniola** in 1492 and the subsequent **Spanish invasion and colonization** of much of the Americas, material objects, flora, and fauna from these faraway lands were shipped back to Europe where many people perceived them as exotic items of wonder and fascination. Americana—objects sent from the Americas—were found in numerous cabinets of curiosities (also known as ***Wunderkammern***). Cabinets of curiosities first appeared in sixteenth-century Europe as a way to display items perceived as exotic, curious, and wondrous. The strategy of collecting Americana and displaying it in cabinets of curiosities offered a way to engage with the Americas for those who might never undertake the voyage. In a sense, we might even say that this allowed Europeans to take possession of these distant lands.

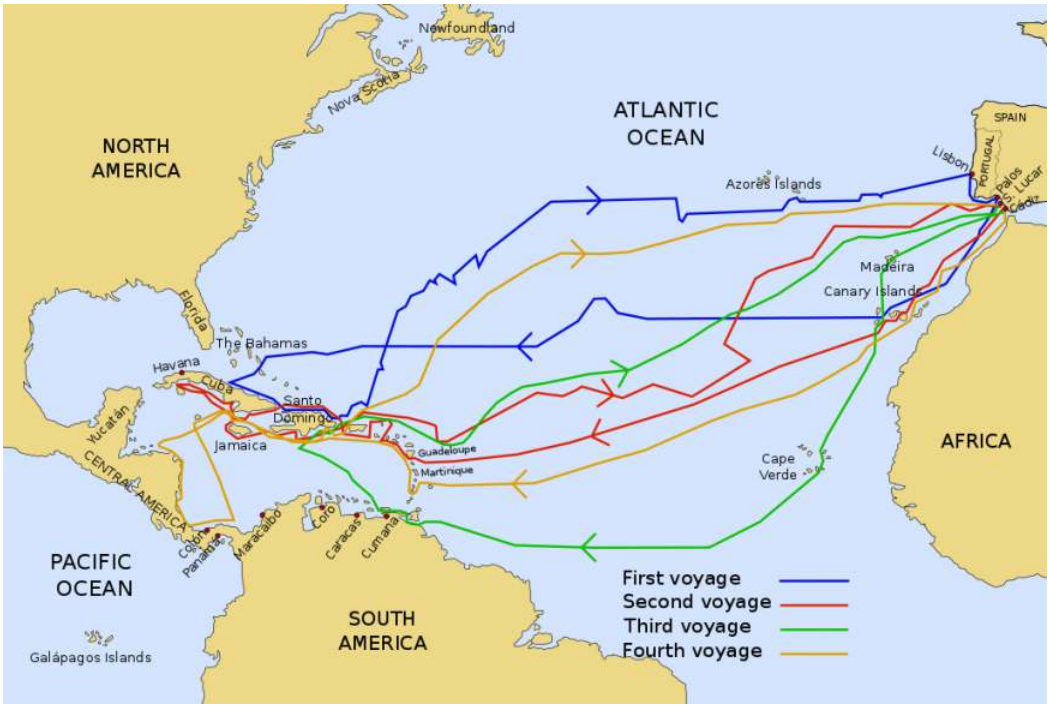


Figure **2.1.4.2**: Map of Christopher Columbus's voyages to the Americas

The origin of cabinets of curiosities in the sixteenth century coincides with the discovery, by Europeans, that the world was much larger than they previously believed. It also coincides with the invasion and the **colonization** of the Americas and the millions of people who lived there. Technological and scientific advancements in mapping and navigation spurred interest in collecting items from around the globe, as well as the instruments needed to create maps and sail the seas.

Cabinets of curiosity created a microcosm of a world that could be studied, ordered, and understood, but they were not spaces in which just anyone could encounter and study such objects, these were personal spaces for the elite (and anyone they invited). They often combined human-made (*artificialia*), natural elements (*naturalia*), and scientific objects and instruments (*scientifica*), as we see in Ferrante Imperato's 1599 illustration of a *Wunderkammern*.

Of the *naturalia* sent from the Americas, living animals—especially birds—were among the most popular. Turkeys, parrots, and macaws were among the birds that arrived in Europe. The armored appearance of armadillos were also a continuous source of wonder; and their shell retained its shape, even if they died on the transatlantic voyage. Apparently, some were even gilded and displayed on pillars in Europe.

Among the human-made items from the Americas found in Renaissance curiosity cabinets are **Olmec masks**, Mesoamerican codices (such as the ***Codex Vaticanus A***), **New Spanish featherworks**, Brazilian hammocks, **Taíno** objects, and more. Among the most exceptional objects to first enter European *Wunderkammern* were those sent by Hernán Cortés in 1519, as gifts to the Holy Roman Emperor, Charles V. Turquoise masks, golden figurines, featherworks, and more were met with excitement and amazement by people in Toledo, Valladolid, and eventually Brussels. Albrecht Dürer even remarked that "In all my life I have seen nothing that made my heart rejoice so much as these things. Here I have found wonderful, costly things and I have marveled at the subtle ingenuity of people in strange lands."[1]

The Medici Popes

Among the most avid collectors of Americana were members of the powerful Florentine Medici family. Medici popes Leo X (Giovanni di Lorenzo de' Medici, who reigned as Pope from 1513–21) and Clement VII (Giulio di Giuliano de' Medici, who reigned from 1523–34) collected Americana—and in fact were some of the earliest to do so. They never traveled across the Atlantic, yet their desire to understand these lands increased, especially with ongoing evangelization attempts. **Leo X** commissioned frescoes filled with American flora and fauna. For instance, he commissioned the artist Giovanni di Udine to paint maize (also known as corn and first domesticated by Indigenous peoples in southern Mexico about 10,000 years ago) in festoons in the Loggias (designed by **Raphael**) in the Vatican palace.



Figure 2.1.4.3: Giovanni da Udine, Loggia of Cupid and Psyche, Villa Farnesina, Rome (with detail of festoon showing maize), 1506-10, built for Agostino Chigi, treasurer for Pope Julius II (photo: Jean-Pierre Dalbéra, CC BY 2.0)

Udine had, though, painted the first known depictions of maize earlier, between 1515–17, in the festoons around frescoes by Raphael in the Loggia of Psyche within the Villa Farnesina in Rome, which belonged to the wealthy Sienese banker Agostino Chigi. Pope Clement VII was likewise among the earliest patrons to commission artworks that depicted subjects related to this foreign world which he had never seen with his own eyes. In his Villa Madama (Sala di Giulio Romano, c. 1520) in Rome, he had Udine paint a naturalistic turkey along with other birds like peacocks.

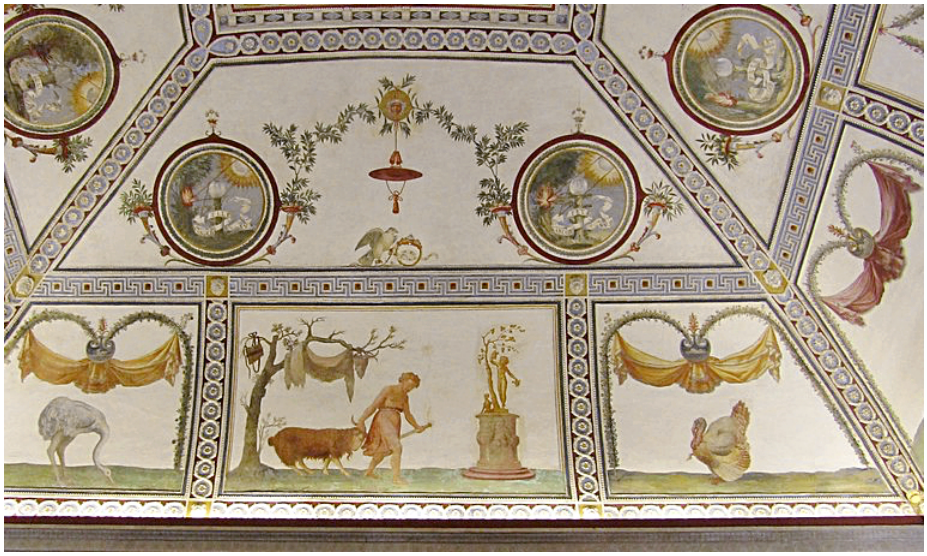


Figure 2.1.4.4: Giovanni da Udine, Villa Madama, Rome, 1523-27

Popes Leo X and Clement VII also actively acquired Americana as well. In 1514, the Portuguese king, Manuel I, sent Leo X a gift of flora and fauna from the Americas and India. It is likely that part of this gift included plants like maize and beans from the Americas, as well as the special gift of an elephant, called Hanno, from India, of whom Leo was extremely fond.

The Ñudzavui (Mixtec) *Codex Vindobonensis Mexicanus I*, one of the few surviving pre-conquest **Mesoamerican** screenfold codices, was owned by Clement VII. The King of Portugal reportedly sent it to Clement VII, along with other gifts from the Americas, sometime before 1523. A decade later, the Medici pope received another gift of objects from the Spanish Dominican friar, Domingo de Betanzos, who had traveled to New Spain to aid in evangelizing the Indigenous populations. The Dominican friar apparently gifted the pope featherworks, Ñudzavui turquoise masks, and codices.



Figure **2.1.4.5**: Codex Vindobonensis Mexicanus 1, image from a **facsimile edition** (original in the Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, Vienna, Austria)



Figure **2.1.4.6**: Bernardino de Sahagún, General History of the Things of New Spain: *The Florentine Codex*, Book 11, volume 3, p. 748.

The First Grand Duke: Cosimo I de' Medici

Grand Duke Cosimo I de' Medici (who reigned from 1537–1574) and his wife, Duchess Eleanora di Toledo, like their Medici family members, never traveled to the Americas. But they too continued to acquire plants, animals, and other objects from these far-away lands. They also commissioned artworks that made visual reference to the Americas, possibly as a way to participate in a vicarious conquest of these foreign peoples and places. Cosimo was partly able to collect Americana because of his marriage to Eleanora, a noblewoman of the Spanish court. Their marriage in 1539 helped to cement a Medici alliance with Spain, which would aid Cosimo in his collecting practices. The two grew maize, and apparently even started to cultivate tomatoes and medicinal plants (also introduced from the Americas). Cosimo had live birds, including turkeys, at Medici estates. Beyond their interest in living flora and fauna, the Medici Duke and Duchess also had also obtained a number of objects from the Americas, including **mosaic masks**, objects made of jade, and feather cloaks.

How items such as these were listed in Medici inventories reveals the challenges that Europeans faced when classifying Amerindian objects. In a 1553 inventory, Aztec masks were listed under 'jewelry' (*goia*), but not long thereafter in another inventory they were listed as "theatrical masks" (*maschera*) in an attempt to compare them with recognizable European forms with clear functions. At this time there was also an interest in Greco-Roman theatrical masks, so perhaps the Aztec masks were

eventually believed to function in a similar capacity. This reframing of Mesoamerican masks—from jewelry to masks—could also relate to broader ways in which Europeans were trying to understand and reconcile American objects, many of which were unfamiliar to them. [2]

Grand Dukes Francesco I (1574 to 87) and Ferdinando I (1587 to 1609)



Figure **2.1.4.7**: Jacopo Ligozzi, *Psittacus Ararauna* (Blue and Gold Macaw), c. 1580-1600, 67 x 45.6 cm (Uffizi)

Cosimo and Eleanora's eldest son, Francesco, was similarly drawn to the *naturalia* and *artificialia* of the Americas, sharing his father's keen interest in birds and plants. At one point, he commissioned Jacopo Ligozzi to create naturalistic drawings of local and exotic plants and animals, some of which came from the Americas. Among the most remarkable are his depictions of a pineapple, a macaw, and the American century plant (*Agave americana*), all drawn circa 1570.



Figure **2.1.4.8**: Jacopo Ligozzi, Pineapple (*Bromelia ananas*) and *Agave americana*, c. 1570

Ligozzi had live models on which to base his clearly articulated images, and his almost microscopic details were praised. Francesco's interest in the American *naturalia* extended to his experiments as well. In the Casino di San Marco in Florence which had workshops, including the Medici porcelain factory, Francesco conducted experiments and studied his collection of plants and

animals. Like his father, he continued to grow plants, some of them from the Americas, in a nearby botanical garden. He would use some in his alchemical experiments, creating medicines and other distillations. Francesco often gifted objects and *naturalia* from the Americas to other high-ranking individuals who were similarly fascinated with items from distant lands. One sumptuous gift was given to Duke Albrecht V of Bavaria in 1572, and it included featherworks, gold and silver figurines, parrots, food items, and more.

Francesco's younger brother, Ferdinando, also had a desire to collect Americana. As a cardinal in Rome, he acquired numerous objects, such as multiple featherworks, one of which was a bishop's mitre. He also came into ownership of the **Florentine Codex**, an encyclopedia produced between 1575 and 1577 under the direction of the Franciscan friar Bernardino de Sahagún along with Indigenous collaborators. This twelve volume text included discussion of cochineal, which produced a highly coveted red dye, along with other types of resources from the Americas. One can imagine Ferdinando's interest in possibly learning from the Florentine Codex how to manufacture cochineal.



Figure **2.1.4.9**: Jacopo Ligozzi, *Passiflora coerulea*

When Francesco died in 1587, and Ferdinando became Grand Duke of Florence, he moved from Rome to Florence with his collection. Ligozzi, who had remained in the employ of the Medici court even after Francesco's death, would then paint, at the request of Ferdinando, one of his most well-known and final botanical images: the *Passiflora coerulea*, or the passion flower (or Granadilla or maracot originally). Previously unknown to Europeans, it had only recently become known, and sent across the Atlantic to Europe. The plant sparked immense curiosity because of the manner in which it visually evoked the crown of thorns, and so became a powerful Christian symbol.

Knowing the unknown

Medici fascination with Americana in the sixteenth century was certainly not unique. Across Europe, many powerful individuals sought to acquire objects taken from the Americas, as a way to know the unknown, to exert some control over the colonial processes underway, and to possess exotic and rare things. The Medici popes and three grand dukes provide a more focused example of the ways in which Americana intersected with European interests in conquest and colonization, science and alchemy, and collecting and visual culture in the sixteenth century.

Acknowledgments

Thanks are due to Lydia Parker.

Notes:

[1] Adriana Turpin, “The New World collections of Duke Cosimo I de’ Medici and their role in the creation of a Kunst- and Wunderkammer in the Palazzo Vecchio,” *Curiosity and Wonder from the Renaissance to the Enlightenment*, ed. R.J.W. Evans and Alexander Marr (London: Ashgate, 2006), p. 64.
[2] Isabel Yaya, “Wonders of America: The Curiosity Cabinet as a Site of Representation and Knowledge,” *Journal of the History of Collections* (2008), pp. 1–16.; Turpin, p. 73.

Additional resources

The Medici Collections of the Museo Galileo, on Google Arts and Culture

Collecting for the Kunstkammer on The Metropolitan Museum of Art’s Heilbrunn Timeline of Art History

Christian F. Feest, “The Collecting of American Indian Artifacts in Europe, 1493–1750,” in America in European Consciousness, 1493–1750, ed. Karen Ordahl Kupperman (University of North Carolina Press, 1995), pp. 324–60.

J. Janick and G. Caneva, “The First Images of Maize in Europe,” *Maydica* 50 (2005), pp. 71–80.

Eloise Quiñones Keber, “Collecting Cultures: A Mexican Manuscript in the Vatican Library,” in *Reframing the Renaissance*, ed. Claire Farago (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1995), pp. 229–42.

Lia Markey, *Imagining the Americas in Medici Florence* (Penn State University Press, 2016).

Peter Mason, “From Presentation to Representation: Americana in Europe,” *Journal of the History of Collections* 6 (1994), pp. 1–20.

Larry Silver, “Europe’s Global Vision,” in *Blackwell Companions to Art History: A Companion to Renaissance and Baroque Art*, ed. Babette Bohn and James M. Saslow (Wiley, 2013).

Adriana Turpin, “The New World collections of Duke Cosimo I de’ Medici and their role in the creation of a Kunst- and Wunderkammer in the Palazzo Vecchio,” *Curiosity and Wonder from the Renaissance to the Enlightenment*, ed. R.J.W. Evans and Alexander Marr (London: Ashgate, 2006), pp. 63–85.

Isabel Yaya, “Wonders of America: The Curiosity Cabinet as a Site of Representation and Knowledge,” *Journal of the History of Collections* (2008), pp. 1–16.

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2.1.5: Virgin of Guadalupe

by DR. LAUREN KILROY-EWBANK

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179562

Video **2.1.5.1**: Virgin of Guadalupe, late 17th century, 190 cm high, oil paint, gilding, and mother of pearl on panel (Franz Mayer Museum, Mexico City)



Figure **2.1.5.1**: Virgin of Guadalupe, 16th century, oil and possibly tempera on maguey cactus cloth and cotton (Basilica of Guadalupe, Mexico City)

Loving mother. Devoted wife. Ideal woman. Queen of Heaven.

Who could ever be this perfect? For Christians, the Virgin Mary carries all these titles, and she is often celebrated in art as a mother, wife, and queen. With Spanish colonization of the Americas, devotion to the Virgin Mary crossed the Atlantic.

The conquistador Hernán Cortés even carried a small statue of the Madonna with him as he searched for gold and encountered the indigenous peoples of Mexico. After the defeat of the Aztec capital of Tenochtitlan in 1521 and the establishment of the Spanish Viceroyalty of New Spain (Spanish rule in Mexico, Central America, and part of the U.S., 1521-1821), the Virgin Mary became one of the most popular themes for artists. One Marian cult image eventually became more popular than any other however: the Virgin of Guadalupe, also known as *La Guadalupana*. Her image is found everywhere throughout Mexico today, gracing churches, chapels, homes, restaurants, vehicles, and even bicycles.

Imagery from the *Book of Revelation* and the *Song of Songs*

Many people consider the original image of Guadalupe to be an *acheiropoieta*, or a work not made by human hands, and so divinely created. Some consider the image the product of an indigenous artist named Marcos Cipac (de Aquino), working in the

1550s. In the original image, still enshrined in the basilica of Guadalupe in Mexico City today, Guadalupe averts her gaze and clasps her hands together in piety. She stands on a crescent moon, and is partially supported by a seraph (holy winged-being) below. She wears Mary's traditional colors, including a brilliant blue cloak over her dress. Embroidered roses decorate her rose-colored dress. Golden stars adorn her cloak and a mandorla of light surrounds her.

The image of Guadalupe relates to Immaculate Conception imagery, which drew aspects of its symbolism from the *Book of Revelation* and the *Song of Songs*. For instance, the *Book of Revelation* describes the Woman of the Apocalypse as "clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet and a crown of twelve stars on her head." In the Guadalupe image, twelve golden rays frame her face and head, a direct reference to the crown of stars.

Ashen skin

Guadalupe's ashen skin is the subject of some discussion. It is possible that she represents an indigenous Madonna. However, the *Virgin of Guadalupe* in Extremadura, Spain, after whom Mexico's Guadalupe is named, is a black-skinned Madonna—a direct reference to Mary's beauty based on a passage from the *Song of Songs*: "I am black but beautiful." Black Madonnas were popular long before Guadalupe's appearance in Mexico, and so it is possible that her ashen skin situates her within this pre-existing tradition.



Figure **2.1.5.2**: Virgin of Guadalupe, 16th century, oil and possibly tempera on maguey cactus cloth and cotton, Basilica of Guadalupe, Mexico City (photo: Esparta Palma, CC BY 2.0)

Seeing her today

Today, millions travel annually to her basilica to glimpse the original image, which visitors see while zooming beneath it on a conveyor belt. The original shrine devoted to Guadalupe, on a hill above the basilica, marks the site of her initial miraculous appearance.

Her miraculous revelation to Juan Diego

The story associated with her miraculous revelation varies depending on the author, but the general story goes something like this: In December 1531, a converted Nahua man named Juan Diego was on his way to mass. As he walked on the hill of Tepeyac(ac), formerly the site of a shrine to the Aztec mother goddess Tonantzin, Guadalupe appeared to him as an apparition, calling him by name in Nahuatl, the language of the Nahua. According to one textual account written in Nahuatl, Juan Diego described her as dark-skinned, with "Garments as brilliant as the sun." She requested that Juan Diego ask the bishop, Juan de Zumárraga, to construct a shrine in her honor on the hill. After recounting the story, the bishop did not believe Juan Diego and requested proof of this miraculous appearance. After speaking again with Guadalupe on two other occasions, she informed Juan Diego to gather Castilian roses—growing on the hillside out of season—inside his tilma, or native cloak made of maguey fibers, and bring them to the bishop. When Juan Diego opened his tilma before Bishop Zumárraga the roses spilled out and a miraculous imprint of Guadalupe appeared on it. Immediately, Bishop Zumárraga began construction of a shrine on the hill.



Figure **2.1.5.3**: Manuel de Arellano, Virgin of Guadalupe, 1691, oil on canvas, 181.45 x 123.38 cm (Los Angeles County Museum of Art)

Initially, devotion to Guadalupe was primarily local. Yet veneration of Guadalupe increased, especially because people attributed her with miraculously interceding on their behalf during calamitous events. For instance, she was thought to assist in ending a flood in Mexico City in 1629 and an epidemic that ravaged the population of the capital between 1736-37. After the 1737 epidemic subsided, Mexico City declared her patron of the city. In 1746, Guadalupe was even declared the co-patroness of New Spain along with St. Joseph, and Pope Benedict XIV granted a feast day and mass in her honor for December 12 in the year 1754.

She was so revered that people of different social and ethnic backgrounds paid her reverence. In particular, creoles (pure-blooded Spaniards born in the Americas) promoted her devotional cult. They wrote some of the earliest texts recounting her miraculous appearance on Novohispanic soil, a fact they advertised as proof that God blessed the Americas and approved of a new nation. To support this notion, artists often included the motto “Non fecit taliter omni nationi” (Psalm 147:20—He has not dealt thus with any other nation) into their artworks.

True copies



Figure **2.1.5.4**: Isidro Escamilla, *Virgin of Guadalupe*, 1824, oil on canvas, 58.1 x 38.1cm (Brooklyn Museum)

Images depicting Guadalupe proliferated in the seventeenth century as devotion to her increased. Prints, paintings, and enconchados (oil painting and shell-inlay) replicate the original tilma image. Sometimes artists included inscriptions that mention the representation is a true copy of the tilma image.

For example, Manuel de Arellano writes “After the original” (Tocada el original) on his 1691 version of Guadalupe. This statement suggests that artists based their work on the original image and some of the power of the original image transferred to the replication. Besides replicating the tilma image, artists often included the narrative of the miracle in the four corners of the composition, as Arellano’s and Isidro Escamilla’s version from 1824 demonstrate. Frequently flowers frame the mandorla surrounding Guadalupe, a direct reference to the Castilian roses in Juan Diego’s tilma.

To prove further that New Spain was equal to Europe, some of the most famous artists of the eighteenth century, such as Miguel Cabrera and Juan Patricio Morlete Ruiz, were invited by the clergymen of the Basilica of Guadalupe to inspect the image on April 30, 1751 to authenticate that the image was indeed miraculous. In 1756, Cabrera published the result of this inspection as *Maravilla Americana (American Marvel)* in which he declared that the tilma image was indeed an acheiropoieta.

Guadalupe and national identity

Other visual motifs further communicate the political connotations with which Guadalupe increasingly became linked. For instance, some artists placed an eagle perched on a cactus below Guadalupe, which had long functioned as a sign for the establishment of the Aztec capital of Tenochtitlan that became Mexico City after the Conquest. Guadalupe’s connection to creole identity and the creole desire for Mexican independence was solidified after father Miguel Hidalgo raised a liturgical banner of Guadalupe during his cry for independence in 1810.

Additional resources:

Manuel de Arellano's *Virgin of Guadalupe* at LACMA

Isidro Escamilla's *Virgin of Guadalupe* in the Brooklyn Museum

Shrine of Guadalupe in the Catholic Encyclopedia

Director's Journal: The Virgin of Guadalupe (video from the Indianapolis Museum of Art)

SmartHistory images for teaching and learning:



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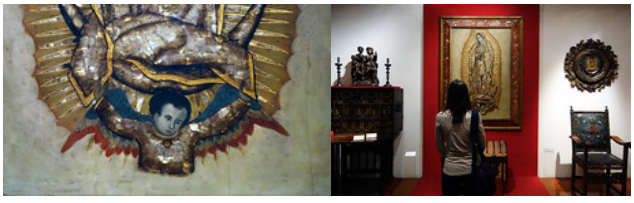
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2.1.6: Defensive saints and angels in the Spanish Americas

by **DR. LAUREN KILROY-EWBANK**

Page ID
179563



Figure **2.1.6.1**: Luis Juárez, *The Guardian Angel*, early 17th century, oil on wood, 68.3 x 58.66 in (Museo Nacional de Arte, INBA; photo: Steven Zucker, CC BY-NC-SA 2.0)

Guardian angels

Brandishing a fiery sword, standing in a balletic pose, and stretching almost top to bottom in a painting, an angel protects a young boy. His pink and green clothes flutter behind him and his delicately painted wings compliment his golden curls. The boy wears expensive clothing—indicating he is elite, or possibly even royalty—and stands on a blue orb. He gestures toward the angel, as if to acknowledge his divine protector, and in turn the angel makes the same gesture toward the light of God in the upper right. The angel protects the child from the two figures in the darkened lower left corner: a woman with an exposed breast and wearing jewelry (perhaps an allegory of Lust or Temptation), and Satan holding a hook. They look toward the boy, as if to tempt him or catch him in sin. They are the dark to juxtapose the light streaming from the opposite, diagonal corner. In this painting, by the artist Luis Juárez in New Spain, the guardian angel protects the noble child from evil.



Figure **2.1.6.2**: Map of the Viceroyalty of New Spain c. 1800



Figure **2.1.6.3**: Map showing the Viceroyalty of Peru; early boundaries demarcated in red. The viceroyalty of Peru would eventually be split up into three separate viceroyalties in the 18th century.

The theme of protection, or more accurately, protection of Christians and the Christian faith, was common in the Spanish viceroyalties of New Spain and Peru (and eventually the viceroyalties of New Granada and Río de la Plata). Painted around 1615, the subject of Juárez's painting can be understood in relation to several important historical events. To begin, about a hundred years earlier (as the invasion and colonization of the Americas was still in its early phase in the early sixteenth century) the Catholic Church split after the Protestant Reformation erupted in northern Europe. For much of the next century, the threat of Protestantism loomed large, which caused reforms in the Catholic Church that were decided at the Council of Trent which convened between 1545–63. The powerful Ottoman Empire continued to be cause for concern among many European Christians as

well; the Ottomans represented a powerful Muslim empire and had already defeated the Byzantine Empire (among others). Even with the perceived threats to Catholicism, the Catholic Church remained tremendously powerful and exerted its influence across the globe. In Europe, images of angels as protectors became more common during the Counter Reformation (the Catholic Church's response to the Protestant Reformation) as did other depictions of saints who defended the Christian faith from supposed heretics, infidels, and invaders.



Figure 2.1.6.4: Jerome Wierix after Martin de Vos, *St. Michael Triumphing Over the Dragon*, 1584, Engraving in black on ivory laid paper, 291 × 202 mm (Art Institute of Chicago)

Ideas about heretics and infidels, as well as the subjects of heavenly protectors, arrived in the Americas with Spanish colonization. The subject of heavenly protectors not only communicated the same messages, but also conveyed new meanings in these newly colonized lands. The defense of the Church and the protection of Christians had a particular urgency as mass forced conversions occurred, as millions of Indigenous people and entire continents came increasingly under the control of Euro-Christian forces. The desire to convert Indigenous peoples to Christianity seemed especially urgent because many Christians believed the Second Coming of Christ and Judgment Day would occur soon—and when that happened, any unbaptized souls would be condemned to suffer for eternity.



Figure **2.1.6.5**: Luis Juárez, *Saint Michael the Archangel*, early 17th century, oil on wood, 175 x 153 cm (Museo Nacional de Arte, INBA; photo: Steven Zucker, CC BY-NC-SA 2.0)

St. Michael the Archangel

Besides images showing guardian angels, another popular subject was St. Michael the Archangel. Paintings, prints, and sculptures of St. Michael as a defender of the faith were common across the Spanish Americas. In many instances, Michael is shown in Roman military clothing standing atop Satan, who falls face forward toward the ground. In another painting by Juárez, *Saint Michael the Archangel*, Michael poses triumphantly on Satan's back, holding a spear (topped by a banner) angled towards the Devil. The painting calls to mind the Book of Revelation (chapter 12), in which Michael defends the Woman of the Apocalypse (understood by Christians to be the Virgin Mary). Rays of divine light illuminate Michael from above, giving the impression of light battling darkness yet again. Here, Michael is a symbol of the Church Militant (the idea of the church battling against heresy and sin). Michael was understood as protecting the expansionist agenda of the church, which amounted to supporting European colonialism and the conversion of the Indigenous peoples of the Americas. This painting was possibly paired with the one of the Guardian Angel above.



Figure **2.1.6.6**: Master of Calamarca, *Archangel with Gun, Asiel Timor Dei*, before 1728, oil on canvas and gilding, 160 x 110 cm (Museo Nacional de Arte, La Paz, Bolivia)

Armed angels

The idea of militaristic angels spawned new art forms in the Spanish Americas. In the viceroyalty of Peru (in what is today Bolivia), a genre of painting now called ***ángeles arabuceros*** (or harquebus-holding angels — a harquebus is a type of gun) developed. In one by the Master of Calamarca, we see an angel wearing elaborate clothes and accoutrements—enormous puffy sleeves, fanciful and delicate lace, golden embroidery, and a hat topped with feathers. Its body is almost lost underneath all the fanciful clothes, but its graceful legs stand firmly on the ground. The angel holds a harquebus aiming it toward the upper right corner. One of the messages of the painting is that the angel defends Christians, supported by the inscription "Asiel Timor Dei" (Asiel Fear of God).



Figure **2.1.6.7**: Santiago on Horseback, 16th century, polychromed and gilded wood (Museo Franz Mayer, Mexico City, Mexico; photo: Steven Zucker, CC BY-NC-SA 2.0)

Saint James (Santiago)

Saint James (Santiago in Spanish), the patron saint of Spain, was another defender of the faith who was popular in the Spanish Americas. He was often displayed on horseback, brandishing a sword. In one polychrome (painted) and gilded wooden sculpture from central New Spain, Santiago sits on a horse. Realistic elements like stirrups, hair, and leather make the sculpture seem more realistic. This type of sculpture is called a *paso*, and it was meant to be carried or even wheeled during a religious procession. For instance, it would have been processed on Saint James's feast day in July. Underneath the horse's feet is an empty box, but originally would have included figures painted on it (either Muslims or Indigenous peoples) to give the illusion that the horse was trampling them (perceived as enemies, heretics, and pagans).



Figure **2.1.6.8**: "St. James the Great, Apostle of Christ, intervenes in the war in Cuzco." Page 406v from Felipe Guaman Poma de Ayala, *The First New Chronicle and Good Government* or *El primer nueva corónica y buen gobierno*, c. 1615 (**The Royal Danish Library, Copenhagen**)

Santiago's popularity in Spain dates back to the 8th century when he miraculously came to the aid of Christians fighting Muslims on the Iberian Peninsula (today, Spain and Portugal). His bodily remains were also popular relics in northwestern Spain in Compostela and many medieval pilgrims made journeys to venerate them. In Spain, he was often represented as Santiago Matamoros, or Saint James the "Moorslayer"—literally as someone who kills Muslims.

This trope as defender of Christians also came to the Americas, where he was sometimes understood and shown as Santiago Mataindios, "Saints James the slayer of *indios*." He is also credited with fighting for the Spanish conquistadors against Indigenous peoples. In one well-known apparition, Santiago helped Spanish forces during a battle in Cuzco in 1536 when he appeared on a white horse with a sword to defend them against the Inka. As a result, he soon appeared through the viceroyalties as a defender of Christians and as a sign of triumph. Native Andean author-artist **Felipe Guaman Poma de Ayala** illustrated the event in his letter to the King of Spain, showing Santiago on horseback and trampling an Inka warrior. Interestingly, some Indigenous peoples venerated Santiago, which may seem contradictory. For some Indigenous Andeans, he came to be associated with Ilapa (a deity of lightning and thunder), demonstrating the complex ways in which Catholicism was transformed, nuanced, or altered after the Spanish Conquests.



Figure **2.1.6.9**: *Saint Christopher and the Christ Child*, 16-17th century, polychromed wood (Museo de Arte de Sacro, Cuernavaca, Mexico)

Saint Christopher

Saint Christopher is another protective saint who was popular in the Spanish Americas. He is often shown carrying the Christ Child to demonstrate his care of Christians, such as we see in another Novohispanic (from New Spain) polychrome and gilded wooden sculpture. The saint has well-developed musculature, and he dwarfs the young child who sits upon his shoulders. Christopher was known as the *cristo ferens*, or Christ bearer. He had devoted himself to the teachings of Jesus, and in doing so began to ferry people across the river on his shoulders. One day, he carried a child across the river, but with each step the Child grew heavier and the ferrying grew more challenging. Once on the other side of the river, the Child identified himself as Jesus and told Christopher he had just carried the weight of the world on his shoulder (this is also why Christopher is the patron saint of travelers).



Figure **2.1.6.10**: Virgin of Christopher Columbus, oil on panel, first half of the 16th century, 20 x 18 inches (Lázaro Galdiano Museum, Madrid)

Christopher was a popular saint in the Americas because he also symbolized the carrying of Christianity across the Atlantic. In a painting from the first half of the 16th century, Christopher Columbus kneels before the Virgin Mary and Christ Child in Hispaniola. Christopher (with Christ upon his shoulder) places his hand on the back of Christopher Columbus to demonstrate his divine protection and to indicate that Columbus was himself another Christ bearer—his voyages initiated the waves of European invasion and colonization that would occur in the Americas after 1492.



Figure **2.1.6.11**: Main altar with Saint Michael the Archangel, Shrine of San Miguel del Milagro, Tlaxcala, Mexico (photo: Isaacvp, CC BY-SA 4.0)

None of these protector saints were unique to the Spanish Americas, but they did acquire new meanings when they traveled from Europe across the Atlantic Ocean. Some of them, such as Saint Michael, would even appear miraculously on American soil (such

as at San Miguel del Milagro in Mexico), prompting pilgrimages to sites of these saints' miraculous apparitions. With these apparitions new local manifestations of these protective saints developed, attesting yet again to the ways in which Catholicism transformed and developed on American soil.

Additional resources:

Learn more about engraved sources for paintings in colonial Spanish American art on ***Project on the Engraved Sources of Spanish Colonial Art***

Learn more about the legacy of the **Reconquest in Latin America** and **Columbus' Landing and Erasing Native Resistance** from *Unsettling Journeys*

The Inquisition in Colonial Latin America – Autos-de-fé paintings from *Unsettling Journeys*

Julia P. Herzberg, "Angels with Guns: Image and Interpretation," in *Gloria in Excelsis: The Virgin and Angels in Viceregal Painting of Peru and Bolivia*, Barbara Duncan, ed. (New York: Center for Inter-American Relations, 1986)

José de Mesa and Teresa Gisbert, *Historia de la pintura cuzqueña*, 2nd ed. (Lima: Fundación Banco Wiesse, 1982)

Painting a New World, exh. cat., ed. Donna Pierce, Denver Art Museum (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2004) (**available online**)

Ramón Mujica Pinilla, "Angels and Demons in the conquest of Peru," *Angels, Demons and the New World*, ed. Fernando Cervantes and Andrew Redden (Cambridge University Press, 2013)

The Virgin, saints, and angels: South American paintings 1600–1825, from the Thoma collection (Italy: Skira, 2006)

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2.1.7: Elite secular art in New Spain

by **DR. MAYA JIMÉNEZ**

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Figure **2.1.7.1**: *Folding Screen with the Siege of Belgrade* (front) and Hunting Scene (reverse), c. 1697-1701, Mexico, oil on wood, inlaid with mother-of-pearl, 229.9 x 275.8 cm (Brooklyn Museum; photo: Steven Zucker, CC BY-NC-SA 2.0)

Portraits, furniture, silver, textiles, folding screens, metal basins, devotional objects, and ceramics. These are among the many types of objects commissioned or purchased by elites in the Spanish viceroyalty of New Spain. While the Church was the most important patron of the arts in New Spain, it was not the only patron of luxurious artworks. Colonial aristocrats, such as *peninsulares* (Spaniards born in Spain) or *criollos* (Spaniards born in the viceroyalties), worked as viceregal officials, merchants, or plantation owners. The artworks decorating their homes showcased their wealth and status in viceregal society. While these were initially imported from abroad, local artists eventually created them at home—as in the case of the ***biombo***, a folding screen traditionally used in Asia.



Figure **2.1.7.2**: Juan Correa, *Folding screen showing the meeting of Hernán Cortés and Moctezuma II*, c. 1675, oil and gilding, 199 x 556 cm (Museo Soumaya, Mexico City; photo: Steven Zucker, CC BY-NC-SA 2.0)

Biombos

The *biombo* became a common feature of aristocratic households in colonial Mexico. An example of a seventeenth-century double-sided biombo by the renowned Afro-Mexican painter Juan Correa depicts a historical narrative on one side, and an allegorical one on the other. *The Encounter of Cortés and Moctezuma II*, painted across ten panels, depicts the fateful encounter between the **Mexica** (more commonly known as the Aztecs) and Spaniards. At right, Cortés enters on horseback, while Moctezuma sits under a canopy as his attendants carry him.



Figure **2.1.7.3**: Juan Correa, *Folding screen showing Moctezuma II on a litter (detail)*, c. 1675, oil and gilding, 199 x 556 cm (Museo Soumaya, Mexico City; photo: Steven Zucker, CC BY-NC-SA 2.0)



Figure **2.1.7.4**: Illustration of the the Toxcatl Massacre, from Diego Durán, *The History of the Indies of New Spain*, 1579 (**Biblioteca Nacional, Madrid**)

The rank of both men is communicated through their position in the composition, as well as through dress. Cortés wears rich fabrics and a feathered helmet, while Moctezuma II wears an elaborate crown and holds a scepter. Correa depicts both men as equals, despite the inherent inequality and brutality of the Spanish conquest. Different from scenes depicted in some sixteenth-century codices, like the **Toxcatl Massacre** from Diego Durán's *Historia de las Indias de Nueva España e islas de la tierra firme* (1579), Correa depicts a somewhat positive view of this encounter.



Figure **2.1.7.5**: Juan Correa, *Folding screen showing an allegory of the Four Continents*, c. 1675, oil and gilding, 199 x 556 cm (Museo Soumaya, Mexico City; photo: Steven Zucker, CC BY-NC-SA 2.0)

On the other side of the biombo is a depiction of the allegorical representations of Africa, Asia, America, and Europe. Correa draws particular attention to the continents of Asia and Europe, placed prominently at center and flanked by Africa at right and America at left. In using the identifiable portraits of the Spanish King Charles II and his first wife, Marie Louise of Orleans, dressed with the French royal fleur-de-lis (to represent Europe), Correa singles out this continent from the other parts of the world.



Figure **2.1.7.6**: Juan Correa, *Folding screen with allegory of America (left) and Europe (right and center)*, c. 1675, oil and gilding, 199 x 556 cm (Museo Soumaya, Mexico City; photo: Steven Zucker, CC BY-NC-SA 2.0)

Charles II turns his back on America and points his toes towards the text at bottom, which reads “Europa.” This gesture alludes to how Charles II “has triumphed over America,” and as a result, he can now gaze confidently and “with desire toward Asia and Africa.” [1] If this is the case, then the *biombo* depicts somewhat contradictory stories. *The Encounter of Cortés and Moctezuma II* focuses on equality and autonomy, but *The Four Parts of the World* showcases Europe’s global aspirations, an image that is more in line with the imperialist behavior of the period—and indeed with the colonization of Mexico.



Figure **2.1.7.7**: *Talavera poblana vessel*, 17th century, earthenware (Franz Mayer Museum, Mexico City; photo: Steven Zucker, CC BY-NC-SA 2.0)

Ceramics

Mexican nobility also decorated their homes with ceramics. These could be made locally or **imported** from Asia, Europe, or the viceroyalty of Peru. The importation of Chinese porcelain and Dutch delftware created a demand for blue-and-white ceramics, and a local tradition emerged in New Spain. The city of Puebla de los Ángeles, the second largest city of the viceroyalty, specialized in this type of ware, known as *talavera poblana* (Spanish for “poblano earthenware”). *Talavera poblana* creates this color combination through a technique known as tin glazing. The tin-covered surfaces of vessels take on a white glossy appearance when fired. The blue decorative patterns that make up the landscape and other imagery are also painted with metal oxides that turn blue when fired.



Figure **2.1.7.8**: Covered jar (*búcaro*), ca. 1675–1700, earthenware, burnished, with white paint and silver leaf, 70.5 cm (The Metropolitan Museum of Art)

In Spain, and throughout Europe, aristocrats coveted another type of earthenware, known for its distinctive aroma and supposed medicinal qualities. These ceramic vessels, known as *búcaros de Indias*, originated in Mexico, and indeed one can be seen in Velázquez's famous ***Las Meninas*** (on a tray being offered to the young infanta), a reflection of the transatlantic nature of the global art trade during Spanish colonialism.



Figure **2.1.7.9**: Francisco Clapera, set of sixteen casta paintings, c. 1775, 51.1 x 39.6 cm (Denver Art Museum; photo: Steven Zucker, CC BY-NC-SA 2.0)



Figure **2.1.7.10**: *Spaniard and Indian Produce a Mestizo*, attributed to Juan Rodríguez Juárez, c. 1715, oil on canvas (Breamore House, Hampshire, UK)

Local artistic production in the form of *biombos*, *talavera poblana*, *enconchados*, and *casta* paintings were also popular Spanish exports. *Casta* paintings consisted of multiple canvases that documented the phenomenon of racial mixing in New Spain, while at the same time ranking each *casta* (Spanish for "caste") into a particular hierarchy.The purpose of these *casta* paintings is not entirely known. It is also unclear the extent to which they accurately depict colonial reality, but they nevertheless reveal an important insight into the crafting of identity through race in the Viceroyalty of New Spain.

Casta paintings tried to document and categorize what the eighteenth-century Archbishop of Mexico, Francisco Antonio Lorenzana, identified as a complex phenomenon. He explained in 1770: "Two worlds God has placed in the hands of our Catholic Monarch, and the New does not resemble the Old, not in its climate, its customs, or its inhabitants. . . . In the Old Spain only a single caste of men is recognized, in the New many and different." [2] Spanish colonizers felt the need to document this racial diversity in New Spain, and initiated the tradition of *casta* painting as a way to understand this phenomenon. This was in line with the Enlightenment's penchant for cataloguing information and fondness for encyclopedic knowledge.



Figure **2.1.7.11**: Miguel de Herrera, *Portrait of a Lady*, 1782, oil on canvas (Museo Franz Mayer, Mexico City; photo: Steven Zucker, CC BY-NC-SA 2.0)

Portraits

Painted portraits became increasingly popular in New Spain, especially in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Portraits such as *Portrait of a Lady* by Miguel de Herrera captured colonial aristocrats in the most favorable of conditions. Whether these paintings hung in private residences or public buildings their intent was to showcase to others the social standing, public service, family ancestry, or even the purity of the sitter (as in *Portrait of a Lady*). In emphasizing the delicate lace of her sleeves, the elaborate plumes and diamond ornaments on her hair, and the heavy jewelry that rests on her ears and around her neck, Herrera captures the elite status of the sitter. This is similar to how artists of *casta* paintings, such as **Juan Rodríguez Juárez**, communicate social rank through race, gender, dress, and accessories. The closed fan, which she holds prominently with her right hand, is not only a fashionable accessory, but also as an indicator of her virginity. It also points in the direction of her watch, a common symbol of mortality.



Figure 2.1.7.12: Miguel de Herrera, *Portrait of a Lady* (detail), 1782, oil on canvas (Museo Franz Mayer, Mexico City; photo: Steven Zucker, CC BY-NC-SA 2.0)

While portraits shed light on the racial and social relations in colonial Mexico, *Portrait of a Lady* changes the context of portraiture entirely, not only because the painting functions independently (not as part of a series), but also because the woman is depicted as an individual rather than a type (as in *casta* paintings). Additionally, the portrait depicts the woman with a distinct sense of agency and autonomy, which is in direct opposition with the depiction of types in *casta* paintings. The painting was most likely commissioned by her and therefore exhibited in the privacy of her home. *Casta* paintings, on the other hand, served an entirely different purpose in Spain, where they were considered quasi-documentary proof of the exotic people, costumes, and fruits of the colonies.



Figure **2.1.7.13**: Crowned Nun Portrait of Sor María de Guadalupe, c. 1800, oil on canvas (Banamex collection, Mexico City; photo: Steven Zucker, CC BY-NC-SA 2.0)

Nun portraits

A distinct and original genre of portraiture in New Spain are crowned nuns (*monjas coronadas*), which became recognizable manifestations of the viceroyalty's tendency for exuberance in religious matters. These portraits were painted to commemorate nuns' admissions into the convents (and in some cases, their deaths). The extravagant crowns that characterized these portraits represented the wearer's historical importance within the context of their indissoluble marriage to God and the Church.



Figure **2.1.7.14**: Escudo de Monja (detail) in the *Crowned Nun Portrait of Sor María de Guadalupe*, c. 1800, oil on canvas (Banamex collection, Mexico City; photo: Steven Zucker, CC BY-NC-SA 2.0)

These portraits displayed another typically New Spanish nun accessory, the nun's shield (*escudo de monja*), a kind of badge that was worn as part of their habit. These shields were round medallions portraying devotional images chosen for their affinity to the wearer. Following particular formulaic conventions, the most important painters of New Spain contributed in making these profession portraits a very original form of artistic production. These portraits were often commissioned by the nuns' families, who would display them proudly in their elite homes.

Together, these portraits—whether of *castas*, aristocrats, or nuns—demonstrate the currency of social portraiture in New Spain, and the importance of capturing religious and material wealth, and establishing racial and gender hierarchies.

Notes:

[1] Michael Schreffler, *The Art of Allegiance: Visual Culture and Imperial Power in Baroque New Spain* (Pennsylvania State University Press, 2007), 123

[2] Cited in Ilona Katzew, *Casta Painting: Images of Race in Eighteenth-Century Mexico* (Hew Haven: Yale University Press, 2005), 39

Additional resources

Learn about New Spain

Read more about the **Brooklyn Biombo**

Read about the **Biombo with the Conquest of Mexico and View of Mexico City**

Read more about ***Crowned Nun Portrait of Sor María de Guadalupe***

Read about the large market (called the Parián) in the Plaza Mayor (or Zócalo) of Mexico City

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2.2.1: Hispaniola's early colonial art, an introduction

by JENNIFER BAEZ

Page ID
179566



Figure **2.2.1.1**: Virgin of Christopher Columbus, oil on panel, first half of the 16th century, 20 x 18 inches (**Lázaro Galdiano Museum**, Madrid)

In the Lázaro Galdiano Museum in Madrid, a small painting shows Saint Christopher presenting Christopher Columbus to the Virgin Mary and Christ child. Columbus wears a gold-braided waistcoat inscribed with the Spanish heraldic motto of "Plus Ultra" ("Further beyond"—a Latin phrase and the national motto of Spain) over an armored suit.[1] The Basilica Cathedral Santa María la Menor of Santo Domingo—recognizable by its double-arched doorway—dominates the background.



Figure **2.2.1.2**: Detail of angels with the insignia of the Dominican Order (detail), *Virgin of Christopher Columbus*, oil on panel, first half of the 16th century, 20 x 18 inches (**Lázaro Galdiano Museum**, Madrid)

Two angels float above the Virgin and carry the insignia of the Dominican Order, calling to mind the name of the city, Santo Domingo (Saint Dominic in English), the capital of the **Caribbean island that Columbus named La española (eventually Hispaniola)**, named in honor of Spain, which had financed Columbus, and which Taíno peoples called Ayiti or Kiskeya. Today the island contains two nations, Dominican Republic and Haiti.



Figure **2.2.1.3**: Detail of figure in the background, *Virgin of Christopher Columbus*, oil on panel, first half of the 16th century, 20 x 18 inches (**Lázaro Galdiano Museum**, Madrid)

The association of Santo Domingo with the Dominican order relates to the foundation of the city on the eastern banks of the Ozama river (by Columbus's brother, Bartolomé) on the feast day of Saint Dominic of Guzmán, who founded the Dominican Order in 1216. The day coincidentally happened to be Sunday (in Spanish, Domingo), and the name of Columbus's father was Domenico (Domingo, in Italian)— sealing the choice of the name for the city.

One figure in the background of the painting might strike the viewer as out-of-place because he is dressed in a turban and tunic. Yet this "Moorish" dress was not uncommon in Spain, especially because Muslims had controlled most of the Iberian peninsula (today Spain and Portugal) for hundreds of years. What is less well known is that enslaved black Moors (Muslim inhabitants of Iberia) had been in Hispaniola since at least 1550 despite a royal prohibition. A letter (dated 1550) from Santo Domingo officers to the crown asks the king to exempt the (at least) 100 enslaved Moors of Hispaniola from the 1543 royal prohibition because they performed various trades.[2] Under the watchful gaze of this turbaned figure, Columbus surrenders his helmet, gauntlets, and spear at the feet of the Virgin, offering her the first Christian city of the **Americas**.

This painting reveals the early European interest in **picturing the so-called "New World"** (many people were unable to travel to the Americas, but wanted to see what it looked like). The turbaned figure also stands as a reminder to peninsular viewers (or people living on the Iberian Peninsula) of threats to Christian dominance. The final Muslim stronghold on the Iberian Peninsula only fell to the Spanish Catholic Monarchs in 1492, followed by the expulsion of Muslims and Jews who refused conversion to Christianity. In the painting, the turbaned figure provides a justification for the colonization of the Americas.

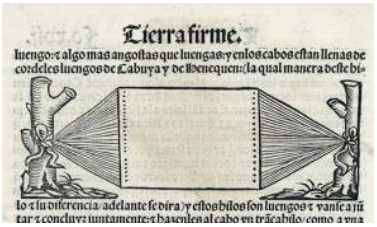


Figure **2.2.1.4**: A hammock in Gonzalo Fernández de Oviedo, ***Natural and General History of the Indies*** (Toledo: Ramon Petras, 1526), p. 34

It is possible the painter worked in Seville as part of the large picture-making industry dedicated to producing religious images (especially of the Virgin Mary) to aid in conversion in the Americas. The artist would not have seen Santo Domingo firsthand, but learned about it from images or written accounts. A letter Columbus sent announcing the news of the "**discovery**" included, in its different editions throughout Europe, several engravings depicting America and its inhabitants. Royal chronicler Gonzalo Fernández de Oviedo's *Natural and General History of the Indies* also introduced Europeans to the fauna, flora, and peoples of Hispaniola, which he had observed in person. His book included the first illustrations of the pineapple, the hammock, the barbecue, and tobacco.

A Blueprint for Colonization

The European invasion and colonization of the Americas was launched in 1492 from Hispaniola. For sixteen years, Hispaniola was Spain's only active colony in the hemisphere, making the lessons learned on the island an important part of the playbook for colonizing elsewhere in the Americas. In 1493, Columbus and his crew arrived after the second voyage ready to establish a trading post in the style of Portuguese *feitorias* (factories), which were fortified, coastal trading houses that the Portuguese set up in west Africa to monopolize trade in gold and enslaved peoples. They served as warehouses and customs agencies mediating exchange between local trading networks and European monarchs. The second voyage also brought Franciscan missionaries who would begin the process of conversion; by 1500 they had baptized 3,000 Indigenous people.



Figure **2.2.1.118**: House of Columbus, La Isabela, Dominican Republic, 1494–98 (photo: **Mario Roberto Durán Ortiz**, CC BY-SA 4.0); right: reconstruction drawing of La Isabela, with the House of Columbus indicated with an arrow (photo: **Mario Roberto Durán Ortiz**, CC BY-SA 4.0)

La Isabela, the first European settlement of the Americas, was founded on January 6, 1494 in today's Puerto Plata province (in northern Hispaniola), after the celebration of a mass during which Amerindians first saw a sculpture of the Virgin Mary in the context of Catholic liturgy. The experiment at La Isabela failed after four years because the all-male settlement suffered starvation, absences by Columbus who left to explore Cuba, indigenous resistance, and a mutiny led by Columbus's former servant, Francisco Roldán.



Figure **2.2.1.5**: A map of Santo Domingo show the city's grid plan. The cathedral is the large building in the center of the grid. Giovanni Battista Boazio, *View of Santo Domingo*, 1589, hand-colored engraving, from *Map and views illustrating Sir Francis Drake's West Indian voyage, 1585–6*, published in Leiden **(Jay I. Kislak Collection Rare Book and Special Collections Division**, Library of Congress)

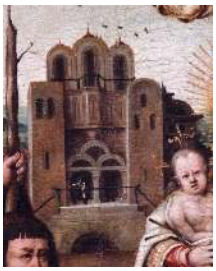


Figure **2.2.1.6**: Detail of Cathedral of Santo Domingo, *Virgin of Christopher Columbus*, oil on panel, first half of the 16th century, 20 x 18 inches (**Lázaro Galdiano Museum**, Madrid)

Before La Isabela failed, the Spanish monarchy had ordered the change of the site's status from trade post to a fully imperial venture in a move to centralize power.[3] This change tells us that the Spanish monarchs wished to expand their empire. With a defined, imperial venture in mind, governor of the Indies Nicolás de Ovando arrived on the island with 2,500 colonists, and founded Santo Domingo proper in 1502 after moving it to the western banks of the Ozama river. He developed the city using a rectilinear grid known as a *traza*, which anchored church, elite residences, and government buildings around a main plaza, with streets meeting at right angles. This organization had several advantages including peripheral and internal surveillance, and possibilities for expansion. With its ideal proportions, the *traza* symbolized the idealized civility and order of classical Rome. The work of ancient Roman architect Vitruvius enjoyed a resurgence in fifteenth-century Europe, and Spaniards reproduced this classical architectural language in their own imperial pursuits. Before the Americas, they implemented the grid model to subjugate the Canary Islands, as well as in the military encampment of Santa Fe de Granada on the eve of the final battle to recapture Spain from Muslim control. Another source for urban planning in the early Spanish Americas was the prophet Ezekiel's vision of Heavenly Jerusalem which offered the Spanish crown the opportunity to promote Santo Domingo as the heavenly city, thus raising its political and religious stature.



Figure **2.2.1.7**: Cathedral of Santa María la Menor, Santo Domingo, 1519–1541 (photo: **Martin Falbisoner**, CC BY-SA 4.0)

The Cathedral Basilica of Santo Domingo was important to the city's early urban development—it was the center of city life. Construction of the Cathedral began in 1514 (possibly 1523) and finished in the 1540s, well after the city's residents had begun to emigrate to newly conquered territories. The coral limestone façade featured a pediment and portico—elements borrowed from classical architecture), and prominently displayed the shield of Habsburg Emperor Charles V. Ornamented tabernacles, flanking the double-arched entranceway, houses statues of the apostles, evoking the Spanish empire's evangelizing mission. This classicizing language fits with other urban elements in the city, such as the *traza* (the grid structure).

Virgen de la Antigua in Santo Domingo Cathedral

Early colonial artworks found inside the Cathedral speak to the transatlantic crossings of popular Iberian religious images and devotions. In his book, Oviedo, the Royal chronicler, writes,

> ***"a large image of our Lady of Antigua, today in the main church of this city in the altar next to the sacristy, copied from the image of Antigua in the main church of Seville."[4]***

According to Oviedo, the painting was placed in the Cathedral of Santo Domingo in 1523 after captain Francisco Vara (from Seville) found it floating in the Caribbean ocean, the only object retrieved from his vessel's shipwreck.



Figure **2.2.1.8**: Left: Painting from the left side of the main entrance: *Virgen Nuestra Señora de la Antigua with two unknown donors*, oil on panel, 275 cm x 174 cm, 1520–1523, Cathedral Basilica Santa Maria la Menor, Santo Domingo (photo: **Li Tsin Soon**, CC BY-NC-ND 2.0); right: similar painting with Ferdinand and Isabel, *Virgen de la Antigua with Isabel and Ferdinand*, date unknown, presbytery of Cathedral Basilica Santa Maria la Menor, Santo Domingo (photo: **Tyler Black**, CC BY-NC-ND 2.0)

This painting is likely one that hangs in the Santo Domingo Cathedral today, displayed on the left side of the main entrance. It features a standing Virgin, carrying the Christ child with her left arm and a flower in her right hand. Two angels hover above her head holding her crown, and two unidentified donors appear below.[5] Diagonally across from this painting, on the right side of the presbytery, another Virgen de la Antigua painting with similar iconography can be seen, except that the donors pictured in the lower segment are the Spanish monarchs Ferdinand and Isabel.[6]

The Virgen de la Antigua was a popular form of the Virgin Mary in Spain, and stories circulated of her miraculous intervention on behalf of Christian kingdoms during the Reconquest. In one of the decisive battles in the 13th century, the image of the Virgen de la Antigua allegedly appeared in a vision to Fernando III of Castile as a mural painting inside a mosque in Seville, signaling an imminent victory against Muslim forces. Her image eventually traveled to the Americas as part of Europe's colonial expansion in the 16th century. Devotion to her inspired votive offerings thanking or petitioning the Virgin for a safe passage, such as we see in the two paintings in the Cathedral today. Devotees also visited the image in the cathedral to implore her protection against storms and catastrophes as people coped with the unpredictability of nature.

In this early period, a great deal of art was produced in Spain for shipment to Hispaniola. Much of it was religious, made for Christian liturgical and devotional purposes. Still, there would have also been secular portraiture, sumptuous textiles, and other movable objects (like furniture) that marked the owner's social standing. While commercial painters in Seville produced many of the works that arrived during the early colonial period, some were made by more prominent artists and their workshops, such as

Alejo Fernández and **Juan Martínez Montañes**. Much of this early art no longer survives unfortunately. Owners emigrated with their art, storms destroyed work, and the Francis Drake's sacking of Santo Domingo in 1586 led to the disappearance of some early colonial art as well.

Reception of Images

Art that arrived in Hispaniola aboard the first Spanish fleets forced a reckoning between cultures that did not understand or use images in the same way. In one infamous encounter, Taínos seized an image of the Virgin from an oratory, buried it in a field, and urinated on it. Seeing the incident as an insult, Columbus's brother ordered the natives burned alive. Catalonian Hieronymite friar Ramón Pané recounts this story in the opening of his ethnographic report, *An Account of the Antiquities of the Indies* (completed in 1498), to suggest Taíno idolatry.[7] For the Taíno however, the venerated image could fertilize the ground just like a zemi (sculptures of wood, stone, or clay, that sheltered deities or ancestral beings). Art historian Amara Solari suggests that Taíno believed that the Marian icon embodied precontact numinous (supernatural or holy) qualities, allowing them to transpose the zemi and Christian icon.



Figure 2.2.1.9: Radiocarbon testing dates the Pigorini zemi after Contact, between 1492–1524 C.E., rhinoceros horn, cotton, shell, glass beads, mirrors, gold, vegetable fiber, pigment, resin, wooden mount (Museo Nazionale Prehistorico ed Etnografico "Luigi Pigorini," Rome, Italy; photo: Lorenzo Demasi)

False starts like these, the persecution of so-called idolatry, and the near genocide of the Taíno within the first fifty years of European arrival (due to diseases and cruel labor practices), doomed the potential development of transcultural aesthetics (the merging of cultural elements into a completely new iteration) during the early colonial period. Still, one surviving zemi (called the Pigorini zemi) hints at the ways different cultures and visual systems converged during the early colonial era. Its mix of African rhinoceros horn and European glass beads demonstrate the different cultures, artistic practices, and materials that convened in Hispaniola.



Figure **2.2.1.10**: Diego de Valadés, "Friar Preaching to Native Converts," 1579, copperplate engraving, within *Rhetorica Christiana ad concionandi et orandi usum accommodate […] ex Indorum maximè deprompta sunt historiis*. Perugia: Petrus Jacobus Petrutius, 1579.

Political, religious, and social indoctrination via Christian images was a strategy deployed by conquistadors and clerics since the early days of contact. Due to language barriers, images became important teaching aids in Spain's missionary enterprise. An engraving by Diego de Valadés in *Rhetorica Christiana* (*Christian Rhetoric)* shows a Franciscan friar in New Spain preaching on a pulpit to a crowded assembly of natives. He points to the *lienzos* (painted cloths) with a stick, showing how images were useful for religious conversion.



Figure **2.2.1.11**: Fragment of Christ figure, 16th century, carved lignum vitae, found in San Rafael Cave, Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic (Jay I. Kislak Collection, Rare Book and Special Collections Division, Library of Congress; photo ©Justin Kerr, Kerr Associates)

Archaeological material can help us learn about the use of images and spaces for instruction and religious conversion in Hispaniola. A fragment of a small wooden sculpture of Christ found in San Rafael Cave in Santo Domingo is a type of religious prop employed in this exchange. Chapels or private oratories (small chapels for private worship) in the estates of *encomenderos* could have also functioned as early conversion sites after the Laws of Burgos of 1512 ordered that Spaniards build churches within their haciendas and display images to instruct the Taíno.

Hispaniola was the first point of long-term contact between the cultures of Europe, America, and Africa. The visual and material culture, such as paintings of Marian miracles, helped people stake territorial and identity claims. More research is needed to bring to light the production and reception of art by Amerindians, Africans, and mixed-race peoples, as well as to fully illuminate the implications of early Hispaniola's role in subsequent colonial schemes.

Notes:

[1] Emilio Rodríguez Demorizi, *España y los comienzos del arte y la escultura en América* (Santo Domingo: Gráficas Reunidas, 1966), pp. 95-96.

[2] See José Antonio Saco. *Historia de la esclavitud de la raza africana en el nuevo mundo y en especial en los países américo-hispanos*. Habana: Cultural, 1938. Vol. I, pp. 305–306.

[3] Pauline Kulstad-González, *Hispaniola: Home of Hell? Decolonizing Grand Narratives about Intercultural Interactions at Concepción de la Vega (1494–1564*) (Sidestonepress, 2020).

[4] Oviedo, *Historia de las Indias*, Madrid, 1855, Vol I, 426.

[5] The painting is dated to c. 1520–1523 by Dominican art historian, Danilo de los Santos, in *Memoria de la pintura Dominicana: Raíces e impulso nacional*, *Vol. 1 2000 AC* 1924 (Santo Domingo: Grupo E. León Jiménez, 2003), 100. Santos, quoting the Marques de Lozoya (in Demorizi, *España y los comienzos del arte*, 1966, p. 9) writes that this is the oldest version of La Antigua in the country. Santos associates this painting with Oviedo's story about a painting of La Antigua surviving a shipwreck. Demorizi, however, dates the painting to 1500, p. 50.

[6] Demorizi dates this painting to 1520. See Demorizi, *España y los comienzos del arte*, 101. Additionally, according to a publication by the Fundación de la Zona Colonial, this is the panel that Oviedo says was rescued from a shipwreck, and it was brought to Santo Domingo in 1527. See *Arte Sacro Colonial en Santo Domingo* (Santo Domingo: Amigo del Hogar, 2002), pp. 38 and 16 [No sources offered].

[7] Ramón Pané, *Relación acerca de las antigüedades de los indios*, 53–54. As seen in Gruzinski, Images at War, footnote 24.

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2.2.2: The Codex Huexotzinco

by **DR. LAUREN KILROY-EWBANK**

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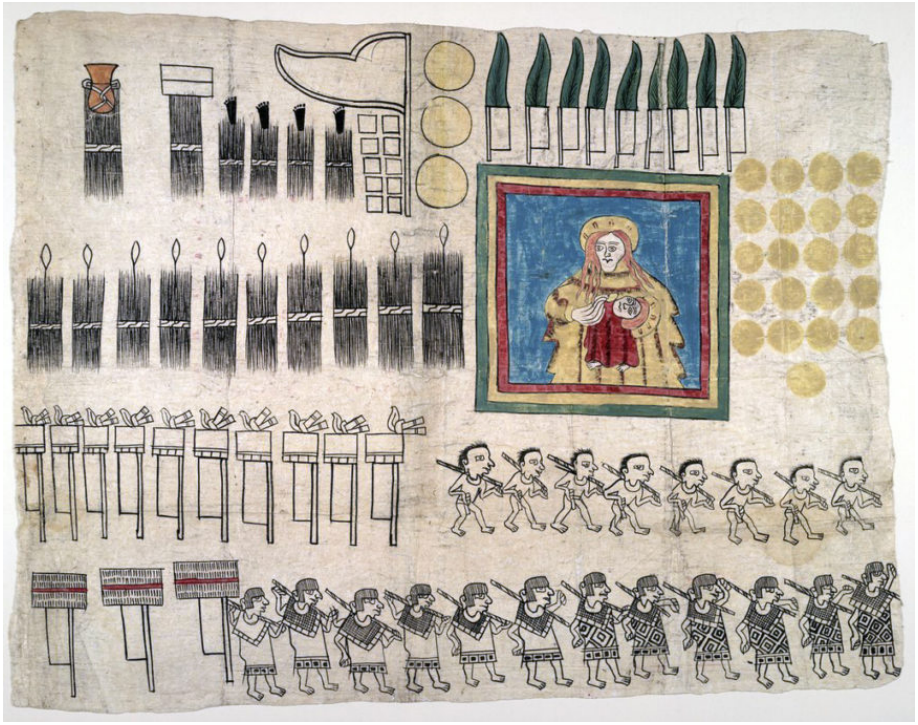


Figure **2.2.2.1**: Copy and Paste Caption here. (Copyright; author via source)Sheet 7 of tribute, with a featherwork of the Madonna and Child, pigments on *amatl* paper, made by Huexotzinca artists, before 1531; then combined with written pages to form the Huexotzinco Codex, 1531 (Library of Congress)

The earliest known image of the Madonna and Child made by an Indigenous artist of the Americas shows the Virgin Mary holding the infant Christ against a blue background on a sheet of *amatl* paper. A frame of red, gold, and green rectangles surrounds them. Many other items also fill the page—bundles of reeds, long green feathers, golden disks, loincloths, sandals, and people—all of which initially seem disconnected from the holy image. It is unclear where we are, what these things mean, and why they are on this page together.



Figure **2.2.2.2**: The locations of Huejotzingo and Mexico City in New Spain (underlying map © Googl

These images were made in the Spanish viceroyalty of New Spain by Indigenous artist-scribes (called *tlacuiloque*) from the town of Huejotzingo (spelled earlier as Huexotzinco) less than ten years after the Spanish Conquest in 1521. This page is a record of goods supplied by the Huexotzinca (the people of Huejotzingo) to the Spanish conquistador and administrator Nuño de Guzmán for his conquest venture to western Mexico (what would become known as Nueva Galicia after he succeeded in taking control of it). Seven other sheets of varying sizes (and in no particular order) were made along with this one as records of the services and physical goods the Huexotzinca gave to the Spaniards during a two-year time period. The eight pages form part of what is called the Huexotzinco Codex, compiled in 1531 after the image sheets and written testimonies became evidence in a court case that involved the Spanish conquistador Hernán Cortés. He claimed that during his absence (while he was in Spain), goods and services that belonged to him were appropriated by other Spaniards. The images in the Huexotzinco Codex reveal the complex situation of the early colonial period in New Spain and the ways in which Indigenous groups—like the Huexotzinca—navigated the colonial situation.

Tribute codices



Figure **2.2.2.3**: MS. Arch. Selden. A. 1, page of tribute from Tochtepec, Codex Mendoza, Viceroyalty of New Spain, c. 1541–1542 C.E., pigment on paper © Bodleian Libraries, University of Oxford

The Huexotzinco Codex belongs to a larger group of objects called tribute codices—documents that did not always take the form of an actual codex. These are documents made by Indigenous peoples that visually recorded the tribute items they were forced to pay, and they were made both pre- and post-Conquest.

Other well-known tribute lists include the **Matrícula de Tributos** (likely made before the Conquest, and with Spanish annotations added later) and the **Codex Mendoza** (mid-16th century, and modeled on the Matrícula de Tributos or a lost prototype), both of which include pages illustrating the tribute that different conquered groups were forced to pay to the **Mexica** Empire (as opposed to Spaniards in the Codex Huexotzinco). In one folio in the Codex Mendoza showing the tribute paid annually and semi-annually from Tochtepec (a province in southern Veracruz and northern Oaxaca), we see cloaks, warrior costumes, feathers, golden objects, greenstone beads and jewelry, rubber balls, cacao and more—all of which totaled more than 30,000 items.

In the Huexotzinco Codex, written testimonies that now accompany the images note that the Huexotzinca created the sheets to document what they felt was excessive tribute that they were forced to give to Nuño de Guzmán, Juan Ortiz de Matienzo, and Diego Delgadillo—members of New Spain's high court (called the First Audiencia)—during Cortés's absence. The Audiencia was actually created to check the power that Cortés had accrued during and after the Conquest. The sheets in the Codex Huexotzinco likely survive because they were used as evidence in Cortés's lawsuit to reclaim what he felt had been taken from him by these three men of the Audiencia.

The legal dispute and the formation of the Codex

During Cortés's initial inland march toward the city of Tenochtitlan in 1519, he had encountered the Huexotzinca, who would ally themselves with Cortés—they were no allies of the expansionist Mexica at this time who tried to control them. Thousands of Indigenous peoples (not only the Huexotzinca) would forge alliances with Cortés to defeat the Mexica Empire (as opposed to the myth that it was just a few hundred Spanish conquistadors). After the fall of the Mexica, the Huexotzinca received benefits from the Spanish Crown. They appealed to the Crown for tax exemptions, citing their early alliance with Spanish forces as evidence of their loyalty.

After the Conquest, Cortés was granted Huejotzingo, along with services and goods to be provided by the Huexotzinca. In the legal case, Cortés claimed that in 1528—when he returned to Spain—Guzmán, Ortiz de Matienzo, and Delgadillo took what rightfully belonged to him. With so many goods and services listed across eight sheets, we can imagine Cortés's displeasure to see others take what he felt was his.

Luckily for Cortés, the people of Huejotzingo had created the paintings that recorded the goods and services they gave as tribute for the two years of his absence, and Cortés's lawyer requested them as evidence. From Huejotzingo the documents traveled to Mexico City along with three Huexotzinca witnesses. Their testimonies—spoken in Nahuatl and translated into Spanish—were written down as they were shown the image sheets and asked to talk about them. The written testimonies were recorded on more than 70 sheets of paper that came from Italy unlike the local materials on which the images were drawn. The case was successful in Mexico, and retried again in Spain. Even King Charles of Spain eventually noted that two-thirds of all the tribute extracted from the Huexotzinca should be returned to Cortés.

Eventually the pages of text and images were combined together to form the Codex Huexotzinco. The image sheets are larger than the written text pages, so they were folded and sewn into the center of the codex (although now they have been conserved and all creases removed).

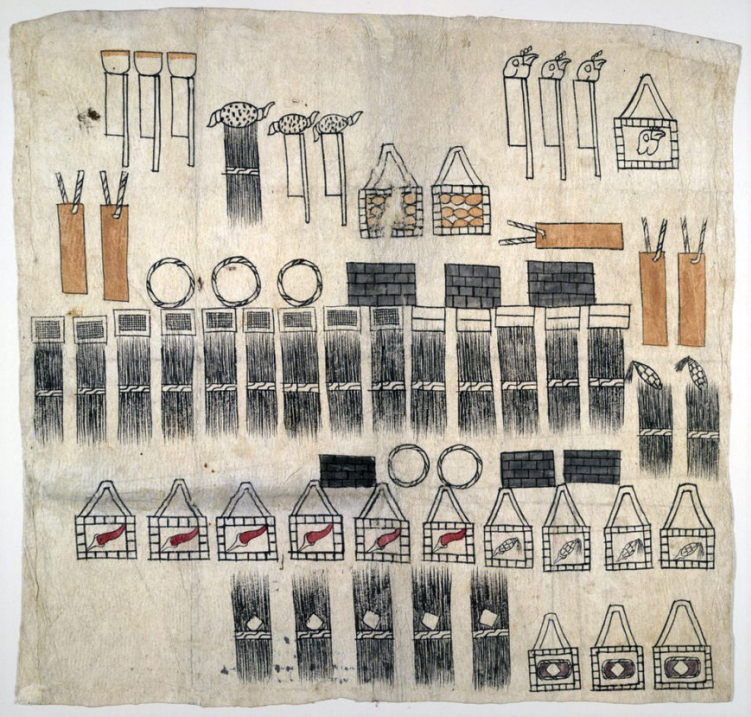


Figure 2.2.2.4: Sheet 2 of tribute, pigments on *amatl* paper, made by Huexotzinca artists, before 1531; then combined with written pages to form the Huexotzinco Codex, 1531 (Library of Congress)

Tribute

Each of the sheets displays rows of tribute given to Guzmán, Ortiz de Matienzo, and Delgadillo. The artist(s) records the tribute pictographically—in the style of Nahua manuscripts that had been made long before the invasion of, and conquest by, Spanish forces. Nahua writing used glyphs and signs to record information. Each item of tribute is shown as a glyph atop a flag, bundle of reeds, or bag. The flags, reeds, and bags were a visual shorthand for a numeric quantity of goods.

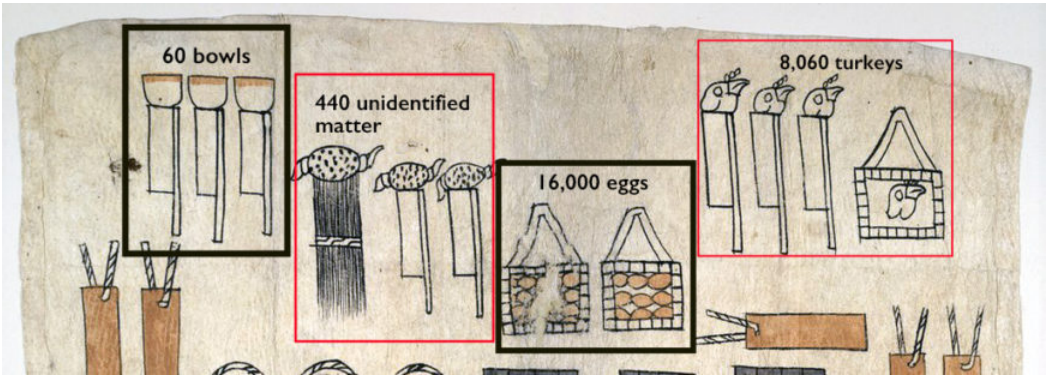


Figure 2.2.2.5: Detail of the top of sheet 2 of tribute, pigments on *amatl* paper, made by Huexotzinca artists, before 1531; then combined with written pages to form the Huexotzinco Codex, 1531 (Library of Congress)

The second sheet of tribute shows approximately four rows of items. On the upper left we see bowls atop flags. It is possible these are gourd bowls (*xicalli*). A flag was a count of 20, meaning that 60 bowls were given as tribute. To the right of the bowls are some unidentified objects that appear on a bundle of reeds and flags. A bundle was equal to 400; coupled with the two flags, the count was 440 of these items. At the center top are two bags containing eggs. A bag (*xiquilli*) was a count of 8,000, which means that the Huexotzinca gave 16,000 eggs! The eggs were likely turkey because chickens—not from the Americas—were not yet common. Plus, the next item of tribute is a count of 8,060 turkeys, represented by the artist with turkey heads on flags and a turkey head in a bag. Imagine all that gobbling!

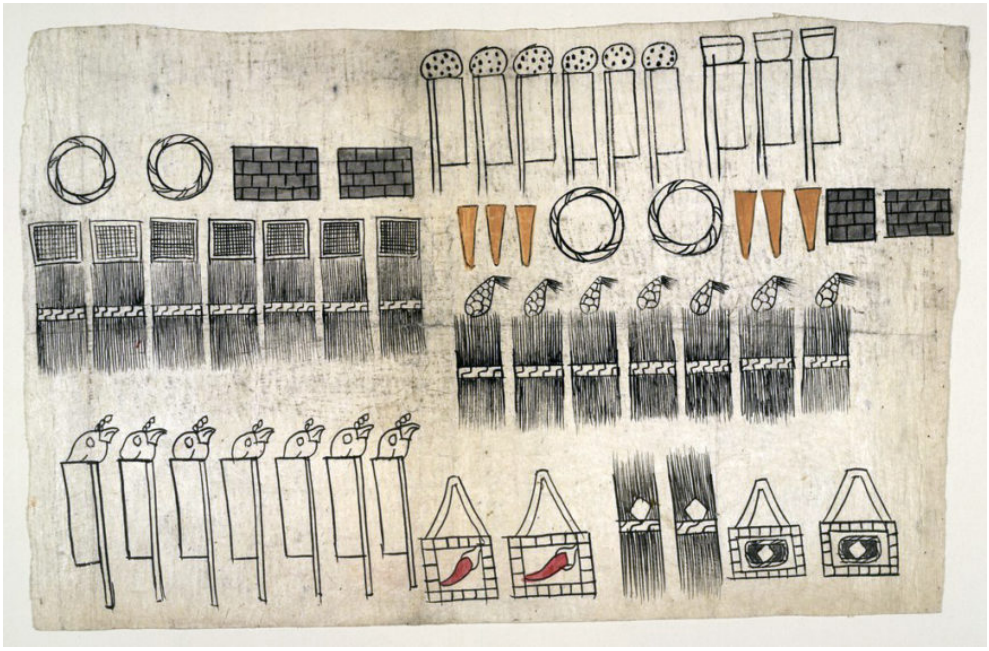


Figure **2.2.2.6**: The first sheet in the Codex included construction materials for a project in Mexico City that involved building monasteries, houses, and an irrigation ditch. Pigments on *amatl* paper, made by Huexotzinca artists, before 1531; then combined with written pages to form the Huexotzinco Codex, 1531 (Library of Congress)



Figure **2.2.2.7**: Sheet 4 with textile designs, pigments on *amatl* paper, made by Huexotzinca artists, before 1531; then combined with written pages to form the Huexotzinco Codex, 1531 (Library of Congress)

On the first page, among the other tribute items you can find wooden planks, lime, and adobe bricks used for construction; 3,600 bundles or pieces of cloth; 32,800 bushels of maize (or even just the cobs); 48,000 chile peppers (or possibly bundles of chiles); and 8,400 chia seeds (or more likely, 8,400 of some specific quantity of chia seeds—they are very tiny!).

Several sheets focus on textiles given as tribute. On one sheet we see a tribute list of different cloths running vertically. Next to each count of cloth is a red rectangle, inside of which can be found a flower or a clawed animal. It is thought that each rectangle is a different type of pattern that could be found on textiles. If these are indeed textile designs intended to be on a red background, it suggests the costliness of the cloths. Red-dyed textiles were expensive, with the color red likely derived from cochineal.



Figure **2.2.2.8**: Sheet 5 with possible textile designs, pigments on *amatl* paper, made by Huexotzinca artists, before 1531; then combined with written pages to form the Huexotzinco Codex, 1531 (Library of Congress)

Another sheet also likely displays different patterns for textiles, this time in a stepped-fret design (what was later called *grecas* in Spanish). These too are shown in red, indicating yet again the likelihood that they were made with red dye. Other later colonial manuscripts include similar types of images of textile patterns, including the early colonial Codex Magliabechiano. Textiles were a common tribute item before the Spanish invasion, and elaborate ones like these were a sign of wealth. Like so many of the other items shown across these sheets, they also speak to the specialized craft economy that flourished in Mesoamerica.

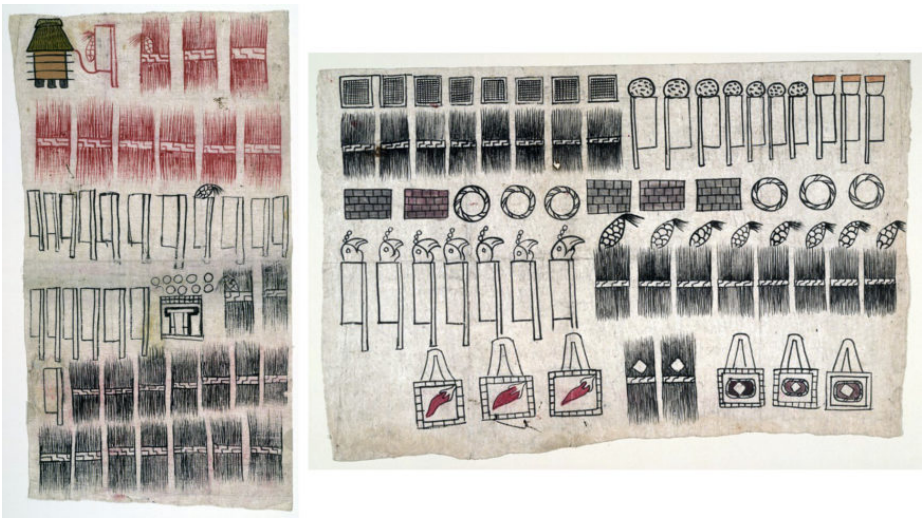


Figure **2.2.2.9**: Sheet 3 (right; showing an enormous amount of maize that was to be ground, possibly to feed soldiers embarking on the journey and conquest of Nueva Galicia) and Sheet 6 tribute, pigments on *amatl* paper, made by Huexotzinca artists, before 1531; then combined with written pages to form the Huexotzinco Codex, 1531 (Library of Congress)

It would take too long to detail all the tribute across all eight sheets. What we do find across the other seven pages are some of the same items, such as turkeys, cloth, maize, and chiles. Some pages also include pots, sandals, bundles of feathers, darts, loincloths, and more. It is an impressive count of goods, and makes one wonder how it was gathered and stored.



Figure **2.2.2.10**: Detail of Sheet 7 of tribute, with a featherwork of the Madonna and Child, pigments on *amatl* paper, made by Huexotzinca artists, before 1531; then combined with written pages to form the Huexotzinco Codex, 1531 (Library of Congress)

Mary, a featherwork, and a military banner



Figure **2.2.2.11**: *The Mass of St. Gregory*, 1539, feathers on wood with touches of paint, 26 1/4 x 22 inches / 68 x 56 cm (Musee des Jacobins)

The image of the Virgin Mary and Child that that we looked at earlier is actually a military banner (or war standard), one that was going to be carried by Guzmán in his efforts to conquer west Mexico. In the written testimonies, the Huexotzinca witnesses noted it was made of feathers and gold. Featherworks had a long history in Central Mexico, and were considered precious items. The Mexica Empire demanded feathers as tribute because of their status as luxury materials. After the Conquest, featherworking traditions continued, albeit with a transformation in subject matter to reflect the desires of Christian colonizers.

The Marian banner displayed in the tribute sheet was apparently so costly that the Huexotzinca had to sell enslaved peoples to produce it—indicated in the painting with the row of enslaved men (wearing *maxtlatls*) and women (wearing *quechquemitls*) in different patterns, possibly to indicate where they were from). Selling them permitted artists to buy gold disks, which we see on the right side of the sheet, as well as bunches of smaller feathers and large green feathers. The Marian banner was a large work, measuring half an arm's length in height and width. The frame was also made of differently colored feathers.

Military banners adorned with Mary were common in Europe, and had been used on the Iberian Peninsula (Spain and Portugal) during the Reconquista. Mary's associations with conquest (she was sometimes known as *la conquistadora*, the conqueress) meant that her image was sometimes placed atop hills after defeating a local Mesoamerican population; after the Mexica empire was toppled, an image of Mary was carried as a sign of Spanish triumph. When Guzmán planned to march to west Mexico with his gold

and feathered Marian banner he participated in this tradition, and he not only had Spaniards among his forces, but also Huexotzinca who he had forced to fight (as indicated in sheet 8).

Not only is the painting in the Codex the first known Marian image made by an Indigenous artist, but it is the first reference to a Nahua featherwork made with a Christian subject. After the Conquest, missionaries like the Franciscans began to establish schools where they could train Native men to read and write, and to learn European visual techniques and strategies. When the Franciscans arrived in Huejotzingo in 1525 they built the ***convento*** of **San Miguel Arcangel,** which became prominent and eventually did have such a school. It is possible that the featherwork cited in the image was made there.

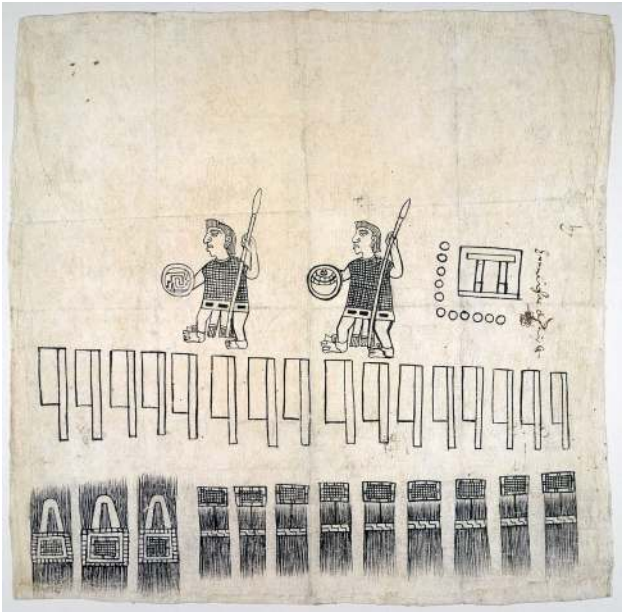


Figure **2.2.2.12**: Sheet 8 shows two warriors holding shields and spears next to a date glyph of 11-House (the year 1529 here, and so likely indicating the beginning of the conquest of Nueva Galicia). The banners below the warriors suggest that this is a record of 320 Huexotzinca warriors provided to Guzmán. Sheet 8 of tribute, pigments on *amatl* paper, made by Huexotzinca artists, before 1531; then combined with written pages to form the Huexotzinco Codex, 1531 (Library of Congress)

Complex entanglements

Other surviving documents from the 16th century tell us that the Huexotzinca continued to speak out against excessive tribute, with a 1560 letter to the Spanish Crown inquiring as to why their tribute had increased more than sevenfold, and once again expressing their frustration given that they had been loyal allies to the Spaniards, had converted to Christianity, had submitted to the Spanish Crown, and always paid their tribute. The earlier eight sheets documenting the tribute paid by the Huexotzinca during Cortés's absence, like later documents, help to showcase the Huexotzinca's agency and resiliency, and the complex entanglements that occurred as the viceroyalty of New Spain was established in Central Mexico. The images in the Huexotzinco Codex help us to learn more about tribute, conquest and the conditions of colonialism, Native agency, **Nahua writing systems**, Indigenous knowledge, the importance of images, early Christianity in the Americas, and legal disputes.

** The Huexotzinco Codex remained in the hands of the heirs of Cortés for hundreds of years, before eventually being sold to a bookdealer and eventually ending up in the Library of Congress in Washington DC (Harkness Collection) where it remains today.*

Additional resources:

See the sheets of images from the Huexotzinco Codex on the World Digital Library

The Huexotzinco Codex on The Mapas Project

Read more about the Matrícula de Tributos on Mesolore

Read more about Nahua writing on Mesolore

The Huexotzinco Codex = El Códice de Huexotzinco : an exact facsimile of the 1531 Huexotzinco codex in the Harkness Collection, Manuscript Division, of the Library of Congress, Washington, DC

English Translation of the Harkness 1531 Huejotzingo Codex

Tom Cummins, “From Lies to Truth: Colonial Ekphrasis and the Act of Crosscultural Translation,” in *Reframing the Renaissance*, ed. Claire Farago (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1995), pp. 152–174

Teresa Castelló Yturbide and Manuel Cortina Portilla, *The Art of Featherwork in Mexico* (Mexico City: Fomento Cultural Banamex, A.C., 1993)

Amy Remensnyder, *La Conquistadora: The Virgin Mary at War and Peace in the Old and New Worlds* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014)



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2.2.3: Classical Architecture in Viceregal Mexico

by DR. JUAN LUIS BURKE

Page ID
179568



Figure **2.2.3.1**: Round arches carried by columns in the Doric order reflect classicizing trends in the former Franciscan convento of Tecali de Herrera, 16th century, Puebla, Mexico (photo: **Luis Espinoza,** CC BY-NC 2.0)

The Renaissance — not just in Italy

The term “renaissance” generally invokes images of Italian cities, buildings, and artworks, rather than images of American ones. However, the renaissance had tremendous repercussions on the American continents, and its influence can be found from Philadelphia to Buenos Aires. In fact it might be more useful to think of the renaissance not as a European phenomenon at all, but as a wide-ranging cultural movement that centered on the rebirth and rediscovery of classical (ancient Greek and Roman) culture that sparked many innovations and changes in architecture, urbanism, pictorial art, theatre, science, literature, and more.



Figure **2.2.3.2**: Map of New Spain. Note that at its height, the Viceroyalty of New Spain also included Central America, parts of the West Indies, the southwestern and central United States, Florida, and the Philippines.

Cities, buildings, and architects in New Spain

Spanish colonizers and *criollos* believed that adopting specific classicizing architectural styles from Europe helped to give their civic and religious buildings a sense of proper decorum. The idea of what constituted decorous architecture derived from Greek and Roman philosophical and architectural sources, including those written by Aristotle, Cicero, St. Augustine, and even Isidore of Seville.

In the sixteenth century, cities were considered to embody an ideal of sophisticated and refined living. This is an ancient idea that took root among peoples in Spain during the medieval period. In the Hispanic world, the term for this idea of a civilized urban center was *policía* (which derives from the ancient Greek term *polis*, meaning city). This idea of the ordered urban center was brought to the Americas where the structure and building of cities became one of the most important colonizing strategies of the Spaniards.

One of the regions in the Americas that saw a resurgence of classical culture was Mexico. From the early sixteenth to the early nineteenth centuries, the territory roughly comprised by present-day Mexico, the midwestern and southwestern U.S., and parts of Central America was known as **New Spain** — a territory claimed and ruled by the Spanish Crown. Throughout this period, towns and cities in the central and southern part of New Spain (by far the most populated of the territory) grew in size. They were inhabited by a diverse population that included Spanish colonizers, *criollos* (the offspring of Spanish colonizers born in the Americas), indigenous peoples of diverse ethnic origin, Africans (originally brought as slaves, many later becoming freed citizens), small communities of other Europeans, Asians, *conversos* (Jewish people who had converted to Christianity), and many ethnic mixtures in between.

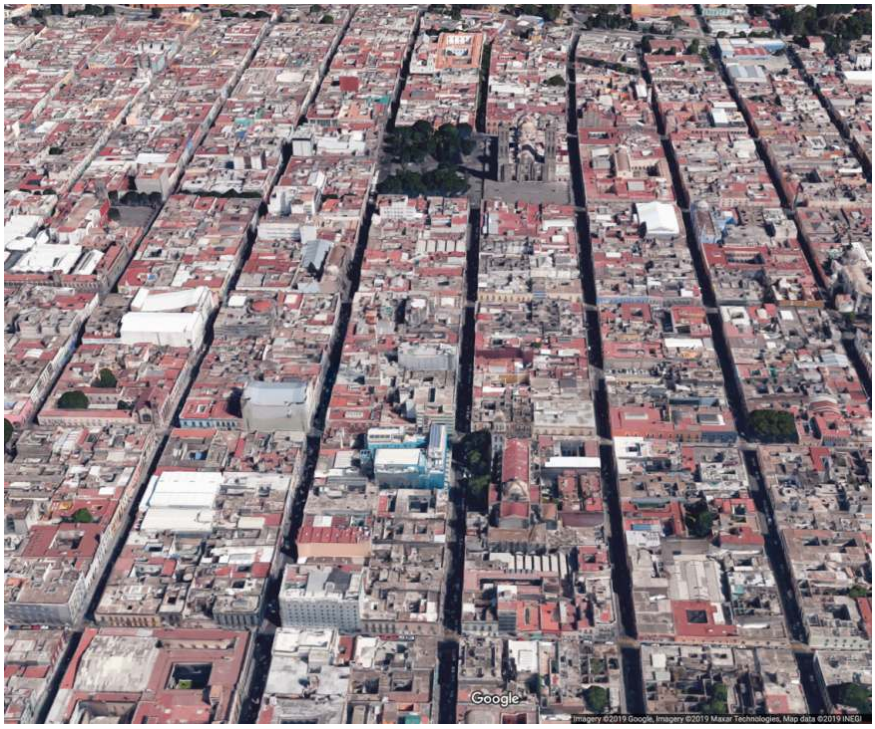


Figure **2.2.3.3**: Aerial view of the city of Puebla de los Ángeles, Mexico (image: Google Maps)

Cities acquired a prominent place in the colonizing strategies of the Spaniards. Spanish colonizers and *criollos* adopted architectural styles from Europe in an effort to validate their civic and religious institutions. Cities participated in dividing peoples along ethnic lines to create social and racial hierarchies. During the sixteenth century, cities were created for indigenous peoples, while other cities were created for Spaniards and their offspring, in what was a clear segregationist effort on behalf of the Spanish colonizers. Cities for indigenous peoples were termed *repúblicas de indios*, while *repúblicas de españoles* was the term employed for cities destined for European colonizers and their offspring. In the *repúblicas de españoles* — and also in the *república de indios*, but arguably to a lesser extent — the preferred architectural language of the most representative buildings was classical in style.

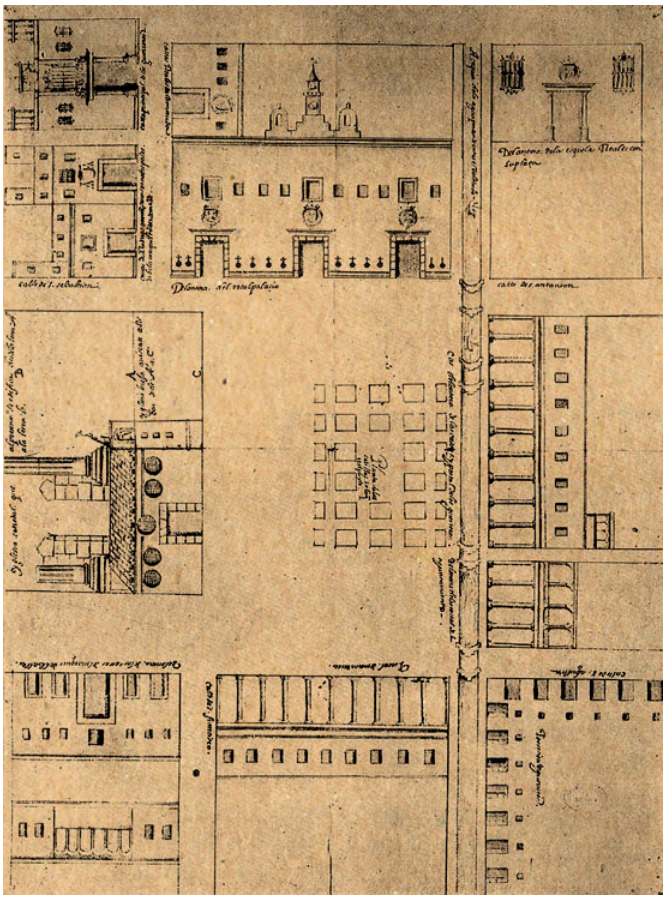


Figure **2.2.3.4**: Drawing of the Plaza Mayor of Mexico City, 1596 (image: Archivo General de Indias, Seville)

Residences for elite families or buildings such as city halls, educational institutions, and hospitals, drew from classical architectural sources. In a plan of Mexico City's central square drawn in 1596, we can see that some of the most important buildings of the city had portals with classical elements such as columned porticoes. Mexico City at the time must have been (architecturally speaking) reminiscent of towns in the Iberian Peninsula (such as Trujillo or Cáceres, both in the region of Extremadura, the birthplace of conquerors and architects, like Francisco Becerra).



Figure **2.2.3.5**: Episcopal Palace, Cáceres, Spain, 13th to the 17th century, with a renaissance façade (image: **Horst Goertz**, CC BY-SA 2.0)

Religious architecture, including cathedrals, monasteries, and church-sponsored buildings such as hospitals and orphanages, were also designed employing the language of classical architecture to indicate proper decorum and appropriateness.



Figure **2.2.3.6**: Façade of the ex-convento of Tecali de Herrera, 16th century, Puebla, Mexico (photo: **Luis Espinoza**, CC BY-NC 2.0)

The façade of the Convento de Tecali is considered to be one of the most refined late-Renaissance designs in New Spain. Some elements, like the proportions of the **architectural orders**, were likely taken from a treatise like the one by Sebastiano Serlio, an Italian architect who published a profusely illustrated treatise in the 16th century, which was extremely influential in both Europe and the Spanish Americas.

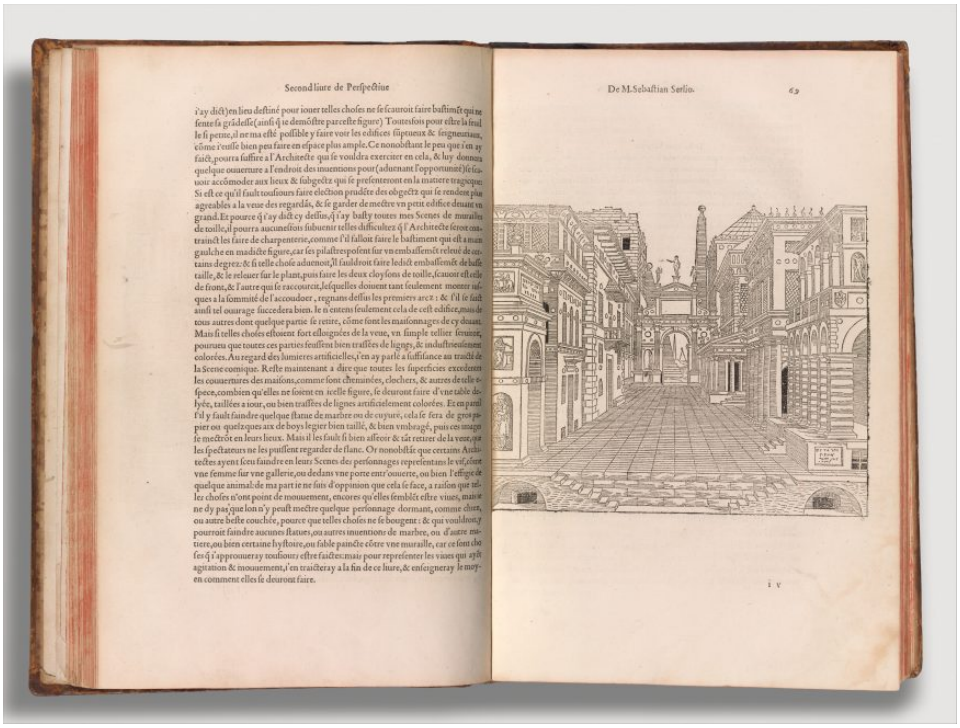


Figure **2.2.3.7**: Sebastiano Serlio, Book 2 of *The Book of Architecture*, published by Jean Barbé, 1544 (**The Metropolitan Museum of Art**)

Architects, patrons, and their sources

Some of the first classically trained architects, like Claudio de Arciniega and Francisco Becerra who arrived in New Spain (from Spain) began practicing their trade during the latter part of the sixteenth century. Their presence signaled the arrival of late-Renaissance architecture to the viceroyalty.



Figure **2.2.3.8**: Becerra, Façade of the Casa del Dean, 16th century, Puebla, Mexico (photo: Lauren Kilroy-Ewbank)

The façade and portal of the Casa del Deán, the residence of the dean of the Cathedral Chapter of the City of Puebla, showcases the classicizing renaissance influences brought to New Spain. The design of this urban palace has been attributed to Becerra, an architect born in Extremadura, Spain. The dean, named Tomás de la Plaza, was known to be a humanist, a person who studied classical literature and culture, which explains his choice of the classical style for his residence.

Even prior to their arrival, the first viceroy of New Spain, Antonio de Mendoza (who ruled from 1535–1550), was well-versed in matters of architecture, and was known to have possessed copies of the architectural treatises by Vitruvius (the ancient Roman

architect) and Leon Battista Alberti (the Renaissance architect). These treatises were the most important vehicles of transmission of classical architectural forms. We see the likely influence of these publications in the official architecture that was built during the sixteenth century in the viceroyalty, and the way cities such as Puebla and Mexico City were being designed and developed. For Europeans in New Spain, just as in Europe, these treatises represented the pinnacle of architectural theory; they were the accepted repository of knowledge regarding what classical architecture was, the knowledge needed to practice the discipline of architecture, and the manner of properly designing and constructing buildings and cities.

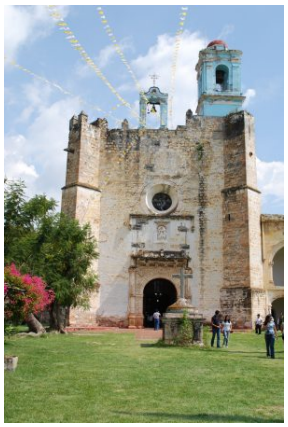


Figure **2.2.3.9**: Façade of San Martín Huaquechula, 16th century, Puebla, Mexico (photo: **Thelmadatter**, CC BY-SA 3.0)

Complicating Classicism

By the start of the seventeenth century, it appeared clear that the classical architectural tradition had taken root. At the same time, it was also clear that the indigenous and mestizo builders, who constituted the bulk of the work force in New Spain, had also established a style of their own. This was especially the case in towns and cities that were more distant from the *repúblicas de españoles*.

In reality, this architectural style had been there all along, as some of the first monasteries erected by the mendicant missionaries together with the native workers and builders, were fascinating architectural combinations of European influences—including Gothic, Mannerist, Plateresque, Mudéjar, and classicizing Italianate—combined with indigenous traits and attributes.



Figure **2.2.3.10**: Façade of San Martín Huaquechula (detail), 16th century, Puebla, Mexico (photo: Lauren Kilroy-Ewbank)

We see this in the façade of the Convento de Huaquechula, for instance, approximately 56 km (35 miles) south of the City of Puebla. It has a main portal of carved stone that displays native sculptural traits, such as floral designs in an indigenous style, in which the stigmata are represented as a native motif of a bleeding wound (center of the image, on the spandrel within a coat of arms held by a cherub). The stigmata was a symbol employed by the Franciscan Order, reminiscent of their founder, St. Francis of Assisi, who received the stigmata. Today, this style has been called at times *mestizo*, other times hybrid, with no consensus among experts on a definitive term.



Figure **2.2.3.11**: Baroque interior of the Church of Santa María Tonantzintla, Cholula, Puebla, Mexico, 18th century (photo: **Photovicz**, CC BY-SA-4.0)

Once the classical language of architecture took hold, it appeared to start its transformation into the next big architectural wave, which art historians often call the Baroque — which constituted the most developed and fascinating architectural tradition to flourish during the viceregal period in New Spain and other Spanish dominions in the Americas. It bears remembering, however, that Baroque architecture in New Spain and elsewhere borrowed elements from the classical language of architecture as a basis for articulating and ordering its own vocabulary.

Additional resources

Mission churches as theaters of conversion in New Spain

Aristotle, "Book IV," in *Nicomachean Ethics*, The Internet Classics Archive

Carlos Chanfón Olmos, ed., *Historia de la arquitectura y el urbanismo mexicanos: El periodo virreinal, Tomo I: El encuentro de dos universos culturales* (Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1997).

Fernando Checa, Alfredo Morales J., and Víctor Nieto, *Arquitectura del renacimiento en España, 1488–1599*. Manuales de Arte (Madrid: Cátedra, 2009).

Luis Javier Cuesta Hernández, *Arquitectura del Renacimiento en Nueva España: "Claudio de Arciniega, maestro maior de la obra de la Yglesia Catedral de esta ciudad de México"* (Mexico City: Universidad Iberoamericana, 2009).

Federico Fernández Christlieb and Angel Julián García Zambrano, *Territorialidad y paisaje en el altepetl del siglo XVI* (Mexico City: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 2006).

Yolanda Fernández Muñoz, “El arquitecto Francisco Becerra,” *Boletín de Monumentos Históricos – Tercera época*, no. 27 (April 2013), pp. 135–50.

Jonathan Israel, *Raza, clases sociales y vida política en el México colonial, 1610–1670* (Mexico City: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1980).

Richard Kagan, *Urban Images of the Hispanic World, 1493–1793* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000).

John McAndrew and Manuel Toussaint, “Tecali, Zacatlan, and the Renacimiento Purista in Mexico,” *The Art Bulletin* vol. 24, no. 4 (1942), pp. 311–25.

Antonio Molero Sañudo, “Francisco Becerra y Otros Nuevos ‘Arquitectos’ En La Nueva España,” *NORBA, Revista de Arte* XXXVI (2016), pp. 69–94.

Ernesto de la Torre Villar, *Las congregaciones de los pueblos de indios* (Mexico City: UNAM, 1995).

Guillermo Tovar de Teresa, “La utopía del virrey de Mendoza,” in *La utopía mexicana del siglo XVI: Lo bello, lo verdadero y lo bueno*, 1st ed. (Mexico City: Editorial Azabache, 1992).

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2.2.4: Puebla de los Ángeles and the classical architectural tradition

by **DR. JUAN LUIS BURKE**

Page ID
179569



Figure **2.2.4.1**: Fountain of San Miguel in the main plaza of Puebla, with the Cathedral towering in the background (photo: Gusvel, CC BY 3.0)

Standing at Puebla de los Ángeles's central plaza, one can see people walking under tall, leafy trees and passing by the beautiful baroque water fountain in the square's center. The square and its delimiting streets are of an exacting geometry: the square is a perfectly traced rectangle lined by arcades on three of its sides.



Figure **2.2.4.2**: Arcades on one side of the main plaza of Puebla (photo: Luis Alvaz, CC BY-SA 4.0)

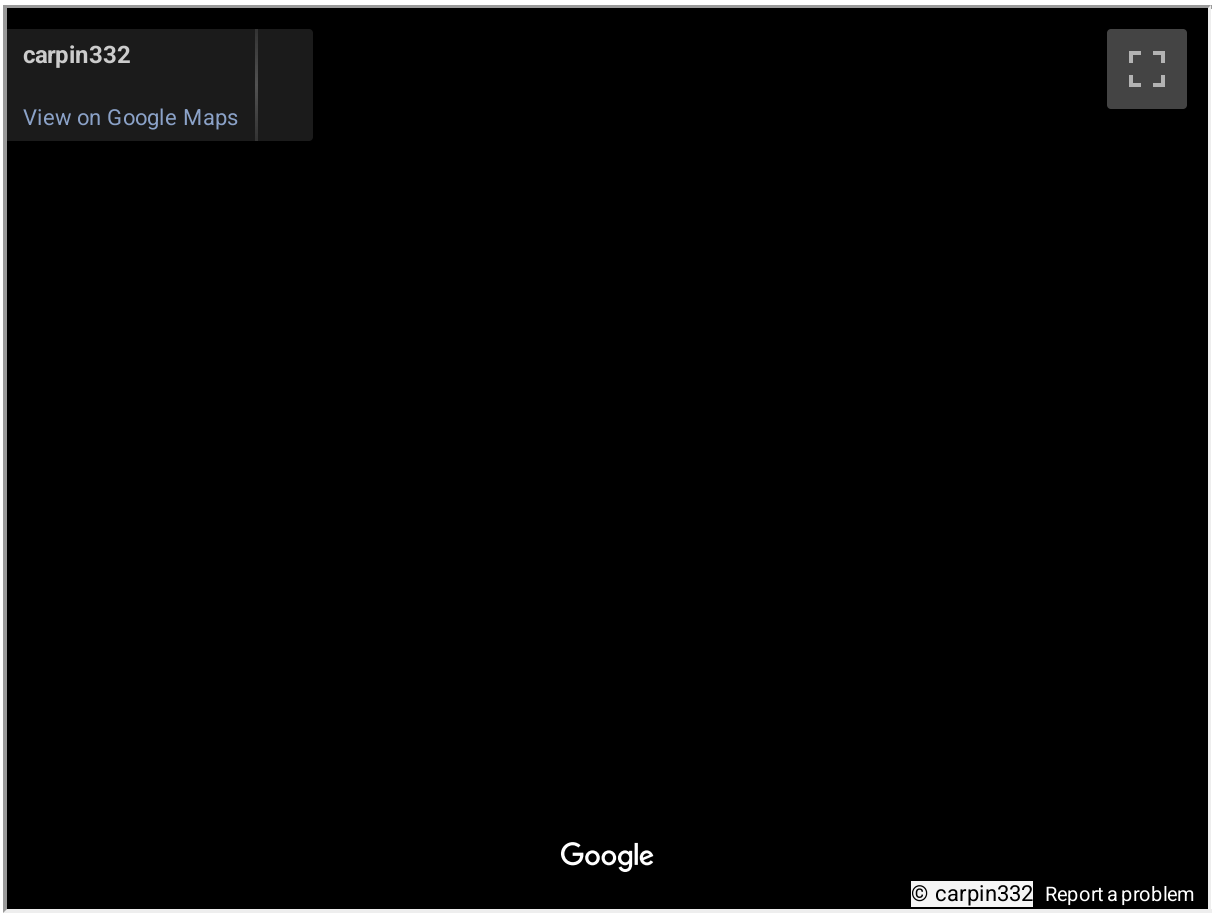
The rounded Roman half arches that make up those arcades are built of grey basaltic stone typical of many of the city's historical constructions and supported by classical columns made of the same material. Above the arcades are rows of buildings of equal height, while on the fourth side of the plaza, toward the south, stands the imposing city cathedral, which towers above the square, severe looking in its basaltic grey stone finish and carefully crafted classical ornamentation.



Figure **2.2.4.3**: Map Mexico with Puebla (underlying map © Google)

The city was built on a grid plan—a series of intersecting orthogonal streets with a square at the middle where the most important civil and religious buildings coexisted, with orderly rows of buildings of similar heights lining the streets. This grid plan was the result of a long tradition of ideas about how cities should be designed.

Located in central Mexico, Puebla is today a large, thriving city. It is well-known for its colonial urban design, which was influenced by ideas about renaissance classicism, including concepts of order, perspective, and decorum (propriety or appropriateness). These concepts (discussed more below) arrived in the Spanish **viceroyalty of New Spain** (as Mexico was known during its colonial period) together with the Spanish colonizers, who employed these notions to establish many cities in the Spanish Americas. Renaissance classicism not only influenced the way cities were designed, but also shaped and influenced other forms of cultural expression, such as architecture, books, and painting.



Renaissance humanism and classicism

What do we mean by renaissance classicism? Classicism here refers to that which is tied to ancient Greek and Roman cultures, while the related term renaissance humanism (known as *studia humanitatis* during the early modern period) was an intellectual movement that changed and renovated European thinking through the study of classical texts by the ancient Greeks and Romans, starting sometime in the late 14th century. To a large extent, the Italian renaissance—understood as a broad cultural movement—was fueled by humanism, given that the renaissance sought to study those classical texts and apply them to aesthetic and practical ends, such as the pictorial arts, literature, urbanism, and architecture, among others. It is broadly accepted that renaissance classicism began in northern Italy, spreading to other parts of Europe soon after, including Spain, and from there to the American continent via European colonizers.



Figure **2.2.4.4**: Puebla Cathedral (photo: Diego Delso, CC BY-SA 4.0)

The classical architectural tradition in Puebla de los Ángeles

Puebla was founded originally by Spaniards as a city exclusively for European colonizers. From its humble origins in 1531, Puebla grew quickly. It is estimated that the city had some 800 households by 1570. By 1600 that number had risen to about 1,500 households distributed in some 120 urban blocks.



Figure **2.2.4.5**: Puebla's central core (traza), with the plaza principal and cathedral marked (© Google Earth)

The city's central core, known as the *traza principal* or "main layout," was the city's most densely populated area. The *plaza principal* or main plaza marked the center of the city and contained a public water fountain and a pillory. Around the square stood important buildings made out of durable, stone masonry like the city hall and eventually an ambitious new cathedral building.

Close to the main plaza stood the residences of the city's elite (who were overwhelmingly Spaniards or *criollos*, their offspring). Meanwhile, in the city's peripheries, communities of Indigenous migrants who came from neighboring native cities like Cholula or Huejotzingo (or some from the towns close to Mexico City, like Texcoco) lived in more informal constructions made out of adobe or shacks called *jacales*. Cramped tenements were also scattered throughout the city for the poorest inhabitants.

Puebla de los Ángeles quickly became New Spain's second most important urban center and populous city after the viceroyalty's capital, Mexico City. It was also an important artistic market for the whole viceroyalty and a popular destination for builders, thanks to wealthy elite Spanish colonizers. After settling in the Americas, they not only wished to emulate and replicate (as much as possible) the lifestyles and built environments of Spain, but also considered their way of life superior to that of the Native population, which was a reason they felt it their obligation to convert the Native population to their ideas about the benefit of living in cities. Most Indigenous towns in Mesoamerica, prior to the arrival of Europeans, were less dense than European cities. People lived scattered in the country, their homes surrounded by parcels of land. Residential units surrounded a core urban center where the community's temples, markets, and the local elite lived. Mesoamerican cities also possessed deep connections to their natural environment, such as rivers, mountains, valleys, and more, which in turn connected their towns and villages to their cosmological belief system. Considering these traits, the Mesoamerican and European traditions differed greatly. In this way, renaissance classicism was part of a larger colonial enterprise that included the imposition of language, religion, and even the **shaping of the built environment** in the Spanish Americas.



Figure **2.2.4.6**: El Escorial was the pet architectural project of Philip II, who personally supervised many elements of its construction, and which would be completed by the 1580s. El Escorial, begun 1563, near Madrid, Spain

In Spain, classicism would become the primary architectural style (over gothic, mudéjar, and plateresque ornamentation) because the Spanish monarchs Charles V and later his son, Philip II, used the classical style in some key buildings that they sponsored to emulate an idea of imperialism, perhaps reminiscent of the ancient Romans.

The case of **El Escorial** located close to Madrid in Spain is particularly outstanding. King Philip II set out to build a palace that would also be the burial vaults of his family lineage, the Habsburgs. The building contains an impressive and enormous library and also a monastery. The building uses a strict and sober classical vocabulary, evident in the simple and stark composition that uses the classical orders in a simple and straightforward manner, always employing heavy-looking columns, entablatures, and repetitive, symmetrical patterns in the distribution of voids and massing. The influence of the northern territories of Flanders, then a part of the Habsburg's empire, is seen in the characteristic sloped, dark slate-tiled roofs, and the pointed turrets at the building's corners.

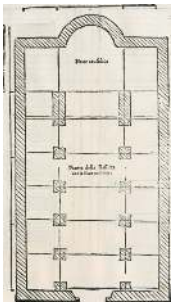


Figure **2.2.4.7**: Basilica plan in Leon Battista Alberti, *De re aedificatoria*, 1565 edition

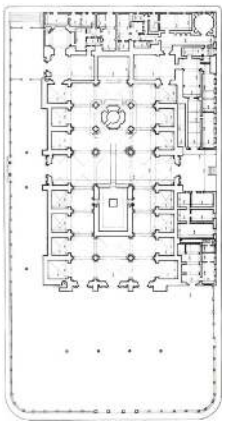


Figure **2.2.4.8**: Plan of Puebla Cathedral

Knowledge of renaissance architectural classicism (or the "Roman style") arrived in New Spain with educated Spaniards, like the first viceroy of the viceroyalty, Antonio de Mendoza, who brought many books from Spain with him and was well-read in many subjects, including architecture. Mendoza owned a copy of Italian renaissance humanist **Leon Battista Alberti**'s famous treatise on architecture called *De re aedificatoria*, written originally around 1450 in Italy and based on the treatise by the ancient Roman architect and engineer Vitrivius. *De re aedificatoria* was thoroughly dedicated to architecture, and discussions such as what made an architect, what were architecture's classical rules on composition, how might an architect better design a building, among other topics.

Mendoza and his successor, Luis de Velasco, were also concerned with attracting European architects to New Spain to take on important building endeavors, such as cathedrals, city halls, hospitals, and other infrastructure works. The first Spanish architect trained in the classical tradition to arrive in New Spain was Claudio de Arciniega, who settled initially in Puebla. While there, Arciniega ornamented a public water fountain at the city's main plaza, worked on the ornamentation of the city's ***alhóndiga*** (city public granary), and began working on Puebla's new cathedral, until he was lured, after a couple of years, to Mexico City.

Other architects, like Francisco Becerra, Francisco Gutiérrez, and Pedro López Florín, also settled in Puebla in the latter part of the 16th century. Becerra is credited with designing the cathedral's layout, an impressive edifice characterized by its classical ornamentation that has certain stylistic and formal parallels with Philip II's El Escorial. One of the most important elements in Puebla's cathedral, which is related to the classical tradition, is the building's form, which is called a basilical plan. A basilica was a building type that harkened back to the ancient Romans. They used basilicas as public buildings where courts of law and other official affairs were conducted. The Christian tradition adopted the idea of a basilica as the notion of a large, religious building that was fit for congregating large amounts of people and carrying out processions throughout them. By the renaissance era, a basilica plan was a building model employed for important Christian religious buildings, notably for cathedrals, which had a series of ample corridors (called naves) separated by rows of columns. In Spain, many cathedrals had been built following this scheme, and Becerra adopted the basilical plan when designing Puebla's cathedral. Relatedly, Alberti's treatise included a model for designing a basilical building.



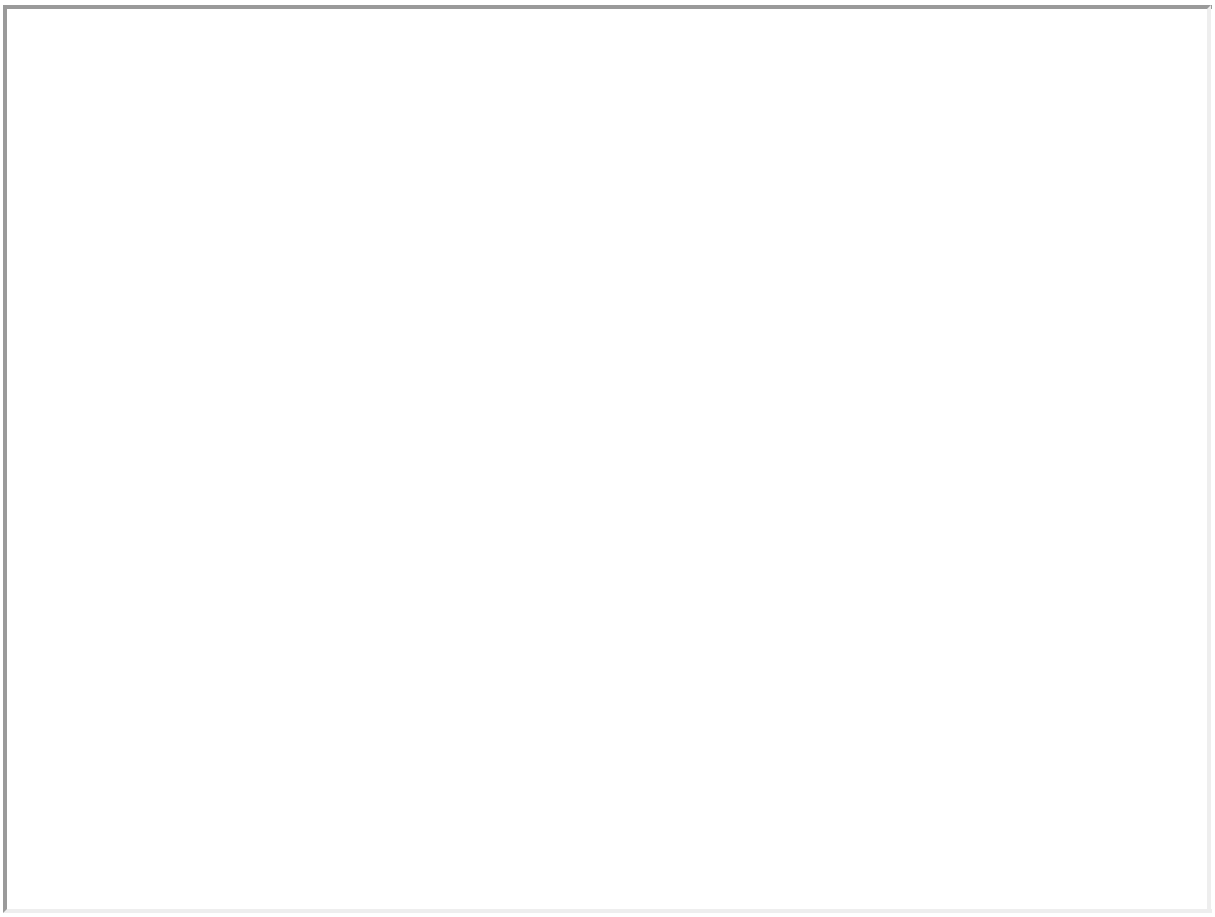
Figure 2.2.4.9: Façade of the Casa del Dean, 16th century, Puebla, Mexico (photo: Lauren Kilroy-Ewbank)

Becerra also had a hand in other important civic buildings, like the private residence of the Cathedral Chapter's Dean, a cleric named Tomás de la Plaza. His residence, today known as Casa del Deán (The Dean's House), is one of Puebla's most relevant works of classical architecture from the 16th century.



Figure 2.2.4.10: Detail of the Templo de Santo Domingo, Puebla (photo: Gusvel, CC BY 3.0)

Important religious buildings in Puebla from the 16th and first half of the 17th centuries, such as colleges, convents, or parish churches, were often designed in the classical canon. The main façade of the Santo Domingo convent is a good example of the appreciation the religious orders in this city had for classicism. The façade is severe and purist in its classicism, noted in the lack of ornamentation and adherence to the rules of classical composition of elements such as columns and architraves. The material, a dark grey basaltic stone, adds to the sense of sobriety.



Main façade of the Templo de Santo Domingo

Architectural treatises in Puebla

A significant number of architectural treatises in Puebla's historical libraries demonstrate how individuals learned about knowledge of classical architecture in Puebla. The Palafoxiana Library and the Lafragua Library were both established in the late 16th century and have volumes by Vitruvius, Alberti, and Serlio.

The power that renaissance architectural treatises had as disseminators of visual messages was nowhere as powerful as in the Americas, where European colonizers encountered unimaginable expanses of territory that they set out to conquer and colonize. The colonization process undertaken by the Spanish in New Spain and elsewhere, involved the shaping of the built environment along colonial ideals, and classical architecture, in that sense, played a crucial role in cities like Puebla.



Figure **2.2.4.11**: Luis Lagarto, *The Annunciation*, 1610, watercolor on vellum, 25.5 x 20.4 cm (Museo Nacional de Arte)

Classicism in the visual arts



Figure **2.2.4.1**: Luis Lagarto, *Adoration of the Shepherds*, 1610, gouache on parchment with gold leaf, 25.4 x 20.3 cm (Denver Art Museum)

The reception and popularization of the classical architectural language in Puebla is also observed in pictorial arts, such as paintings by Luis Lagarto. Born in Andalusia, Spain, Lagarto migrated to New Spain and was active in Mexico City and Puebla. He received a commission to illuminate the choir books for Puebla's cathedral in 1600, spending more than a decade on this project. While he was in Puebla, he painted religious miniatures, including *The Annunciation* and *Adoration of the Shepherds*, both carried out sometime around 1610.

Both of these images display intricate architectural environments by the artist, who paid attention to carefully designed classical architectural backdrops. In *The Annunciation*, the Archangel Gabriel meets the Virgin Mary, while above them, a window into heaven opens with God and a cohort of angels watching the scene. All of this drama unfolds in an intricate and elegant architectural space, in which marble Corinthian columns are topped by a finely decorated frieze. Lagarto's attention to classical architecture in this work is outstanding, and his depiction of entablatures, Corinthian pilasters, columns, a tiled marble floor, and a technically accomplished perspective reveal an undeniable visual proficiency regarding architectural classicism. The tendency to employ classical architectural backdrops would continue throughout the 17th century.

Reframing our understanding of the renaissance

The importance of classical architecture to Puebla's 16th- and 17th-century colonial history helps to reframe our understanding of the renaissance as it has been traditionally understood—namely, as a northern Italian phenomenon whitewashed by notions such as the flowering of philosophy, education, and artistic innovation via an emphasis on individual agency and creativity. In the context of the Spanish colonial Americas, as we have seen with the case of Puebla, renaissance ideas and forms were part of a colonial endeavor that aided colonizers in implementing a cultural program that asserted their values over Indigenous ones. The concept of classical architecture and urbanism in Puebla was part of a broader colonial enterprise that urges a revised, expanded, or altogether redefined understanding of the renaissance.

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2.2.5: La Casa del Deán in Puebla

by DR. JUAN LUIS BURKE

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Figure **2.2.5.1**: Attributed to Francisco Becerra, façade of the Casa del Dean, 16th century, Puebla, Mexico (photo: Lauren Kilroy-Ewbank)

Renaissance architecture and humanist culture in Puebla, Mexico

Close to Puebla's cathedral and central square stands the once palatial residence known as the Casa del Deán or The Dean's House. It was built around the year 1580, but most of the residence was demolished in 1953 to make room for a modern cinema house. Thanks to preservation activists, a fragment of the palatial residence survived—the façade and two upstairs rooms that contain a fascinating mural program, including elaborately dressed figures riding on horseback in a procession that takes place amongst rolling hills, patches of woods, bodies of water, mountains, and hamlets.



Figure 2.2.5.2: The Triumph of Chastity, murals of the Casa del Dean, Hall of the Triumphs, 16th century, Puebla, Mexico (photo: Lauren Kilroy-Ewbank)

What remains of the residence is an outstanding example of renaissance architecture and murals made in the viceroyalty of New Spain. The building and murals also speak to the importance of renaissance humanism in the city after the Spanish conquest of surrounding lands in 1521 initiated waves of evangelization and colonization. Renaissance humanist ideas were important to some of the Spanish colonizers, as they believed Humanism, which was the study of Classical literature and sources, represented some of the outstanding traits of European and Spanish civilization. Tomás de la Plaza was known to be a humanist, a person who studied classical literature and culture, which explains his choice of the classical style for his residence.

With Spanish colonization underway, wealthy Spanish colonizers adopted the urban palatial residences found in Italy and Spain. Such palaces were built for high-ranking clerics and even some Indigenous noble families who enjoyed privileges for having fought alongside Spanish forces against the Mexica. Residences of the elite class formed part of the urban fabric in towns such as Puebla, where the religious and civil buildings designed along classical (ancient Greek and Roman) lines embodied the concept of *urbanitas*, or urban refinement and decorum. Spanish colonizers viewed the city as the site of their "civilizing" efforts.



Figure 2.2.5.3: While the facade displays some Classical elements, such as the pediments over the windows and doors, others, like the tracery on the windows on top, are of medieval origin. Juan Guas, Palacio del Infantado, 1480, Guadalajara, Spain

Like their prototypes in Italy and Spain, these renaissance palaces were used to to flaunt the magnificence and political weight of the urban elite. In Spain, while many palaces display a classicizing renaissance style, there is also the influence of plateresque, mudéjar, and **gothic ornamentation**.



Figure **2.2.5.4**: The facade of Casa de Montejo, 1540–50, Mérida, Yucatán, Mexico. The facade displays Plateresque motifs, identifiable in the intricate lace and vegetative ornaments, mixed with classical attached columns and pilasters. Of note is the violent character of the sculptures representing Spanish conquistadors standing on disembodied heads, a symbol of colonial subjugation. The Montejo family crest of arms is visible at the center of the upper body. (photo: Inri, CC0)

The urban palaces built in New Spain likewise displayed a mixture of classicizing, plateresque, mudéjar, and gothic ornamentation on their façades. Few examples of those *palacios* from the 16th century remain in present-day Mexico, and one of the most remarkable examples is the Casa del Dean.



Figure **2.2.5.5**: Map of Puebla showing the location of the Cathedral and the Casa del Deán. The yellow box is what remains of the Casa today (© Google)

An urban residential palace in Puebla

The Spanish-born, high-ranking cleric named Tomás de la Plaza was the Dean of Puebla's Cathedral Chapter and held important administrative roles. The design of the Dean's House façade is attributed to the Spanish architect Francisco Becerra, who had come from Spain to design buildings that signaled the Spanish Catholic presence, including Puebla's impressive new cathedral—a project De la Plaza was also involved with. Becerra was well-trained in classically-informed architecture, which he had practiced since he was a young man in his native Extremadura.



Figure **2.2.5.6**: Attributed to Francisco Becerra, façade of the Casa del Dean, 16th century, Puebla, Mexico (photo: Lauren Kilroy-Ewbank)



Figure **2.2.5.7**: Sebastiano Serlio, Book 2 of *The Book of Architecture*, published by Jean Barbé, 1544 (The Metropolitan Museum of Art)

De la Plaza (the Dean) may have asked Becerra to remodel an existing building he had acquired. Becerra's design for the entry portal possesses a sense of rhythm and repetition that lends the building a coherent sense of order (although it has been disrupted in its present state).

The balconies we see today were originally windows and the lower floor entries have changed in their dimensions and forms (see hypothetical reconstruction).



Figure 2.2.5.8: A hypothetical reconstruction of Casa del Deán in the late 16th century. Of note are the windows, which were transformed into balconies and the tower seen on the left side of the elevation. The ground floor entries and windows have also been extensively altered over the centuries (drawing by Trevor Wood, hypothetical reconstruction by Juan L. Burke)

The palace also demonstrates the important role that classical architectural principles had among some elite, intellectual Spaniards who participated in the colonial enterprise. The residence portal of the Casa del Dean reminds us of Sebastiano Serlio's popular 16th-century treatise, *The Book of Architecture*, that borrowed from classical architecture and ideas, and which would influence a great deal of architecture throughout the Spanish Americas.



Figure 2.2.5.9: Attributed to Francisco Becerra, façade of the Casa del Dean, 16th century, Puebla, Mexico (photo: Lauren Kilroy-Ewbank)

The lower level of the portal consists of an entry flanked by two engaged Doric columns on pedestals. The columns are fluted and sit below a robust entablature, which carries the second-story balcony. This second story balcony is fitted with a pair of rusticated jambs and lintels that are flanked by engaged and fluted columns with Ionic capitals. These columns support a cartouche of Tomás de la Plaza's family coat of arms (now partially missing). The frieze displays the words *Plaça Decanus* (Plaza, the Dean), and the building's year of completion, 1580. Flanking the upper-level balcony are two ogee windows, characterized by having a cusped lintel. These windows are complemented by classical pediments above them. Each pediment at Casa del Deán displays a sculpted scallop shell at its center—a possible sign of devotion, on behalf of de la Plaza, to St. James, the patron saint of Spain. Each window is crowned by an elegant finial.

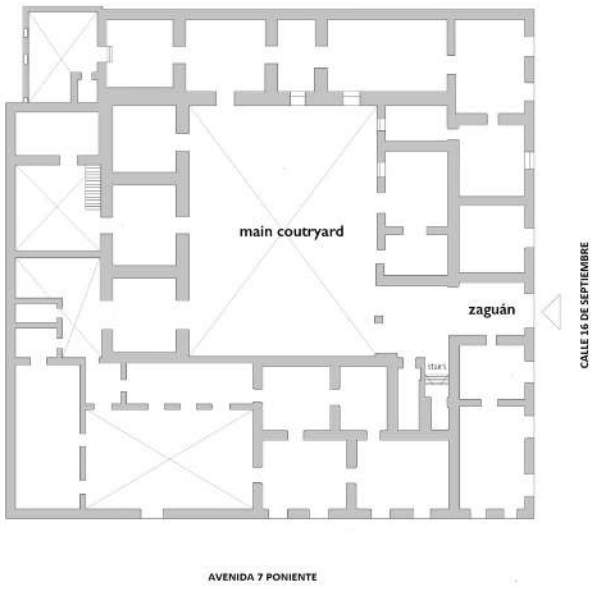


Figure **2.2.5.10**: Plan of the first floor of the Casa del Dean (before the 1953), 16th century, Puebla, Mexico (plan adapted from: YoelResidente, CC BY-SA 4.0)

From this doorway, a person walked into a covered vestibule space (known in Spanish as *zaguán)* that led into an open courtyard, encircled by a series of rooms on two levels. At Casa del Deán, the stairs were at the left hand of the main entry. The lower level was used for storage, to house horses, and for service spaces; sometimes lower-level rooms were rented out to shopkeepers or artisans. The upper level was known as the *piano nobile*, an Italian term that designates the living spaces of a residence. It included bedrooms, a living room, a kitchen, and sometimes even a small chapel. At Casa del Deán, the only two extant rooms were probably a living or dining room, and another one may have been a a study room.



Figure **2.2.5.11**: Murals of sibyls on horseback holding standards. From left to right the sibyls are Cumana, Delphica and Hellespontica. North wall, Hall of the Sibyls, the Casa del Dean, 16th century, Puebla, Mexico (photo: Lauren Kilroy-Ewbank)

The Casa del Deán's murals

Besides its architecture, the most intriguing aspect of the Casa del Deán is its murals. In each of its two surviving halls, there is a cycle of mural paintings done in **tempera**, each one with a specific program and visual imagery. The Hall of the Sibyls is based on the figures of the Greek oracles that, during the renaissance period, were understood as pre-Christian prophetesses who predicted the coming of Jesus. The sibyls are depicted at Casa del Deán in a processional cycle, all of them riding on horseback. in the ancient Hellenic world, the sibyls were considered to be itinerant, which means they traveled from town to town performing their divinations, and this probably explains the reason they were represented on horseback at Casa del Deán. Each sibyl is holding a standard (type of flag) and a symbol or emblem of their prophecies. All are elaborately dressed, and their procession takes place against a picturesque landscape of rolling hills, patches of woods, bodies of water, mountains, and hamlets. These pastoral environments were referred to as a *locus amoenus*, a phrase in Latin meaning "beautiful place," a common setting for classical literature and art in the pre-modern era. Framing the sibyls' procession, at the top and bottom, are two elaborate horizontal friezes, in which putti mingle with birds, fruits, flowers, and vines, a veritable representation of a garden of delights.

Each of of the sibyls' names are inscribed next to them, although some names became illegible over time, and their identities are now unclear. There are twelve visible sibyls in total, and each one carries a standard revealing their prophesies, which are all related to the coming, life, crucifixion, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. The sibyl that starts the procession is called the Synagogue sybil, so-named because she represents the Old Testament. She is followed by the Erithrean sybil, who prophesied the Annunciation, and behind her is the Samian sybil, who prophesied the Nativity, and so on, ending the procession with a sybil whose name has been erased, who most likely prophesied the Ascension of Christ to the heavens.



Figure **2.2.5.12**: The left (south) wall shows the Triumph of Eternity, the center (west) wall shows the Triumph of Love, and the right (east) wall, not visible here, shows the Triumph of Chastity. Murals of sibyls or horseback holding standards, Hall of the Triumphs, the Casa del Dean, 16th century, Puebla, Mexico (photo: Lauren Kilroy-Ewbank)

The other hall contains a representation of the narrative poem, *Triumphs* (c.1351) by the Italian poet and humanist Petrarch, that was much admired in the late medieval and renaissance eras. The essence of the poem spoke of a transition from sin to Christian salvation. Petrarch populated the poem with a series of allegorical figures—Love, Chastity, Death, Fame, Time, and Eternity—that later artists often represented as a series of triumphal carts, pulled by horses, stags, or fantastical creatures such as unicorns. The murals in this room display a version of those allegorical figures in their carts.

The triumph represented in the figure above, a chariot pulled by two white unicorns, represents the Triumph of Chastity or Virtuosity. Unicorns were, in the European medieval period, considered to be a symbol of virtuosity too, an animal which was believed to be real but elusive and of a shy nature. The chariot is driven by a young female. The young woman is Laura, the love of Petrach to whom he dedicated the Triumphs. Laura is also, in this case, the embodiment of virtuosity or chastity. The women

behind the chariot carry a palm in their hands, a symbol of victory in the ancient world. The embodiment of chastity carries a palm too, together with a torch, a symbol in the ancient world of a condition of enlightenment or purification.

The triumphant chariot driven by Laura can be seen running over a pair of people, a man dressed as a monk and a woman. The monk could represent Petrarch himself, who was a canon, a post of lesser rank in the Catholic Church. Petrarch made a vow of chastity but was still believed to have fathered two children. The woman in the picture could be interpreted as Eve herself, a symbol of the loss of virtuosity in Christian symbolism. This mixture of pagan (ancient classical) and Christian symbols interacting together is an interesting aspect of the representation of the Triumphs at the Casa del Deán.



Figure **2.2.5.13**: Murals of the Casa del Dean, Hall of the Sibyls, 16th century, Puebla, Mexico (photo: Lauren Kilroy-Ewbank)

Some interesting aspects of the murals are contained in the details and the backgrounds. For instance, in both halls the murals depict vistas that are reminiscent of Northern European landscape painting.



Figure **2.2.5.14**: Paired monkeys, murals of the Casa del Dean, Hall of the Sibyls, 16th century, Puebla, Mexico (photo: Juan Luis Burke)



Figure **2.2.5.15**: Monkey scribe, murals of the Casa del Dean, 16th century, Puebla, Mexico (photo: Lauren Kilroy-Ewbank)

However, even if at first glance the murals at the Dean's House are reminiscent of European art, details reveal the Indigenous background of the artists. For one, many of the animals depicted in the mural cycles are native to the Americas, such as monkeys, jaguars, opossums, coyotes, and javelinas, and they reveal traces of Amerindian iconography.

In the Hall of the Triumphs we find further evidence of the Indigenous origin of the artists, such as representations of animals in cartouches (with anthropomorphic attributes), which are shown in a series of roles, such as scribes, musicians, or dancers.



Figure **2.2.5.16**: A detail of a monkey in the Codex Borgia, c. 1500 (Vatican Library)

Interestingly, monkeys were held in very high regard by Mesoamerican cultures. The eleventh day of calendar was symbolized by a monkey and in some mythical narratives, like the Popol Vuh, monkeys were considered closely related to humans. In contrast,

medieval Europeans considered monkeys to represent sin and debauchery. It is telling how, at Casa del Deán, monkeys are depicted carrying out human-like behaviors and in the friezes are seen with the characteristically Mesoamerican symbol of the spoken word (which looks like a little cloud close to the character's mouth). Additionally, the monkeys depicted at Casa del Deán share many similarities with Mesoamerican depictions of these animals in pre-Hispanic or early post-Conquest documents, like the **Borgia Codex**.

We also see the presence of Indigenous objects, such as a jaguar depicted as a warrior holding a *macuáhuitl* (an Indigenous mallet used as a weapon) and a typical pre-Hispanic round shield.



Figure **2.2.5.17**: Murals of the Casa del Dean, 16th century, Puebla, Mexico (photo: Lauren Kilroy-Ewbank)

Penny Morrill has argued that the artists at work in the Casa del Deán might have trained at a Franciscan monastery in the Puebla-Tlaxcala region. [1] De la Plaza, who arrived to New Spain at the age of 19, traveled the territories that comprise present-day Oaxaca and Puebla states extensively as a missionary, where he may have acquired an affection and appreciation for native cultures, which he subtly displayed in his home's murals. Additionally, it is worthwhile to note that de la Plaza, like many educated colonialists, might have had access to prints, which were a common visual source utilized by Indigenous artists to recreate European aesthetics and visual forms.

An important architectural relic

The Casa del Dean responded to notions of magnificence and decorum (the idea that individual buildings contribute to the beauty and magnificence of a city), while reaffirming the social standing of the residence's owner and the cultural values that he stood for. The murals in the residence's private spaces also responded to the intellectual and theological concerns of de la Plaza. The influence of Indigenous artistic styles and the presence of native cultural symbols in the frescoes is important, because in colonial societies, the colonized groups—as was the case with the Indigenous peoples of Mexico—were not often allowed to flaunt or display their cultural values, most often deemed inferior and undesirable by the colonizers. On the other hand, the Casa del Deán testifies to the importance of renaissance classicism and **humanist culture in New Spain**, and Puebla in particular, as part of the belief system of the Spanish colonizers and the values they upheld in the cities they established in the Americas.

Notes:

[1] Penny C. Morrill, *The Casa Del Deán: New World Imagery in a Sixteenth-Century Mexican Mural Cycle* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2014).

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2.2.6.1: Mission churches as theaters of conversion in New Spain

by *DR. MAYA JIMÉNEZ*

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Figure **2.2.6.1.1**: Ex Convento de Tepoztlán dedicated to the Virgin of the Nativity. The Tepoztlán Ex Convento Museum was built by the Tepoztecan Indians under the orders of the Dominican friars between 1555 and 1580 (photo: **Gunnar Wolf**, CC BY-SA 3.0)

In the **Viceroyalty of New Spain**, the Roman Catholic Church was an important—if not *the* most important—art patron, commissioning churches, altarpieces, paintings, and sculptures, a result of the system of Royal Patronage (*Patronato Real*), which granted the Spanish Crown unprecedented privileges in Church affairs in exchange for Spain's funding of missionary ventures abroad (this was a unique system in Europe). The colonization of New Spain therefore worked in favor of both the Crown's imperialist and material aspirations, and the Church's desire to evangelize local indigenous populations.

These goals were accomplished largely through the work of missionaries and mission churches, as well as through an active artistic program that initiated the construction of new buildings and art schools that trained Amerindians in the art of painting, sculpture, and even cartography. Royal Patronage also meant that colonial authorities exercised considerable power over the Church in New Spain, controlling church appointments, revenues, and architectural programs.

The importance of mission churches



Figure **2.2.6.1.2**: Diego Valadés, illustration of preaching to the indigenous population in New Spain, from *Rhetorica christiana ad concionandi et orandi vsvm accommodata*, 1579 (**Houghton Library, Harvard University**)

The Christianization of the Americas began in 1537, following the papal bull *Sublimis Deus*, through which Pope Paul III declared that the native populations were in fact human beings with souls and the intellectual potential to understand the tenets of Christianity, and thus were not subject to enslavement (prior to this moment they had been considered savage and even demonic by the Church).

This religious fervor grew even more severe in 1545, when the Council of Trent convened in response to the rising threat of Protestantism, a new form of Christianity that emerged in the sixteenth century as a reformed version of Roman Catholicism. In response to the **Protestant Reformation**, the Council of Trent launched a global campaign—known as the **Counter-Reformation**—that reaffirmed Roman Catholic beliefs and teachings. One of the results of this effort was that religious institutions like churches, monasteries, and convents were expected to play an active role in expanding their congregations and expounding the values of Roman Catholics through the proliferation of religious spaces.



Figure **2.2.6.1.3**: Mural depicting the first twelve Franciscan monks in Mexico in the Sala de Profundis, Ex-Convento of San Miguel Arcángel, Huejotzingo, Puebla, Mexico, constructed 1526-70 (photo: **AlejandroLinaresGarcia**, CC BY-SA 4.0)

From 1523 to 1580, many religious orders arrived in New Spain, among them the Dominicans, Franciscans, Augustinians, and Jesuits. Determined to convert the native people and expand the congregation, friars built mission churches, also called *conventos***,** in indigenous communities, such as the Franciscan **Church of San Miguel in Huejotzingo** (above) and the Augustinian Church of San Salvador in Malinalco (below).



Figure **2.2.6.1.4**: Ex Convento of Divino Salvador, Malinalco, constructed 1540-60. Left: entrance and belltower (photo: **AlejandroLinaresGarcia**, CC BY-SA 3.0); right: cloister murals (photo: **Karen Apricot**, CC BY-SA 2.0)

These mission churches, which followed a similar architectural plan but varied in terms of decoration, are among the earliest examples of colonial architecture—a testimony to the importance given to missionary work within the Viceroyalty of New Spain. A religious militia of sorts, the friars not only empowered the Church, but also facilitated the colonization of New Spain without the use of a standing army.

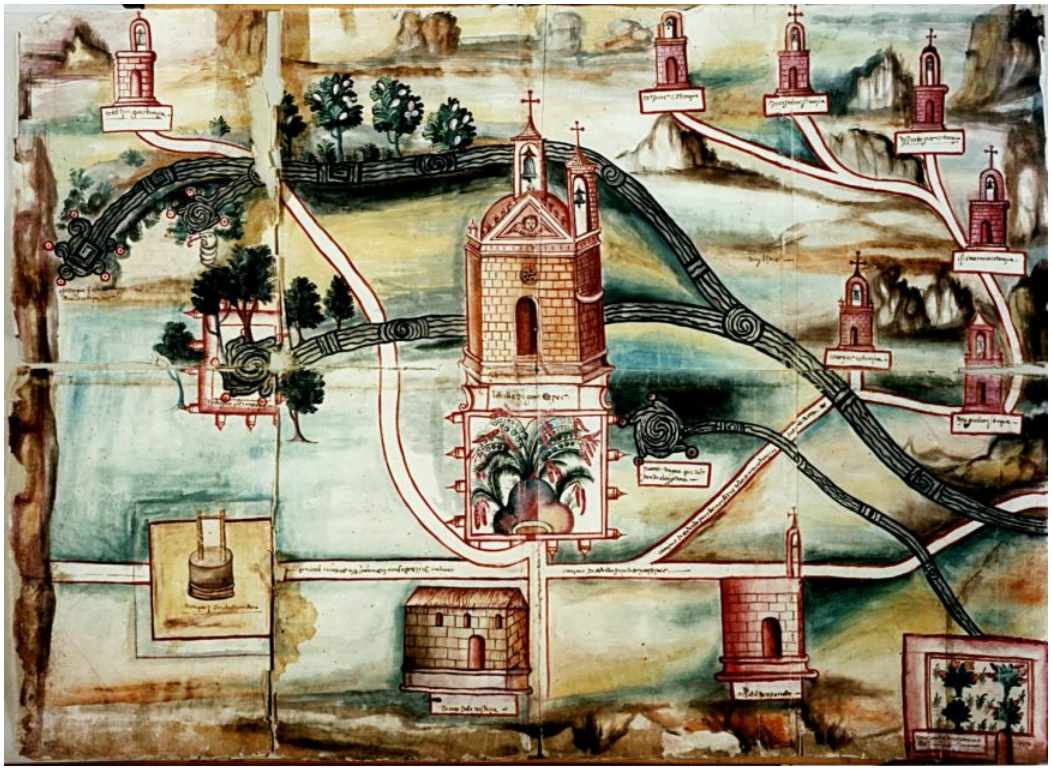


Figure **2.2.6.1.5**: Map of Oaxtepec, September 24, 1580, ink and pigments on European paper, 62 x 85 cm (Benson Latin American Collection, University of Texas at Austin)

Colonial maps like the *Map of Oaxtepec* reiterate the importance of mission churches. Here, the *convento*, identified by the large *patio* (courtyard), appears as the nucleus of the community. Near the edges of the map, and connected through a network of roads, the artist depicts seven additional churches. Their identical appearance suggests that they are meant as symbols for "church," rather than visualizations of how these spaces actually looked. [1] This repetition reinforces the firm presence and power of the Roman Catholic Church in New Spain.



Figure **2.2.6.1.6**: Pedro de Gante, page from *Catecismo de la doctrina cristiana*, a pictorial catechism used to teach indigenous converts, 16th century (**Biblioteca Nacional de España**)

The Franciscan Mission in New Spain

Franciscans were among the earliest monks to arrive in New Spain, including the three prominent Flemish Franciscans Peeter van der Moere of Ghent (a.k.a. Pedro de Gante), Jehan der Auwera (a.k.a. Juan de Aora), and Johan Dekkers or de Toict (a.k.a. Juan de Tecto). For monks, the first order of business was to begin construction on mission churches that functioned as "theaters of conversion," as art historian Samuel Y. Edgerton refers to them, since they served as sites of theatrical performances and processions that merged both pre-Hispanic and Christian rituals. [2] In preparation for this process of conversion, monks—particularly Franciscans—would learn the languages and cultures of the local populations, allowing them to integrate indigenous names, iconography, and customs into the Christian practices of New Spain. The most powerful of didactic tools, however, were visual aids that helped overcome the challenges of illiteracy and language barriers.



Figure **2.2.6.1.7**: Ex Convento de San Miguel, Huejotzingo, constructed 1526-70 (photo: **Airvillanueva**, CC BY-SA 3.0)

The exterior of the Franciscan mission **Church of San Miguel in Huejotzingo** serves as an exemplar of the importance of designing a proper space of conversion. Featuring high, thick walls topped by crenellations, the church appears—at least from the exterior—as a type of fortress. This design might have suggested the permanence of these Christian missions in New Spain. Monks came and went, but the church and its congregation remained. The design might have also alluded to the belief that Christian monks were the soldiers of God—though such associations might have been lost on the indigenous population.



Figure **2.2.6.1.8**: Exterior wall and northwest *posa* chapel, Ex Convento de San Miguel, Huejotzingo, constructed 1526-70 (photo: **AlejandroLinaresGarcia**, CC BY-SA 3.0)

Unique characteristics

The *convento* was, in and of itself, a foreign concept. Therefore, the fact that these churches were built by indigenous masons and often times in an indigenous style helped to further legitimize the idea of the *convento* as part of their local community. A unique characteristic of Mexican *conventos* was the creation of open spaces, like the *capilla india*, used to address large native crowds, and the smaller *posa* chapels in the corners of the atrium (typically found in Franciscan churches), used for ritual processions involving portable altars. While the creation of these outdoor spaces solved the problem of accommodating the growing population of converted Christians, it resonated among the natives who, during the pre-Columbian period, performed dances and rituals in walled outdoor spaces, recalling the open-air layout of the ***Templo Mayor*** in the Aztec capital city of Tenochtitlan.



Figure **2.2.6.1.9**: Reliefs, northwest *posa* chapel, Ex Convento de San Miguel, Huejotzingo, constructed 1526-70 (photo: **PetrohsW**, CC BY-SA 4.0)

As was typical of Franciscan mission churches, the Church of San Miguel includes four *posa* chapels, each located in a corner of the perfectly squared *patio*. Above the archway, relief sculptures of angels appear inside a knotted cord, a reference to the habits of the Franciscan monks, who each tied a cord around their waist. Above these angels, four shields contain the emblems of the Franciscan order. The distinctive pyramidal roof is another common trait of *posa* chapels.



Figure **2.2.6.1.10**: Atrial Cross, Convento of San Agustín de Acolman, mid-16th century (photo: **Dr. Steven Zucker**, CC BY-NC-SA 2.0)

Sculpture and painting in *conventos*

Found in *conventos* of different religious orders, atrial crosses were sculpted stone crosses displayed in courtyards, such as the one found at the **Convento of San Agustín de Acolman**. They usually represented the instruments of Christ's passion in relief**,** thus avoiding the need to represent the actual Crucifixion. By avoiding a realistic depiction of Christ's sacrifice, the early missionaries were intentionally de-emphasizing the existing ideas about human sacrifice prevalent in Mesoamerican cultures.



Figure **2.2.6.1.11**: Crucifixion, San Agustín de Acolman murals, c. 1560-90, large cloister of the Ex Convento of San Agustín de Acolman (photo: **Dr. Steven Zucker**, CC BY-NC-SA 2.0)

At the Convento of San Agustín de Acolman, one can also find a series of fresco paintings that detail the Passion of Christ through a narrative sequence. Indigenous artists, who were most likely looking at religious prints imported from Europe, created **these**

frescoes, with their sparse composition and limited color palette. Much like the atrial cross, these murals functioned as didactic tools that gave visual clarity to an otherwise complex narrative, and borrowed from both Christian and native practices.

Carefully combining local and foreign practices, these mission churches created a unique colonial iconography and architecture that is indebted as much to Amerindians as it is to Europeans. While *conventos* served to first congregate and convert locals during the early decades of colonization, they largely fell out of favor by the end of the sixteenth century. Yet despite their demise, Catholicism continued to flourish in New Spain, and even after independence.

Footnotes:

1. Barbara Mundy, *The Mapping of New Spain: Indigenous Cartography and the Maps of the Relaciones Geográficas*, (Univeristy of Chicago Press, 1996), p. 79.
2. Samuel Y. Edgarton, *Theaters of Conversion: Religious Architecture and Indian Artisans in Colonial Mexico* (University of New Mexico Press, 2001).

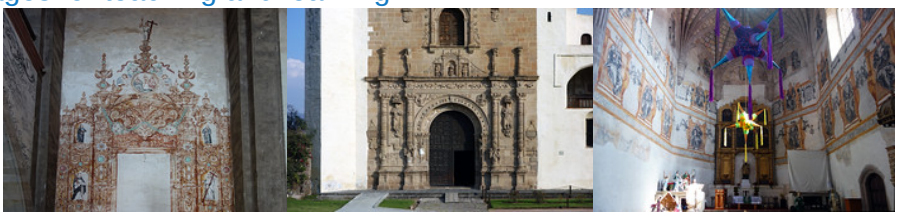
Additional resources:

"Surveying Political Force," essay on politics and the Church in New Spain from *Vistas*

The original Papal Bull of 1537

Official pages for the Ex Convento of San Agustin de Acolman and Ex Convento de San Miguel, Huejotzingo (in Spanish) from INAH (Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia)

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2.2.6.2: St. Michael the Archangel in Huejotzingo

by DR. EMMANUEL ORTEGA

Page ID
179573



Figure **2.2.6.2.1**: Portada del Convento Franciscano Huejotzingo, c. 1520s – 1530s, Huejotzingo, Puebla, Mexico (photo: **C. Garza**, CC BY-SA 2.5)

In 1994, UNESCO (The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization) named the earliest sixteenth-century Mexican monasteries found on the slopes of the Popocatepetl volcano in central Mexico a World Heritage Site. These fourteen monasteries define the history of Christian evangelization for much of Mexico's colonial period (1521–1821). One of these monasteries is the Franciscan mission of St. Michael the Archangel in Huejotzingo, twenty-three miles outside the city of Puebla.

Temple fortress

When building the mission of Huejotzingo, the friar-architects likely envisioned themselves constructing a new temple of Jerusalem, an expression of the westward expansion of Christianity.



Figure **2.2.6.2.2**: Convento de Huejotzingo, estado de Puebla (México). Vista lateral de la iglesia, con la Puerta de la Porciúncula, c. 1520s – 1530s, Huejotzingo, Puebla, Mexico (photo: **Manuel de Corselas**, CC BY-SA 3.0)

The monasteries constructed between the 1520s and 1550s may have also been designed with a second purpose in mind, to defend monks from attacks by unconverted local and regional populations. However the fortress-like appearance of these missions is now generally accepted as reflecting earlier representations of the temple of Jerusalem in western art.

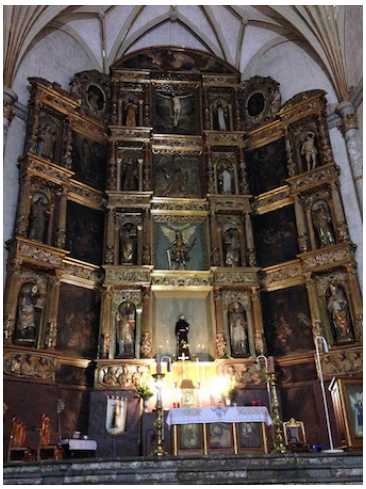


Figure 2.2.6.2.3: Simon Pereyns, Altar of Church of Huejotzingo, late 16th century, Huejotzingo, Puebla, Mexico (photo: Fernando_c6, CC BY-NC-SA 2.0)

The Franciscan monastery of Huejotzingo is a landmark in the development of sixteenth-century art in central Mexico. Huejotzingo's impressive church façade displays a variety of Spanish architectural styles while the church as a whole contains a consistent theological program. Most prominent is the church's retablo (altarpiece). It was painted by the Flemish artist Simon Pereyns and is located in the mission church. It displays aspects of Mannerism, a style that remained influential in colonial México for almost a hundred years.

Posas

Among the church's most important architectural features are a group of four open-air chapels known as *posas* located in each of the corners of the monastery's atrium. They are among the best preserved in all of Mexico and exemplify the practice of outdoor spiritual teaching that was so much a part of the process of colonization. In the Franciscan mission at Huejotzingo, a new visual language representing spiritual conversion is evident when the visitor crosses the threshold of the *posas.*



Figure 2.2.6.2.4: North West Posa, mid to late 16th century, Huejotzingo, Puebla, Mexico (photo: **Alejandro Linares Garcia**, CC BY-SA 3.0)

The posas are vaulted in the interior, capped by a pyramid-like structure, and adorned with crosses on their pinnacles. The structures are accessible through arches on two adjacent sides to allow processions to move through unimpeded. Each posa measures seventeen feet across and are twice as high. They are constructed of stone, like the rest of Huejotzingo. However, their historical significance is principally the result of how Mesoamerican religious practices were implemented here for the purpose of mass spiritual conquest.

The position of the chapels in the atrium's corners allowed for a large number of people to participate in dramatic daily liturgical processions. The interiors of the *posas* were decorated with frescoes that included themes of the Immaculate Conception of the Virgin Mary and the Last Judgment. These images would have intensified the emotional effects of spiritual salvation and condemnation for recent indigenous converts. *Posas* were most likely adaptations of *tremezzi*, which date back to fourteenth-century Italian religious architecture. A tremezzo was a bridge and porch-like form that spanned across a church nave. Its purpose was to shelter altars, and was used as a stage for preaching and dramatic enactments. In addition to any possible European architectural forerunners, one must also consider Mesoamerican precedents. For instance, *posas* resemble *callis* ("house" in Nahuatl, an indigenous language of Central Mexico), which were rectangular and open on one side, and Aztec temple houses, which were erected atop pyramids (*teocalli*).



Figure **2.2.6.2.5**: Atrium wall, mid to late 16th century, Huejotzingo, Puebla, Mexico (photo: **Alejandro Linares Garcia**, CC BY-SA 3.0)

Posas allowed for conversion to take place outside the main church. While this may have been done for practical purposes, pre-Columbian Mexican spiritual ceremonies also took place out of doors. Worshippers were accustomed to gathering in open courtyards to listen to priest-rulers. Another example of the fusion of Christian and indigenous spiritual meaning is presented by the pyramidal shape of the chapels' roofs, which were surmounted by highly ornate crosses. Crosses were important symbols for water, fertility, and sustenance prior to the arrival of the Spaniards. Non-Christian, pre-Columbian crosses were often created out of trees and represented the Tree of Life in various rituals. In mission spaces such as Huejotzingo, crosses became a powerful symbol for the source of spiritual life shared by Europeans and indigenous peoples alike. They were placed in the center of monastery atriums as a symbol of the Christian and indigenous *axis mundis* (world axis). The crosses that topped the posas, of which only the example from below survives, were modeled with similar didactic functions as the large atrium crosses that decorated most sixteenth-century missions in this region. They were carved with a fusion of Mesoamerican and European symbols, offering natives an opportunity to learn about Christ's life, death, and resurrection through familiar regional motifs.



Figure 2.2.6.2.6: Surviving Posa Cross, mid to late 16th century, San Miguel Arcangel monastery, Huejotzingo, Puebla, Mexico (photo: **Alejandro Linares Garcia**, CC BY-SA 3.0)

Huejotzingo's *Posa Cross* has a serpentine base that resembles Christ's crown of thorns, and the wounds of Christ's Passion (the stigmata) are shown through carved circles that drip blood in the form of grape clusters (or, perhaps maize cobs, if one considers a possible indigenous meaning). The stigmata were not only representations of Christ's Passion, but in this context, also the miraculous stigmatization of St. Francis, the patron saint of the Franciscan order. Above the open sides of the posas, which are framed by a relief of the order's knotted rope cord, appear four Franciscan Order shields, containing five grape clusters, reiterating the stigmata iconography (wine from grapes miraculously becomes the blood of Christ during the Eucharist).

Posa façade iconography

On every arch, two apocalyptic angels hover within an *alfiz*. This is a term borrowed from Mozarabic architecture and it is used to describe the relief details that surround the perimeters of an arch. In Huejotzingo's *posas*, the *alfiz* is carved to resemble a knotted Franciscan cord. Each angel holds a different Instrument of the Passion (or the *Arma Christi*), announcing the sacred battle against pagan forces. Above the keystone, we see an emblem of the Virgin Mary capped by a crowned cross. The posa carvings communicate the unifying suffering of Saint Francis and Christ.



Figure 2.2.6.2.7: Angels in relief on the south side of the NW corner atrium chapel dedicated to Santiago, mid to late 16th century, monastery of San Miguel Arcangel, Huejotzingo, Puebla, Mexico (photo: **Alejandro Linares Garcia**, CC BY-SA 3.0)

The carving style of the dynamic hovering angels is at times described as Romanesque, Gothic, Tequitqui, or Indo-Christian.[1] Many sculpted and frescoed details from this period can be traced to Northern European prints while the overall theological program was

most likely envisioned by people like friar Pedro de Gante whose indigenous art school in Mexico City trained the artists that created this and other important sixteenth-century monuments.



Figure **2.2.6.2.8**: Angel holding the crown of thorns (detail), North East Posa, mid to late 16th century, Huejotzingo, Puebla, Mexico

Huejotzingo's *posas* constitute a blend of Christian and indigenous Mesoamerican symbols that established a message of evangelization that achieved new levels of success.

1. "Tequitqui is a term "meaning 'laborer' or 'tribute payer' in Nahuatl, used by 20th-century scholars to describe the sculpture and architectural decoration created in New Spain in the sixteenth century…" Leibsohn, Dana, Barbara Mundy, "**Vistas: Visual Culture in Spanish America, 1520-1820**."

Additional resources:

The sixteenth century: Age of the conventos

Mexico: Colonial Architecture

Jaime Lara, *City, Temple, Stage: Eschatological Architecture and Liturgical Theatrics in New Spai*n (Notre Dame, Ind: University of Notre Dame Press, 2004).

Richard Perry, *Mexico's Fortress Monasteries* (Espadaña Press: Santa Barbara California, 1992).

Eleanor Wake, *Framing the Sacred: The Indian Churches of Early Colonial Mexico* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2010).

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2.2.6.3: The Convento of San Nicolás de Tolentino, Actopan, Hidalgo

by ANA PERRY

Page ID
179574



Figure **2.2.6.3.1**: View of stairway murals, Convento de San Nicolás de Tolentino, 1546 and after, Actopan, Hidalgo, Mexico (photo: **ismael villafranco**, CC BY 2.0)

Immediately after the Conquest, Spanish colonizers set about the task of imposing Spanish culture, customs, and religion upon the native populations in New Spain (a Spanish colony that was comprised of what is now parts of the Caribbean, Mexico, Central America, and the southwestern United States up to northern California). One of the most important steps in this process was the conversion of the indigenous peoples to Christianity and the elimination of their religious beliefs—beliefs the Spaniards considered idolatry. Three different monastic orders arrived in New Spain to help convert indigenous populations: the Franciscans in 1524, Dominicans in 1526, and Augustinians in 1533. All three monastic orders were mendicants (monks who had taken vows of poverty). The orders directed the construction of *conventos* (conversion centers or missions)—built with the forced labor of indigenous peoples—where they would simultaneously celebrate the triumphs of Christianity and seek to destroy pagan practices. This process was supported by the construction of elaborate decorative schemes—often murals—that could visually express the word of God.

The Convento of San Nicolás de Tolentino



Figure **2.2.6.3.2**: Façade of convent church and convent, San Nicolás de Tolentino, 1546 and after, Actopan, Hidalgo, Mexico (photo: **SAHER**, CC BY-SA 3.0)

The murals in the stairwell and open chapel at the Convento San Nicolás de Tolentino in Actopan, a town in Hidalgo, Mexico, offer a unique view into early conversion practices and artistic projects in the decades immediately following the Spanish Conquest in 1521. They were painted in the mid-sixteenth century during the early colonial period of New Spain. The Augustinian friars were

particularly concerned with the area around San Nicolás de Tolentino because they feared that continued resistance to Catholicism would lead the local indigenous Hñahñu/Otomí people to join with the nomadic Chichimecas who were particularly hostile to Spanish colonizers.

As a result, local Augustinians launched an aggressive conversion campaign to eradicate native beliefs and enforce religious conformity. This campaign included the creation of elaborate murals throughout the *convento* that illustrate the benefits of Christianity and the ramifications of continuing idolatrous practices. For example, the stairwell murals of the cloister (an open space surrounded by covered walkways) as well as in the open chapel (located on the side of the church) show the virtues of the Augustinian friar who acts against idolatry as well as the evils of sin and Satan.



Figure **2.2.6.3.3**: Augustinian heroes (detail), stairway murals, Convent of San Nicolás de Tolentino, 1546 and after, Actopan, Hidalgo, Mexico (photo: **Abdeelyanez**, CC BY-SA 3.0)

The murals on the stairway walls

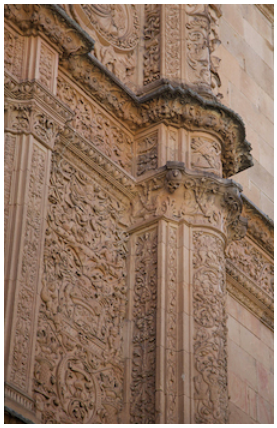


Figure **2.2.6.3.4**: Plateresque style façade (detail), University of Salamanca, 1415 and after, Spain (photo: **markjhandel**, CC BY 2.0)

Black-and-white murals depicting Augustinian heroes (in other words, esteemed figures from the Augustinian tradition) cover every wall of the interior stairs at San Nicolás de Tolentino (above). The walls are divided into five horizontal tiers that rise up the two-story hall. Each tier contains an image of an arcade (a covered walkway with arches) of plateresque pilasters (below). The style is named for its affinity with silver work (*plata* means silver in Spanish). The plateresque style was common on architectural façades throughout Spain beginning in the 15th century and can be found on a number of institutions devoted to higher education, like the University of Salamanca in Spain (left). That the Augustinians would use the plateresque style makes sense given the order's historical ties to education and intellectual pursuits. In fact, many distinguished Augustinians were professors of philosophy and theology at some of the greatest universities in Europe. In the murals, Augustinian heroes are shown sitting beside desks, either

reading or writing (below). Several of the figures face the viewer with pens held up, as if we have caught them in mid-thought, emphasizing their roles as intellectuals and scholars and suggesting a sense of immediacy.



Figure **2.2.6.3.56**: Augustinian heroes (esteemed figures) at desks (detail), stairway murals, Convent of San Nicolás Tolentino, 1546 and after, Actopan, Hidalgo, Mexico (photo: **linkogecko**, CC BY-NC-ND 2.0)

One section of the stair mural veers from the intellectual and scholarly model (below). It shows friar Martín de Acevedo on the far left (possibly the author of the mural program), and two indigenous men named Don Juan Atocpa and Don Pedro Izquicuitlapico (possibly patrons of the program). The three figures kneel and pray towards a small statue of the crucifixion in an outdoor setting. This scene emphasizes the potential for salvation and celebrates the converted indigenous men as a part of the convent.



Figure **2.2.6.3.6**: Friar Martín de Acevedo, Don Juan Atocpa, and Don Pedro Izquicuitlapico (detail), stairway murals, Convent of San Nicolás Tolentino, 1546 and after, Actopan, Hidalgo, Mexico

The influence of European prints



Figure **2.2.6.3.7**: Hans Springinklee, *St. Jerome*, 1522, woodcut, 23.5 x 18.1 cm (The British Museum)

The artist's method of depicting the seated heroes on a gridded floor framed in an arcade (see image above) demonstrates the influence of European prints (left). Prints imported from Europe had become useful in the evangelization process. Friars used them as educational tools and as artistic models. In the absence of paintings or models with color, the murals maintained the grayscale palette so commonly found in prints. Since few European artists came to the Spanish viceroyalty in the sixteenth century, prints served as an opportunity to import European cultural and artistic practices and establish the superiority of Euro-Christian traditions.

The murals in the open chapel

In contrast to the mural paintings of the stair hall, the open chapel includes brightly colored narrative murals depicting scenes of sin and the Last Judgment (in the Christian tradition, the final and eternal judgment by God of all peoples). The architectural form of open chapels in early sixteenth-century missions varied, but they often took the form of an apse (the semi-circular area that surrounds an altar in a church) or arcaded porch that faced an atrium (an open plaza). The open chapels, which contained altars, were always located outside so many people could congregate in front of them. In this way, a large audience could see the altar during the celebration of mass or other religious events.



Figure **2.2.6.3.8**: Open chapel, Convent of San Nicolás Tolentino, 1546 and after, Actopan, Hidalgo, Mexico (photo: **maelvillafranco**, CC BY 2.0)

In the open chapel, friars also preached to a large indigenous audience to carry out their conversion practices. Since there were often only a few friars for entire communities of indigenous peoples, the convents needed a large space where friars could speak to many people. The open chapel allowed the friars to bring potential converts into one space and use sermons as well as images to root out idolatry and evangelize large groups of people together.

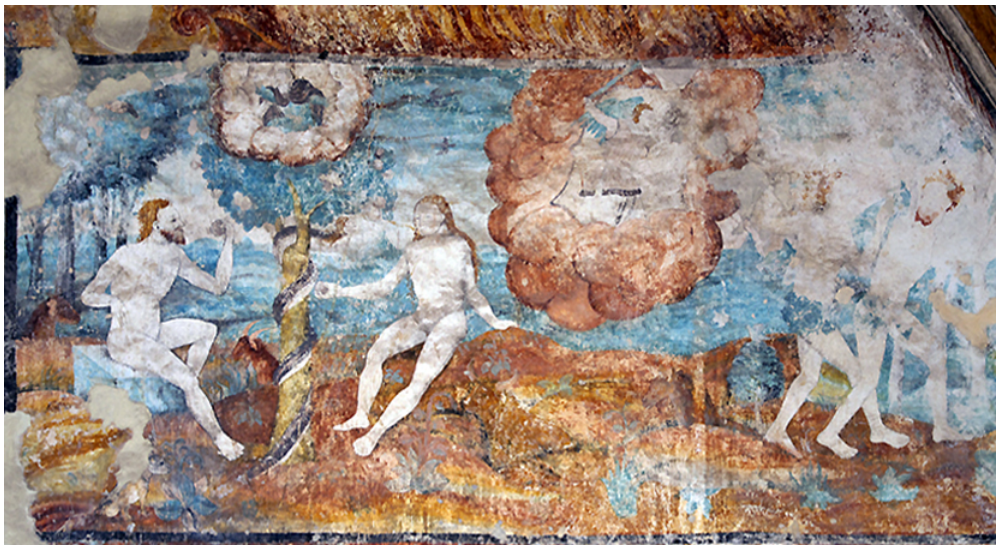


Figure 2.2.6.3.9: Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden (left) and expulsion from the Garden of Eden (right), open chapel, Convent of San Nicolás Tolentino, 1546 and after, Actopan, Hidalgo, Mexico

At Actopan, the back wall, where the altar was placed, contains a series of panels depicting important Catholic teachings, like the expulsion of Adam and Eve from the Garden of Eden (above), the destruction of Babylon, Purgatory, the Flood, and the Last Judgment—the latter depicted sinners being tortured by demons in the flames of Hell. These scenes correspond with the function of the open chapel as a conversion space. The missionaries believed that indigenous religions and practices were the direct result of Satan's influence and saw it as their role to guide the indigenous population down the path to salvation and away from Satan's grasp. In this way, the panels depicting God's punishment for sinners and the path to Hell are a direct manifestation of the missionaries' fears of idolatry and their attempt to save the souls of the local population. On the surrounding walls, additional scenes of torment and torture reinforce the dangers of Satan's influence.



Figure 2.2.6.3.10: Hell Mouth (detail), open chapel, Convent of San Nicolás Tolentino, 1546 and after, Actopan, Hidalgo, Mexico

Though the imagery is drastically different from the stairwell murals, the open chapel murals also borrow from other examples of Christian art in Europe. For example, the motif of Adam and Eve cowering as they walk out of Eden is common throughout European art (for example, Masaccio's fresco in the Brancacci Chapel in Florence). In the Actopan open chapel, Adam and Eve are initially shown nude in the Garden of Eden with a large snake entwined around a tree facing Eve. The narrative continues to show Adam and Eve, now with their genitals covered, as they leave Eden, as in Masaccio's painting.

Importantly, the open chapel mural paintings highlight acts that the friars believed were particular dangers and temptations for the local indigenous communities. Sins such as adultery, idolatry and drunkenness are illustrated alongside demonic figures and figures supposed to represent the indigenous peoples. In one scene, an indigenous convert turns his back to a pagan temple, following instead a Spanish man towards the sun, which represents Jesus Christ in this case. Depicted on the left and right walls, a monstrous mouth (a “Hell Mouth”) devours sinners and confirms what awaits those who choose to follow idolatrous paths (above, left). Rather than the heavenly scene on the back wall, the adulterers, drunks, and idolaters fall into monstrous mouths and face horrifying scenes in the afterlife, including flaying and grilling (below).



Figure **2.2.6.3.11**: Demons flaying sinners (detail), open chapel, Convent of San Nicolás Tolentino, 1546 and after, Actopan, Hidalgo, Mexico

Directly above this scene, and topping the back wall, is a panel of the Last Judgment. The panel is split horizontally and shows primarily white Europeans, similar in dress and appearance to the friars. They are seated behind Christ in heaven, with a light color palette that is in stark contrast to the deep reds of hell. The figures in hell are shown as natives with darker skin, and they are included here to reinforce the message against the evils of indigenous cultural and religious practices.

Educating a new Christian population

The open chapel and the stair hall together offer two different motivations of the friars at Actopan—they wanted to establish their place within the lineage and history of other heroes of the Augustinian order and emphasize their roles as educators of the Christian faith. The murals also demonstrate the great fear and urgency of the evangelization process and the friars’ desire to eradicate idolatry. The juxtaposition of indigenous converts kneeling in the stairwell with the burning and tortured bodies of those who maintain idolatrous practices in the open chapel establishes the two potential outcomes for the local congregation.

Additional resources:

Colonial mural paintings at the website of the Inter American Institute

Victor Manuel Ballesteros García, *The Monasteries of the State of Hidalgo: Religious Expressions of the Art and the Culture of the Sixteenth Century* (Pachuca, México Universidad Autónoma del Estado de Hidalgo, 2000).

Samuel Y. Edgerton, *Theaters of Conversion: Religious Architecture and Indian Artisans* (Alburquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2001).

Robert H. Jackson, *Conflict and Conversion in Sixteenth Century Central Mexico: The Augustinian War on and Beyond the Chichimeca Frontier* (Leiden: Koninklijke Brill NV, 2013).

Eleanor Wake. *Framing the Sacred: The Indian Churches of Early Colonial Mexico* (University of Oklahoma Press, 2012).

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2.2.6.4: A new Jerusalem in the Americas—the convento of Acolman

by **DR. LAUREN KILROY-EWBANK** and **DR. STEVEN ZUCKER**

Page ID

179575



A conversation between Dr. Lauren Kilroy-Ewbank and Dr. Steven Zucker in the atrium of the ex-convento, San Agustín de Acolman, Acolman de Nezahualcóyotl, Mexico

Additional resources

Atrial Cross at Acolman

Murals at Acolman

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2.2.6.5: Murals from New Spain, San Agustín de Acolman

by DR. LAUREN KILROY-EWBANK and DR. BETH HARRIS

Page ID
179576



Murals, c. 1560–90, large cloister of the ex-convento, San Agustín de Acolman, Acolman de Nezahualcóyotl, Mexico

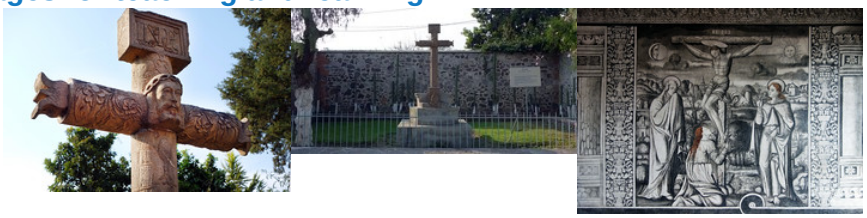
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Mission churches as theaters of conversion

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2.2.6.6: Atrial Cross at Acolman

by DR. ELENA FITZPATRICK SIFFORD

Page ID
179577



Video **2.2.6.6.1**: Atrial Cross, convento San Agustín de Acolman, mid-16th century
Speakers: Dr. Lauren Kilroy-Ewbank and Dr. Beth Harris

Conventos

When we think of the conquest of the "New World," we may immediately picture the violence of the military encounter between Spaniards and the indigenous peoples of the Americas. While the process of colonization began through bloodshed, relatively few Indians fought against Spanish soldiers.



Figure **2.2.6.6.1**: C*onvento* San Agustín de Acolman, mid-16th century

Instead, their first exposure to the new conquerors was often within the large walled complexes called *conventos* (missions). Built by indigenous populations alongside mendicant friars (who were the mendicant friars?), these compounds contained a church, cloister, patio (also known as an atrium), and an outdoor chapel. Within the *conventos* indigenous people were baptized and taught the tenets of the Christian faith. The outdoor walled atrium hosted *autos* (religious plays) as well as religious processions that were staged in a counter-clockwise direction, imitating the direction of Nahua rituals (the Nahua are an indigenous people of Mexico and El Salvador).



Figure **2.2.6.6.2**: Crenellated (notched) roofline, convento San Agustín de Acolman, mid-16th century

One of the most celebrated Mexican *conventos* is the Augustinian mission of San Agustín de Acolman (Acolman was a Nahua village located just north of Mexico City). Built in the mid-sixteenth century, the complex features a rusticated façade with boldly projecting stones, and a crenellated (notched) roofline, giving it a fortress-like appearance (see image above). This architectural style was common among the *conventos* of New Spain (the former Spanish colony that is now Mexico, Central America, and the southwestern United States). San Agustín de Acolman's architectural style suggests a protective function, and may have referenced the temple of Jerusalem, celebrating Mexico as a "New Jerusalem" where the Christian faith could flourish.



Figure **2.2.6.6.3**: Atrial Cross, convento San Agustín de Acolman, mid-16th century (now located across the street from the *convento*)



Figure 2.2.6.6.4: Carved INRI at top and pierced heart below (detail), Atrial Cross, Acolman

The Atrial Cross at Acolman

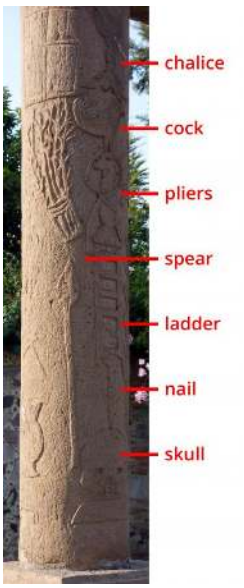


Figure 2.2.6.6.5: The famed atrial cross of Acolman originally stood at the center of the large atrium, hence the term “atrial” cross coming from its location. It was carved by an indigenous artist under the instruction of an Augustinian friar. The cross, similar to others created in the early years after the conquest, is carved with complex iconography. The vertical shaft features the INRI plaque at top [1], below which is carved the Augustinian emblem of a heart pierced with arrows (see image at left).



Figure 2.2.6.6.6: Glyph 14 , Tizoc Stone (Aztec), c.1480s (National Museum of Anthropology, Mexico City)

The remainder of the shaft features the *Arma Christi* (literally, “weapons of Christ,” the objects associated with the Passion) including a chalice, cock, pliers, spear, ladder, nail, and a human skull. These objects relate to the story of Christ’s entry into Jerusalem and his suffering at the hands of the Roman soldiers before his death on the cross and eventual resurrection. The objects are isolated from one another, displaying an affinity with the Aztec pictographic writing system. Each “instrument,” like an Aztec glyph, is boldly outlined and reduced to simplicity of forms for the sake of legibility. Within the ritual theater of the *convento*, the cross served as a teaching tool for new Nahua converts to learn an episode of the Passion story by metaphorically zooming in on the relevant “glyph.” For example, the spear would illustrate the story of the Roman soldier who pierced Christ’s side, and the ladder would narrate the deposition, or removal of Christ’s body from the cross.



Figure 2.2.6.6.7: Christ's face (detail), Atrial Cross, Acolman, mid-16th century

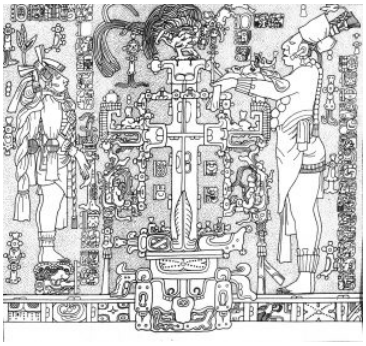


Figure 2.2.6.6.8: Panel from Temple Of The Cross, Palenque (Maya), Late Classic Period (Schele, #174)

In addition to these symbols, the cross's arms feature vegetal designs (see image above), a trope connected to the indigenous "World Tree," the symbolic center of the universe from which the human race emerged (see image at left). Spaniards of the period noted that Indian images of the World Tree bore similarities to the Christian cross, surmising that Saint Thomas the Apostle had introduced the cross to the Americas in Biblical times, but that his efforts were destroyed by the workings of the Devil. In fact, the World Tree was an ancient symbol in Mesoamerica (modern-day Mexico and much of Central America), and had no original connection to Christ's martyrdom. Rather than Christ's body hanging on a cross as is typical for a Crucifix, the center of the Acolman cross features his boldly projecting face (see image above), perhaps also connecting it to the World Tree as a place of creation.

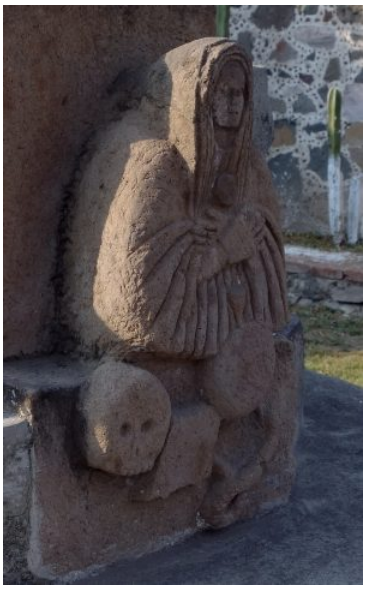


Figure **2.2.6.6.9**: Virgin Mary and skull (detail), Atrial Cross, Acolman

Alternatively, Christ's face may be a rendering of the *sudarium*, or the veil that Saint Veronica used to wipe Christ's blood and sweat as he carried the cross to his execution. The veil that became imprinted with his visage is one of the *arma Christi* which might explain its inclusion on the atrial cross. Finally, the base of the cross includes a rendering of the Virgin Mary alongside a human skull, a reference to Calvary, or "the place of the skull," the burial place of Adam and the hill upon which Christ died (see image at left). This complex iconography derived from European print sources and was executed by native artists in native styles. This legacy is clearly visible when comparing the cross to pre-Hispanic Nahua monumental stone sculpture in the round that similarly features bold designs executed in varying relief.

A hybrid style

"Tequitqui" is one term given to this type of early colonial sculpture from Central Mexico that displays indigenous symbolism and style. Created as a collaborative effort, the hybrid atrial cross offers a fascinating look into the interactions between Spanish friars and Nahua converts in the years directly following the conquest of Mexico. While Spaniards wielded power as conquerors, indigenous people nevertheless played a major role in shaping the new colonial society. At Acolman, we can see these interactions at play, manifested in this masterfully carved monumental stone cross.

[1] INRI are initials for the Latin words that Pontius Pilate had written over the head of Jesus Christ on the cross (*Iēsus Nazarēnus, Rēx Iūdaeōrum*, Jesus the Nazarene, King of the Jews)

Additional resources:

Samuel Y Edgerton, "Christian Cross as Indigenous 'World Tree' in Sixteenth-Century Mexico" in *Exploring New World Imagery*, edited by Donna Pierce (Denver: Mayer Center for Pre-Columbian and Spanish Colonial Art, 2002), pp. 16–24.

Jaime Lara, *City, Temple, Stage: Eschatological Architecture and Liturgical Theatrics in New Spain* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2004).

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2.2.7: Frontispiece of the Codex Mendoza

by DR. LAUREN KILROY-EWBANK

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Figure 2.2.7.1:MS. Arch. Selden. A. 1, fols. 1v–2r, *Codex Mendoza*, Viceroyalty of New Spain, c. 1541–42 C.E., pigment on paper (© Bodleian Libraries, University of Oxford)

Priests and pirates

Around 1541, the first viceroy of the viceroyalty of **New Spain**, Antonio de Mendoza, commissioned a codex to record information about the **Mexica** (Aztec) Empire. The codex, now known as the *Codex Mendoza*, contained information about the lords of Tenochtitlan, the tribute paid to the Aztecs, and an account of life "from year to year." The artist or artists were Indigenous, and the images were often annotated in Spanish by a priest that spoke Nahuatl, the language spoken by the Nahuas (the ethnic group to whom the Aztecs belonged). Viceroy Mendoza intended to send the Codex to the Spanish King, Emperor Charles V of Spain, although it never made it to Spain; French pirates acquired the Codex and it ended up in France. Upon its appearance in sixteenth-century France, it was acquired by André Thevet, the cosmographer to King Henry II of France, and Thevet included his name on several pages, including at the top of the *Codex Mendoza*'s frontispiece.



Figure 2.2.7.2: Frontispiece, *Codex Mendoza*, Viceroyalty of New Spain, c. 1541–1542, pigment on paper © Bodleian Libraries, University of Oxford

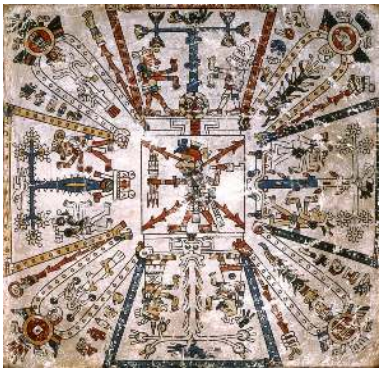


Figure 2.2.7.3: In the center of this cosmological diagram is the deity Xiuhtecuhtli (a fire god), standing in the place of the axis mundi. Four nodes (what look almost like trapezoidal petals) branch off from his position, creating a shape called a Maltese Cross. East (top) is associated with red, south (right) with green, west (bottom) with blue, and north (left) with yellow. Codex Féjervary-Mayer, 15th century, f. 1 (World Museum, Liverpool)

The Codex contains a wealth of information about the Aztecs and their empire. For instance, the Codex's frontispiece relates information about the organization and foundation of the Aztec capital, Tenochtitlan—the place of the prickly pear cactus. Tenochtitlan was established in the middle of Lake Texcoco in the Valley of Mexico in 1325.

Given that much of the former Aztec capital is below modern-day Mexico City, the *Codex Mendoza* frontispiece corroborates other information we have about the capital city and its origins. For instance, it shows us a schematic diagram of Tenochtitlan, with the city divided into four parts by intersecting blue-green undulating diagonals. The city was made of canals, similar to the Italian city of Venice, and was divided into four quarters. The image displays the quadripartite division of the city and the canals running through it. The division of the city into four parts was intended to mirror the organization of the universe, believed to be four parts aligned with the four cardinal directions (north, east, south, west), such as we see represented in the Codex Féjervary-Mayer.



Figure **2.2.7.4**: Detail with eagle, cactus and shield, Frontispiece, *Codex Mendoza*, Viceroyalty of New Spain, c. 1541–42, pigment on paper (© Bodleian Libraries, University of Oxford)

Tenochtitlan

At the center of the schematic diagram of Tenochtitlan is an eagle on a cactus growing from the midst of a lake. The eagle and the cactus relate to the narrative surrounding the capital's establishment. According to Aztec myth, their patron deity, Huitzilopochtli (Hummingbird Left), told the Aztecs' ancestors to leave their ancestral home of Aztlan and look for a place where they saw an eagle atop a cactus growing from a rock. He informed them that when they saw this sign, they should settle and build their city. For the Aztecs, they observed the sign in the middle of Lake Texcoco, and so established their capital on an island in the lake.



Figure **2.2.7.5**: Mexican flag

The cactus upon which the eagle rests also symbolizes the place name of Tenochtitlan. The cactus is a nopal, or prickly pear cactus, which in Nahuatl is *nochtli*. The cactus grows from a stone, or *tetl*. When paired together, they form *te-noch* to connote the place of the prickly pear cactus, or Tenochtitlan. Today's Mexican flag similarly displays the eagle on a nopal cactus growing from a stone in the middle of a lake, relating to the mythic origins of the Mexican capital



Figure **2.2.7.6**: Temple (detail), Frontispiece, *Codex Mendoza*, Viceroyalty of New Spain, c. 1541–42, pigment on paper (© Bodleian Libraries, University of Oxford)

Besides the eagle on the cactus, other figures and symbols on the frontispiece aid us in understanding the city's foundation and early history. For instance, below the cactus and stone in the middle of the drawing is a war shield, indicating the Mexica did not settle peacefully in the Valley of Mexico. The simple structure above the eagle likely symbolizes a temple, possibly an early phase of the **Templo Mayor**, or the Aztecs' main temple that was located at the heart of the city in the sacred precinct. To the right of the eagle is a simplified skull rack (*tzompantli*), another structure found near the Templo Mayor. Different types of plants, including maize, or corn, dot the city's four quadrants, no doubt alluding to the agricultural fertility associated with the city.



Figure **2.2.7.7**: Detail with Tenoch, Frontispiece, *Codex Mendoza*, Viceroyalty of New Spain, c. 1541–42, pigment on paper (© Bodleian Libraries, University of Oxford)

Tenoch

Ten men are also depicted in the four quadrants, wearing white garments and displaying top knots in their hair. These figures are the men who led the Aztecs to this island location. Their name glyphs are attached to them in a manner typical of **pre-Conquest manuscripts**; a thin black line connects to a symbol that denotes their name. One man, different than the rest and seated to the left of the eagle, has gray skin, as well as a different hairstyle and red mark around his ear. These traits identify him as a priest because he let blood from his ear as offerings to deities and ash covers his skin. His name glyph identities his as Tenoch. Other motifs, such as the speech scroll coming from his mouth and the woven mat upon which he sits, convey his high status as well. Tenoch died in 1363, and the first Aztec *tlatoani*, or speaker (the ruler), was elected in 1375 by a council of elders.

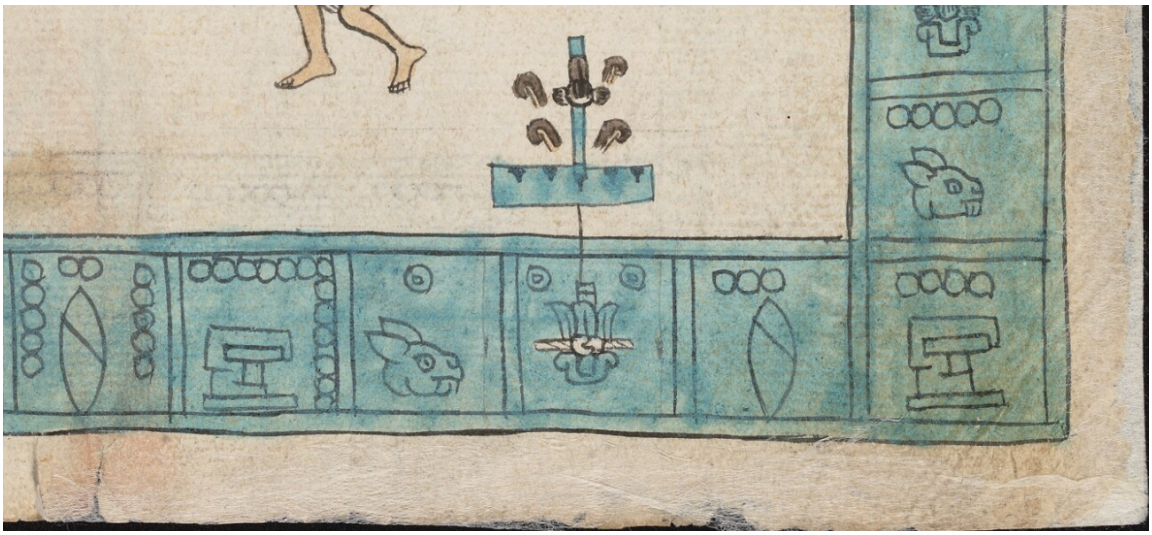


Figure **2.2.7.8**: Detail with year 2-Reed glyph, Frontispiece, *Codex Mendoza*, Viceroyalty of New Spain, c. 1541–42, pigment on paper (© Bodleian Libraries, University of Oxford)

Surrounding the entire page are year glyphs, beginning on the upper left with the date 2-House (1325 C.E.) and finishing (counter clock-wise) with the date 13-Reed. There are a total of fifty-one year glyphs. One year is marked—the year 2-Reed, which occurred twenty-six years after Tenochtitlan's establishment; the reed has a cord wound around it and a fire drill appears above it. These symbols note that the year 2-Reed was the first year of a new 52-year cycle, the time during which new fire was drilled to begin the new cycle and signal the completion of the previous 52-year cycle. For the Aztecs, the New Fire ceremony occurred every 52 years—a complete cycle of the solar calendar—and it assured that the sun would rise again. Just prior to the beginning of a new cycle, new fire was drilled in the body of a sacrificial victim. After this point, the fire was distributed among people to light their homes.

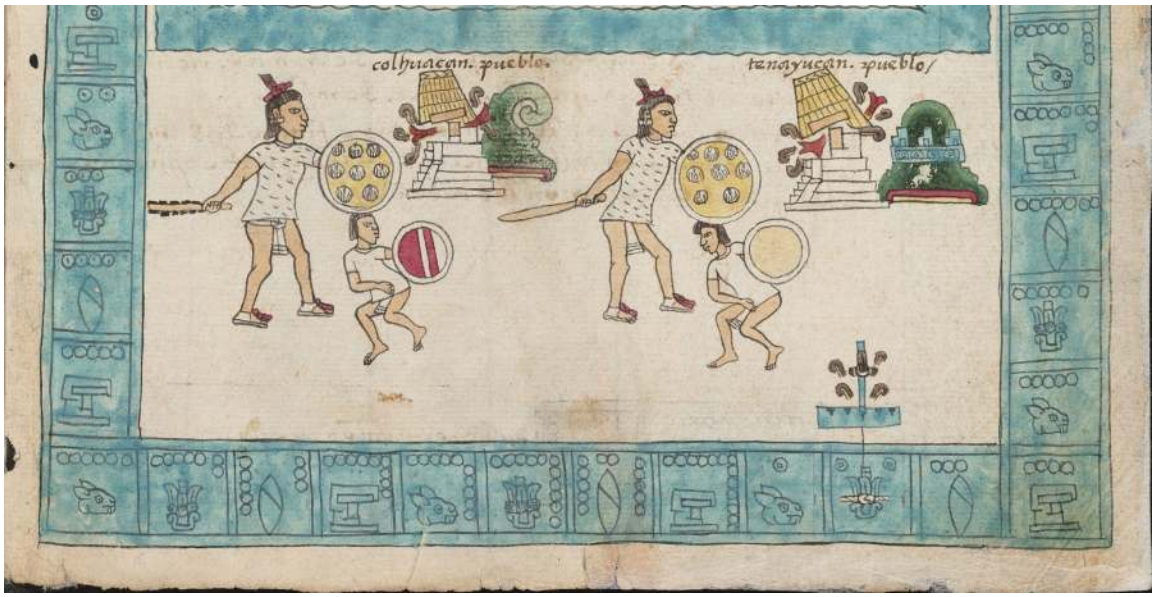


Figure **2.2.7.9**: Detail with Aztec warriors, Frontispiece, Codex Mendoza, Viceroyalty of New Spain, c. 1541–42, pigment on paper (© Bodleian Libraries, University of Oxford)

Conquest

Below the schematic diagram of the city are two scenes of military conquest. The artist emphasizes the military power of the Aztecs by showing two soldiers in hierarchic scale: they physically tower over the two men they defeat. The Aztec warriors are also identified by their shields—identical to the one above that is associated with Tenochtitlan—and their obsidian-bladed weapons (called *macana*). The defeated men come from two different locations, both identified with place glyphs as Colhuacan and

Tenayuca, both located around Lake Texcoco. In this case, burning temples paired with specific hills note that Colhuacan and Tenayuca were defeated. Spanish glosses also identify these place names as “colhuacan pueblo” and “tenoyucan pueblo.” This scene of conquest alludes to early Aztec military victories, which aided them in building their power even prior to their first official *tlatoani* came to power.

Additional resources:

Digital edition of the *Codex Mendoza*

Aztec Society, Foundation for the Advancement of Mesoamerican Studies

Aztec Group codices, Foundation for the Advancement of Mesoamerican Studies

Spoken excepts from the *Codex Mendoza* in Nahuatl, Spanish, and English, Bodleian Libraries

The Aztec World, Elizabeth Baquedano and Gary M. Feinman editors (New York: Abrams in association with the Field Museum, 2008).

Frances F. Berdan, *The Essential Codex Mendoza* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: The University of California Press, 1997).

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SECTION OVERVIEW

2.2.8: The Florentine Codex

2.2.8.1: Bernardino de Sahagún and collaborators, Florentine Codex

2.2.8.2: Remembering the Toxcatl Massacre- The Beginning of the End of Aztec Supremac

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2.2.8.1: Bernardino de Sahagún and collaborators, Florentine Codex

by ERIKA NELSON

Page ID
179580



Figure **2.2.8.1.1**: Aztec deities, Bernardino de Sahagún and collaborators, *General History of the Things of New Spain*, also called the *Florentine Codex*, vol. 1, 1575-1577, watercolor, paper, contemporary vellum Spanish binding, open (approx.): 32 x 43 cm, closed (approx.): 32 x 22 x 5 cm (Medicea Laurenziana Library, Florence, Italy)

How would you try to understand a culture that was completely unknown to you? In the sixteenth century, shortly after the Spanish arrived in what today is Mexico, one of the first things they created was a 12-volume encyclopedic work, known as the *Florentine Codex*, or *The General History of the Things of New Spain*. The 12 volumes document the culture, religious and ritual practices, economics, and natural history of the indigenous central Mexican peoples in the years immediately preceding the Spanish Conquest, as well as the events of the Conquest itself.

The *Codex* is quite large with 1,200 folios (pages) and 2,468 painted illustrations! The Franciscan friar Bernardino de Sahagún, and a group of Nahua (one of the indigenous groups that occupied Central Mexico) writers and illustrators, conceived of and compiled the *Codex*. Today, we think of the *Florentine Codex* as one of the most remarkable manuscripts created in the early modern era (roughly the period from the late 15th through late 18th centuries).



Figure **2.2.8.1.2**: Activities in the temple (detail), Bernardino de Sahagún and collaborators, *General History of the Things of New Spain*, also called the *Florentine Codex*, vol. 1, book 2, f. 135r, 1575-1577, watercolor, paper, contemporary vellum Spanish binding, open (approx.): 32 x 43 cm, closed (approx.): 32 x 22 x 5 cm (Medicea Laurenziana Library, Florence, Italy)

When it was completed in 1579, they sent the *Codex* to Madrid, where it was likely meant to train Spanish missionaries about Nahua people and customs. Exactly when and under what circumstances the book traveled from Madrid to Florence is unclear. We refer to the work of Sahagún and his collaborators as the *Florentine Codex* because of its present-day location. The Medici family of Florence, Italy, assumed ownership of the manuscript no later than 1588. It first appeared in a catalog of the Medicea-Laurenziana Library in 1793, but it remained untitled for nearly a century until 1886 when it acquired its current title.

The creation of the Codex



Figure **2.2.8.1.3**: The divining arts, Bernardino de Sahagún and collaborators, *General History of the Things of New Spain*, also called the *Florentine Codex*, vol. 1, book 4, f. 52v, 1575-1577, watercolor, paper, contemporary vellum Spanish binding, open (approx.): 32 x 43 cm, closed (approx.): 32 x 22 x 5 cm (Medicea Laurenziana Library, Florence, Italy)

Sahagún's preparation for the creation of the *Florentine Codex* began shortly after his arrival in 1529 to New Spain, an area that included modern-day Mexico, Central America, Cuba, Hispaniola, Puerto Rico, Jamaica, the Philippines, Florida, and most of the southwestern United States. A viceroy (like a governor) ruled New Spain on behalf of the King of Spain. During his first years in New Spain, Sahagún prepared for the creation of this encyclopedia through the training of young indigenous students who became his collaborators in the creation of the *Codex*. He also produced an earlier manuscript, known as the *Primeros Memoriales* (*First Memorials*) in Nahuatl, a language spoken by the Nahua and other indigenous groups in Central Mexico before the Conquest. *Primeros Memoriales* served as the foundation for the *Florentine Codex*.

By about 1549, Sahagún began the process of assembling the *Florentine Codex*, collaborating with two groups. First, the *principales* (literally, the chiefs), a group of Nahua wise elders, answered questionnaires about their culture and religion. They recorded the answers as paintings, using pictographs (icons that communicate meaning by resembling a specific object, like drawing two parallel squiggly lines to suggest a river). Painted manuscripts with pictographs had been a traditional Nahua practice. Second, the grammarians, a team of Christianized indigenous nobility who were trained in Latin, Spanish, and Nahuatl, interpreted the principales' paintings, expanded the answers, and transcribed them into alphabetic Nahuatl. By 1569, this information took the shape of twelve books, and the grammarians had completed the alphabetic Nahuatl text. By 1576, Sahagún and his collaborators began to create and include new illustrations and to translate the text into Spanish. They completed the entire project by 1579, when they sent it to Spain.

The structure of the Codex

The *Codex* is composed of twelve volumes, each of which documents a specific component of Nahua culture. They include:



Figure **2.2.8.1.4**: Diagram of Spanish and Nahuatl columns, *Florentine Codex*

Book 1: The gods
Book 2: The ceremonies
Book 3: The origin of the gods
Book 4: The soothsayers
Book 5: The omens
Book 6: Rhetoric and moral philosophy
Book 7: The sun, moon and stars, and the binding of the years
Book 8: Kings and lords
Book 9: The merchants
Book 10: The people
Book 11: Earthly things
Book 12: The conquest

Each page of the *Florentine Codex* contains parallel columns of Nahuatl and Spanish text. The Nahuas recorded their culture and history in their own language in the right text column, and Sahagún had the Nahuatl translated into Spanish in the left text column. These translations are abbreviated, so the Spanish text is not as long as the Nahuatl. This provides numerous opportunities for the insertion of illustrations–thousands of these appear throughout the 12 volumes.



Figure 2.2.8.1.5: Featherworkers, Bernardino de Sahagún and collaborators, *General History of the Things of New Spain*, also called the *Florentine Codex*, vol. 2, book 9,6 f. 64v, 1575-1577, watercolor, paper, contemporary vellum Spanish binding, open (approx.): 32 x 43 cm, closed (approx.): 32 x 22 x 5 cm (Medicea Laurenziana Library, Florence, Italy)

In the illustrations of the *Codex*, we see the ability of the Nahua artists to continue working in a style characteristic of the Mesoamerican (or pre-Hispanic Nahua) painted manuscripts, but they also demonstrate the ability to adapt to European methods of perspective and shading.

For example, in Book 9, we see a representation of Nahua featherworking (left), another artistic practice that predated the arrival of the Spanish, in which artists "painted" by pasting brightly colored feathers to sheets. The artist who illustrated this scene for the *Florentine Codex* worked in a manner similar to the earlier, indigenous painted manuscripts. For example, the profile views and the heavy outlines of the bodies and objects are characteristic of the pre-Hispanic Nahua painted manuscripts. Yet, the imagery also demonstrates clear shifts from Nahua graphic systems to European modes of representation. For instance, in these same scenes, the backgrounds also feature typical classical Renaissance architecture, like doorways flanked by columns. The artist, or artists, also use linear perspective (in which parallel lines appear to converge in the background, creating a convincing illusion of space) in their depiction of the tiled floors in each illustration, thus recalling European artistic methods. The Nahua did not use linear perspective prior to Spanish colonization.



Figure 2.2.8.1.6: Top scene (above) and middle scene (below) of featherworkers (details), Bernardino de Sahagún and collaborators, *General History of the Things of New Spain*, also called the *Florentine Codex*, vol. 3, book 9, f. 64v, 1575-1577, watercolor, paper, contemporary vellum Spanish binding, open (approx.): 32 x 43 cm, closed (approx.): 32 x 22 x 5 cm (Medicea Laurenziana Library, Florence, Italy)

The subject matter of the three scenes on folio 64v depict the artists working in both European and Nahua modes of representation. For instance, in the top scene (above, left), an artist paints a man who has his arms outstretched. He has used shading to convey roundness of form, a technique that was not typical of Nahua painted manuscripts. Also, in the middle and bottom scenes, we see featherwork artists at work—pasting brightly colored feathers to create beautiful imagery. In fact, in the middle scene of folio 64v

(above, right), a disembodied hand appears to rest atop a blank white mat to suggest and emphasize an artist's involvement in creating a featherwork "painting." Featherworking not only pre-dated the Spanish but also continued and transformed after their arrival. In fact, the conquistador Hernán Cortés marveled at featherwork objects and sent them back to Spain. In these scenes, we get a sense of both the Spanish appreciation of this practice, and its importance to the Nahua.

A Nahua perspective?

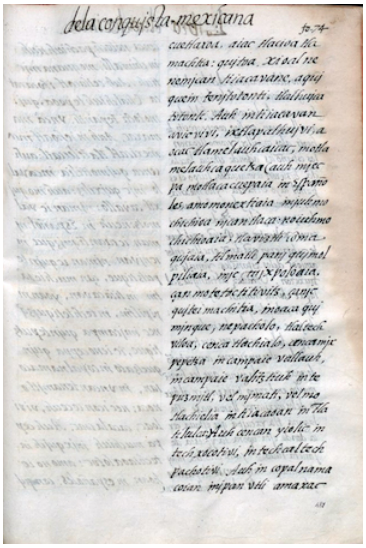


Figure 2.2.8.1.7: Nahua tactics of warfare, Bernardino de Sahagún and collaborators, *General History of the Things of New Spain*, also called the *Florentine Codex*, vol. 3, book 12, f. 74v, 1575-1577, watercolor, paper, contemporary vellum Spanish binding, open (approx.): 32 x 43 cm, closed (approx.): 32 x 22 x 5 cm (Medicea Laurenziana Library, Florence, Italy)

In the *Florentine Codex*, the Spanish text is not a strict, literal translation of the Nahuatl text, but rather in some instances an approximation or summary. For this reason, discrepancies occur between the two sets of text. These discrepancies are in no way arbitrary, and, through them, some of the European biases become clear. In the image to the left (folio 74v), the Nahuatl text describes Nahua tactics of warfare and the failed Spanish attempt to use a catapult. The Nahuatl text takes up two full-page columns, but the Spanish translation only amounts to two lines. Sahagún leaves the column reserved for the Spanish translation blank, as he was unlikely to translate in great detail the failings of Spanish forces. Sahagún also possibly planned the empty spaces for more images, but we know that epidemics prevented the images' completion.

Even though the Spanish text often attempts to de-emphasize the "unpleasant" aspects of the Conquest in Book 12, the illustrations cannot conceal its sheer violence and destruction. We see this in an illustration of the Toxcatl massacre, an event that took place on May 20, 1520, during the celebration of a main deity. The Nahuatl text describes the massacre in which the blood of warriors "ran like water," and the ground became "slippery with blood." The Spanish text leaves much of this text untranslated. However, the event is illustrated in chapter one of Book 12 (below), directly below the title of the book. It shows Spanish soldiers hacking away at a group of Nahua people at a temple, with bodies strewn about the temple base. So while the Spanish text and the Nahuatl text do not correspond precisely, if we consider the two texts with the illustrations, we get a more complete understanding of the events of the Spanish Conquest. This is true in many instances in the *Florentine Codex*, which often conveys the conflicting views and ideas of the time period. Importantly, we get a sense of the Nahua perspective from this period through some of these discrepancies.



Figure 2.2.8.1.8: Toxcatl massacre (detail), Bernardino de Sahagún and collaborators, *General History of the Things of New Spain*, also called the *Florentine Codex*, vol. 3, book 12, f. 1v, 1575-1577, watercolor, paper, contemporary vellum Spanish binding, open (approx.): 32 x 43 cm, closed (approx.): 32 x 22 x 5 cm (Medicea Laurenziana Library, Florence, Italy)

Reading the *Florentine Codex* today

Due to its unparalleled wealth of information regarding the people and culture of central Mexico immediately preceding the Conquest, and its discussion of the Conquest itself, scholars have made the text of the *Florentine Codex* accessible to a larger audience through comprehensive translations of both the Nahuatl and Spanish. A full digital version is also now available at the website of the Medicea-Laurenziana Library. Together, the images and text in the *Florentine Codex* demonstrate the complex negotiation of culture, tradition, and identity in the years immediately following the Spanish Conquest.

Additional resources:

This work at the Medicea Laurenziana Library

Gauvin A. Bailey, *Art of Colonial Latin America* (London; New York: Phaidon, 2005).

Diana Magaloni Kerpel, “Painters of the New World: The Process of Making the Florentine Codex,” In Gerhard Wolf and Joseph Connors, eds. *Colors Between Two Worlds: The Florentine Codex of Bernardino de Sahagún* (Florence: Villa I Tatti and Harvard University Press, 2011), pp. 47-76.

H.B. Nicholson, “Fray Bernardino de Sahagún: A Spanish Missionary in New Spain, 1529–1590.” In Eloise Quiñones Keber, ed. *Representing Aztec Ritual: Performance, Text, and Image in the Work of Sahagún*, (Boulder, CO: University Press of Colorado, 2002), pp. 21-42.

Kevin Terraciano, “Three Texts in One: Book XII of the Florentine Codex,” *Ethnohistory* 57, no. 1 (Winter 2010), pp. 51-72.

This page titled 2.2.8.1: Bernardino de Sahagún and collaborators, Florentine Codex is shared under a CC BY-NC-SA 4.0 license and was authored, remixed, and/or curated by Erika Nelson, "Bernardino de Sahagún and collaborators, Florentine Codex," in SmartHistory, August 9, 2015, accessed November 11, 2020, https://SmartHistory.org/bernardino-de-sahagun-and-collaborators-florentine-codex/..

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2.2.8.2: Remembering the Toxcatl Massacre- The Beginning of the End of Aztec Supremac

by BÉRÉNICE GAILLEMIN



Figure **2.2.8.2.1**: Toxcatl Massacre, Book 12 of the Florentine Codex ("Of the Conquest of New Spain"). Ms. Mediceo Palatino 220, 1577, fol. 1 (detail) (Biblioteca Medicea Laurenziana, Florence)

Competing Histories

This May marks 500 years since the Toxcatl massacre, in which Indigenous people were killed during a festival that took place in the Aztec capital of **Tenochtitlan** (today's Mexico City). Two competing histories of this event exist. In the Spanish telling, the conquistadors acted in self-defense, yet a very different narrative emerges in the Indigenous version.

On May 22, 1520, Spanish conquistadors and their Indigenous allies attacked the **Mexicas**—the Nahuatl-speaking ethnic group that dominated a vast multi-ethnic territory that spanned from the Pacific Ocean to the Gulf coast, and from central Mexico to present-day Guatemala. The attack during the Toxcatl festival incited a war that led to the end of Mexica supremacy and to the beginning of the conquest of Mexico.



Figure **2.2.8.2.2**: Spaniards order Mexicas to prepare the Toxcatl festival and female ritual practitioners preparing amaranth dough that will be made into an incarnation of the deity Huitzilopochtli for the Toxcatl festival while Spanish soldiers observe their work, Book 12 of the Florentine Codex ("Of the Conquest of New Spain"). Ms. Mediceo Palatino 220, 1577, fols. 29v and 30 (Biblioteca Medicea Laurenziana, Florence)



Figure **2.2.8.2.3**: Unveiling of the amaranth-dough incarnation of Huitzilopochtli (the patron deity of the Mexica associated with warfare, fire, and the Sun) and richly dressed leaders dancing and singing during the Toxcatl festival, Book 12 of the Florentine Codex ("Of the Conquest of New Spain"). Ms. Mediceo Palatino 220, 1577, fol. 31v (details) (Biblioteca Medicea Laurenziana, Florence)

For most of the past 500 years, this history of the conquest of Mexico has been based on the accounts of Spaniards. **Francisco López de Gómara's *La conquista de Mexico*** was one of the most influential historical accounts of the conquest of Mexico, drawing on Hernán Cortés's letters addressed to the Spanish king that justified the attack. The Spaniards claimed the festival was a cover-up for an Indigenous rebellion. However, Nahuatl-language texts survive that tell us an alternative version. They

excruciatingly detail the human horror and the treachery of a mass murder, now known as the Toxcatl Massacre. One of the most critical Indigenous sources is Book 12 of the **Florentine Codex, the manuscript that is the focus of a digital research initiative at the Getty Research Institute**.

The Mexica Perspective

Book 12 of the 16th-century Nahuatl-Spanish encyclopedia, known as the Florentine Codex, preserves the point of view of the Mexicas. It is the longest and most detailed historical account of the conquest written in Nahuatl, the lingua franca of pre-Hispanic central Mexico. Here the Toxcatl Massacre is described as an attack carried out with cruelty, stealth, and treachery. The Nahua authors write that the Spaniards ordered the ceremony to take place, even after they detained the Mexica ruler, Moteuczoma Xocoyotzin, and looted the palace for gold.

Book 12 of the Florentine Codex begins with an illustration of the Toxcatl Massacre. The Nahua authors and artists deliberately placed this image at the beginning of the book to foreground their underlying argument: the treacherous attack and ensuing war on Tenochtitlan, the Mexica capital, and the sister city Tlatelolco were unjustified.



Figure 2.2.8.2.4: First page of Book 12 of the Florentine Codex ("Of the Conquest of New Spain") showing the Toxcatl Massacre and a second illustration of the omens foretelling the arrival of Spaniards. Ms. Mediceo Palatino 220, 1577, fol. 1 (Biblioteca Medicea Laurenziana, Florence)



Figure 2.2.8.2.5: Toxcatl Massacre, Book 12 of the Florentine Codex ("Of the Conquest of New Spain"). Ms. Mediceo Palatino 220, 1577, fol. 1 (detail) (Biblioteca Medicea Laurenziana, Florence)

The image depicts the gruesome attack: armed Spaniards crowd in from all sides and hack away at unarmed Mexicas gathered for the ceremony. In the background is the **Templo Mayor**, Tenochtitlan's main ceremonial temple, signaling the sacred environment in which this massacre was perpetrated. Two traditional drums in the foreground, the vertical *huehuetl* and the horizontal *teponaztli*, underscore the violent interruption of the religious festival. The Nahuatl text in Book 12 and in other 16th-century Nahuatl sources, such as the **Codex Aubin**, detail how the Spaniards initiated the attack by cutting off the hands of the drummer and then dismembering him—a traumatizing memory also captured in multiple images in the manuscript.



Figure 2.2.8.2.6: Spaniard severing the hand of a drummer, Book 12 of the Florentine Codex ("Of the Conquest of New Spain"). Ms. Mediceo Palatino 220, 1577, fol. 33 (detail) (Biblioteca Medicea Laurenziana, Florence)



Figure 2.2.8.2.7: Toxcatl Massacre in Diego Durán, *Historia de las Indias de Nueva España e islas de la tierra firme*, 1579, fol. 211 (detail)) (Biblioteca Nacional de España)

These painful visual elements are echoed in this colorful image painted in a history of New Spain compiled by the Dominican friar Diego Durán in 1579. Again, we see two drums at the center, Spaniards entering the sacred courtyard from all four sides, and dismembered and bleeding Mexica bodies. This image was most likely painted by an Indigenous artist. We see a European-style colonnade, but the architecture and people are flattened against the pictorial plane to allow for maximum visibility following Indigenous artistic norms.

The Nahuatl text of Book 12 recounts the bloody scene:

> ***Then they stabbed every one with iron lances and struck them with iron swords. They stuck some in the belly, and then their entrails came spilling out. They split open the heads of some, they really cut their skulls to pieces, their skulls were absolutely pulverized. And some they hit on the shoulders; their bodies broke open and ripped. Some they hacked on the calves, some on the thighs, some on their bellies, and then all their entrails would spill out. And there were some who were still running in vain: they were dragging their intestines and seemed to get their feet caught in them. Eager to get to safety, they found nowhere to go.Book 12 of the Florentine Codex***

The Mexica Counterattack

Soon, the Mexicas organize a counterattack. The Nahua authors record a speech calling the warriors to take up arms: "Mexica! Warriors! Come running, get outfitted with devices, shields, and arrows. Hurry! Come running! The warriors are dying; they have died, perished, been annihilated. Mexica! Warriors!"



Figure **2.2.8.2.8**: Mexica man calling warriors to action and Mexica warrior battling Spaniards in Book 12 of the Florentine Codex ("Of the Conquest of New Spain"). Ms. Mediceo Palatino 220, 1577, fol. 34 (details) (Biblioteca Medicea Laurenziana, Florence)

The chapter on the Toxcatl Massacre ends with the Mexica fending off the attackers, in an atmosphere described as "yellowish" (*cozpol*). The color yellow refers to the blur of arrows, harpoons, and darts, all made from reeds, falling upon the attackers. The Mexicas win this battle but will lose the war that follows. The story ends with the surrender of the Mexicas, led by Cuauhtemoc, the last ruler of Tenochtitlan.

Essay first published in ***the iris*** (CC BY 4.0)

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SECTION OVERVIEW

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2.2.9.3: A shimmering saint, St. John in featherwork

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2.2.9.1: The Mass of St. Gregory

by DR. LAUREN KILROY-EWBANK

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Figure **2.2.9.1.1**: The Mass of St. Gregory, 1539, feathers on wood with touches of paint, 26-1/4 x 22 inches / 68 x 56 cm (Musée des Jacobins; photo: Steven Zucker, CC BY-SA 2.0)

Imagine a two-dimensional artwork made of feathers instead of paint, pen, or pencil. The feathers rustle with the breeze or as you exhale, their iridescent qualities creating a luminous effect as you turn the artwork in your hands or lift it upwards. Feathered artworks were created in Mesoamerica before and after the Spanish Conquest in 1521, with Spaniards and other Europeans marveling at their shimmering beauty and originality.

A clash of traditions

In 1539, the Nahua noble and *gobernador* (governor) of Mexico City, Diego de Alvarado Huanitzin (nephew and son-in-law to Moctezuma II, the last Aztec ruler before Spanish colonial rule began in 1521), commissioned a featherwork for Pope Paul III showing the Mass of St. Gregory. This artwork, made of different types of bird feathers attached to a wood panel, is remarkable for several reasons. Not only is it the oldest surviving featherwork from colonial Mexico, but it was made by an Indigenous man in order to be sent to the Pope during the early period of Spanish colonization. Two years before the featherwork's creation, Pope Paul III had issued the bull *Sublimus Dei* that decreed Amerindian peoples to be rational human beings complete with souls, and called for an end to their enslavement.



Figure **2.2.9.1.2**: The Mass of St. Gregory, 1539, feathers on wood with touches of paint, 26 1/4 x 22 inches / 68 x 56 cm (Musee des Jacobins; photo: Steven Zucker, CC BY-SA 2.0)

The subject of the Mass of St. Gregory was popular at this time because of its focus on transubstantiation—the belief that the bread and wine transform into the body and blood of Christ during Mass. Saint Gregory was an important 6th-century pope, and one day during Mass he raised the consecrated host (the bread) and experienced a miraculous vision of Christ on the altar. His vision offered proof that the bread literally became Christ's body when consecrated. Christ appeared to Saint Gregory as the Man of Sorrows—a type of image of Christ, where he is shown above the waist, with his wounds displayed on his hands and side.

The featherwork production of *The Mass of Saint Gregory* was likely supervised by the famous Franciscan missionary, Pedro de Gante, who came to the Viceroyalty of New Spain (the Spanish colonies in North America) from Flanders to aid in converting the native peoples to Christianity. He established a well-known school that trained Indigenous men in European artistic conventions and techniques. Prints were often supplied as models for these Christian neophytes. The featherwork represents the clash of different worlds—its technique is Mesoamerican, but the subject is European and Christian.



Figure **2.2.9.1.3**: Israhel van Meckenem, *The Mass of Saint Gregory*, c. 1490/1500, engraving (National Gallery of Art)

Indigenous artists of early colonial Mexico learned about European artistic techniques and Christian subject matter in schools attached to *conventos* (missionary centers). Mexico City had some of the most famous, including the School of San Jose where Pedro de Gante worked. Some of the most common models supplied to the students were prints brought from Europe. The *Mass of St. Gregory* featherwork compares to Israhel van Meckenem's *The Mass of St. Gregory*, c. 1490—suggesting the print came to New Spain and provided a model for the 1539 featherwork.

The instruments of the Passion of Christ (also known as the *Arma Christi*— specifically the instruments of Christ's suffering, including the column, nails, sponge, cock, and flagellant whip) appear on or surrounding the altar in both van Meckenem's print and the featherwork. Other colonial Mexican artworks—especially those used to aid in conversion of Indigenous populations—displayed passional instruments. On atrial crosses (crosses found in the courtyards, or atria, of missionary churches), for example, friars could point to the different *Arma Christi* as they taught native peoples about Christian dogma and biblical history.



Figure **2.2.9.1.4**: Saint John the Evangelist, 16th century, featherwork (Museo Nacional de Arte, Mexico City)

Featherworks

Featherworks were among the most highly prized objects in the early post-Conquest period. Hernan Cortes sent feathered objects to Holy Roman Emperor Charles V to dazzle him with their richness and unique qualities. Others, like Diego de Soto, carried packages of featherworks from New Spain to Spain to give to Charles V soon after the Spanish Conquest. Many featherworks found their way into cabinets of curiosities throughout Europe, no doubt collected because they symbolized the exotic "New World" across the Atlantic. Still today, feathered goods like the so-called **Headdress of Moctezuma** are some of the most prized possessions of European museums.

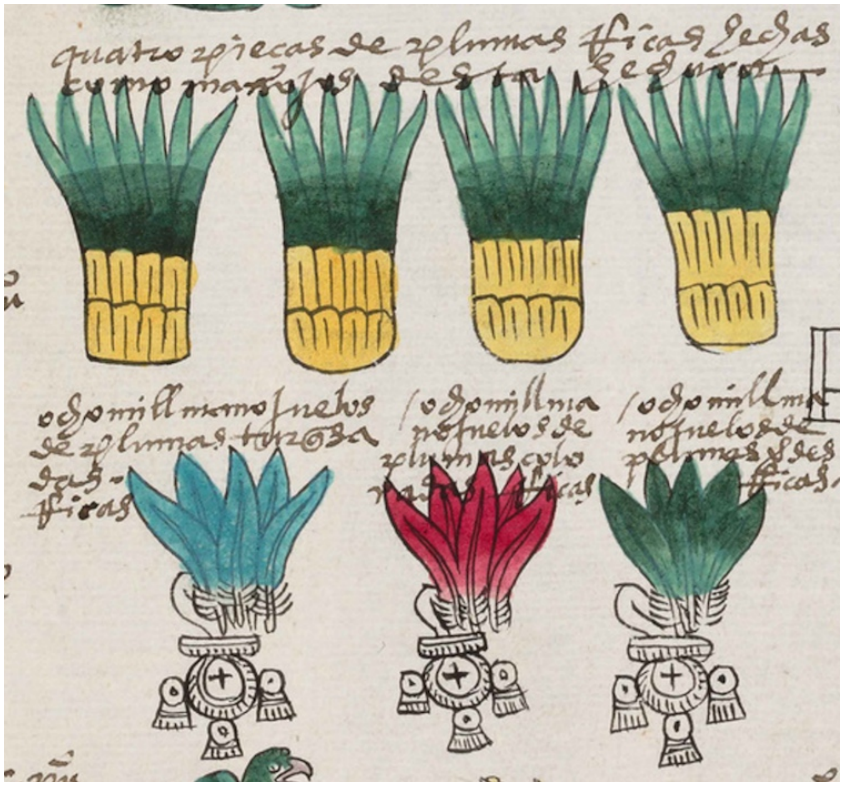


Figure \(\PageIndex{5\): Detail, *Codex Mendoza*, folio 46r (Bodleian Library, Oxford). The text records feathers paid as tribute (from top to bottom and left to right: “four pieces of rich feathers, made like handfuls into this form,” “eight thousand little handfuls of rich turquoise feathers,” “eight thousand little handfuls of rich red feathers” and “eight thousand little handfuls of rich green feathers.”

We find many Indigenous groups used feathers to adorn luxury goods, festoon clothing, and function within ceremonies. The Mexica (more commonly known as the Aztecs), were among those groups who prized feathers. Through long-distance trade, the Aztecs acquired feathers from afar. The most highly prized feathers—those of the resplendent quetzal—came from Guatemala. Hummingbirds, macaws, and many other birds supplied feathers. The Mexica also collected feathers as tribute from areas they conquered. Tribute lists illustrated in the *Codex Mendoza*, produced after the Spanish Conquest, demonstrate the large number of birds and feathers sent to the Aztec capital city, Tenochtitlan. In Tenochtitlan, featherworkers comprised their own special social class. They lived in a neighborhood called *Amantla*, which is why they were called *amanteca*.



Figure **2.2.9.1.6**: Amanteca in the *Florentine Codex*, Book 9, c. 1577–1579, folio 65v

The *amanteca* and their featherworks were both valuable, as indicated by the attention paid to them in the encyclopedic ***Florentine Codex***, produced by the Franciscan friar Bernardino de Sahagun and his Indigenous collaborators between 1577–79. The Codex devotes many pages to the amanteca and provides numerous illustrations detailing how they worked, including how they glued feathers to flat surfaces.

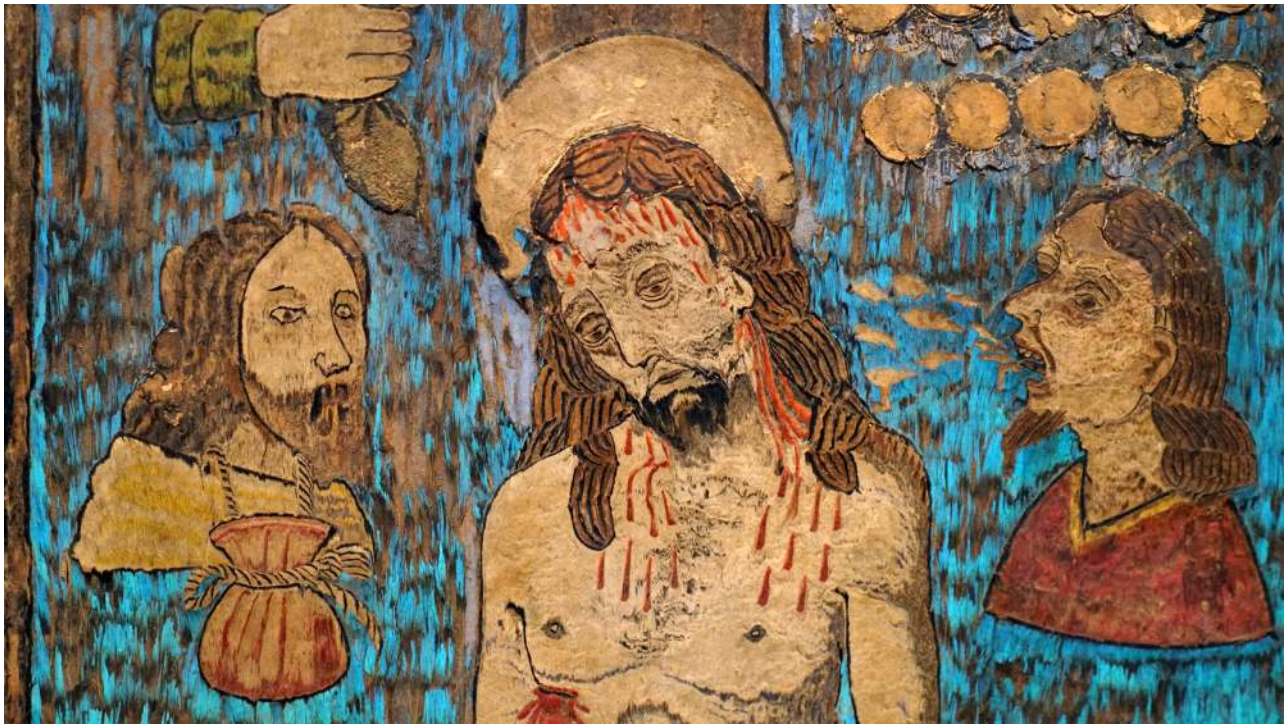


Figure **2.2.9.1.7**: The Mass of St. Gregory (detail), 1539, feathers on wood with touches of paint, 26 1/4 x 22 inches / 68 x 56 cm (Musee des Jacobins)

Divine Light

As religious or devotional objects, iridescent featherworks like *The Mass of St. Gregory* seemed to communicate ideas about divine light. As air passed over their surface, the feathers rustled and moved, animating the object with a life force. Depending on how you held the object, the colors of the feathers seemed to transform as well. Green hummingbird feathers became purple or pink, corresponding to Christian notions of divine light. The iridescent qualities of feathers and their Christian symbolism compare to stained glass windows in Gothic cathedrals, all of which relate to Christ as the *lux mundi* (the light of the world).



Figure 2.2.9.1.8: Juan Bautista Cuiris, *Portrait of Christ*, Hummingbird and Parrot feathers (Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna)

The potential religious connotations of featherworks stimulated the creation of liturgical garments and objects made of feathers. Examples of bishops' garments (like miters and stoles) and eucharistic altars still exist. Many of the liturgical garments were sent to Europe in the sixteenth century. We know, for instance, that Ferdinando I de' Medici, the Grand Duke of Tuscany, actively collected featherworks and other items from colonial Mexico.



Figure **2.2.9.1.9**: Sacred Eucharistic Featherwork, 16th century, feathers on wood with silver trimmings, 55.7 x 37.2 cm (Museo Nacional de Arte, Mexico City; photo: Steven Zucker, CC BY-SA 2.0)

Several sixteenth-century eucharistic triptychs portray the Last Supper flanked by saints Peter and Paul. The central panel also includes a Latin inscription that relates the moment when Christ offers his body and blood—the very same words a priest would say during Mass at the moment of transubstantiation.

Additional resources:

"The Mass of St. Gregory," in *Painting a New World*, exh. cat., ed. Donna pierce, Denver Art Museum (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2004), pp. 98-102 (**available online**).

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2.2.9.2: A Renaissance miniature in wood and feathers

- *by DR. LAUREN KILROY-EWBANK and DR. BETH HARRIS*

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Video **2.2.9.2.1**: Pendant triptych with scenes of the Passion, 16th century, boxwood, feathers, gold, enamel, 4.4 x 4.4 cm (The Metropolitan Museum of Art)



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2.2.9.3: A shimmering saint, St. John in featherwork

by **DR. LAUREN KILROY-EWBANK** and **DR. BETH HARRIS**

Page ID

179585



Saint John the Evangelist, 17th century, feather mosaic and paper on copper (Collection of Daniel Liebsohn, loaned to Museo Nacional de Arte, Mexico City)

Additional resources

Read more about **New Spain**

Read more about **featherworks from New Spain**

Learn more about **Mexica featherwork**

Maya Stanfield-Mazzi, “Featherwork,” in *Clothing the New World Church: Liturgical Textiles of Spanish America, 1520–1820*, 1st ed. (University of Notre Dame Press, 2021), pp. 115–74.

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2.2.10: Map of Cholula, from the relaciones geográficas

by DR. LAUREN KILROY-EWBANK

Page ID
179586



Figure 2.2.10.1: Map of Cholula, from the *relaciones geográficas*, 1581, 31 x 44 cm (Benson Latin American Collection, University of Texas)



Figure 2.2.10.2: Map showing the town of Cholula (underlying map © Google)

In 1581, an Indigenous artist from San Gabriel, Cholula (near the city of Puebla in Mexico, then part of the viceroyalty of New Spain) created an extraordinary map that shows the main buildings and spaces of the city—all centered around the *convento* of San Gabriel and the plaza mayor (or main plaza).

How did this remarkable map come to be? In 1577, the King of Spain (Philip II) asked towns throughout the Spanish viceroyalties to complete a questionnaire that included 50 questions about the terrain, built environment, demographics, natural resources, and more. The goal was to help the Spanish Crown gather information about its territorial possessions. The responses are now known as the *relaciones geográficas*. One of the questions asked for a map (on the questionnaire it is called a *pintura* or painting), and requested that it include the town's center, streets, plazas, monasteries, and other important features.

Answers to the survey and the map would be separate objects, although they were intended to be kept together. For the map, the Spanish *corregidor* of Cholula (the local administrator), Gabriel Rojas, answered the questions on the survey, while a currently unidentified Indigenous artist produced the map—both of which would be sent back to Spain. Because these maps were largely produced by Indigenous artists (indicated by the use of such elements as Indigenous language inscriptions or imagery), they provide important insight into how they visualized space in the wake of colonization and also the visual entanglements and negotiations that occurred as a result of different cultures coming into contact. The materials, iconography, textual inscriptions and more speak to these entanglements.

The *convento* of San Gabriel



Figure **2.2.10.3**: Aerial map of San Gabriel Cholula (underlying map © Google)

The map is organized on a grid—as was the actual city it represents. At the map's center is the large Franciscan church of San Gabriel, which takes up two city blocks. It is clearly the most important building on this map—even more than the buildings of government below it. This church (part of a ***convento***) was founded by the Franciscans, the first mendicant order to arrive in New Spain, as an aid in converting the Indigenous peoples.

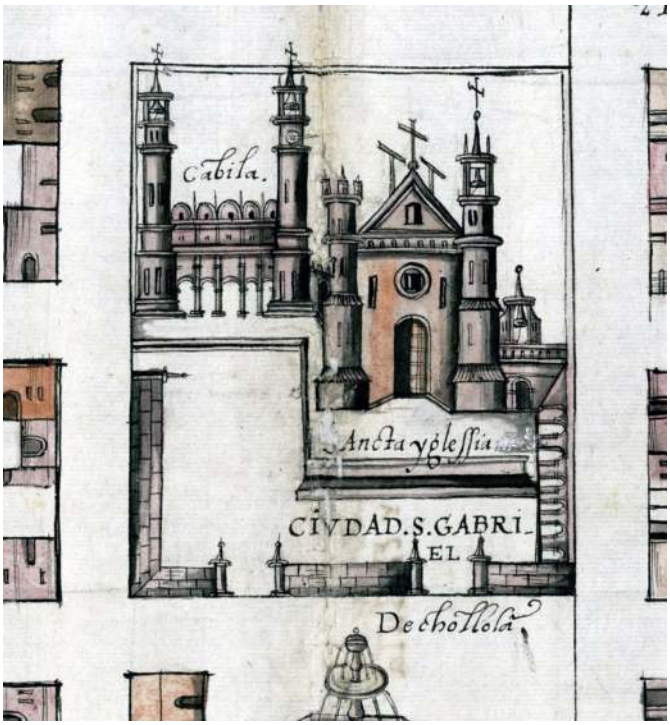


Figure **2.2.10.4**: The convento of San Gabriel and the royal chapel (detail), map of Cholula, from the *relaciones geográficas*, 1581, 31 x 44 cm (Benson Latin American Collection, University of Texas)

The *convento*'s royal chapel is on the left (on the map, it's labeled '*cabila*' which is a variant of *capilla*), connected to the church. Its distinctive many-domed ceiling is visible, as are its bell towers. Despite its name, the chapel was not meant for royalty, but for the local population to gather and worship. The chapel has an open arcade on the front (both in the map and still extant today), and inside the chapel there is an undifferentiated space filled with columns—similar to a **hypostyle hall** such as we find in a mosque like Spain's **Great Mosque of Córdoba**. Other open chapels built primarily for Indigenous peoples in the early colonial period also used this form, and it is likely that making the structure look like a **mosque** was both functional (to accommodate large numbers of people) and symbolic (the more recent waves of conquest throughout Iberia had involved transforming mosques into Christian spaces). The *convento* of San Gabriel also was built with an atrium (open courtyard) to accommodate the large numbers of new Indigenous converts, around which a wall was constructed to demarcate the sacred space, also included in the map.

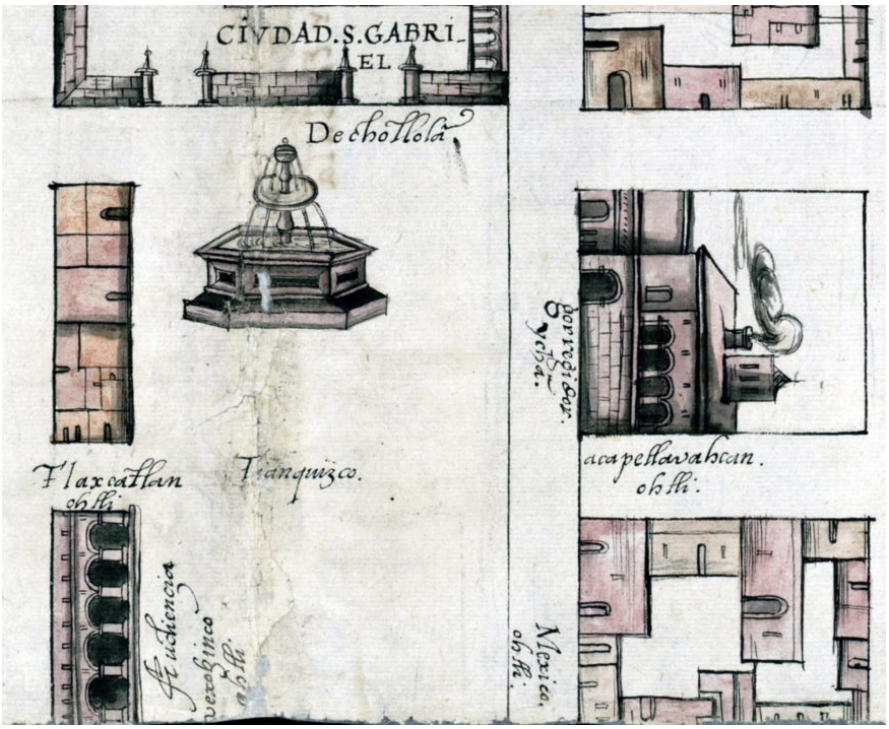


Figure **2.2.10.5**: Fountain, plaza and marketplace (detail), map of Cholula, from the *relaciones geográficas*, 1581, 31 x 44 cm (Benson Latin American Collection, University of Texas)

The city center

The artist has drawn a fountain directly below the *convento*, and to the left we see a series of connected buildings, and below that an arcaded building. This is the city square (the plaza) in which the city's main marketplace (labeled as *tianquizco*, the Nahuatl word for marketplace) was situated (and still is today). The arcaded building is where the cabildo, or town's government, was located. On the opposite side of the square is the corregidor's residence (labeled *gorregidor ychā*), a multi-storied building with an arcaded balcony on the second floor. Roads leading out of the city are also indicated around the square, all labeled with the name of a town and the Nahuatl word *ohtli* (path or road)—they head to Tlaxcala, Acapetlahuacan (today, Izúcar de Matamoros in Puebla), Huejotzingo, and Mexico City.

The *barrios*



Figure **2.2.10.6**: A church in a specific *altepetl* (detail), map of Cholula, from the *relaciones geográficas*, 1581, 31 x 44 cm (Benson Latin American Collection, University of Texas)

Surrounding the city center, we see city blocks outlined in black ink filled with smaller unnamed structures (homes and other types of buildings) and six churches, that occupy a full block and are often shown from the front or side, and in connection with a mountain (or *tepetl* in Nahuatl) to designate a location (not because there was necessarily an actual mountain; explained more

below). They are all labeled with a name and a number, such as “2. Sanctiago Cabezera,” and they represent *barrios* (neighborhoods) of the city.

Cholula has many churches, even today, and many of the early ones were built directly atop Indigenous places of worship. The way the churches are depicted was likely influenced by imported European prints. The artist used light and shadow to model them, giving them a three-dimensional quality, which was a European renaissance artistic strategy introduced to this area.

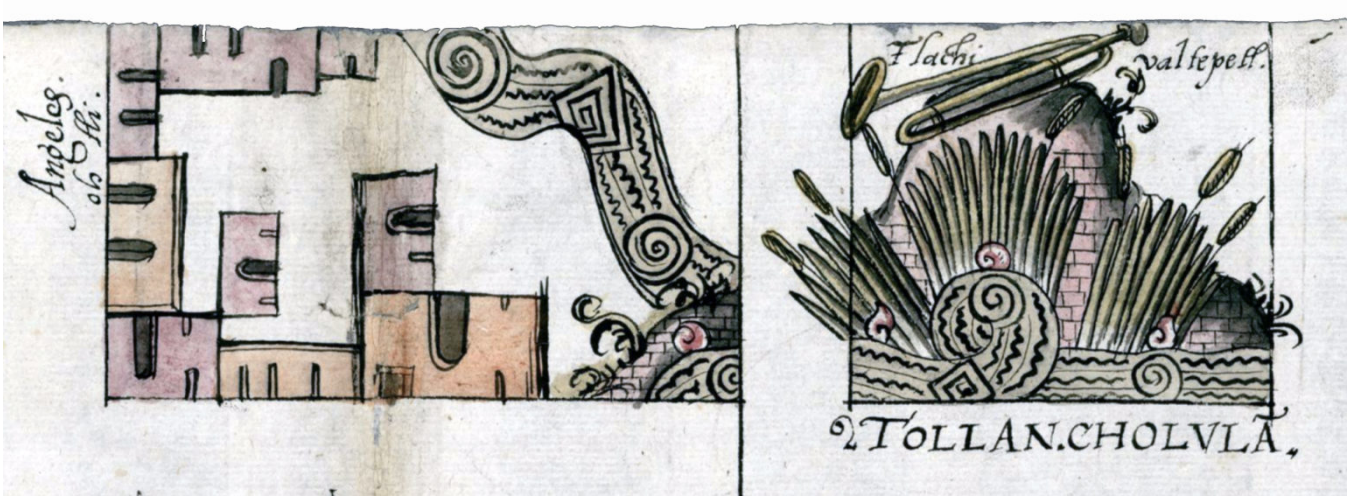


Figure **2.2.10.7**: Tollan Cholula (detail), map of Cholula, from the *relaciones geográficas*, 1581, 31 x 44 cm (Benson Latin American Collection, University of Texas)

Tollan Cholula

One of the most interesting features of the map is a block on the top right that shows Tollan Cholula, the thriving Mesoamerican city that was here before the colonial era (Tollan means, “among the reeds”; Cholula comes from *acholloyan*, or the “place where the water flows”). This site is indicated by a Native place sign which combines a mountain with a trumpet, the native *atl* sign (the sign for water, shown like a spiral in the water), and reeds.



Figure **2.2.10.8**: Great Pyramid of Cholula, now partially overgrown (with the small church of Our Lady of Remedies atop it), Cholula, Puebla, Mexico (photo: Diego Delso, CC BY-SA 3.0)

It marks the place of the famous pyramid that was once the thriving center of the city before the Spanish Invasion. Cholula’s massive pyramid still stands today, one of the largest in the world and the biggest in the Americas. Cholula was also the supposed birthplace of the deity Quetzalcoatl (“feathered serpent”), one of the oldest divine presences in Mesoamerica. On the map, the pyramid and the water connected to it are the only forms that spill into other blocks on the map, highlighting its significance to the city, and likely to the artist.

Painted by an Indigenous artist-scribe



Figure 2.2.10.9: The location of Chapultepec, for example, would include a hill (*tepetl*) and a grasshopper (*chapolin*). Detail, *Codex Telleriano-Remensis*, 16th century, folio 45v (Bibliothèque nationale de France)

The artist is believed to be Indigenous not solely because of the prominence of the pyramid and the use of the Native place sign, but also because the map includes text in Nahuatl. Atop the pyramid is the word 'Tlachivaltepetl', another name for the pyramid (today spelled Tlachihualtepetl); it literally means "built mountain" or "man-made mountain." Its importance on the map also refers to the concept of the *altepetl* (in Nahuatl *atl* is water, and *tepetl* is mountain). *Altepetl* referred to a specific socio-political unit (something like a city-state) found among the Indigenous peoples. On maps, Nahua artists often used the image of a mountain in association with other glyphs or symbols to denote a specific altepetl. The tepetl or mountain glyph designated a specific place; the addition of other symbols (like reeds or a trumpet) helped to identify the specific place. This convention was a common feature of Indigenous maps before and after the Spanish Conquest. The city of Tollan Cholula (recall that it means "among the reeds" and "place where the water flows") has the mountain, a trumpet, the Native sign for water, and reeds.

The Indigenous artist was likely a *tlacuilo*, an artist-scribe, someone who both divined knowledge and recorded it in visual form. The *tlacuiloque* (the plural of *tlacuilo*) were an important class of individuals prior to the Spanish invasion and conquest, responsible for producing painted pictographic codices that contained knowledge about history, myths, the gods, and more. Many of the manuscripts and maps (like this one) produced after 1521 were painted by *tlacuiloque*.

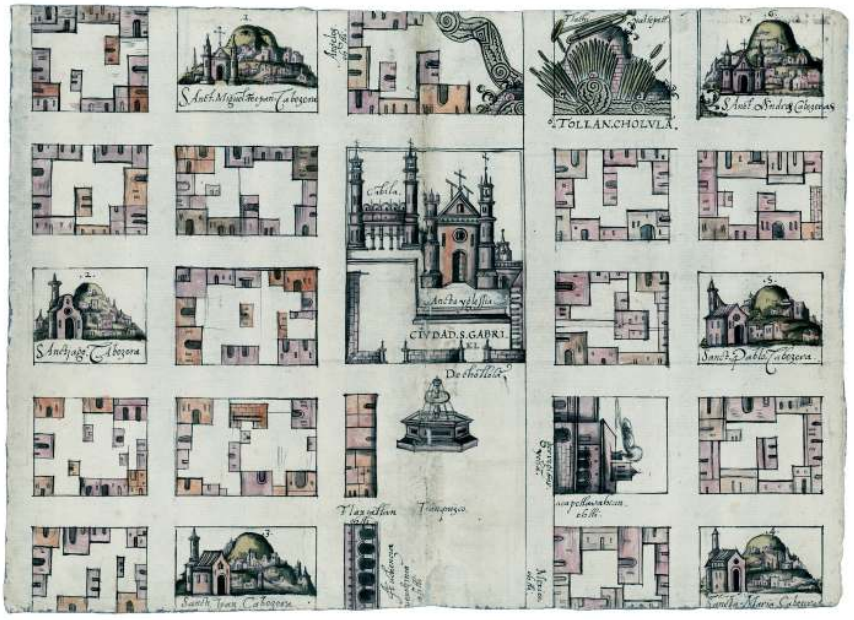


Figure 2.2.10.10: Map of Cholula, from the *relaciones geográficas*, 1581, 31 x 44 cm (Benson Latin American Collection, University of Texas)

The power of the grid

The grid plan had conceptual and literal power at this time too. Cities developed after the waves of Spanish conquests in the Americas were sometimes built on a grid plan. Others were symbolically conceived as grids (although not necessarily built as such), and still others were only visually represented as grids because of the symbolic weight of the plan. The grid plan had

associations with order, as well as ties to ancient Roman building practices and ideas about power and imperialism. While the grid plan here was likely connected to Spanish imperial ideas, it is important to note that some cities and towns in Mesoamerica developed grid plans (such as Teotihuacan), so this urban plan was not unique to Europe.

Translation and entanglement

The *relaciones geográficas*, of which this map was a part, are remarkable moments of translation. The original questions disseminated by order of the King were written in Spanish. Once they made their way around the viceroyalty to towns and cities with a prominent Indigenous population, the questionnaire was then translated into the local language (such as Nahuatl). The questions were then answered in the Native language before being re-translated back into Spanish. The map is another act of translation because it records information in both visual and textual ways, and often includes Spanish and the local Indigenous language.

The entanglements of different traditions are also reflected by the materials. Both imported and local pigments are found on the map. One of the local pigments is cochineal, which created a red color. The paper is imported European paper, and includes a water mark, although some maps are done on locally made paper.

The map of Cholula, while only one map of many that formed the *relaciones geográficas*, provides insight into the Spanish imperial project in the 16th century, Indigenous artists working in the early colonial era, cultural entanglements, and the conceptualization of space. They also testify to the importance of visual materials as forms of documentary evidence.

Additional resources

See the map in high-res on the World Digital Library

Learn more about the **Relaciones Geográficas** at the LLILAS Benson Latin American Studies and Collection

The Map annotated on The Mapas Project

LLILAS Benson and the Repatriation of Indigenous Cultural Patrimony

Jordana Dym and Karl Offen, eds. *Mapping Latin America: A Cartographic Reader* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011)

Barbara Mundy, "**Mapping Babel: A Sixteenth-Century Indigenous Map from Mexico**," *The Appendix* (2013)

Barbara Mundy, *The Mapping of New Spain: Indigenous Cartography and the Maps of the Relaciones Geográficas* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1996)

Dana Leibsohn, "Primers for Memory: Cartographic Histories and Nahua Identity," in *Writing without Words: Alternative Literacies in Mesoamerica and the Andes* (Durham andLondon: Duke University Press, 1994)

Geoffrey McCafferty, "Mountain of Heaven, Mountain of Earth: The Great Pyramid of Cholula as Sacred Landscape," in *Landscape and Power in Ancient Mesoamerica*, ed. Rex Koontz, Kathryn Reese-Taylor, Annabeth Headrick (Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 2001)



This page titled 2.2.10: Map of Cholula, from the relaciones geográficas is shared under a CC BY-NC-SA 4.0 license and was authored, remixed, and/or curated by Dr. Lauren Kilroy-Ewbank, "Map of Cholula, from the relaciones geográficas," in Smarthistory, January 22, 2021, accessed November 4, 2022, https://smarthistory.org/map-cholula/..

2.2.11: Engravings in Diego de Valadés's Rhetorica Christiana

by DR. LAUREN KILROY-EWBANK

Page ID
179587



Figure **2.2.11.1**: Diego Valadés, "Didacus Valadés Fecit," 1579, copperplate engraving, within *Rhetorica Christiana ad concionandi et orandi usum accommodate […] ex Indorum maximè deprompta sunt historiis*. Perugia: Petrus Jacobus Petrutius, 1579. (**New York Public Library Digital Collections**)

The first book ever printed by an American author was *Rhetorica Christiana* (or *Christian Rhetoric*) in 1579 in the city of Perugia, Italy. It was written in Latin and illustrated by Diego de Valadés, who was born in Mexico to a Spanish conquistador father and an Indigenous mother in 1533. He would become the first mestizo to join the Franciscan religious order in the viceroyalty of **New Spain**, and in 1570 he traveled to Rome on behalf of the Franciscans. His written account was the first published text to describe the evangelization and conversion of Indigenous peoples in the Americas from the perspective of a missionary, and it included twenty-seven copperplate engravings. One shows Valadés accompanied by an inscription that states "F. Didacus Valadés Fecit" or "F. Diego Valadés maker," announcing to any reader that he created the engravings. Valadés died around 1582, never having returned to Mexico.



Figure **2.2.11.2**: Diego Valadés, "The Great Chain of Being", 1579, copperplate engraving, within *Rhetorica Christiana ad concionandi et orandi usum accommodate […] ex Indorum maximè deprompta sunt historiis*. Perugia: Petrus Jacobus Petrutius, 1579 (**Getty Research Institute**)

The Franciscan order was the first group of mendicant friars to arrive in New Spain after the Spanish conquest. They arrived in 1521 in order to convert the Indigenous populations. At the time Valadés joined the Franciscans, Indigenous converts were not allowed to enter the mendicant orders. This might explain why his name is omitted from some records. His father's status as a conquistador may have helped the young Valadés gain entry to the Franciscan order.

One of Valadés's teachers was friar Pedro de Gante (Pieter of Ghent), a well-known Franciscan friar who was among the first three Franciscans to arrive from Spain in Mexico, and who worked at the school of Santiago Tlatelolco. Gante helped to train young Indigenous men in the ways of European artistic conventions and to learn Latin and Spanish. Valadés himself was the product of this school. Gante was highly esteemed by Valadés, as well as the king, Charles V, who at one point asked Gante to become archbishop; in his book, Valadés notes that Gante refused.

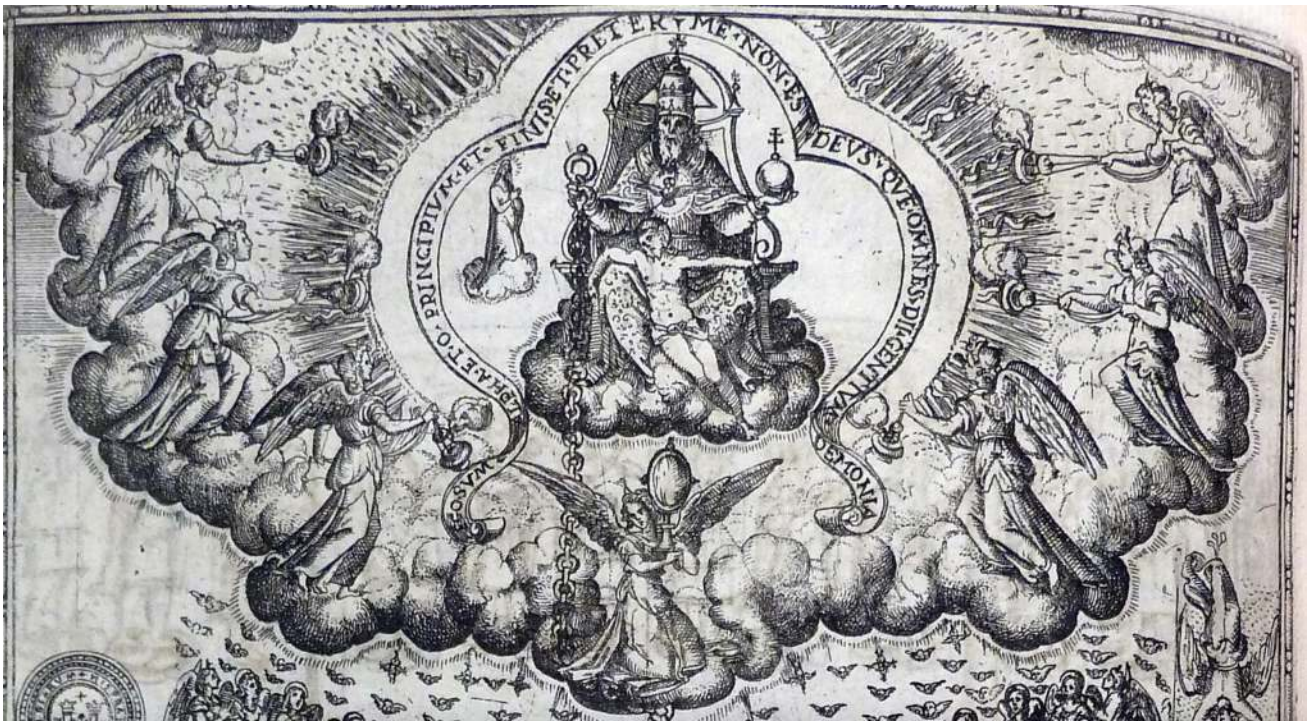


Figure **2.2.11.3**: Diego Valadés, "The Great Chain of Being," 1579, copperplate engraving, within *Rhetorica Christiana ad concionandi et orandi usum accommodate […] ex Indorum maximè deprompta sunt historiis*. Perugia: Petrus Jacobus Petrutius, 1579 (**Getty Research Institute**)

Rhetorica Christiana reflects Valadés's classical, humanist education under Gante, with its references to ancient Greco-Roman authors like Plato, Aristotle, Cicero, Virgil, and Horace, among others. One image called the "Great Chain of Being" encapsulates some ideas derived from ancient philosophers like Plato, Aristotle, and Neoplatonic thinkers in its illustration of a hierarchy of existence. God sits at the top of the hierarchy, with angels below him. They are all encompassed in clouds to suggest their spirit form, which was intended to convey their infinite, un-changing, and perfect form.

Lower on the hierarchy are beings that do change and are imperfect: (in order) humans, animals, plants, and finally stones and minerals. Hell is at the bottom of the engraving, with Satan ruling over the realm of the fallen and sinners. The image encapsulates a sophisticated understanding of matter, science, philosophy, and alchemy borrowed from classical and more modern sources, and speaks to Valadés's own humanist education.

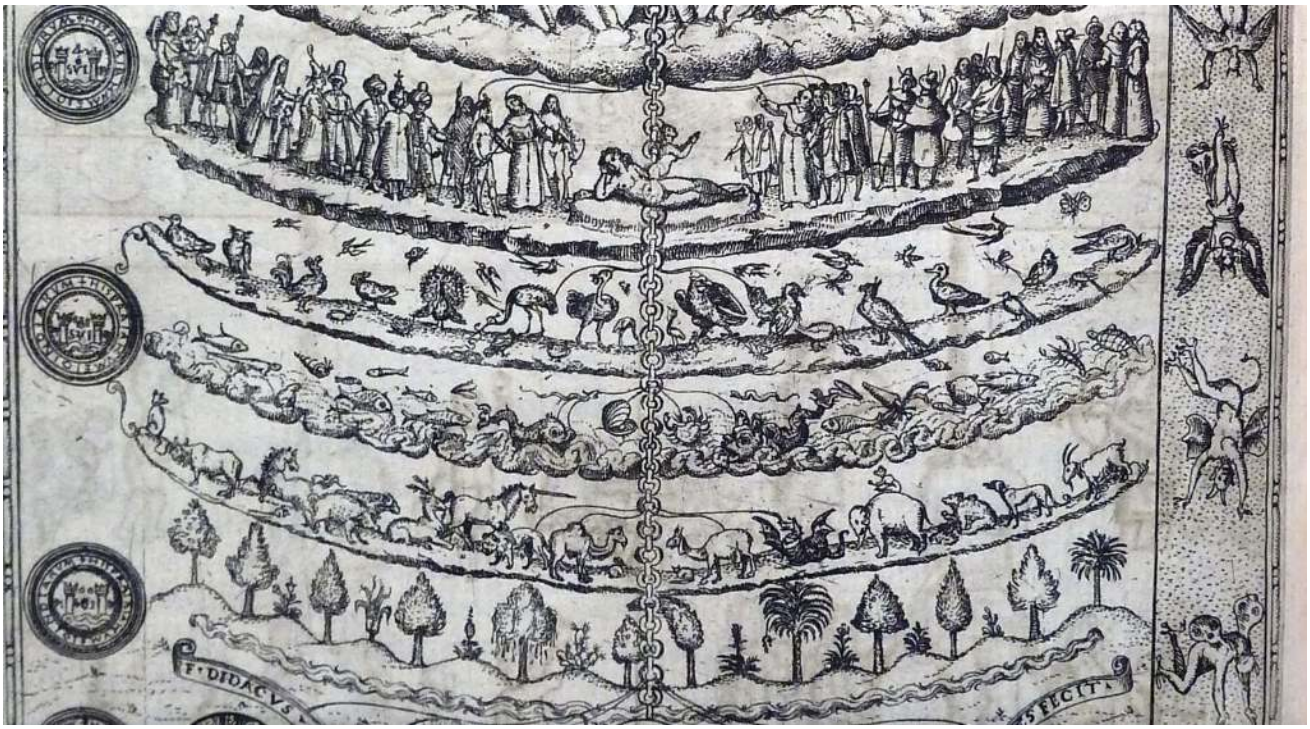


Figure **2.2.11.4**: Diego Valadés, "The Great Chain of Being," or 1579, copperplate engraving, within *Rhetorica Christiana ad concionandi et orandi usum accommodate […] ex Indorum maximè deprompta sunt historiis*. Perugia: Petrus Jacobus Petrutius, 1579 (**Getty Research Institute**)



Figure **2.2.11.5**: Diego Valadés, "Mnemonic Alphabet," 1579, copperplate engraving, within *Rhetorica Christiana ad concionandi et orandi usum accommodate […] ex Indorum maximè deprompta sunt historiis*. Perugia: Petrus Jacobus Petrutius, 1579 (**Getty Research Institute**)

Valadés would eventually work at San José de los Naturales (an important early center for conversation in Mexico City) with Gante between 1543 and 1553. Valadés claims in his book that he learned three Indigenous languages: Nahuatl, Tarascan, and Otomí. He, like many other Franciscans, learned Indigenous languages as a way to facilitate communication and conversion. Valadés served as a missionary for years among the Chichimecs in northern Mexico (in the modern states of Durango and Zacatecas) before he eventually traveled to Europe, most notably to Spain and Italy. It was during his time in Rome that he began work on the *Rhetorica Christiana*.

Rhetorica Christiana is written in Latin, which indicates its use for a learned audience, specifically Franciscan friars who wished to better understand the missionary ventures in the Americas. The book tackled a number of issues and themes, and supported the overall conversion goals of the Franciscans in New Spain. It includes a number of engravings accompanying the written text, suggesting the important role that Valadés accorded to images. Many of them function as visual mnemonic devices, or a means of using images to help cement ideas in a person's memory.

Friar Preaching to the Indigenous Population

Valadés describes in the text and shows in the image how Franciscans converted the local Indigenous populations, as well as preached to them. One engraving in *Rhetorica Christiana* shows a Franciscan friar, likely Pedro de Gante, preaching to a large crowd of Indigenous converts. The friar uses a stick to point to images of the Passion, likely on a *lienzo*, a large painted cloth, and which was similar to the types of murals often found painted within missionary spaces. This engraving reveals the important role that images played in early conversion efforts because language barriers still existed, and using images became a powerful strategy to teach recent converts Catholic dogma.



Figure **2.2.11.6**: Diego Valadés, "Friar Preaching to Native Converts," 1579, copperplate engraving, within *Rhetorica Christiana ad concionandi et orandi usum accommodate […] ex Indorum maximè deprompta sunt historiis*. Perugia: Petrus Jacobus Petrutius, 1579 (**Getty Research Institute**)

Many of Valadés's images include letters scattered about the scene to help viewers understand concepts. For instance, the letter A is located on the pulpit where the preacher speaks to the crowd and points to images. In the corresponding text, it notes that the letter A says that the friar speaks to the converts in an Indigenous language. With the letter B, it notes that the friar points to the image to correspond to what he says aloud.

The Ideal Atrium

In his discussions of evangelizing the Indigenous population, Valadés mentions that friars preached outside so that they could reach large crowds of people. The engraving of the "Ideal Atrio" is an image of idealized missionary conversion carried out by the Franciscans in Mexico. Letters included with each scene are connected to a key with explanations of each vignette in the scene.

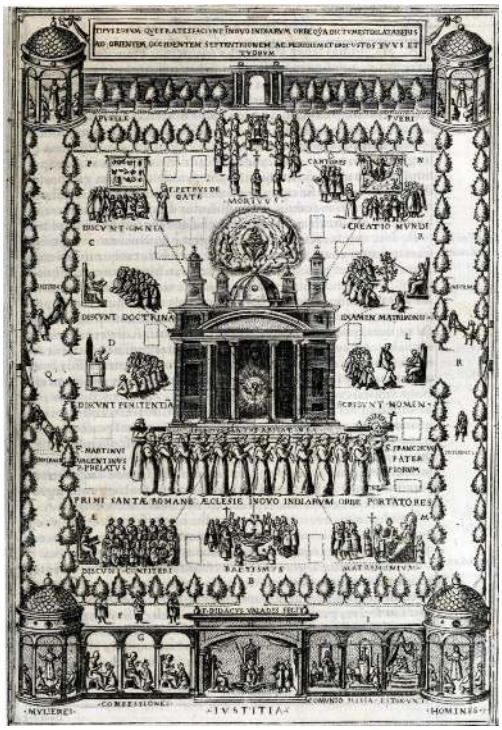


Figure 2.2.11.7: Diego Valadés, “The Ideal Atrium,” 1579, copperplate engraving, within *Rhetorica Christiana ad concionandi et orandi usum accommodate […] ex Indorum maximè deprompta sunt historiis*. Perugia: Petrus Jacobus Petrutius, 1579 (Getty Research Institute)

In the center of the image, the founder of the Franciscan order, St. Francis of Assisi, leads a procession, which also includes the principal Franciscan missionary Martin de Valencia who was the leader of the group of twelve Franciscans who came to Mexico in 1524. They lead other Franciscans as carriers of the church. The inscription accompanying the central scene states “The first to bring the Holy Roman church to the New World of the Indies.” Above the Franciscans carrying the church we see the dove of the Holy Spirit framed within the architecture, and above the structure itself is God holding Jesus on the cross, creating a vertical line connecting father, son, and holy spirit, and a common visual reminder of the Trinity.

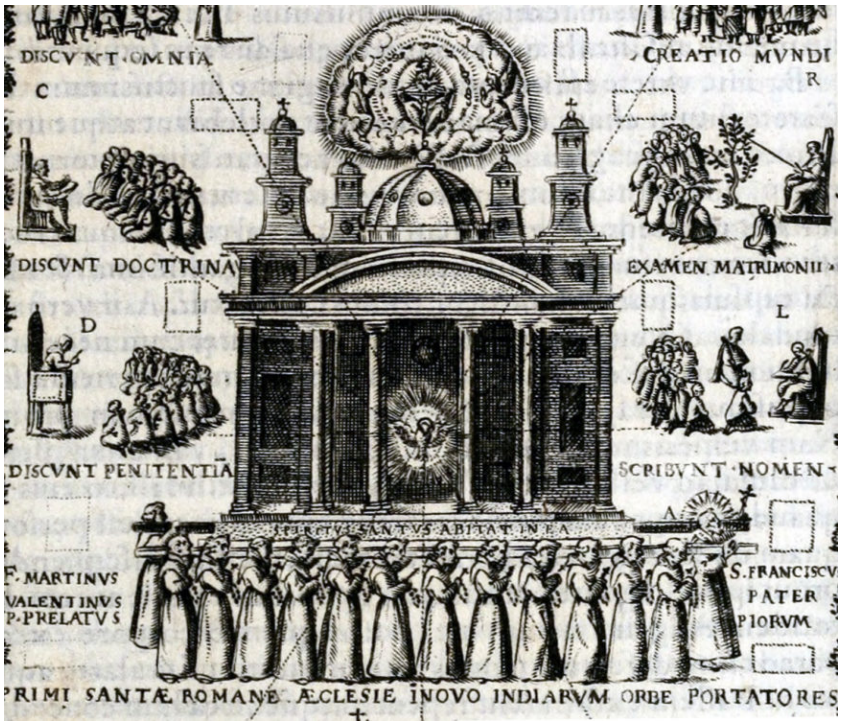


Figure 2.2.11.8: Diego Valadés, "The Ideal Atrium," 1579, copperplate engraving, within Rhetorica Christiana ad concionandi et orandi usum accommodate […] ex Indorum maximè deprompta sunt historiis. Perugia: Petrus Jacobus Petrutius, 1579 (Getty Research Institute)

In the rest of the image, Franciscan friars teach young men and women about Catholicism. The image also shows friars administering the sacraments, which include baptism, confession, and marriage. Several friars are shown engaged in teaching, subjects such as the creation of the world and penitence.



Figure 2.2.11.9: Diego Valadés, "The Ideal Atrium," 1579, copperplate engraving, within Rhetorica Christiana ad concionandi et orandi usum accommodate […] ex Indorum maximè deprompta sunt historiis. Perugia: Petrus Jacobus Petrutius, 1579 (Getty Research Institute)

The long sticks used to point to images on a wooden board or textile are visible, once again revealing the importance of images as teaching aids in the early post-conquest period. Valadés even includes friar Pedro de Gante teaching Indigenous converts in the upper left corner.

At the bottom of the image, inside the arched structure, friars listen to confession, offer communion, deliver justice, and give last rites to a dying individual. We also see men and women separated, each within their own domed structures at each of the four corners. These chapels in the atrium's corners recall posa chapels that were built in actual Franciscan missionary complexes, like that at Huejotzingo. They were used similarly to what we see in Valadés's image: for friars to pause and teach Indigenous people about Catholic dogma or was way stations during processions.

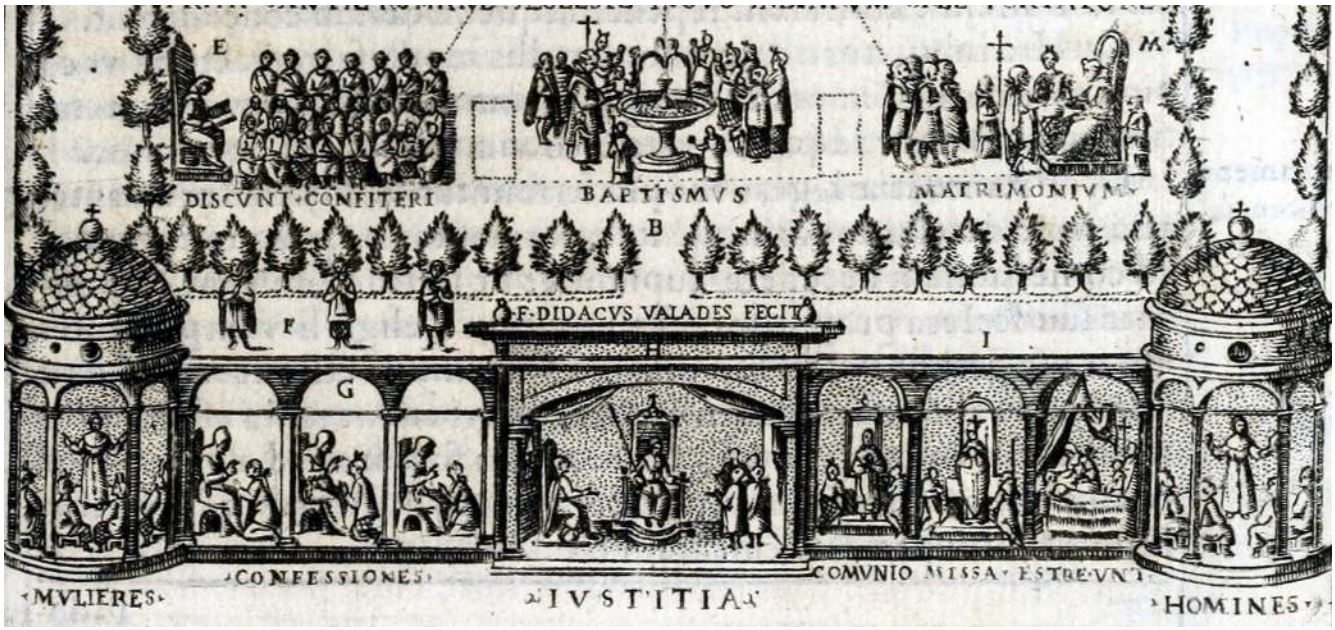


Figure **2.2.11.10**: Diego Valadés, "The Ideal Atrium," 1579, copperplate engraving, within *Rhetorica Christiana ad concionandi et orandi usum accommodate […] ex Indorum maximè deprompta sunt historiis*. Perugia: Petrus Jacobus Petrutius, 1579 (**Getty Research Institute**)

It is possible that the ideal atrium depicted here was directly borrowed from Valadés's own missionary experiences during his time at San José de los Naturales under Gante. There, a large atrium and accompanying *capilla indio*, or chapel for Natives, had been created. This architectural form served as a model for other missionary complexes built throughout New Spain in the sixteenth century.

Indigenous Customs



Figure **2.2.11.11**: Diego Valadés, "Mexico City" 1579, copperplate engraving, within Rhetorica Christiana ad concionandi et orandi usum accommodate […] ex Indorum maximè deprompta sunt historiis. Perugia: Petrus Jacobus Petrutius, 1579 (**Getty Research Institute**)

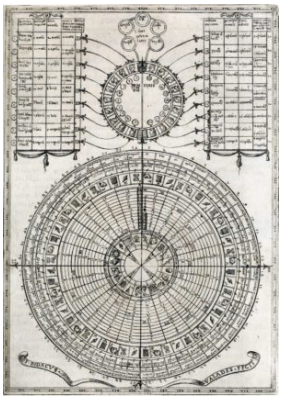


Figure **2.2.11.12**: Diego Valadés, “Mesoamerican and Julian Calendars,” 1579, copperplate engraving, within Rhetorica Christiana ad concionandi et orandi usum accommodate […] ex Indorum maximè deprompta sunt historiis. Perugia: Petrus Jacobus Petrutius, 1579 (**Getty Research Institute**)

Other parts of the book illustrate and describe Mesoamerican practices, ceremonies, and ideas. In one image, Valadés attempts to reconcile Indigenous timekeeping with European timekeeping. He tries to match the Mesoamerican calendrical wheel with the Julian calendar, although in the end it is not entirely accurate.

In another image, we see a view of Mexico City with a teocalli, around which people engage in diverse activities. They are identifiable as Amerindians by the ubiquitous use of feathered headdresses. By this point, feathers had become a symbol for America and of the Indigenous peoples living there.

Valadés depicts the teocalli as an elevated platform, on top of which is an open air space and a rounded, apsidal space. Below the elevated platform, people dance in a slightly sunken courtyard. Surrounding the teocalli we find buildings, trees, pathways, and people engaged in day-to-day activities. This particular engraving was actually a fold-out image.

The importance of education

Rhetorica Christiana asserts the success of the Franciscan mission to convert Native peoples in New Spain. For Valadés the proof lay in Native peoples’ understanding Catholic dogma and liturgy. Throughout his text, Valadés argues for the education of Indigenous peoples, and in so doing also argues for their humanity. After the Spanish conquest in 1521, and throughout the sixteenth century, there were arguments over whether Indigenous peoples of the Americas qualified as human beings, as people with souls.



Figure **2.2.11.13**: Diego Valadés, “The Seven Liberal Arts,” 1579, copperplate engraving, within Rhetorica Christiana ad concionandi et orandi usum accommodate […] ex Indorum maximè deprompta sunt historiis. Perugia: Petrus Jacobus Petrutius, 1579 (**Getty Research Institute**)

Valadés makes his position clear—Native peoples needed to be educated. For Valadés, a Christian humanist education brought with it a civilizing influence, and so he argued for the need to educate the Indigenous population. One of his engravings shows the seven liberal arts, which included grammar, dialectic or logic, rhetoric, arithmetic, music, geometry, and astronomy. An engraving like this one reminded readers once again of the importance of a liberal arts education in an American context, and the images clearly played an important role within Valadés’s own vision of education and evangelization.

Additional resources

Read more about mission churches as theaters of conversion in New Spain

Learn more about how friars used atrial crosses to educate the Indigenous population of Mexico about Catholicism

Read more about how other artists invented visions of America in the sixteenth century

This page titled 2.2.11: Engravings in Diego de Valadés’s Rhetorica Christiana is shared under a CC BY-NC-SA 4.0 license and was authored, remixed, and/or curated by Dr. Lauren Kilroy-Ewbank, "Engravings in Diego de Valadés’s Rhetorica Christiana," in SmartHistory, November 5, 2019, accessed November 11, 2020, https://SmartHistory.org/engravings-in-diego-de-valadess-rhetorica-christiana/.

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2.2.12: Saintly violence? Santiago on Horseback

by DR. LAUREN KILROY-EWBANK and DR. BETH HARRIS

Page ID
179588



Video 2.2.12.1: Santiago on Horseback, 16th century, polychromed and gilded wood (Museo Franz Mayer, Mexico City, Mexico)A conversation between Dr. Lauren Kilroy-Ewbank and Dr. Beth Harris

Introduction

Santiago Matamoros (or Saint James the Moor Slayer) was the patron saint of the conquest and colonization of the Americas by Spain. He was associated with conquest long before the Spaniards arrived in the Americas, since he was believed to have miraculously helped Spanish Christians during the Reconquest of the Iberian Peninsula (Spain and Portugal) from Muslims (which started after 711).

In 1492, the final Muslim stronghold was defeated—the same year that Christopher Columbus arrived in the Caribbean. After the Spanish Conquest of the **Aztecs** in 1521 (in what is today Mexico City), the process of colonization and conversion began in what would be called the **Viceroyalty of New Spain**. Santiago became an important saint in New Spain, and he became known by the nickname Santiago Mataindios (Indian Killer)—recast to convey Spanish dominance over the Indigenous population. The saint's aggressive, violent defense of Spanish Christians was celebrated on both sides of the Atlantic but is deeply troubling today. To complicate matters, in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, some indigenous groups in the Americas even adopted the saint's image as an icon of resistance–in what may seem at odds with what the saint symbolized for Spaniards after the conquest. It testifies to the many meanings that saints accrued in the complex communities of the Americas.



Figure **2.2.12.2**

Terms

- Reconquest
- Polychrome wooden sculpture
- **Estofado**

Additional resources:

Read more about Spain in the 15th and 16th centuries

Read more about another version of Santiago Matamoros/Mataindios from New Spain on Vistas

Javier Domínguez García, "Santiago Mataindios: La Continuación De Un Discurso Medieval En La Nueva España." *Nueva Revista De Filología Hispánica* 54, no. 1 (2006): 33-56

Joan Myers, Marc Simmons, and Donna Pierce, *Santiago: Saint of Two Worlds* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1991)

For more on how indigenous peoples (on occasion) adopted Santiago after the sixteenth century, see John M. Watanabe, "From Saints to Shibboleths: Image, Structure, and Identity in Mayan Religious Syncretism," *American Ethnologist* 17, no. 1 (Feb 1990): 131–50

Constanza Ontiveros Valdés, "Las andanzas de Santiago en la nueva España y la imagen del indio: Santa María Chiconautla," *Ad Limina* , no. 4 (2013)

Elisa Vargas Lugo et al., eds., *Images of the Natives in the Art of New Spain* (Mexico City: Banamex, 2005)

For the classroom

Print out and use the Santiago Active Video Note-taking document (for teachers and students)

Discussion questions

1. Compare the sculpture with the painting of ***Saint Michael Defeating the Devil* by the Master of Belmonte** (15th century, Spain). What do these works tell us about the idea of conquest and religion in Spanish culture of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries?
2. What does *Santiago Mataindios* tell us about race and the process of colonization in New Spain? How does this compare with other types of 16th-century New Spanish art, such as the murals of **San Agustín de Acolman**?

3. How do polychrome wooden sculptures, such as *Santiago Mataindios* and **Juan Martínez Montañés and Francisco Pacheco's *Christ of Clemency*** broaden our understanding of renaissance/early modern sculpture? How do they compare with sculptures such as **Michelangelo's *Pietà***?
4. How do we think about works of art that were once celebrated but are now deeply troubling and racist? Why is it important to study violent and intolerant periods in history?



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2.2.13: The manuscripts of Luis de Carvajal

by DR. RONNIE PERELIS

Page ID

179589



Figure **2.2.13.1**: Luis de Carvajal, *Decalogue (The Ten Commandments)*, c. 1596 (Princeton University Digital Library)

A secret faith

In 1596, Luis de Carvajal, along with his mother and sisters, were condemned to the flames of an *auto da fé* in Mexico City for their secret adherence to Judaism. The Carvajals were *conversos*, descendants of Jews who converted to Catholicism often under great duress in Spain and Portugal during the late middle ages. A minority of these converts maintained their ancestral faith in secret, braving the wrath of the Inquisition.

The Carvajals moved to Mexico for the same reason other Spaniards left the Old World for the New—economic opportunities and the chance to remake themselves in a new land. While the Inquisition only functioned in the Americas beginning in 1571, many *conversos* migrated to the ports and major urban centers of the Americas from the earliest days of Spanish conquest and colonization in the early 16th century. Carvajal's uncle, also named Luis de Carvajal, was a decorated *conquistador* who was named the governor of the frontier territory of the Nuevo Reino de León in the Northeastern part of modern-day Mexico, and he invited relatives to join him in **New Spain**. Though he was a devout Catholic, much of his family, including his nephew Luis, who worked as his main assistant, were crypto-Jews. Eventually the secret unraveled, and the family was arrested by the Inquisition in 1589. The younger Luis, his mother, and his sisters all asked for mercy and were placed in a monastery to serve out their penance. The uncle was stripped of his position and exiled; he died in prison.

A life story lost and found

Soon after the younger Carvajal was released from the monastery, he began to compose an electrifying spiritual autobiography. He was a trained calligrapher and he wrote his life story in tiny, lucid script in a small leather-bound book that he kept hidden on his person throughout his travels. In these writings, he charts the guiding hand of Providence in his spiritual adventures, and his last entry tells of his planned escape to Italy. Sadly, Carvajal and his family were arrested before they made it to safety, and the autobiography which was meant to declare God's mercies was found and used by the Inquisitors as evidence against them.

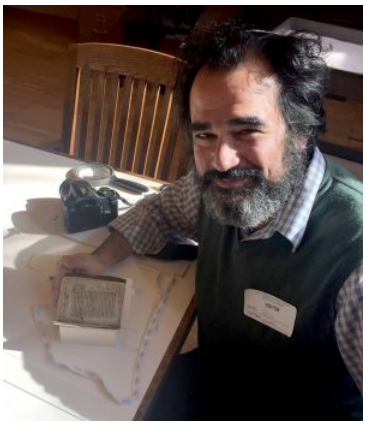


Figure 2.2.13.2: The author with the Luis de Carvajal manuscripts at the New York Historical Society (courtesy of author)

The autobiography, along with some of Carvajal's other writings, were preserved with the extensive trial records and stored in the Mexican National Archives until they were mysteriously stolen in 1932. These documents were thought to have been lost for over eighty years, until they resurfaced and were identified as the long-lost texts by Leonard Milberg, a renowned collector. Milberg alerted the authorities and arranged for the return of these documents to Mexico.

Before their official return, however, the manuscripts were put on display at the New York Historical society, where I had a chance to look at them up close. I have been working on Carvajal's life story for the past 15 years and I was overjoyed to finally see his handwriting and read the lines he penned with such passion. I—and all of the scholars who have investigated this sensational case of crypto-Jewish activity in the heart of colonial Mexico—had previously relied on a transcription of Carvajal's autobiography made by Alfonso Toro a few years prior to the theft of the manuscripts. After many years living with this text, analyzing, contextualizing, and turning it around in my head, it was a real thrill to sit with the original, up close.

New discoveries, new questions

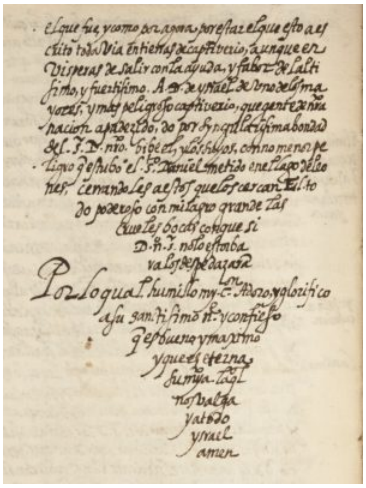


Figure 2.2.13.3: Final page of Luis de Carvajal's spiritual autobiography, c. 1596 (Princeton University Digital Library)

The small bundle of manuscripts seemed to be inviting me in with their neat lines of tiny script. The first section was like meeting an old friend, or seeing the face of a longtime pen pal. I knew the lines of Carvajal's autobiography inside and out, but I had never seen them in his own hand, nor did I know about the small side notes and elegant arrangement of the heading—the dedication to the Lord of Hosts that announces the beginning of his tale—nor the way he arranged the last lines in a final triangular flourish. Those details point to the fact that it was a text he went back to, added to, and revised. It also tells me that he really thought that he was about to escape the shadow of persecution and that his story of trials and tribulations was coming to a favorable end.

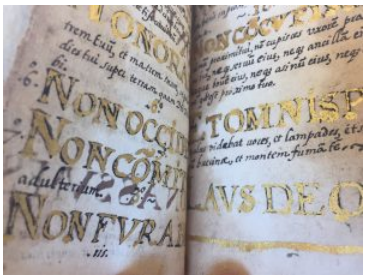


Figure 2.2.13.4: Luis de Carvajal, Decalogue (The Ten Commandments) (detail), c. 1596 (photo courtesy of the author)

But then I encountered works I had never known about like *El modo que es de Rezar*, a guide to prayer for himself and for his fellow secret Jews in Mexico, and a list of the acts of mercy that the "most high God performed for Joseph"—a review of the major events of his short and tumultuous life.

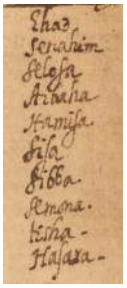


Figure 2.2.13.5: List of transliterated Hebrew numbers (detail), Luis de Carvajal manuscript, c. 1596 (Princeton University Digital Library)

Right before this list, which takes up two pages, I found a section with the ten commandments in Latin, written out in beautiful large letters with gold leaf. New questions emerged: I knew Carvajal was an expert calligrapher, but where would he have had access to the materials and knowledge of the technique to apply the gold leaf?

There is another page towards the end with a list of Jewish holidays and their corresponding Christian dates, along with another column featuring the name of the Hebrew months and a list of transliterated Hebrew numbers from one to ten—a Hebrew primer for a fully Latinized Converso Jew? What follows is even harder to understand—some psalms in Latin and some prayers in Portuguese, along with some deeply cryptic lists that seem to be mystical codes waiting to be deciphered.

More to decipher



Figure 2.2.13.6: Diego Rivera, *Dream of a Sunday Afternoon in Alameda Central Park (Sueño de una tarde dominical en la Alameda Central)* (detail), 1947, entire mural 4.8 x 15 m (Museo Mural Diego Rivera, originally, Hotel del Prado, Mexico City)

The story of the Carvajal family has intrigued historians of colonial Mexico and has caught the imagination of a wide range of Mexican intellectuals and artists. Their experience is often read as an exemplary tale of the abuses of religious authority and the struggle for freedom of belief. I believe that the story of the Carvajals also complicates and enriches our understanding of Latin American religious history and points to the diversity of colonial society and the dynamism of religious creativity and expression that can still speak to spiritual seekers today.

Now that these texts have been digitized and the originals are securely back in Mexico, scholars will be able to explore and ask more questions of these beguiling records of a vibrant and short-lived religious life.

Additional resources:

Digitized version of the Luis de Carvajal manuscripts from Princeton University Digital Library

"A Secret Jew, the New World, a Lost Book: Mystery Solved," *The New York Times*, January 1, 2017

Ronnie Perelis, *Narratives from the Sephardic Atlantic: Blood and Faith* (Indiana University Press, 2016)

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2.2.14: What does the music of heaven sound like? St. Cecilia in New Spain

- *by DR. LAUREN KILROY-EWBANK*

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Video **2.2.14.1**: Andrés de Concha, *St. Cecilia*, 1590, oil on wood (Museo Nacional de Arte, Mexico City, Mexico)

Additional resources

This painting in the collection of MUNAL, Mexico City

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2.3.1: Baltasar de Echave Ibía, The Hermits

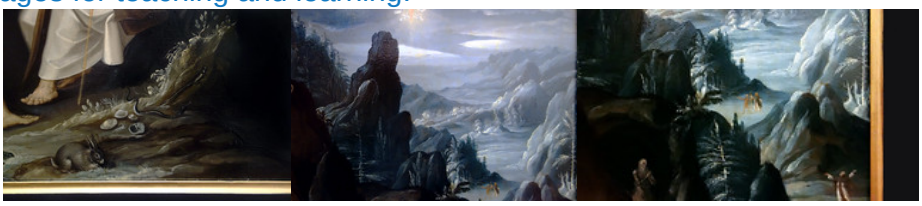
by DR. LAUREN KILROY-EWBANK and DR. STEVEN ZUCKER

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Video **2.3.1.1**: Baltasar de Echave Ibía, *The Hermits*, *Saint Paul and Saint Anthony*, c. 1620, oil on copper, 51.5 x 37.5 cm (Museo Nacional de Arte [MUNAL], Mexico City)

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2.3.2: Mission Church, San Esteban del Rey, Acoma Pueblo

DR. LAUREN KILROY-EWBANK

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Figure **2.3.2.1**: View of Acoma Pueblo, New Mexico

Stunning and dramatic, Acoma Pueblo is magnificent to visit not only for its spectacular location, but also because it is home to one of the best-preserved early mission churches in the United States. Standing on the edge of Acoma Pueblo (referred to as Sky City), one can see vast panoramas of the New Mexican landscape. What is a mission church?

Acoma sits on a mesa—a flat-topped hill with steep sides—about 360 feet above sea level, and until the mid-20th century, the only access to the Pueblo was via a narrow stone staircase carved into the mesa itself (pueblo is the Spanish word for a town or village). The location of the Pueblo is imposing and impressive, and it is easy to grasp why so many described it as impregnable. In the past, its elevated location aided in protecting it from invaders. Acoma Pueblo is believed to be one of the oldest continuously inhabited communities in the United States.



Figure **2.3.2.2**: Acoma Pueblo street with adobe buildings and ladders that lead to the upper story entrances to kivas (sacred ceremonial spaces)

A city in the sky

The Pueblo is filled with dwellings ranging from one to two stories, all fashioned in adobe (mud-brick). The tallest and largest structure is the mission church of San Esteban del Rey, built between 1629 and 1642. A Spanish Franciscan friar named Juan Ramirez directed the construction of the church in 1629. The Franciscans are mendicant friars (a religious order where the monks take vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience and depend on charity for their livelihood) that helped to convert the peoples of modern-day New Mexico beginning in the sixteenth century. The practice of building missions for the purpose of conversion began soon after Spaniards defeated the Mexica (often called the Aztecs) in their capital city of Tenochtitlan (what is today Mexico City) in 1521. The Spanish established the viceroyalty of New Spain, which eventually comprised parts of the southwestern United States, Mexico, Central America, Spain's Caribbean colonies, and the Philippines. What is a viceroy and a viceroyalty?



Figure **2.3.2.3**: Mission Church of San Esteban del Rey, 1629, Acoma Pueblo

The church of San Esteban del Rey is based on missionary churches found in Colonial Mexico, but combines local Indigenous techniques and architectural elements. Because it was the first mission built in New Mexico, it became the model for many others erected in this area.

It is a single nave church—it has no transept (or crossing), and is approximately 150 feet long and 40 feet wide. Typical of other mission churches of this era in the Spanish viceroyalty, it has a cloister (a covered walkway surrounding an open space) that may have been used to instruct Indigenous converts, an atrium (an open courtyard in front of the church), and an elevated open-balcony chapel. The walled atrium yard also functions as a cemetery, called a campo santo, in front of, and to the side of, the church.



Figure **2.3.2.4**: Elevated open-balcony chapel, Mission Church of San Esteban del Rey, 1629, Acoma Pueblo

The Spanish in New Mexico

Spaniards had two primary interests for desiring missions like the one at Acoma in New Mexico—to convert peoples to Christianity and to protect mines in northern Mexico. Led by Francisco Vazquez de Coronado, the Spanish arrived in the area around 1540. In 1542, New Mexico and Arizona were claimed for Spain, but the geographic regions remained largely unsettled because of the harsh conditions and lack of water. The Spanish king, Philip II, officially authorized settlement of New Mexico in 1583, but it was not until 1598 that Juan Perez de Oñate officially claimed this region for Spain.

Franciscans arrived at Acoma in 1598. At first, the peoples of Acoma defeated the Spaniards, but in 1599 the Spaniards were successful after a strategic attack. They claimed St. James (Santiago), appeared on horseback brandishing a sword and intervened to help them conquer Acoma.

The façade of San Esteban del Rey



Figure 2.3.2.5: Façade, Mission Church of San Esteban del Rey, 1629, Acoma Pueblo

The church's unadorned adobe façade is stark and austere, which is different from other Franciscan mission churches such as San Miguel in Huejotzingo, Mexico (in the state of Puebla, image below). San Esteban del Rey has two bell-towers framing a rectangular central area and an elevated open balcony chapel above the main entrance. This elevated space allowed friars to preach to people in the atrium outside the church, and so provided both practical and spiritual functions. Any priest in the open chapel stood higher than any new converts, suggesting he was closer to God and to Heaven.



Figure 2.3.2.6: Façade of church and cloister of San Miguel Arcangel in Huejotzingo, c. 1520s – 1530s, Puebla, Mexico (photo: Alejandro Linares Garcia, CC BY-SA 4.0)

San Esteban del Rey's massive adobe walls—bricks made from a mix of clay and straw—need continuous maintenance. In places the walls are seven feet thick, keeping the interior cool during the hot New Mexican summer, but also warm when the temperature drops. The heavy adobe construction limits the number of windows in the church structure. Small windows appear high above the ground, allowing little light into the church interior. The thick adobe walls and dark interior add a sense of awe and mystery to the space, especially as you pass through the main door from outside. You immediately know you have entered a holy space.



Figure 2.3.2.7: View of adobe wall (note that straw is visible to the right), Acoma Pueblo

The thick unadorned walls, interrupted by only a few windows, gives the façade an imposing quality. Some scholars describe it as having a militaristic or defensive appearance, yet there are no crenellations or other militaristic motifs like the ones we find on

Central Mexican mission churches such as Huejotzingo. It is unclear whether San Esteban del Rey actually functioned as a fortress or if this impression was intended to symbolically convey the impression that the church was the stronghold of God.

To build the church, people gathered materials and then transported them up to the top of the mesa. The vigas (wooden beams), for instance, were brought from the San Mateo Mountains—some of which were considered sacred—and which are about thirty miles north of Acoma. This demonstrates the substantial labor required to construct the church.



Figure **2.3.2.8**: View from Acoma Pueblo

Church interior

The church's interior is simple like the outside. You'll need to imagine what it looks like because interior photos are forbidden. There are no arches, domes, or stoneworking; instead, there are flat ceilings with vigas over forty feet long. The nave is narrow, due in part due to the use of adobe since it can't hold as much weight as stone.

Packed earth covers the floor. A raised sanctuary demarcates the holiest space within the church. Some of the windows shine light on the altar, literally highlighting its importance. An altarpiece stands in the church's raised sanctuary. Originally the interior was painted with frescoes, which were repainted often. Today sacred symbols like rainbows, clouds, and corn are visible. These symbols attest to the syncretic Catholicism practiced at Acoma, the result of Puebloan and Christian sacred ideas and practices becoming entangled over time.

The original interior frescoes were whitewashed likely as a result of the Acoma Revolt (1680–92), a period during which many missions were destroyed and missionaries like the Franciscans killed or expelled. Yet San Esteban del Rey survived and it remains a stunning testament to the events that shaped this area during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

Additional resources:

Most of the photographs in this essay were taken by Dr. Steven Zucker and can be found **here**.

Edward Proctor Hunt, *The Origin Myth of Acoma Pueblo* (Penguin Classics, 2015)

Ward Alan Minge and Simon Ortiz, *Acoma: Pueblo in the Sky* (University of New Mexico Press, 1991).

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Dr. Lauren Kilroy-Ewbank and Dr. Steven Zucker, "Baltasar de Echave Ibía, *The Hermits*," in *SmartHistory*, February 24, 2017, accessed



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2.3.3: Sebastián López de Arteaga, Marriage of the Virgin

by **DR. LAUREN KILROY-EWBANK** and **DR. BETH HARRIS**

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Sebastián López de Arteaga, *Marriage of the Virgin (Los Desposorios de la Virgen)*, before 1652, oil on canvas, 223.5 x 170 cm (Museo Nacional de Arte, INBA, Mexico City)

Additional resources:

James Oles, *Art and Architecture in Mexico* (London: Thames & Hudson, 2013)

Painting a New World, exh. cat., ed. Donna Pierce, Denver Art Museum (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2004) (**available online**)

Tesoros, Treasures, Tesouros, the Arts in Latin America, 1492–1820, exhibition catalogue (Philadelphia: Philadelphia Museum of Art, 2006)

Kelly Donahue-Wallace, *Art and Architecture of Viceregal Latin America, 1521–1821* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2008)

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2.3.4: Miguel González, The Virgin of Guadalupe

by DR. LAUREN KILROY-EWBANK

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Figure **2.3.4.1**: Miguel González, *The Virgin of Guadalupe* (*Virgen de Guadalupe*), c. 1698, oil on canvas on wood, inlaid with mother-of-pearl (*enconchado*), canvas: 99.06 × 69.85 cm / frame: 124.46 × 95.25 cm (Los Angeles County Museum of Art)

The Virgin of Guadalupe reveals herself to Juan Diego

On December 9th, 1531, a decade after the downfall of Tenochtitlan and the beginnings of Spanish colonization, a man named Juan Diego (born Cuauhtlatoatzin) was walking across the Hill of Tepeyac near a razed shrine to the Mexica (Aztec) earth goddess Tonantzin when a woman appeared and spoke to him in Nahuatl, his native tongue. She revealed herself as the Virgin Mary, and asked Juan Diego to go to the local bishop, Juan de Zumárraga, and ask for a church to be built on the hill in her honor. Bishop Zumárraga did not believe Juan Diego's story. The Virgin Mary revealed herself to Juan Diego two more times with the same request, but still no shrine was constructed. During her fourth request on December 12th, she told Juan Diego to gather roses from the hill into his cloak (or *tilma*). When he stepped before the bishop and opened his cloak, the roses—Castillian roses (which are not native to Mexico) spilled forth. Imprinted on the *tilma* was an image of the Virgin Mary herself, known today as the Virgin of Guadalupe. Zumárraga recognized the miracle, and a shrine to the Virgin of Guadalupe was built on the Hill of Tepeyac, with a basilica to her constructed below. Today, the **original miraculous *tilma* image** hangs in the new basilica at Tepeyac in Mexico City.



Figure 2.3.4.2: Another painting of the *Virgin of Guadalupe*, late 17th century, 190 cm high, oil paint, gilding, and mother of pearl on panel (Franz Mayer Museum, Mexico City)

Devotion to the **Virgin of Guadalupe** increased dramatically in Mexico during the seventeenth century with the publication of books printed in her honor and greater support from the creole population. One of the earliest books recording the apparitions was the *Nican mopohua*, written in Nahuatl in the sixteenth century and widely distributed in the following century. Creoles began to identify with an "American" or Mexican identity, and supported the Virgin of Guadalupe as a uniquely *americano* miracle. After all, she had revealed herself on Mexican soil to a Nahua (indigenous) man. With her increased popularity came a demand for more images, especially those that faithfully copied the original miraculous *tilma* (as in the painting above in the Franz Mayer Museum). Many paintings even include the phrase *fiel copia*, or "true copy," to suggest their painting is a direct copy of the *tilma* image.



Figure 2.3.4.3: Detail, Miguel González, *The Virgin of Guadalupe (Virgen de Guadalupe)*, c. 1698, oil on canvas on wood, inlaid with mother-of-pearl (enconchado), canvas: 99.06 × 69.85 cm / frame: 124.46 × 95.25 cm (Los Angeles County Museum of Art)

Some of the most remarkable images of the Virgin of Guadalupe are created not entirely in paint, but also include mother-of-pearl, or *enconchado*. Miguel González's version portrays the Virgin as she appears on the *tilma*: in three-quarter view, crowned, hands clasped, eyes cast downwards, encased in light, and standing on a crescent moon that an angel supports. The manner in which the Virgin of Guadalupe appears relates to Immaculate Conception* imagery which was based on Revelation 12: "clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet and a crown of twelve stars on her head."



Figure 2.3.4.4: Angel (detail),Miguel González, *The Virgin of Guadalupe (Virgen de Guadalupe)*, c. 1698, oil on canvas on wood, inlaid with mother-of-pearl (*enconchado*) (Los Angeles County Museum of Art)

In the four corners of the painting (below) we see four framed scenes carried by angels. These represent different moments in the story of the miracle.

- In the upper left, Juan Diego is led to the Virgin Mary by angels. In the upper right, Juan Diego has a vision of the Virgin Mary at the Hill of Tepeyac; in the lower left, Juan Diego takes leave of the Virgin Mary with a full cloak, and in the lower right Juan Diego reveals the miraculous image on his cloak to the bishop and others.

González uses pieces of mother-of-pearl shell to form most of the Virgin Mary's clothing (it even decorates the bodies of the angels and the frames they support). The iridescent shell would reflect shimmering candlelight to emphasize the sacredness and importance of the Virgin Mary.

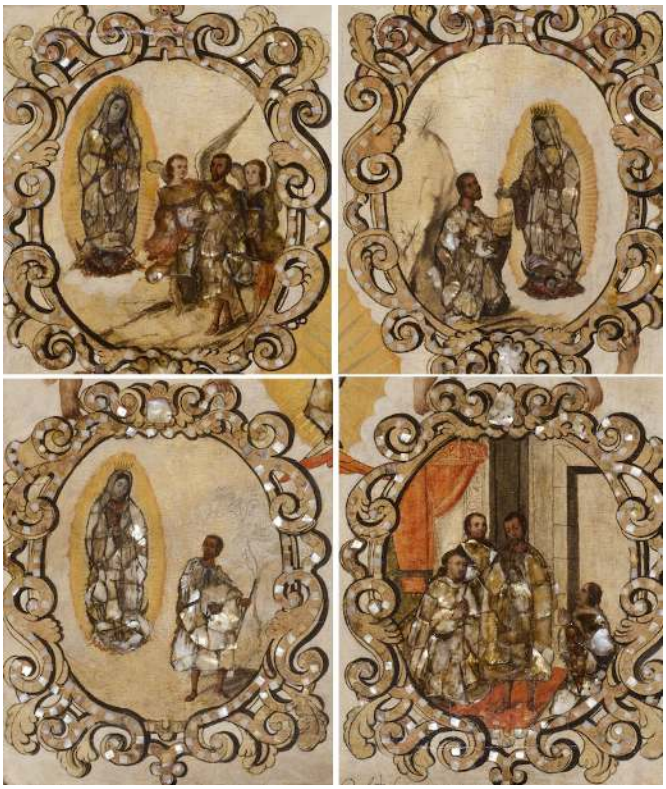


Figure **2.3.4.5**: Four corner scenes (detail), Miguel González, *The Virgin of Guadalupe* (*Virgen de Guadalupe*), c. 1698, oil on canvas on wood, inlaid with mother-of-pearl (enconchado), canvas: 99.06 × 69.85 cm / frame: 124.46 × 95.25 cm (Los Angeles County Museum of Art)



Figure **2.3.4.6**: Eagle perched on a cactus (detail), Miguel González, *The Virgin of Guadalupe* (*Virgen de Guadalupe*), c. 1698, oil on canvas on wood, inlaid with mother-of-pearl (enconchado) (Los Angeles County Museum of Art)



Figure **2.3.4.7**: Holy Spirit symbolized by a dove (detail),Miguel González, *The Virgin of Guadalupe (Virgen de Guadalupe)*, c. 1698, oil on canvas on wood, inlaid with mother-of-pearl (enconchado), canvas: 99.06 × 69.85 cm / frame: 124.46 × 95.25 cm (Los Angeles County Museum of Art)

Above the Virgin of Guadalupe is the dove representing the Holy Spirit in a golden cloud, and below an eagle perches on a cactus. You might be familiar with this symbol from the Mexican flag, which refers to the Mexica (or Aztec) and the mythic founding of their capital city, **Tenochtitlan** (now Mexico City). On their journey from their homeland (Aztlan), the Mexica patron deity **Huitzilopochtli** (pronounced "wheat-zil-oh-poach-lee") informed the Aztecs that they would know when to end their journey and establish a new home when they saw an eagle perched on a cactus (the snake got added to the story later), which happened to be on an island in the middle of Lake Texcoco (today, under Mexico City).

By the seventeenth century, when creoles were looking for ways to emphasize New Spain's greatness and uniqueness, the symbol of the eagle on the cactus once again became popular as a symbol for Mexico City. Its inclusion here—as well as in many other artworks—signals the Virgin of Guadalupe's direct connection to the people of **New Spain**, and so connects her to the creoles as well.



Figure **2.3.4.8**: Ladder (detail), González, *The Virgin of Guadalupe* (*Virgen de Guadalupe*), c. 1698, oil on canvas on wood, inlaid with mother-of-pearl (*enconchado*) (Los Angeles County Museum of Art)

Beyond the elaborate use of mother-of-pearl, González also created a frame that includes more pieces of shell inlaid into wood. Floral decorations in red and gold alternate with common symbols of the Virgin Mary that derive in part from the Song of Songs and other Old Testament sources. We see a ladder, palm tree, ship, lily, and fountain. The ladder connoted Jacob's Ladder or the ladder to Paradise (think of Mary as the ladder by which her son descended to earth and by which mortals will ascend into heaven), while the palm tree signified an Exalted Palm (as recounted in Ecclesiasticus 24:14) and also the righteous and chosen ones (mentioned in Psalm 92:12). Mary is seen as the ship of salvation, but the ship could also refer to Noah's Ark. The lily refers to Mary's purity (she is the lily among the thorns), and the fountain refers to Mary as "the fountain of living water" (Jeremiah 17:13).

- *Enconchado*

Enconchado artworks were popular in seventeenth-century Mexico. The shell is placed into the painting like mosaic, then covered with glazes. Shell-working had been an important art form among some Mesoamerican peoples. In the **Florentine Codex**, we see illustrations of Mexica shell workers, and discussions of the types of shell used in different types of objects.

Some scholars have noted the connection between *enchonchado* and Japanese *namban* lacquer work that uses a similar technique with shell inlaid into wood. Many *namban* lacquer works also show a preference for red and gold colors, like we see on our Mexican *enconchado* painting.



Figure 2.3.4.9: Storage Box in Nanban style, 16th century (Japan), gold maki-e on black lacquer, inlaid with mother-of-pearl; silver mounts, 14 x 32.1 x 28.9 cm (The Metropolitan Museum of Art)

Japanese goods were imported to Mexico via the Manila Galleons, where they were sold or sent on to Spain. Eventually, non-Japanese artists began to copy the Japanese technique.



Figure 2.3.4.150: Folding Screen with the Siege of Belgrade (front) and Hunting Scene (reverse), c. 1697-1701, Mexico, oil on wood, inlaid with mother-of-pearl, 229.9 x 275.8 cm (Brooklyn Museum)

Other types of Japanese objects, like folding screens (called biombos, example above), also became popular. It has been suggested that after Japan cut ties with foreigners in the seventeenth century, the demand for Japanese goods (or Japanese-inspired goods) increased. We even have **an example of a Mexican *enconchado* folding screen** that is based on Japanese folding screens and *namban* lacquer works, but uses imagery borrowed from European prints and tapestries. The desire for Japanese objects is likely

one reason for the popularity of *enconchado* paintings like González's *Virgin of Guadalupe*, and they showcase the cosmopolitan nature of colonial Mexican society.

*See the essay on **Miguel Cabrera, Virgin of the Apocalypse** for more on immaculate conception iconography.

Additional resources:

This painting at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art

SmartHistory video and essay on the painting of the Virgin of Guadalupe at the Franz Meyer Museum in Mexico City

Painting Conservation of the Virgin of Guadalupe at the Indianapolis Museum of Art

The Virgin of Guadalupe on Vistas (Visual Culture in Spanish America, 1520-1820)

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2.3.5: Christ Crucified, a Hispano-Philippine ivory

Page ID
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This ivory sculpture of Jesus traveled between three continents, demonstrating the global flow of materials, objects, and Christianity in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.



Video **2.3.5.1**: Christ Crucified, 17th century, ivory (Museo Franz Mayer, Mexico City), speakers: Dr. Lauren G. Kilroy-Ewbank and Dr. Steven Zucker



Figure **2.3.5.1**: Trade between the Philippines, New Spain and Spain

Introduction

Both the Philippines and Mexico formed part of what was once called the **Viceroyalty of New Spain**, which was controlled by the Spanish Crown. Beginning in the sixteenth century, Spanish galleons (large, multi-decked ships) began to sail between Manila (in the Philippines) and Acapulco (in Mexico). This trans-Pacific Manila Galleon trade created an important route for the global exchange of materials (such as silk, spices, porcelain, and ivory from Asia and silver and gold from the Americas). Many of the resources and goods coming from Asia would also travel overland from Acapulco to the Gulf Coast of Mexico, at which point they would be shipped across the Atlantic Ocean to Spain.

These objects are often labeled “Hispano-Philippine ivory sculptures” to denote their creation in the Philippines (or possibly even China) but made for a Spanish clientele (whether in the Spanish Americas or the Iberian Peninsula). The artists may also have been originally from China.

Artists carved a number of small-scale devotional objects, like *Christ Crucified* from ivory— a luxurious material in the sixteenth and seventeenth century. While some of these ivory sculptures were ultimately destined for Spain, many remained in the Americas. An object like *Christ Crucified* also demonstrates the global reach of Catholicism in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

Terms

- New Spain
- Manila Galleon
- ivory

Additional resources:

Learn more about New Spain

Learn about a New Spanish folding screen that also speaks to the Manila Galleon trade

Read about the Manila Galleon trade on The Met's Heilbrunn Timeline

Marjorie Trusted, "Survivors of a Shipwreck: Ivories from a Manila Galleon of 1601," *Hispanic Research Journal*, 14:5 (2013): 446-462

M. Estella Marcos, *Ivories from the Far Eastern Provinces of Spain and Portugal*, ed. by L. Sada de González (Monterrey: Espejo de Obsidiana Ediciones, 1997)

For the classroom

Print out and use the ***Christ Crucified* active note-taking activity** (for teachers and students)

Mapping activity

Print out a blank world map (like these ones), and have several different colored pens or pencils available. Choose 3-4 objects to track across the globe. Some examples of objects that can be used for this activity include:

- Christ Crucified
- **The Florentine Codex**
- **Sapi Lidded Saltcellar**
- **Chinese export porcelain**

Mark each object's point of original production, and then add points to the map where they moved. Use a different color for each object.

- What do you notice about these objects' movement in space and time? Do these objects intersect at any points? What does tracing their movements in space tell us about the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries?

Discussion questions

1. Compare the sculpture with other depictions of Christ Crucified from the renaissance, such as Matthias Grünewald's ***Isenheim Altarpiece*** or **Juan Martínez Montañés and Francisco Pacheco's *Christ of Clemency***. What does this comparison tell us about how peoples in different parts of the world pictured the Crucifixion?
2. Compare *Christ Crucified* to other examples of objects made for private devotion, such as Rogier van der Weyden's ***Crucifixion Triptych*** (c. 1445). What do they have in common?
3. What does *Christ Crucified* tell us about global trade in the 17th century? Consider other New Spanish objects, such as **featherworks**, **folding screens**, and **paintings on copper** that might also speak to issues of trade, cross-cultural exchange, and the cosmopolitan nature of New Spain.
4. The video mentions that *Crucified Christ* speaks to the new global reach of Catholicism in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. How do other objects and spaces speak to this as well? You might consider spaces like the mission church of **San Esteban del Rey** at Acoma Pueblo in New Mexico or paintings like Bernardo Bitti's ***Coronation of the Virgin*** in Peru.
5. How does our understanding of art and artists of a specific time period shift when we focus on objects that moved across vast distances over time? How do we categorize objects that migrate?

Research topics

1. Consider the history of ivory sculpture over time and in different cultures. How does *Crucified Christ* fit into a longer history of ivory sculpture that we see in objects such as the Minoan **Statuette of a Male Figure** (The Palaikastro Kouros, 1425 B.C.E.), the Byzantine ***The Emperor Triumphant*** *(Barberini Ivory)* from the 6th century, the **Pyxis of al-Mughira** from AH 357/ 968 C.E., and the ***Queen Mother Pendant Mask*** *(Iyoba)*, 16th century, Edo peoples, Court of Benin?



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2.3.6: Cristóbal de Villalpando, View of the Plaza Mayor of Mexico City

by **DR. LAUREN KILROY-EWBANK**

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Figure **2.3.6.1**: Cristóbal de Villalpando, *View of the Plaza Mayor of Mexico City*, c. 1695, oil on canvas (Corsham Court Collection, Wiltshire)

In Mexico City's main plaza, a bustling scene unfolds before our eyes. Horse-drawn carriages carry the city's elite. Most people are on foot, and some can be seen promenading in a line at the canvas's bottom edge. Other people congregate before the city's massive cathedral on the left. Temporary tents are pitched in the furthest portion of the plaza, with people selling their goods. A more permanent structure made of stone surrounds even more shops in the foreground. Looking at the hundreds of individuals depicted here, we see a kaleidoscope of dress and accoutrements. We also see an artist attempting to represent the diverse ethnic makeup of the Spanish viceroyalty of **New Spain**.

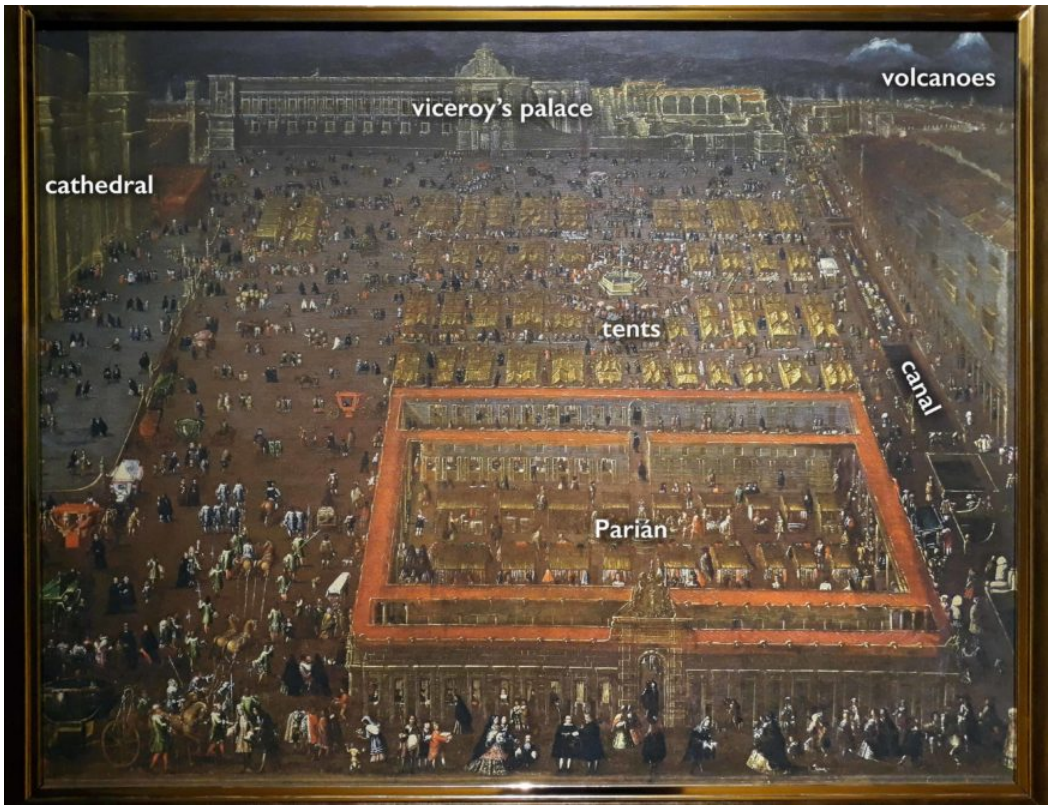


Figure **2.3.6.2**: Cristóbal de Villalpando, *View of the Plaza Mayor (Zócalo) of Mexico City*, c. 1695, oil on canvas (Corsham Court Collection, Wiltshire)

This painting, by the famous artist Cristóbal de Villalpando from about 1695, is well-known for its subject. It shows the large market (called the Parián) in the Plaza Mayor (or Zócalo) of Mexico City, which existed until the 19th century when it was demolished (you won't see it in the Zócalo today). Its name was borrowed from its counterpart in Manila (in the Philippines, which was also controlled by Spain at this time). Merchants brought goods from across oceans to sell to the residents of the city in the Parián. Mexico City, and the broader territory of New Spain, were at the center of a large network of global trade.



Figure **2.3.6.3**: Routes of the Manila Galleon trade

Goods, people, and ideas travelled from Manila (having themselves come from many parts of Asia) to the port city of Acapulco via galleons (sailing ships often called Manila Galleons). From Acapulco, these goods either made their way to Mexico City or were carried to Veracruz on the Gulf Coast, at which point they'd be shipped across the Atlantic to Europe. Goods flowed likewise from Europe to New Spain. What makes this center even more complex and fascinating is that it did not just receive goods from Europe and Asia, but likewise sent finished goods and natural resources across the Atlantic and Pacific, and even down the coasts to the viceroyalty of Peru. Silver was among the most popular materials to travel to Asia from the Americas. The constant flow of objects,

ideas, raw materials, and people added to the dynamic character of New Spain, and especially in a city like Mexico City which had a worldwide reputation as a beautiful, wealthy city energized by the constant influx of things.



Figure **2.3.6.4**: Cristóbal de Villalpando, detail of the Parián, *View of the Plaza Mayor of Mexico City*, c. 1695, oil on canvas (Corsham Court Collection, Wiltshire)

Transpacific trade and cosmopolitanism

Lacquerwares, folding screens, ivories, spices, silks, Chinese porcelain—these are but some of the many objects and natural resources that traveled across the Pacific from Asia to New Spain. Goods were often labeled as "*de China*" or "from China—a reference to something coming from what we call Asia today, and not paying close attention to where things originated specifically in Asia. In Villalpando's painting, in the stone Parián enclosure it seems that some merchants are selling cloth, possibly silk, indicated by the multicolored lengths of fabric hanging from individual stalls.



Figure **2.3.6.5**: Biombo with the *Conquest of Mexico and View of Mexico City*, New Spain, late 17th century (Museo Franz Mayer, Mexico City; photo: Steven Zucker, CC BY-NC-SA 2.0)



Figure **2.3.6.6**: Talavera vessel with the image of a crane, adapted from Chinese porcelain, 17th century, earthenware (Franz Mayer Museum, Mexico City; photo: Steven Zucker, CC BY-NC-SA 2.0)

Artists in New Spain began to adapt the forms and visual modes they encountered in these foreign goods, developing new art forms or modifying older ones. Japanese folding screens were popular trade items that stimulated Novohispanic artists to adapt the Japanese *byobu* (folding screens) into **biombos**. Many paintings, prints, sculptures, and furniture also incorporate representations of things that made their way to New Spain via trade networks.



Figure **2.3.6.7**: José Manuel de la Cerda, Writing cabinet on table, c. 1750, Wood, Mexican lacquer, gilding, and silver drawer pulls, 102 x 155 cm (The Hispanic Society)

For example, we find Chinese blue-and-white porcelains represented on altars with sculptures of Christ, or locally produced ceramics adapting Chinese motifs, such as with *talavera poblana* (local ceramic production in Puebla). Clearly, the flow of goods through places like the Parian, that Villalpando so dynamically captures in paint, affected many different aspects of Novohispanic culture.

The transpacific trade also resulted in Asian peoples coming to new Spain, where they or their descendants worked in cities like Acapulco, but also Puebla and Mexico City. While some were enslaved, others worked in many different trades and occupations—adding yet again to the diverse society of the Spanish viceroyalty that Villalpando represents here.



Figure **2.3.6.8**: Cristóbal de Villalpando, detail of the lower edge of the *View of the Plaza Mayor of Mexico City*, c. 1695, oil on canvas (Corsham Court Collection, Wiltshire)

A history painting?

Adding to the lively scene are details like dogs running or playing, children, people engaged in conversation, and people on the canal (that no longer remains today). This is an idealized view of daily life in Mexico City, where all peoples seem to exist in relative harmony.

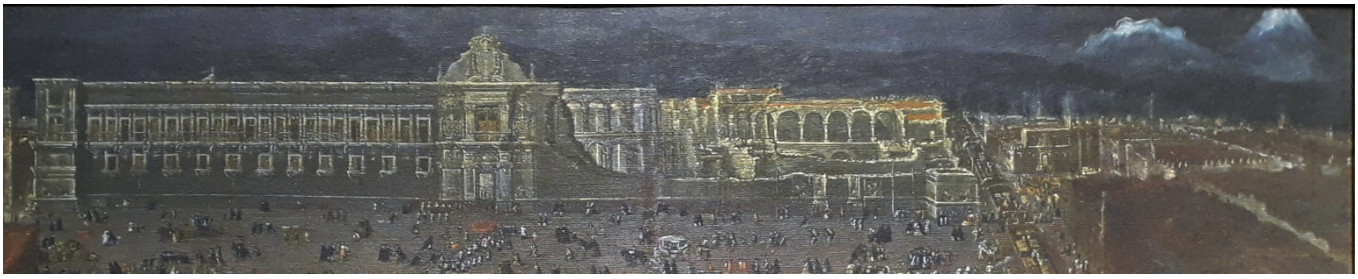


Figure **2.3.6.9**: Cristóbal de Villalpando, detail of the viceroy's palace and volcanoes, *View of the Plaza Mayor of Mexico City*, c. 1695, oil on canvas (Corsham Court Collection, Wiltshire)

Villalpando crafts a painting that gives the impression of a snapshot, or a realistic portrayal of Mexico City's main plaza. Nevertheless, he took certain liberties. The Parian was under construction when he painted the scene, and here it looks more majestic than it likely did (and even more symmetrical than it actually was). One account describes it as "horrible," in reference to its unsightliness. [1] The entrance to the viceroy's palace is also larger than it was, perhaps a way to elevate the dignity of the viceroy himself.

The painting shows identifiable structures, many of which still stand today. Villalpando took great care to detail fabrics and faces, animals and spaces, almost creating a visual argument that this really *is* what the Zocalo looked like. The painting also references a recent important event in New Spain's history: the burning and partial destruction of the viceroy's palace after uprisings in 1692 over food shortages. The large horizontal palace in the back of the painting shows the partially destroyed structure. Villalpando also includes clear topographic features in his painting to situate the scene in Mexico City. In the far background we see the snow capped volcanoes of Popocatepetl and Iztaccihuatl—still famous today for their appearance above the skyline of Mexico City. Even the angle that Villalpando chose to depict the city is considered correct; he possibly observed the Zocalo from the top of one of the houses from the western side of the plaza.



Figure **2.3.6.10**: Cristóbal de Villalpando, detail of the Parián, *View of the Plaza Mayor of Mexico City*, c. 1695, oil on canvas (Corsham Court Collection, Wiltshire)

Shopping



Figure **2.3.6.11**: Francisco Clapera, two paintings from a set of sixteen casta paintings, c. 1775, 51.1 x 39.6 cm (Denver Art Museum; photo: Steven Zucker, CC BY-NC-SA 2.0)

The painting's focus on shopping and material consumerism reinforces the wealth of many *criollo* (Spaniards born in the Americas) and *peninsulare* (Spaniards from the Iberian Peninsula) residents of Mexico City and New Spain more broadly who had amassed fortunes from silver mining and other means. Villalpando's portrayal of the residents of Mexico City as active consumers extends beyond the upper levels of society, but this is an idealized vision of the Zócalo and the city's inhabitants. In reality, anxieties over ethnic mixing and blurred social divisions existed, as the later genre of **casta paintings** so explicitly communicate. Sumptuary laws

tried to restrict not only what people could wear in public, but *who* could wear them. In Villalpando's painting, people of many different social stations wear luxurious clothes and jewelry.

The cosmopolitan nature of Mexico City, with its steady influx of luxury goods from afar, meant that there was a desire to own and wear fanciful things. But there was also the fear that those of lower social status could give an impression of being above their station by wearing nice things. Travelers passing through Mexico City comment on how even servants were seen in pearls—to them an oddity and a social transgression.



Figure **2.3.6.12**: Cristóbal de Villalpando, *View of the Plaza Mayor of Mexico City*, c. 1695, oil on canvas (Corsham Court Collection, Wiltshire)

An ideal projection

For all of its attention to detail, Villalpando's painting should not be read as an accurate image of what life was actually like in its lived experience for everyone in the capital of New Spain. The painting celebrates the city, the viceroyalty, its wealth, and its cosmopolitanism—but it is an ideal projection. It was commissioned by the viceroy Gaspar de Silva, Count of Gelves, who had been responsible for the food shortages in the 1690s. He apparently paid for the painting, and returned to Spain with it. The vision that Villalpando projects undoubtedly appealed to the viceroy who wished to believe that he had brought prosperity to the Spanish colony.

Notes:

[1] Richard Kagan, *Urban Images of the Hispanic World, 1493–1793* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000), p. 161

Additional resources

Barbara Mundy and Dana Leibsohn, "Patterns of the Everyday," on *Vistas: Visual Culture in the Spanish Americas, 1521–1820*

Cristóbal de Villalpando (Mexico City: Fomento Cultural Banamex, 1997)

Donna Pierce et al., ed., *Asia & Spanish America: trans-Pacific artistic and cultural exchange, 1500–1850: papers from the 2006 Mayer Center Symposium at the Denver Art Museum* (Denver: Denver Art Museum 2009)

Donna Pierce et al., ed., *At the crossroads the arts of Spanish America & early global trade, 1492–1850: papers from the 2010 Mayer Center symposium at the Denver Art Museum* (Denver: Denver Art Museum 20012)

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SECTION OVERVIEW

2.3.7: Biombos (folding screens)

2.3.7.1: Screen with the Siege of Belgrade and Hunting Scene (or Brooklyn Biombo)

2.3.7.2: Biombo with the Conquest of Mexico and View of Mexico City

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2.3.7.1: Screen with the Siege of Belgrade and Hunting Scene (or Brooklyn Biombo)

by **DR. LAUREN KILROY-EWBANK**



Screen with the Siege of Belgrade and Hunting Scene (or *Brooklyn Biombo*), Circle of the Gonzales family, c. 1697-1701, oil on wood, inlaid with mother-of-pearl, 229.9 x 275.8 cm (Brooklyn Museum and Museo Nacional del Virreinato – INAH, Tepotzotlán); speakers: Dr. Lauren Kilroy-Ewbank and Dr. Steven Zucker



Figure **2.3.7.1.1**: Folding Screen with the Siege of Belgrade (front) and Hunting Scene (reverse), here, showing the front, c. 1697–1701, Mexico, oil on wood, inlaid with mother-of-pearl, 229.9 x 275.8 cm (Brooklyn Museum; photo: Steven Zucker, CC BY-NC-SA 2.0)

A chaotic battle scene unfolds across six panels of a folding screen. The seemingly endless amount of human bodies, animals, weapons, and buildings are difficult to differentiate without careful, slow looking. On land and sea, the battle scene pits countless warriors against one another in violent conflict. Fallen soldiers spill over the side of a boat into the water, with body parts floating around the vessel.



Figure 2.3.7.1.2: “Barcas cogidas en el Danubio” (“boats caught on the Danube River”) appears underneath the ship while canons fire in the foreground. Upper right corner, Folding Screen with the Siege of Belgrade (front) and Hunting Scene (reverse), detail of the front, c. 1697–1701, Mexico, oil on wood, inlaid with mother-of-pearl, 229.9 x 275.8 cm (Brooklyn Museum; photo: Steven Zucker, CC BY-NC-SA 2.0)

Canons shoot, lances impale, swords are raised, heads appear on pikes—all these details emphasize the horrors of war. Short, descriptive Spanish inscriptions on the screen, such as “Barcas cogidas en el Danubio” (boats caught on the Danube River), guide viewers.



Figure 2.3.7.1.3: Folding Screen with the Siege of Belgrade (front) and Hunting Scene (reverse), here the reverse, c. 1697–1701, Mexico, oil on wood, inlaid with mother-of-pearl, 229.9 x 275.8 cm (Brooklyn Museum; photo: Steven Zucker, CC BY-NC-SA 2.0)

This battle scene forms one side of a double-sided folding screen made around 1700 in the viceroyalty of New Spain; the other side shows no sense of violent conflict between warring forces, but rather is a hunt set in a bucolic forest.



Figure 2.3.7.1.4: A feline attacks a fallen hunter, and is itself about to be speared by three men on horseback. Folding Screen with the Siege of Belgrade (front) and Hunting Scene (reverse), detail of the reverse, c. 1697–1701, Mexico, oil on wood, inlaid with mother-of-pearl, 229.9 x 275.8 cm (Brooklyn Museum; photo: Steven Zucker, CC BY-NC-SA 2.0)

The hunting scene is not free of violence though; a spotted feline attacks a fallen hunter, and is itself about to be speared by three men on horseback. **Another big cat pounces** on a surprised hunter on horseback. Dogs aid hunters in tracking animals. Still, the scene is largely focused on large trees, rolling hills, and delicately painted plants and flowers.



Figure 2.3.7.1.5: Folding Screen with the Siege of Belgrade (front) and Hunting Scene (reverse), detail of the reverse, c. 1697–1701, Mexico, oil on wood, inlaid with mother-of-pearl, 229.9 x 275.8 cm (Brooklyn Museum; photo: Steven Zucker, CC BY-NC-SA 2.0)

Vines, garlands, and more flowers adorn the screen's edges on both sides. Further animating both scenes is the varied color palette, fanciful brushwork, and use of inlaid shell (here, mother-of-pearl). Our eyes can't help but be attracted to the shell's luster, almost playfully leading our eye across the screen. And this isn't even the entire folding screen!



Figure **2.3.7.1.6**: Folding Screen with a Scene from the Siege of Vienna (front) and Hunting Scene (reverse, not pictured), here showing the front, c. 1697–1701, Mexico, oil on wood, inlaid with mother-of-pearl, 229.9 x 275.8 cm (Museo Nacional del Virreinato, Tepotzotlán)

These six double-side panels are but half of an original screen that was composed of 12 panels—the half this essay focuses on is in the Brooklyn Museum today; the other half is in the Museum of Viceregal Art in Tepotzotlán near Mexico City. [1] This folding screen perfectly encapsulates the cosmoplitanism of colonial Mexico and its art, and the may ways that local artists borrowed from and adapted materials, forms, and subjects from near and far to create something new. It also provides a window onto several important themes: transpacific and transatlantic trade, elite and nonreligious objects, and visual transculturalism.

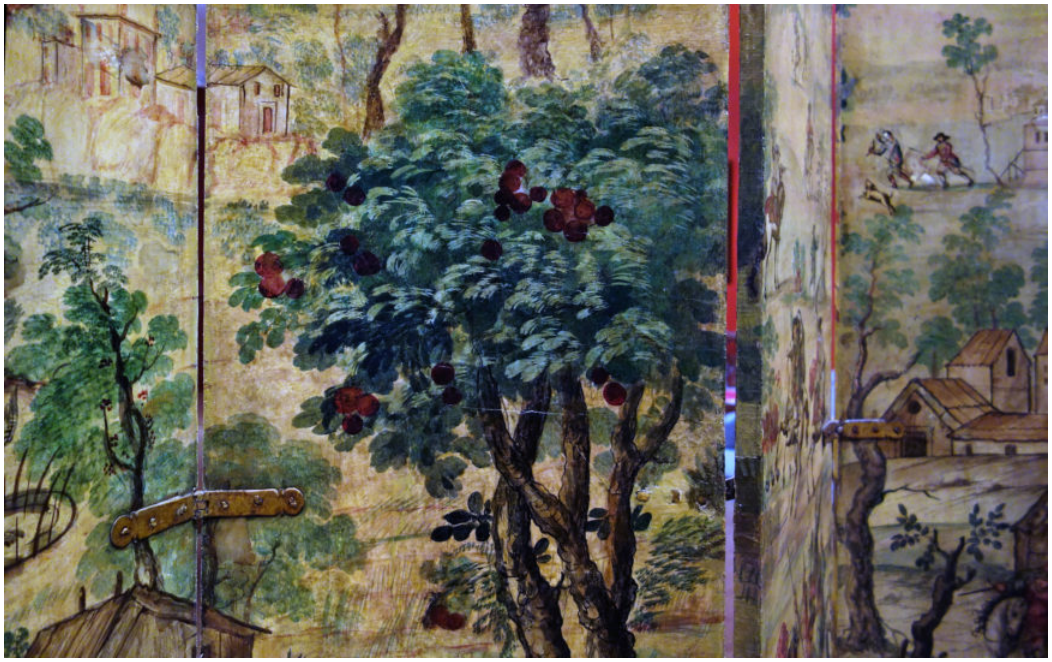


Figure **2.3.7.1.7**: Folding Screen with the Siege of Belgrade (front) and Hunting Scene (reverse), detail of the reverse, c. 1697–1701, Mexico, oil on wood, inlaid with mother-of-pearl, 229.9 x 275.8 cm (Brooklyn Museum; photo: Steven Zucker, CC BY-NC-SA 2.0)

Made for a palace

Created for viceroy José Sarmiento de Valladares, the count of Moctezuma, the folding screen was likely made for his palace—which still rests on the main plaza or zócalo of Mexico City. [2] Less than a decade before his 5-year reign, the viceregal palace had been burned and partly destroyed after uprisings over food shortages in 1692. After Sarmiento de Valladares became the viceroy, he began to rebuild the palace, and needed new furnishings for the space. This lavish folding screen, with the added opulence of mother-of-pearl inlay, was likely made to help in this process of refurbishment, along with many other luxurious items. What a statement it would have made to guests who viewed it!



Figure **2.3.7.1.8**: Biombo with the Conquest of Mexico and View of Mexico City, New Spain, late 17th century (Museo Franz Mayer, Mexico City; photo: Steven Zucker, CC BY-NC-SA 2.0)

Folding screens (called *biombos*) acted as room dividers, and they were often found in state rooms and reception rooms. In the viceregal palace, a screen such as the Brooklyn Biombo most likely separated the *piano nobile* (formal reception hall) from the *estrado* (women's sitting room). Local and international visitors who came to converse with the viceroy would have been struck by the shimmering surface of the biombo's battle scene, while guests in the women's sitting room would have had a fitting conversation starter with the hunting scene while they talked, drank chocolate, sewed, and smoked.



Figure **2.3.7.1.9**: Folding Screen with the Siege of Belgrade (front) and Hunting Scene (reverse), detail of the front, c. 1697–1701, Mexico, oil on wood, inlaid with mother-of-pearl, 229.9 x 275.8 cm (Brooklyn Museum; photo: Steven Zucker, CC BY-NC-SA 2.0)

Transpacific and transatlantic trade and exchanges

Contemporary battles



Figure **2.3.7.1.11**: Miguel González, The Conquest of Mexico, Tabla XX (detail), late 17th century, organic pigments, ink, stucco, nacre, and organic varnish on scrim panel, 52 x 100 cm (Museo Nacional de Bellas Artes de Buenos Aires)

As the viceroy rebuilt the palace, he filled the space with paintings of the Spanish conquest and other types of battle scenes or themes related to power—such as a series of paintings with shell inlay made by Miguel González (today in the Museo Nacional de Bellas Artes de Buenos Aires).

The battle scene on this biombo was not focused on the conquest of Mexico, which by this point had occurred more than 150 years earlier. Rather, it depicts a battle of in what is now called the Great Turkish War (1683–99). The war pitted Habsburg forces against Ottoman ones.



Figure **2.3.7.1.12**: Folding Screen with the Siege of Belgrade (front) and Hunting Scene (reverse), detail of the front, c. 1697–1701, Mexico, oil on wood, inlaid with mother-of-pearl, 229.9 x 275.8 cm (Brooklyn Museum; photo: Steven Zucker, CC BY-NC-SA 2.0)

The Brooklyn Biombo shows the Siege of Belgrade, one battle of the War that occurred on 6 September 1688. The Tepotzotlán screen shows another battle, the Siege of Vienna, which occurred on 12 September 1683, and which resulted in the Holy League defeating Ottoman troops. When the War finally ended in 1699, Habsburg power was solidified in central and southeastern Europe.



Figure **2.3.7.1.13**: Romeyn de Hooghe, *Belgrade Taken by Storm by Maximilian Emanuel, Elector of Bavaria, September 6, 1688*, 1688, engraving, 47 x 58 cm (Rijksmuseum)

Prints made originally in Holland served as models for the battle scenes. They were made less than thirteen years before Sarmiento de Valladares's arrival in New Spain by the Dutch printmaker Romeyn de Hooghe. His etchings were popular in Holland among people following the war with interest, and his images were popular in New Spain as well. De Hooghe was well-known for his prints of military exploits, and they offered a way for peoples in New Spain—separated from the war by an ocean—to visualize what happened in it.



Figure 2.3.7.1.14: Left: Detail of Romeyn de Hooghe, *Belgrade Taken by Storm by Maximilian Emanuel, Elector of Bavaria, September 6, 1688*, 1688, engraving, 47 x 58 cm (Rijksmuseum); right: detail of battle scene in Folding Screen with the Siege of Belgrade (front) and Hunting Scene (reverse), c. 1697–1701, Mexico, oil on wood, inlaid with mother-of-pearl, 229.9 x 275.8 cm (Brooklyn Museum; photo: Steven Zucker, CC BY-NC-SA 2.0)

The battle scenes that play out on both the Brooklyn and Tepotzotlán panels showcase not only the violence of the war, but also cast it as one of formidable opposites. The Ottoman forces are not shown as weak nor incapable, but strong and capable warriors; showing them in this way only elevated the strength of Habsburg forces who eventually would win. The choice of these two battle scenes advertised Habsburg power—a power that extended to Sarmiento de Valladares as the Spanish Habsburg king's representative (as viceroy) in New Spain. The battle scenes also demonstrate Sarmiento de Valladares's allegiance to the Habsburg Crown. His coat of arms is located in the upper-left corner (on the Tepotzotlán half), no doubt to associate himself with the Habsburg rulers and their victories. His support of the Habsburgs was clearly on display for any visitor to his reception room.



Figure 2.3.7.1.15: Biombo with the Conquest of Mexico and View of Mexico City, view of scenes of the Conquest, New Spain, late 17th century (Museo Franz Mayer, Mexico City; photo: Steven Zucker, CC BY-NC-SA 2.0)

While the battle scene does not show events of the Spanish Conquest of Tenochtitlan (that occurred 1519–21), it does visually parallel the many other artworks of the time that did. In another biombo (not made for Sarmiento de Valladares) that shows the Conquest, the artist paints so many battling figures that the scene is similarly chaotic. Like the Siege of Belgrade on the Brooklyn Biombo, the fighting also occurs on the water, and there is a mountainous landscape behind the scene in the top portion of the biombo. Despite the different historical moments that each artist tried to capture, they clearly drew on similar visual conventions to

convey conflict between Spanish forces and their enemies. Visitors likely would have made associations with the different conflicts set on land and water.

Hunting scenes

As the use of de Hooghe's prints indicates, local New Spanish artists adapted and transformed European prints—as was also common among artists in Europe and elsewhere that prints were sent. The hunting scene on the biombo further demonstrates the far-flung networks that connected people in the seventeenth century—across land and sea. It was not just the battle scenes painted in New Spain that were adapted from European prints. The hunting scene likewise borrowed from prints that replicated tapestries and drawings by Johannes Stradanus (Jan van der Straet) and Gobelins tapestries for the French King Louis XIV.



Figure **2.3.7.1.16**: Harmen Jansz Muller, Hunt for Ibex, 1570, engraving after Stradanus (Jan van der Straet), 32.5 x 44.5 cm (Yale University Art Gallery)

For instance, Harman Jansz. Muller made prints that belonged to a larger series of hunting scenes set into ornamental frames that look like the biombo: the frames have flowers, swags, and animals. They likewise show hunters in landscapes pursuing animals. Interestingly, these printed images were themselves based initially on tapestry designs made by Stradanus for Duke Cosimo de' Medici's villa outside of Florence. These became so popular that **Stradanus** (in collaboration with Philips Galle), made even more hunting scenes as engravings—all of which proved immensely popular throughout Europe.



Figure **2.3.7.1.17**: Left: garland, heads, and swag. Folding Screen with the Siege of Belgrade (front) and Hunting Scene (reverse), c. 1697–1701, Mexico, oil on wood, inlaid with mother-of-pearl, 229.9 x 275.8 cm (Brooklyn Museum; photo: Steven Zucker, CC BY-NC-SA 2.0); right: ox head and garland. Ara Pacis Augustae (Altar of Augustan Peace), 9 B.C.E. (Ara Pacis Museum, Rome, Italy) (photo: Steven Zucker, CC BY-NC-SA 2.0)

Stradanus's hunt scenes drew on ancient Greco-Roman textual sources including Pliny, Homer, and Herodotus. They also borrow from **classicizing** imagery, such as the decorative frames, swag, garlands, and ox heads. Using motifs and scenes from prints that borrowed from classicizing court objects was yet another way of transforming the biombo into an elite court object that advertised its owner as a powerful intellectual.

The influence of Asia

There are yet more layers to this complex biombo—its very form as a folding screen and aspects of its visual appearance reveal Asian (especially Japanese) influences on the visual culture of New Spain. The word biombo comes from the Japanese "byobu," which translates literally to "protection from wind" or "wind wall."



Figure **2.3.7.1.18**: Kano Motonobu, *Birds and Flowers of the Four Seasons*, 16th century, pair of folding screens, ink, color, and gold on paper, 162.4 × 360.2 cm each (Hakutsuru Fine Art Museum, Kobe)

These portable, freestanding objects functioned as room dividers—a function that continued when they arrived in New Spain. The first Japanese *byobu* arrived in Mexico City around 1614 as a diplomatic gift, immediately becoming popular in elite circles. This was the result of the embassy of the samurai Hasekura Rokuemon that stopped in New Spain on its way to Rome. By the 1630s, local recreations of Japanese folding screens developed.



Figure 2.3.7.1.19: Folding screen with view of the viceroy's palace, c. 1675, oil paint and gilding (Museo de América, Madrid)



Figure 2.3.7.1.20: Routes of the Manila Galleon trade

Goods from Asia were highly sought after luxury goods in New Spain, and as art historian Sofia Sanabrais notes, they spoke to a person's refinement and education. When the Manila Galleon trade began after 1564 when Spain conquered the Philippines, new materials and goods began to flow across the Pacific Ocean to **New Spain**. In 1580, with the unification of Spain and Portugal, this also meant new access to Portuguese ports like Macau, Nagasaki, and Goa, increasing the global flow of goods. Oceans were the connective tissue not only between Asia and the Americas, but also the Americas and Europe. Importantly, the fascination with Asian objects from Japan (and other parts of Asia equally), and the local derivations of Asian goods, predates the phenomenon we now call **Japonisme** and Chinoiserie by centuries—these are often associated with the 18th and especially the 19th century.

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Figure **2.3.7.1.21**: *Box of Five Trays with Crabs and Waves*, 17th century, Edo Period, gold on black lacquer, Japan, 31.8 x 17.1 cm (The Metropolitan Museum of Art)



Figure **2.3.7.1.22**: Batea, 1600–1700, Peribán (Mexico), Mexican lacquer on wood, H. 8 cm, diameter, 56.5 cm (**Hispanic Society of America**)

Portions of the biombo, especially the floral decorations above the arches at the top and the decorative bands at the bottom, look similar to smaller portable Asian lacquer objects, also traded in New Spain. If we compare a Japanese black lacquerware to the biombo, especially the decoration on the bottom, we can see how they are visually similar. The biombo's **delicate golden decorations set against a black background** parallel the types of lacquered objects from Asia that came to New Spain.

Local lacquer working traditions already existed in New Spain. These traditions predated the invasion of Europeans, and with the infusion of Asian objects into New Spain, artists still working in these Indigenous traditions began to incorporate Asian motifs and color schemes. Like the folding screen's adaptation and emulation of Japanese screens and aesthetics, New Spanish lacquerware also looked to Japanese objects for inspiration.



Figure **2.3.7.1.23**: Left: Japanese artist, missal, 1580–1620, wood, lacquer, gold & shell, 35 x 31 cm (Peabody Essex Museum, MA); right: details of Folding Screen with the Siege of Belgrade (front) and Hunting Scene (reverse), c. 1697–1701, Mexico, oil on wood, inlaid with mother-of-pearl, 229.9 x 275.8 cm (Brooklyn Museum)

Sometimes Asian lacquered objects also included gold, silver, and tortoise-shell inlay (sometimes called Namban (or Nanban) art), and they in turn—like the biombo—were adapted in New Spain. With the biombo, we see the clear influence of Namban objects on the decorative frame filled with flowers and shell. Importantly though, while the overall aesthetic hearkens to Asian lacquerware and Namban objects, many of the flowers are ones associated with Europe, such as tulips, lilies, and carnations. This is yet another powerful reminder that artists were not trying to faithfully copy artworks from any one tradition, but to adapt and transform to create something new.



Figure **2.3.7.1.24**: Miguel González, *The Virgin of Guadalupe (Virgen de Guadalupe)*, c. 1698, oil on canvas on wood, inlaid with mother-of-pearl (*enconchado*), canvas: 99.06 × 69.85 cm / frame: 124.46 × 95.25 cm (Los Angeles County Museum of Art)

Shell-working (*enconchado*)



Figure **2.3.7.1.25**: Guerrero coyote, Toltec, c. 900–1200 C.E., shell and bone (Museo Nacional de Antropología)

As far as we know, this biombo is one of the few that exists to combine a folding screen with *enconchado* (or shell inlay). Around 1660, *enconchado* paintings became popular in New Spain, such as we see in a painting of the Virgin of Guadalupe by Miguel González, and many of these paintings survive. Visually, the *enconchado* in the biombo and in other paintings enlivens the surface, drawing our eye to those areas that reflect light.

As already mentioned, the use of shell-inlay was common in Japanese Namban works. But shell-working and shell-inlaid objects also had a long-standing tradition in what is today Mexico. Numerous objects throughout Mesoamerica's long history included shell, such as sculpture, disks, beads, pendants, bracelets, and more. The way the shell is incorporated into the biombo, while visually refers to Namban lacquer works, draws on techniques already present in New Spain, and reminds us that it is important to remember the role that Indigenous knowledge bearers (including artists and craftspeople) often played in the formation of New Spanish visual culture.

Courtly artists . . . from Asia?



Figure **2.3.7.1.26**: Miguel González, *The Conquest of Mexico*, Tabla XX (detail), late 17th century, organic pigments, ink, stucco, nacre, and organic varnish on scrim panel, 52 x 100 cm (Museo Nacional de Bellas Artes de Buenos Aires)

While we are not certain who made this biombo, we do know that some of the most well-known enconchado painters, such as Juan and Miguel González, worked at the viceregal court—and made paintings for Sarmiento de Valladares, including scenes of the Conquest of Mexico sent back to Spain. For this reason, the biombo is attributed to the González Family circle.

It has been suggested that the González brothers may originally be from Asia. We know that many people from Asia came to New Spain beginning in the late 16th century, and this included artists, craftsmen, sailors, and more. [2] It can be challenging however to identify how many as they often changed their names upon arrival and when they converted to Christianity.

Challenging categories

The Brooklyn Biombo speaks to the challenges with existing categories that art historians tend to use, helping us to question and reconsider how we locate, discuss, and frame objects. It also reveals the many types of art forms, ideas, and places that the biombo

engages: tapestries, prints, paintings, and shell-work; ancient Greco-Roman sources, conquest narratives, and battle stories; and the locations of Spain, Florence, Antwerp, Versailles, Holland, the Philippines, Japan, and, of course, Mexico City and New Spain more broadly.

Notes:

[1] So how did this biombo come to be split apart, and why is half in Brooklyn and half in Mexico? Most likely, the viceroy returned to Spain with the complete biombo around 1701, after the new Bourbon dynasty came to the Spanish throne. Valladares passed away in 1706, and at some point thereafter it entered into multiple collections, eventually being sold in the 1990s.

[2] Peoples from Asia were also forcefully relocated to the Americas as enslaved individuals or indentured laborers.

Additional resources:

This object at the Brooklyn Museum

Learn about New Spain

Read about elite secular art in New Spain

Learn about Mexico City's main market where Asian import goods were traded and sold

Read about the **Biombo with the Conquest of Mexico and View of Mexico City**

"The Circulation of Japanese and Mexican Art in the Early Modern World," Sofia Sanabrais (video)

Vistas: Visual Culture in Spanish America (Fordham University)

The Manila Galleon Trade on The Metropolitan Museum of Art's Heilbrunn Timeline of Art History

Richard Aste et al., *Behind Closed Doors: Art in the Spanish American Home 1492–1898* (Monacelli Press, 2013).

Anne Gerritsen and Giorgio Riello, "The Global Lives of Things: Material Culture in the First Global Age." In Anne Gerritsen and Giorgio Riello eds., *The Global Lives of Things: The Material Culture of Connections in the Early Modern World* (Routledge, 2015), pp. 1–28.

Barbara E. Mundy, "Moteuczoma Reborn: *Biombo* Paintings and Collective Memory in Colonial Mexico City," *Winterthur Portfolio* vol. 45, no. 2/3 (Summer/Autumn 2011), pp. 161–76.

Donna Pierce et al., ed., *Asia & Spanish America: trans-Pacific artistic and cultural exchange, 1500–1850: papers from the 2006 Mayer Center Symposium at the Denver Art Museum* (Denver: Denver Art Museum 2009).

Donna Pierce et al., ed., *At the crossroads the arts of Spanish America & early global trade, 1492–1850: papers from the 2010 Mayer Center symposium at the Denver Art Museum* (Denver: Denver Art Museum 2012).

Sofía Sanabrais, "From Byobu to *Biombo*: The Transformation of Japanese Folding Screen in Colonial Mexico,"*Art History* vol. 38, no. 4 (September 2015), pp. 778–91.

Sofía Sanabrais, "'Desire and sought by the rest of the world': Asian Art in the Hispanic World," *Art and Empire: the Golden Age of Spain*, ed. Michael A. Brown (San Diego : The San Diego Museum of Art, 2019), pp. 143–158.

Michael Schreffler, *The Art of Allegiance: Visual Culture and Imperial Power in Baroque New Spain* (Pennsylvania State University Press, 2007).

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2.3.7.2: Biombo with the Conquest of Mexico and View of Mexico City

by DR. ELENA FITZPATRICK SIFFORD

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Figure **2.3.7.2.1**: Mexico City side, *Biombo with the Conquest of Mexico and View of Mexico City*, New Spain, late 17th century (Museo Franz Mayer, Mexico City)

Spices, silks, porcelains and more

François Boucher's *A Bourgeois Breakfast* (below) features an upper middle class French family in their fashionable home. In the corner of the room, nestled on a small shelf, is a Buddha statuette, perhaps imported from China, but also possibly created in Meissen, Germany in imitation of Chinese porcelains. "Chinoiserie," (and later, "Japonisme") are terms used to describe eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Europe's fascination with East Asian goods. In reality Europeans had long sought spices, silks, and porcelains from the East, but the Ottomans controlled the trade in these and other luxury goods.



Figure **2.3.7.2.2**: François Boucher, *Family Taking Breakfast* (detail), 1739, 81 x 65 cm (Louvre)

In search for a direct route to Asia that bypassed Ottoman control, Christopher Columbus, a Genoese navigator backed by the Spanish crown, accidentally stumbled upon the so-called “New World,” though he believed he had found the Western route to Asia. Spanish navigators quickly realized they were not in fact in Asia and set about colonizing the Americas. Europeans soon made their way across the Pacific and the first Spanish settlement in Asia was established in San Miguel, present day Cebu (Philippines) in 1565. The **Viceroyalty of New Spain** eventually came to include much of North America including Mexico and Central America, as well as the Philippines.

Asia + the Americas (via Spain)



Figure 2.3.7.2.3: Routes of the Manila Galleon trade



Figure 2.3.7.2.4: *Young Woman with a Harpsichord*, 1735-1750, oil on canvas (Denver Art Museum)

These two disparate Asian and American territories were joined by a fleet of Spanish ships called the Manila Galleon that left biannually from the cities of Manila in the Philippines and Acapulco in Mexico. From Acapulco, Asian luxury goods were transported over land to Veracruz where they were placed onboard ships bound for Spain, or made their way either by boat or mule to port cities like Lima, Havana, Cartagena, and Portobelo.

Elite Spaniards and Creoles decorated their homes and adorned their bodies with stunning examples of East Asian textiles and manufactured goods, as seen in a Mexican portrait of a *Young Woman with a Harpsichord* (left). The sitter holds an Asian (or Asian-inspired) fan and wears an elaborate silk dress—both the height of fashion at the time. Soon local artists were inspired to create their own versions of Asian goods, or to inject East Asian styles and motifs into their work. The influence of Asian art is particularly evident in viceregal textiles, ceramics, and furniture. Some examples are the resplendent *biombos*, or folding screens, made in Mexico beginning in the seventeenth century.



Figure 2.3.7.2.5: Mexico City side, *Biombo with the Conquest of Mexico and View of Mexico City*, New Spain, late 17th century (Museo Franz Mayer, Mexico City)

What is a *Biombo*?

The word *biombo* is a Hispanization of the Japanese *byobu*, which can be translated as "protection from wind." The first *byobu* arrived in Mexico City as early as 1614 and quickly became highly sought after luxury items. These screens, originally imported from China to Japan in the eighth century and made of separate folding panels hinged together, were used within homes to divide or enclose interior spaces. Japanese screens typically featured landscapes with people or animals, but *biombo* made in Mexico featured secular subjects set within a city or landscape. Popular subjects included indigenous festivities, allegories of the four continents, and scenes from the conquest of Mexico.



Figure **2.3.7.2.6**: Conquest side, *Biombo showing the Conquest of Mexico and View of Mexico City*, New Spain, late 17th century (Museo Franz Mayer, Mexico City)

Biombo as Map

The *Biombo with the Conquest of Mexico and View of Mexico City* in the Museo Franz Mayer in Mexico City (above) is exemplary of the genre. Created in the second half of the seventeenth century, the screen features a panoramic birds-eye map of Mexico City on one side and scenes from the Conquest of Mexico on the other. While both sides of the *biombo* show the same geographic space (Tenochtitlan/Mexico City), the city is rendered very differently on each side.



Figure **2.3.7.2.7**: Mexico City streets (detail), *Biombo with the Conquest of Mexico and View of Mexico City*, New Spain, late 17th century (Museo Franz Mayer, Mexico City)

This birds-eye view of the city (above) gives a cartographic rendering of the city in three dimensions. Likely based on a seventeenth-century map of the city, this side of the *biombo* focuses on the physical aspects of Mexico City. The image is idealized

—privileging the elite Spanish view of the city. Notably absent, for example, are the small indigenous dwellings that could be found on the outskirts of the city.



Figure **2.3.7.2.8**: Tlatelolco and the landscape beyond (detail), *Biombo with the Conquest of Mexico and View of Mexico City*, New Spain, late 17th century (Museo Franz Mayer, Mexico City)

Devoid of people, the sweeping city on a lake appears picturesque, with mountains rising in the distance and causeways that radiate out from its carefully organized grid of plaza, streets, and canals. The grid was established by the Mexica (Aztecs) who founded the city. The Spanish troops who arrived in 1519 were amazed; conquistador Bernal Díaz del Castillo wrote: "Among us there were soldiers who had been in many parts of the world, in Constantinople and all of Italy and Rome. Never had they seen a square that compared so well, so orderly and wide, and so full of people, as that one."[1] He marveled also at the "straight, level causeway," and "high towers, pyramids, and other buildings, all of masonry, which rose from the water." For the Spaniards, they had arrived in a city of dreams—one that mirrored the Renaissance ideals of city planning that had yet to be realized in Spanish medieval cities.



Figure **2.3.7.2.9**: Cathedral (detail), *Biombo with the Conquest of Mexico and View of Mexico City*, New Spain, late 17th century (Museo Franz Mayer, Mexico City)

Following the Conquest, Tenochtitlan was renamed Mexico City, and was transformed to more closely resemble a European city. Painted in **one point perspective** (a convention of European painting), the *biombo* showcases seventeenth-century Mexico City as a sprawling metropolis of stucco buildings with red slate roofs. Particular attention is paid to its most prominent structures: churches, schools, hospitals, monasteries, and convents. The perspectival focus is on the *traza*, the center of the city that was reserved for the Spanish elites, but the indigenous city of Tlatelolco, the "sister" city of Tenochtitlan, is rendered on the left hand side of the island (above).



Figure **2.3.7.2.10**: Battle scene (detail), *Biombo with the Conquest of Mexico and View of Mexico City*, New Spain, late 17th century (Museo Franz Mayer, Mexico City)

Biombo as Narrative



Figure **2.3.7.2.11**: Cartouche (detail), *Biombo with the Conquest of Mexico and View of Mexico City*, New Spain, late 17th century (Museo Franz Mayer, Mexico City)

In contrast, the opposite side of the *biombo* is full of figures—both native and Spanish. It too depicts the Mexican capital, but rather than an idealized map, the reverse of the *biombo* teems with action, depicting the epic clash between Hernan Cortés' troops, their indigenous allies (the Tlaxcalteca) and the Mexica warriors (above). Specific events of the Conquest are placed in the locations

where they took place rather than in chronological order. Letters next to the scene and a cartouche at the bottom right corner (left) serve as narrative devices for decoding the different battles and events of the Conquest.

Perhaps the most prominent portion of the *biombo* lies in the scene depicting the assassination of the Mexica emperor Moctezuma II (below) at the bottom right corner. Spanish accounts, such as the wildly popular *History of the Conquest of Mexico by the Spaniards* by Antonio Solís, blame the Mexica for killing their leader in an act of vengeance for his perceived errors in handling the Spanish incursion. Contemporary indigenous accounts, however, such as in **Bernardino de Sahagún's *Florentine Codex***, record that Moctezuma was killed by the Spanish before they fled the city. Clearly this *biombo* privileges the Spanish (or Creole) view of the Conquest—showing the Mexica leader being executed by one of his own people, thus exculpating the Spaniards in this key moment of the violent conquest.



Figure **2.3.7.2.12**: Assassination of Moctezuma II (detail), *Biombo with the Conquest of Mexico and View of Mexico City*, New Spain, late 17th century (Museo Franz Mayer, Mexico City)

Biombo in Context

Imagine this folding screen in a large and sumptuously decorated home in Mexico City. Its recalling of Asian art forms was a reflection of the sophisticated tastes of its cosmopolitan owners. The Spanish or Creole elites would have used the *biombo* as a conversation piece, or perhaps invented games and riddles that related one episode of the Conquest to a particular part of the city. The *biombo* could serve as a mnemonic device for recalling collective and oral histories of the city.[2] While the Conquest view illustrated the discord of the pre-Hispanic period, the map view celebrated order under Spanish rule. Though never visible at the same time, the two scenes are interrelated, and the act of going back and forth between the physical city and its historic Conquest was one that fascinated both the eye and the mind. Through the act of looking, its owners could superimpose themselves within both the physical and historical city, becoming a part of the transition of the Mexica capital of Tenochtitlan to the Spanish capital of Mexico City.

Notes:

[1] Bernal Diaz del Castillo, *The History of the Conquest of New Spain*, ed. John Cohen (New York: Penguin Books Limited, 1963), p. 235.

[2] Barbara E. Mundy, "Moteuczoma Reborn: *Biombo* Paintings and Collective Memory in Colonial Mexico City," *Winterthur Portfolio*, vol. 45, no. 2/3 (Summer/Autumn 2011), p. 164.

Additional resources:

"The Circulation of Japanese and Mexican Art in the Early Modern World," Sofia Sanabrais (video)

The Manila Galleon Trade on The Metropolitan Museum of Art's Heilbrunn Timeline of Art History

Vistas: Visual Culture in Spanish America (Fordham University)

Barbara E. Mundy, "Moteuczoma Reborn: *Biombo* Paintings and Collective Memory in Colonial Mexico City," *Winterthur Portfolio*, vol. 45, no. 2/3 (Summer/Autumn 2011), pp. 161-176.

Sofia Sanabrais, "From Byobu to *Biombo*: The Transformation of Japanese Folding Screen in Colonial Mexico,"*Art History* 38, 4 (September 2015), pp. 778-791.

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SECTION OVERVIEW

2.3.8: Miguel Cabrera, Virgin of the Apocalypse

2.3.8.1: Miguel Cabrera, Virgin of the Apocalypse

2.3.8.2: Miguel Cabrera, Portrait of Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz

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2.3.8.1: Miguel Cabrera, Virgin of the Apocalypse

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The Michelangelo of Mexico

Miguel Cabrera was one of the most celebrated and prolific artists of viceregal Mexico in the eighteenth century—painting everything from casta paintings and portraits to large-scale religious altarpieces and small devotional paintings. During his lifetime, he achieved great renown, and even attempted to create an official Academy of Painting in Mexico City modeled after the Royal Academy of Fine Arts of San Fernando in Madrid.



Figure **2.3.8.1.1**: Miguel Cabrera, *The Virgin of the Apocalypse*, 1760, oil on canvas, 352.7 x 340 cm (Museo Nacional de Arte, INBA)



Figure **2.3.8.1.2**: Signature (detail), Miguel Cabrera, *The Virgin of the Apocalypse*, 1760, oil on canvas, 352.7 x 340 cm (Museo Nacional de Arte, INBA)

On his 1760 painting, *The Virgin of the Apocalypse* (above), Cabrera notably signed his name as "Michelangelo" (left) to draw comparisons between himself and the great Italian Renaissance master and to promote the idea that he was the Michelangelo of Mexico.

Even beyond the signature—which links the art of New Spain to the European tradition—this painting reveals other artistic and religious exchanges between the Spanish viceroyalty (in what was known as the "new world") and parts of Europe.

Iconography

The iconography of Cabrera's *The Virgin of the Apocalypse* derives from chapter 12 of the Book of Revelation—a book of the New Testament that prophesies and describes the end of the world and the second coming of Christ. This comes as no surprise since subjects related to the apocalypse (the end of the world) and the Virgin Mary were increasingly important from the late seventeenth

century onwards in New Spain. In chapter 12, John of Patmos, the author, describes a woman “clothed with the sun” and pursued by a dragon who wants to devour her child.



Figure **2.3.8.1.3**: Left side (detail), Miguel Cabrera, *The Virgin of the Apocalypse*, 1760, oil on canvas, 352.7 x 340 cm (Museo Nacional de Arte, INBA)

The Book of Revelation, chapter 12, verses 1-5 read:

> ***1 A great sign appeared in the sky, a woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet, and on her head a crown of twelve stars.***
> ***2 She was with child and wailed aloud in pain as she labored to give birth.***
> ***3 Then another sign appeared in the sky; it was a huge red dragon, with seven heads and ten horns, and on its heads were seven diadems.***
> ***4 Its tail swept away a third of the stars in the sky and hurled them down to the earth. Then the dragon stood before the woman about to give birth, to devour her child when she gave birth.***
> ***5 She gave birth to a son, a male child, destined to rule all the nations with an iron rod. Her child was caught up to God and his throne.***

The rest of the chapter describes how “war broke out in heaven” and how the archangel Michael and his angels fought the dragon who fled with the wings of an eagle.

The woman of the apocalypse is a long-standing subject in Catholic art and theology—understood by early Church thinkers to be a personification of the Church and by medieval interpreters as the Virgin Mary (based on the text describing a woman who gave birth to a “male child who is to rule the nations with a rod of iron”). The male child was often interpreted as Jesus. Broadly

speaking, the woman was understood to represent Christianity itself. However, it is worth noting that the symbolism in the Book of Revelation often carries multiple meanings.*



Figure **2.3.8.1.4**: Detail, Miguel Cabrera, *The Virgin of the Apocalypse*, 1760, oil on canvas, 352.7 x 340 cm (Museo Nacional de Arte, INBA)

The representation of the Woman of the Apocalypse in Baroque art included recognizable Marian iconography deriving from the **Litany of Loreto** (also known as the Litany of the Blessed Virgin Mary), approved by Pope Sixtus V in 1587 (a litany is a call and response form of prayer).

The Woman of the Apocalypse is often dressed in the Virgin Mary's colors—either blue and red or white and blue as seen here. The white and blue color scheme corresponds to the iconography of the Immaculate Conception (the doctrine that Mary was conceived without original sin in her mother's womb)—a popular subject in Spanish Baroque art (**examples here**). In his treatise entitled *El arte de la pintura* (*The Art of Painting*, 1649), the Spanish painter and theorist Francisco Pacheco offered guidelines as to how the Immaculate Conception should be represented, proposing that painters depict Mary wearing a white tunic with a blue mantle and stars around her head—all motifs derived from the Book of Revelation.



Figure **2.3.8.1.5**: Detail, Miguel Cabrera, *The Virgin of the Apocalypse*, 1760, oil on canvas, 352.7 x 340 cm (Museo Nacional de Arte, INBA)

In Cabrera's painting we see a literal representation of the heavenly battle described in the Book of Revelation. At the center of the composition a woman stands in front of the sun, dressed in a white tunic and a blue cloak (the white shawl with blue stripes draped over her shoulder resembles a *tallit* (a Jewish prayer shawl). She stands over a blue orb and steps on one of the dragon's seven heads. Like the woman in Revelation, she has two wings and twelve stars around her head. She holds aloft a young boy who is reaching up to God the Father. God, clothed in red and white, is identifiable by the traditional long white beard and triangular halo that symbolizes the Holy Trinity. God is painted somewhat fainter than the woman to indicate that he is behind her. His arms are outstretched over her wings, implying divine assistance as she triumphs over the dragon.



Figure **2.3.8.1.6**: Miguel Cabrera, *The Virgin of the Apocalypse*, 1760, oil on canvas, 352.7 x 340 cm (Museo Nacional de Arte, INBA)



Figure 2.3.8.1.7: Angels, Miguel Cabrera, *The Virgin of the Apocalypse*, 1760, oil on canvas, 352.7 x 340 cm (Museo Nacional de Arte, INBA)

The heavenly battle unfolds to the viewer's left; St. Michael and his army of angels come down from heaven. Like the woman, Michael has one foot on the dragon, as he casts the monster down into a fiery, demon-filled hell on the lower left. In the top right clouds (image left), one angel bears a palm frond (a traditional symbol of victory) as the other looks down while also pointing to God.

The angels at the lower right hold a mirror and small bouquet of roses referencing symbols in the **Litany of Loreto**. The mirror stands for the Virgin Mary's title of *speculum justitiaé* (mirror of justice); the roses are for her title of *Rosa mystica* (mystical rose). Another angel holds a lilies (a symbol of purity); the rose and the lily are flowers often included in depictions of the Virgin Mary. Both are mentioned in a passage from the Song of Songs (part of the Hebrew Bible) often associated with the Virgin, that reads "I am the Rose of Sharon, the lily of the valleys" (2:1). Off in the distance **on the right side is John**, the writer of the Book of Revelation. He sits outdoors recording his vision; he looks to the sky and the words from his prophecy, *signum magnum apparuit in cae*lo c. 12 (and a great sign appeared in the sky, Ch. 12) come forth from his mouth written upside down—perhaps an indication that their real author was in heaven.



Figure 2.3.8.1.8: Crushing the serpent (detail), Miguel Cabrera, *The Virgin of the Apocalypse*, 1760, oil on canvas, 352.7 x 340 cm (Museo Nacional de Arte, INBA)

The woman crushing the head of the serpent in Cabrera's painting symbolizes the defeat of heresy. But another interpretation is possible. Many Mesoamerican cultures venerated a feathered serpent deity (Quetzalcoatl for the Aztecs), and in the wake of Spanish colonization—beginning after the defeat of the Aztecs in 1521—there were many attempts to eradicate the traditional beliefs of the indigenous people as they were being converted to Christianity. The image of the woman of the apocalypse crushing the serpent could be therefore also interpreted as Christianity defeating indigenous Mesoamerican religious beliefs.

Artistic Exchange



Figure **2.3.8.1.9**: Left: Miguel Cabrera, *The Virgin of the Apocalypse*, 1760, oil on canvas, 352.7 x 340 cm (Museo Nacional de Arte, INBA)l right: Peter Paul Rubens, *The Woman of the Apocalypse*, 1623-25, oil on canvas, 554.5 x 370.5 cm (Alte Pinakothek, Munich)

The format and iconography of Cabrera's *Woman of the Apocalypse* is borrowed from the Flemish painter Peter Paul Rubens' work of the same subject (above, right). Rubens lived in Antwerp (then part of the Spanish Netherlands). Skilled in both art and diplomacy, he was employed by the Spanish crown in both capacities. King Philip IV of Spain was one of Rubens' patrons and thus his work was highly regarded and widely reproduced through prints. These prints made their way to the Spanish Americas where they influenced local artists. One artist, Cristóbal de Villalpando created a large version of the *Woman of the Apocalypse* between 1684–88 for the sacristy of the Metropolitan Cathedral of Mexico City. Other Mexican painters, including **José de Ibarra** (Pinacoteca Profesa, Mexico) and **Miguel Vallejo** (Museo Regional de Querétaro), also painted their own versions of the *Woman of the Apocalypse* prior to Cabrera, demonstrating the subject's popularity in the Spanish viceroyalty.



Figure **2.3.8.1.10**: Cristóbal de Villalpando, *Woman of the Apocalypse*, 1684–88. oil on canvas. 899 x 776 cm (Sacristy of the Metropolitan Cathedral of the Assumption of the Most Blessed Virgin Mary into Heaven, Mexico City)

Cabrera's style has been likened to the work of Spanish artist **Bartolomé Esteban Murillo** as well as Rubens, though his style is softer and more delicate. Rubens's painting of this subject is more energetic and has a vertical emphasis (where the Cabrera is more square in format). In the Rubens, the viewer clearly sees a landscape and a tumultuous battle in the sky that curves around the central figure of the Woman/Virgin Mary. Most of the iconography and its placement remains the same in Cabrera's work, though Mary does not wear red—instead Cabrera follows Pacheco's suggestion of white and blue clothing.



Figure **2.3.8.1.11**: Miguel Cabrera, *Altarpiece of the Virgin of Guadalupe with Saint John the Baptist, Fray Juan de Zumárraga and Juan Diego* (Museo Nacional de Arte, INBA)

Cabrera and his workshop produced many secular and religious artworks. For instance, he made numerous versions of Our Lady of Guadalupe—a miraculous image of the Virgin Mary who appeared to an indigenous man (Juan Diego) in Mexico in 1531. Significantly, the Woman of the Apocalypse, the Virgin of the Immaculate Conception, and Our Lady of Guadalupe all share similar iconographic details such as stars, the moon under her feet, being "clothed with the sun," and crushing a serpent. Our Lady of Guadalupe was often interpreted as the Woman of the Apocalypse by contemporary Mexican writers including Miguel Sánchez and Jerónimo de Valladolid. This was an important identification because it associated Juan Diego with John of Patmos, the author of the Book of Revelation.

Our Lady of Guadalupe is further linked to the Immaculate Conception by the proximity of their Holy Days: Guadalupe is celebrated on December 12 and the Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception on December 8, though it was celebrated on December 9 in Mexico—the day the Virgin first appeared to Juan Diego. Miguel Cabrera even wrote a short treatise entitled *Maravilla americana* (*American Marvel*, 1756) on the miraculous nature of the image of Our Lady of Guadalupe from an artist's point of view.

The prominence of the apocalyptic iconography of the Woman of Apocalypse is thus linked to other important Marian apparitions and advocations in colonial Mexico at a moment in time when many elite creoles (pure-blooded Spaniards born in the Americas) were championing their local identities and the greatness of New Spain. Miguel Cabrera's painting was commissioned by the elite creole patrons, Don José Reaño and his wife Doña Maria Olivares, indicated by an inscription at the bottom of the painting, *A la Devoción de Don José Reaño y Doña María Olivares, su esposa* [To the devotion of Don José Reaño and Doña Maria Olivares, his wife].



Figure **2.3.8.1.12**: Inscription with the names of the patrons (detail), Miguel Cabrera, *The Virgin of the Apocalypse*, 1760, oil on canvas, 352.7 x 340 cm (Museo Nacional de Arte, INBA)

Unlike Rubens' painting, which was meant as a cathedral altarpiece, this painting was displayed at the Royal and Pontifical University of Mexico. The University (the first in the Americas) was founded in 1551 by Friar Juan de Zumárraga, first bishop of

Mexico, and Viceroy Antonio de Mendoza. The university was established “to serve God and the public welfare.” In 1557 a decree was issued that limited the number of students of “mixed blood” (those with Spanish and indigenous parentage) to six and in the 17th century, essentially only those of Spanish descent were admitted.[1] The painting was later moved to the San Carlos Academy of Fine Arts, then to the San Diego Viceregal Painting Gallery and finally the Museo Nacional de Arte (MUNAL), where it is housed today.

*Much of the symbolism in Revelation is drawn from the Old Testament, specifically from the book of Genesis. The twelve stars, the sun and moon refer to Jacob and the twelve patriarchs (twelve tribes of Israel). The twelve apostles of Christ parallel the tribes and the Christian community is considered the New Israel.

[1] Philip Russell, *The Essential History of Mexico: From Pre-Conquest to Present* (Routledge, 2015), **p. 88**.

Additional resources:

Bartolomé Estéban Murillo, *The Immaculate Conception of the Virgin*, 17th century (Dulwich Picture Gallery)

Miguel Cabrera, Altarpiece of the Virgin of Guadalupe with Saint John the Baptist, Fray Juan de Zumárraga and Juan Diego (Museo Nacional de Arte, INBA)

Art of the Spanish Americas on the Metropolitan Museum of Art’s Heilbrunn Timeline of Art History

Michael J. Schreffler, *The art of allegiance: visual culture and imperial power in Baroque New Spain* (Pennsylvania State University Press, 2007)

Kelly Donahue-Walace, *Art and Architecture of Viceregal Latin America, 1521-1821* (University of New Mexico Press, 2008)

Lois Parkinson Zamora and Monika Kaup, eds., *Baroque New Worlds: Representation, Transculturation, Counterconquest* (Duke University Press, 2009)

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2.3.8.2: Miguel Cabrera, Portrait of Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz

by DR. LAUREN KILROY-EWBANK

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Figure 2.3.8.2.1: Miguel Cabrera, *Portrait of Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz*, c. 1750, oil on canvas (Museo Nacional de Historia, Castillo de Chapultepec, Mexico)

Miguel Cabrera's posthumous portrait of sor Juana Inés de la Cruz (1648-1695) is a famous depiction of the esteemed Mexican nun and writer. Considered the first feminist of the Americas, sor Juana lived as a nun of the Jeronymite order (named for St. Jerome) in seventeenth-century Mexico. Rather than marry, she chose to become a nun so she could pursue her intellectual interests. She corresponded with scientists, theologians, and other literary intellectuals in Mexico and abroad. She wrote poetry and plays that became internationally famous, and even engaged in theological debates.

Her life

Born to a creole family in 1648, sor Juana was a child prodigy. At the age of fifteen, she amazed people at court by excelling at an oral exam that tested her knowledge of physics, philosophy, theology, and mathematics.

She came to live as a lady in waiting in the house of the viceroy (the substitute or representative for the Spanish king in Mexico). Shortly afterwards, she chose to become a nun instead of marry. She entered the Carmelite convent in 1667, but left a year later to join the Jeronymite order in 1669—and in the process gained intellectual freedom. The Jeronymite order allowed her to host intellectual gatherings and live a comfortable life.

In 1690 she became involved in an ecclesiastical dispute between the bishops of Mexico City and Puebla. She responded to the criticism she received as a woman writer, which culminated in one of her most famous works: *The Answer* (1691). This work defended her right as a woman to write and to be a scholar. At one she claimed that:

> ***I do not study in order to write, nor far less in order to teach (which would be boundless arrogance in me), but simply to see whether by studying I may become less ignorant. This is my answer, and these are my feelings. . . .***

Despite her eloquent defense, the Church forced her to relinquish her literary pursuits and even her library. When she sold her library and musical and scientific instruments, she wrote a document that renounced her learning, which ended with "I, Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz, the worst in the world," signed in her own blood. After giving up her intellectual pursuits, she cared for the infirm during an epidemic but she fell sick and passed away.

An intellectual



Figure **2.3.8.2.2**: Antonio da Fabriano II, *Saint Jerome in his Study*, 1451, tempera, oil (?) and gold leaf on wood panel, 34 13/16 x 20 13/16″ (The Walters Art Museum)

Miguel Cabrera positions sor Juana in such a way that the portrait insists on her status as an intellectual. He never actually met sor Juana, so he likely based his image of her on earlier portraits of her, possibly even some self-portraits. Cabrera likely modeled this painting on images of male scholars seated at their desks. Most importantly, he possibly found inspiration in depictions of St. Jerome, the patron saint of sor Juana's religious order. Images often portray St. Jerome seated at a desk within a study, surrounded by books and instruments of learning.



Figure **2.3.8.2.3**: Miguel Cabrera, *Portrait of Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz* (detail), c. 1750, oil on canvas (Museo Nacional de Historia, Castillo de Chapultepec, Mexico)

…and a nun

In many ways this is a typical nun portrait of eighteenth-century Mexico. Sor Juana wears the habit of her religious order, the Jeronymites. She also wears an *escudo de monja*, or nun's badge, on her chest underneath her chin. *Escudos de monja* were often painted, occasionally woven, and they usually displayed the Virgin Mary. Sor Juana's *escudo* shows the Annunciation, the moment in which the archangel Gabriel informs Mary that she will bear the son of God. Her left hand toys with a rosary, while she turns a page of an open book with her right hand. The book is a text by St. Jerome, the saint after whom her religious order was named.



Figure **2.3.8.2.4**: Escudo de monja, 18th century, oil on copper with tortoiseshell frame (San Antonio Museum of Art)

Cabrera's portrait differs from other nun portraits in several important ways. She looks towards us, her gaze direct and assertive, as she sits at a desk, surrounded by her library and instruments of learning. The library here includes books on philosophy, natural

science, theology, mythology, and history, and so it reflects the types of works in sor Juana's own library. Writing implements rest on the table, a clear allusion to sor Juana's written works and intellectual pursuits.

The rosary—a sign of her religious life—is juxtaposed with items signifying her intellectual life. The books, the desk, the quills and inkwell aid in conveying her intellectual status. The red curtain, common in elite portraiture of this period, also confers upon her a high status.

Additional resources:

Another Latin American nun's portraits at the Google Art Project

Another portrait of Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz at the Philadelphia Museum of Art

Electa Arenal and Amanda Powell, eds. *The Answer/La respuesta*. 2 ed. (New York: The Feminist Press at the City University of New York, 2009).

Charlene Villaseñor Black, "Portraits of Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz and the Dangers of Intellectual Desire," in *Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz: Selected Works, Norton Critical Edition*, edited by Anna More (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, Inc., 2016).

Dartmouth's Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz project

*Marion Oettinger Jr., Retratos: 2,000 Years of Latin American Portraits (*New Haven: San Antonio Museum of Art and Yale University Press, 2004).

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SECTION OVERVIEW

2.3.9: Casta Paintings

2.3.9.1: Spaniard and Indian Produce a Mestizo, attributed to Juan Rodriguez Juárez

2.3.9.2: Francisco Clapera, set of sixteen casta paintings

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2.3.9.1: Spaniard and Indian Produce a Mestizo, attributed to Juan Rodriguez Juárez

by DR. LAUREN KILROY-EWBANK *and* DR. ELENA FITZPATRICK SIFFORD

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179605

In America people are born in diverse colors, customs, temperaments and languages. From the Spaniard and the Indian is born the mestizo, usually humble, quiet and simple.[1]

So states an inscription on José Joaquín Magón's painting, *The Mestizo*, made in **New Spain** (Spanish colonial Mexico) during the second half of the eighteenth century. The painting displays a Spanish father and Indigenous mother with their son, and it belongs to a larger series of works that seek to document the inter-ethnic mixing occurring in New Spain among Europeans, indigenous peoples, Africans, and the existing mixed-race population. This genre of painting, known as *pinturas de castas*, or casta paintings, attempts to capture reality, yet they are largely fictions.



Figure **2.3.9.1.1**: José Joaquín Magón, *El Mestizo/The Mestizo*, second half of the eighteenth century, oil on canvas. 102 x 126 cm (private collection)

Typically, casta paintings display a mother, father, and a child (sometimes two). This family model is possibly modeled on depictions of the Holy Family showing the Virgin Mary, saint Joseph, and Christ as a child. Casta paintings are often labeled with a number and a textual inscription that documents the mixing that has occurred. The numbers and textual inscriptions on casta paintings create a racial taxonomy, akin to a scientific taxonomy. In this way, casta paintings speak to Enlightenment concerns, specifically the notion that people can be rationally categorized based on their ethnic makeup and appearance.



Figure **2.3.9.1.2**: Casta Painting, 18th century, oil on canvas, 148 x 104 cm (Museo Nacional del Virreinato, Mexico)

They are commonly produced in sets of sixteen, but occasionally we see sixteen vignettes on a single canvas. Costume, accouterments, activities, setting, and flora and fauna all aid in racially labeling the individuals within these works.

The first position of the casta series is always a Spanish man and an elite Indigenous woman, accompanied by their offspring: a *mestizo*, which denotes a person born of these two parents. As the casta series progresses and the mixing increases, some of the names used in casta paintings to label people demonstrate social anxiety over inter-ethnic mixing and can often be pejorative.

For instance, a Spaniard and a *mestizo* produce a *castizo* ("burned tree"), while a Spaniard and a *morisco* (a muslim who had been forced to convert to Christianity) produce an *albino torna atrás* ("Return-Backwards") and a *No te entiendo* ("I-Don't-Understand-You") with a *Cambuja* (offspring of an Indian woman and African man) makes a *tente en el aire* ("Hold-Yourself-in-Mid-Air"). Indigenous peoples who chose to live outside "civilized" social norms and were not Christian were labeled *mecos*, or barbarians.



Figure **2.3.9.1.3**: Detail of first two groups, Casta Painting, 18th century (Museo Nacional del Virreinato, Mexico)

Casta paintings convey the perception that the more European you are, the closer to the top of the social and racial hierarchy you belong. Pure-blooded Spaniards always occupy the preeminent position in casta paintings and are often the best dressed and most "civilized." Clearly, casta paintings convey the notion that one's social status is tied to one's perceived racial makeup.



Figure **2.3.9.1.4**: Spaniard and Indian Produce a Mestizo, attributed to Juan Rodríguez Juárez, c. 1715, oil on canvas (Breamore House, Hampshire, UK)

Many famous artists, including Juan Rodríguez Juárez, Miguel Cabrera, and Juan Patricio Morlete Ruiz, produced casta paintings. Rodríguez Juárez created some of the earliest casta paintings, and *Spaniard and Indian Produce a Mestizo* (above), which displays the same subject as Joaquín Magón's painting[2], is attributed to him.



Figure 2.3.9.1.5: Detail, *Spaniard and Indian Produce a Mestizo*, attributed to Juan Rodríguez Juárez, c. 1715, oil on canvas (Breamore House, Hampshire, UK)

The painting displays a simple composition, with a mother and father flanking two children, one of whom is a servant carrying the couple's baby. The indigenous mother, dressed in a beautiful *huipil* (traditional woman's garment worn by indigenous women from central Mexico to parts of Central America) with lace sleeves and wearing sumptuous jewelry, turns to look at her husband as she gestures towards her child. Her husband, who wears French-style European clothing including a powdered wig, gazes down at the children with his hand either resting on his wife's arm or his child's back. The young servant looks upwards to the father. The family appears calm and harmonious, even loving. This is not always the case, however. Often as the series progresses, discord can erupt among families or they are displayed in tattered, torn, and unglamorous surroundings. People also appear darker as they become more mixed. Casta paintings from the second half of the eighteenth century in particular focus more on families living in less ideal conditions as they become more racially mixed. Earlier series, like Rodríguez Juárez's, often display all families wearing more fanciful attire.

But who commissioned these works and why? The existing evidence suggests that some of these casta series were commissioned by Viceroys, or the stand-in for the Spanish King in the Americas, who brought some casta series to Spain upon their return. Other series were commissioned for important administrators. However, little is known about the patrons of casta paintings in general. Yet, we can infer to a degree who might have commissioned such paintings. Because casta paintings reflect increasing social anxieties about inter-ethnic mixing, it is possible that elites who claimed to be of pure blood, and who likely found the dilution of pure-bloodedness alarming, were among those individuals who commissioned casta paintings.

1. "En la America nacen gentes diverzas en color, en costumbres, genios y lenguas. Del español y la yndia nace el mestizo, por lo común, humilde, quieto y sencyllo."

2. De español y de india, produce mestiso [sic].

Additional resources:

Why an Albino? Some Notes On Our New Casta Painting by Miguel Cabrera (Getty Museum)

Ilona Katzew, *Casta Painting: Images of Race in Eighteenth-Century Mexico* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005).

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2.3.9.2: Francisco Clapera, set of sixteen casta paintings

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Video **2.3.9.2.1**: Francisco Clapera, Set of Sixteen Casta paintings, c. 1775, 51.1 x 39.6 cm (Denver Art Museum). Speakers: Sabina Kull, Meyer Center Fellow, Denver Art Museum and Beth Harris.

Key points

- New Spain was a viceroyalty of the Spanish empire. The presence of people of many different ethnic backgrounds and their relative social mobility in New Spain prompted Spanish anxiety about racial mixing and a desire to maintain social hierarchies that privileged European lineage.
- Casta paintings used labels and visual details such as different skin tones, dress, occupations, and settings to distinguish ethnicity and to signal economic and class divisions. These images did not reflect reality so much as represent stereotypes arranged along a biased, hierarchical scale.
- Francisco Clapera was involved in the founding of an art academy in New Spain. It is likely that many casta paintings were produced for export back to Spain, as part of an effort by artists in the viceroyalty to demonstrate their skill and sophistication, as well as the wealth and productivity of New Spain.

Go deeper

Learn more about this painting at the Denver Art Museum

See another example of a set of Casta paintings

What was a viceroyalty?

How did the Manila Galleon Trade influence local culture in the Americas?

How was ethnicity thought about in New Spain?

What are some examples of upper-class Spanish-American portraiture?

How did ethnic and social divisions intersect with the production of art in New Spain?

Another set of Casta paintings, recently acquired by the Los Angeles County Museum of Art

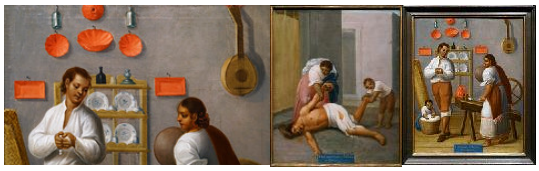
More to think about

Casta paintings depicted stereotypes about race and social class in New Spain. How do we, today, perpetuate stereotypes about race, class, and identity in the United States?

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2.3.10: Juan Patricio Morlete Ruiz, Christ Consoled by Angels

by **DR. LAUREN KILROY-EWBANK** and **DR. BETH HARRIS**

Page ID

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A conversation between Dr. Lauren Kilroy-Ewbank and Dr. Beth Harris in front of Juan Patricio Morlete Ruiz, *Christ Consoled by Angels*, 18th century, oil on copper, 84.5 x 64.5 cm (Museo Nacional de Arte, Mexico City)

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2.3.11: The Virgin of the Macana and the Pueblo Revolution of 1680

Page ID

179608



Figure **2.3.11.1**: The Virgin of the Macana, second half of the 18th century, oil on canvas (History Collections New Mexico History Museum)

Did you know that the first American Revolution took place in New Mexico? The Pueblo Revolution, better known as the Pueblo Revolt of 1680, was the only successful Indigenous insurgency (armed rebellion) to expel Spanish colonial forces in the Americas (Spanish colonization began in 1492 when Christopher Columbus landed on the island that would become **Hispaniola**). In the 17th century, New Mexico was part of the northern frontiers of the **viceroyalty of New Spain**, where Spanish control was continuously contested by Native groups and other European powers. The Pueblo Revolution involved Christianized Pueblo peoples and non-Christian Apaches rising up against the Spaniards, killing 21 Franciscans and almost 400 Spanish colonists. The thousands of remaining colonists were forced to flee.



Figure **2.3.11.2**: Map of the Viceroyalty of New Spain c. 1800

The Pueblo Revolution was a monumental event during which the Native Pueblos of New Mexico regained their independence for twelve years. Despite this, no artists of the period depicted this event, though Spaniards (whose goal was to justify their control of these lands and people) did write about it. It is only in later 18th-century images, such as the *The Virgin of the Macana* now in the New Mexico History Museum, that help us learn more about this important historical revolution and how artists chose to depict it.



Figure **2.3.11.3**: The Virgin of the Macana, second half of the 18th century, oil on canvas (private collection)

The paintings

Only a few paintings of the Virgin of the Macana (also called just Macana) still exist, and they all date to the second half of the 18th century. They all display remarkably similar iconography: Mary is shown as a statue, bleeding from her forehead, wearing a crown, and holding a *macana* (a wooden weapon embedded with obsidian blades commonly used by the Nahua peoples of central Mexico—not by the Pueblo peoples in New Mexico). She is surrounded by events from the Pueblo Revolution.



Figure **2.3.11.4**: The Virgin of Toledo, the printed frontispiece to *A la devocion que la Reyna nuestra señora ha significado a la imagen de la Madre de Dios, que con titulo del Sagrario se venera en la muy Santa Iglesia de Toledo, Primada de las Españas* (Madrid, 1677) (Biblioteca Nacional de España)

With the Spanish conquest and colonization of the Americas, devotions to and images of the Virgin Mary, Jesus, and saints were transported across the Atlantic Ocean, where they were then adapted to the historical and regional peculiarities of the Spanish colonies. Paintings and prints showing statues (called “statue paintings”) were a popular genre in Spain that was brought to the Spanish viceroyalties. One example is a copy of a statue of the Virgin of Toledo (Nuestra Señora del Sagrario de Toledo), which was brought to New Spain by Franciscan missionaries who viewed Mary as their protectress while they established missions and converted Indigenous peoples. This statue of the Virgin of Toledo would be recast as the Virgin of the Macana (with the addition of the scar and a weapon) in New Mexico a century after the Pueblo Revolution.



Figure **2.3.11.5**: The Virgin of the Macana (detail), second half of the 18th century, oil on canvas (History Collections New Mexico History Museum)

In the painting of Macana in the New Mexico History Museum, the statue of Mary dominates most of the composition. Mary is identifiable as a statue because a pedestal is visible beneath her. We also see a crescent moon at the base of the statue; Mary is often shown standing on a crescent moon (as a reference to her purity and immaculate conception), but here her feet are absent. She wears a blue mantle and an elaborate dress covered in flowers. The dress flares outwards to create a pyramid shape, adding to the impression that this is a painting of a statue. We get no sense of her body underneath. Statues such as this would have been carved in wood, then painted. Additional clothes and jewelry (that could be swapped out) would have further enlivened it.



Figure **2.3.11.6**: The Virgin of the Macana, second half of the 18th century, oil on canvas (History Collections New Mexico History Museum)

In the painting, she is flanked on either side by two kneeling figures, a Franciscan friar (to our left) wearing a blue habit and an Indigenous man (to our right) wearing only a headdress, two arm bands, and a feathered loincloth. The man on the right steadies himself with a *macana*. Both men look up at Mary. The friar and the Native man are not specific individuals—they are generic types that represent the two main groups (Spaniards and Puebloans) that fought one another during the Pueblo Revolution. The kneeling Franciscan missionary also represents the Franciscan friars who had come to the northern frontier of New Spain, and who were killed during the Pueblo Revolution.



Figure **2.3.11.7**: The Revolution (detail), *The Virgin of the Macana*, second half of the 18th century, oil on canvas (History Collections New Mexico History Museum)



Figure **2.3.11.8**: Detail of Indigenous people attacking the statue. *The Virgin of the Macana*, second half of the 18th century, oil on canvas

Behind them, a chaotic battle scene plays out. On the top left, Native peoples throw stones against the Spanish army from defensive towers as the Spanish troops fire guns at them. Below, an Indigenous person raises a *macana* to strike a friar. We also see mutilated Franciscans, many of them with wounds on their heads and arrows through their hearts. The foreground of the painting presents the idea that the Pueblo people who revolted were “barbarians” who killed innocent and unarmed Franciscans.

On the right side of the painting, we see more fighting, with Spanish forces pointing guns and riding in on horses to stop the rebellious Natives. We also see Pueblo peoples attacking the statue of the Virgin of Toledo, and a Native man hanged in a tree in the upper right. Above all this violence, we see God the Father and the Holy Spirit, both framed by clouds.

Questions remain: why did the Pueblos rise against the Spaniards? And why are the Pueblo peoples shown as violent, barbaric aggressors in this painting? Whose version of events do we see here?



Figure **2.3.11.9**: Map showing the general locations of Indigenous uprisings in northern provinces of New Spain (underlying map © Google)

Native resistance

The history of the Americas under the Spanish is marked by a series of often violent encounters between Native peoples and Castilians (as the Spanish knew themselves). If we are to understand this history more fully, we must re-contextualize colonial history to include the series of Indigenous resistance movements that constantly challenged Spanish authority in the territories they administrated. The Pueblo Revolution was only one of many Native uprisings in the northern provinces of New Spain during the 17th century. These included (unsuccessful) uprisings from the Tepehuanes (1616–1620, in present day Durango), Tobosos, Conchos, and the Tarahumaras (1644–1652, in present day northern Mexico), all of whom responded to mistreatments from colonial authorities.

The groups who today identify as Pueblo peoples (in what is today the southwestern United States) shared similar religious beliefs, and a similar visual and material culture, but their languages and customs varied and historically, the Pueblo peoples did not see themselves as part of a unified ethnic group. After the Revolution of 1680, however, a shared sense of regional pride and unity developed as a strategy to keep the Spaniards away from their lands.

The Franciscans and the conversion of the Pueblo peoples

When the Spaniards founded the village of Santa Fe in 1607, the spiritual conquest of the local Pueblo peoples was entrusted to the Franciscans, a religious order that had arrived early on in New Spain, following closely the initial Spanish conquests of central Mexico. The Franciscans began to convert Indigenous peoples to Christianity, and worked throughout the Americas to eliminate what they believed were the idolatrous beliefs of the Native populations. They saw it as their duty to defend what they believed to be the true religion, Christianity. Images such as *The Virgin of the Macana*, with its depiction of Native people attacking a representation of the Virgin Mary demonstrate how Europeans justified colonization by depicting Native resistance as an attack on their faith.

Under the religious zeal of the Franciscans, Pueblo peoples and their traditions were continuously targeted. Violent colonial practices resulted in severe corporal punishment for many activities including the refusal to observe the Spanish prohibition of Native ceremonial dances. The Spaniards also carried out the near total destruction of Indigenous religious centers and the sacred objects of their worship. Official Spanish accounts of this period focus not on the injustices suffered by Indigenous people, but instead on Native assaults on Spanish authority.

The legend of the Virgin of the Macana

A text written shortly after the Pueblo Revolution helps us to better understand the iconography of paintings of the Virgin of the Macana and how it reflects the Franciscan perspective of the Pueblo Revolution. The Franciscan chronicler Friar Agustín de Vetancurt wrote about the origins of the Virgin of the Macana in his book *Teatro mexicano* (1698), and later 18th-century artists borrowed from this account to create their images of Macana. Published a few years after Spanish control was restored over the Pueblos (which occurred in 1692), Vetancurt drew information from funeral orations honoring the fallen Franciscans and historic accounts as told by Spanish soldiers including the Spanish Governor of Santa Fe during the Pueblo Revolution.

According to Vetancurt, a copy of the statue of the Virgin of Toledo originally came to New Mexico with Franciscans sometime after the conquistador Juan de Oñate y Salazar intruded into the area in 1598. They had brought the statue from Spain as protection during their mission and it was also intended to signal to local Pueblo peoples that Spanish forces were powerful because Mary watched over them.

Vetancurt's story details how a few years before the Pueblo Revolution, the Virgin of Toledo appeared to the six-year old daughter of the Spanish governor. The Virgin miraculously cured the girl of a physical ailment, and then cautioned her to warn her father and local administrators against the injustices they had committed against the Pueblo peoples for almost a century. She also requested that the Franciscans be treated better by Spanish administrators (there were ongoing tensions between political colonial administrators and the Franciscan missionaries at this time). If the abuses of either group continued, the Virgin of Toledo warned, the conquistadors would be punished. The Virgin is quoted as saying:

> ***Raise thyself child, and tell that this province will soon be destroyed for the lack of reverence that it shows my priests, and that this miracle will be the testimony of this truth; that they mend their ways, should they not want to experience punishment. [1]***

In other words, the apparition was supposed to be a wake-up call to local government authorities. Yet those cautioned ignored her call, and six years later, the Pueblo Revolution occurred.



Figure **2.3.11.10**: Detail of the Virgin's face with the wound. *The Virgin of the Macana*, second half of the 18th century, oil on canvas

According to legend, during the Revolution a Native struck the forehead of the statue of Our Lady of Toledo in an attempt to destroy it, creating a wound that was visible on the statue. From the Spanish perspective, Macana's survival was miraculous. The statue survived the Revolution largely unscathed at a time when other churches and Christian images were destroyed. In painted versions of Macana, the wound is visible on the statue to remind viewers of this miraculous moment.

This violent act transformed the statue of the Virgin of Toledo into the Virgin of the Macana; she was given the macana to hold. Here, the statue's forehead wound represents Native violence, and more importantly, Christian triumph over the "barbarian." A Native weapon transferred to the hands of the Virgin became a powerful Christian emblem that legitimized the Spanish campaign against Native people and their perceived idolatry (which the Spanish believed was aided by the Devil). In this way the Macana also undermined the legitimacy of the Pueblo Revolution despite the warning of the Virgin to the daughter of the Governor. After the Revolution, the statue was moved to Mexico City, and, after 1754 was housed in the main Franciscan convent of San Francisco where it is still venerated to this day (although the statue today is possibly not the original). [2]



Figure 2.3.11.11: The Virgin of the Macana (detail), second half of the 18th century, oil on canvas (History Collections New Mexico History Museum)

In paintings of Macana, Indigenous people attack and kill Franciscans. From the Franciscan perspective, these men died as martyrs—in other words they died for their Christian faith. Paintings, like the version in the New Mexico History Museum, show the martyr-making process that was desired by the members of the Franciscan order. Those who died through the violent acts of barbarian heathens (as they understood it) echoed Christ's death at the hands of the pagan Romans.



Figure 2.3.11.12: The Virgin of the Macana (detail), second half of the 18th century, oil on canvas (History Collections New Mexico History Museum)

The inclusion of God and the Holy Spirit at the top of the painting suggests the divine destiny of the twenty-one Franciscans who were martyred during the uprising. God holds his arms open, blessing the Virgin Mary and the martyrs in the chaotic scene below.



Figure 2.3.11.13: Attributed to José de Páez, *Destruction of the Mission of San Saba in the Province of Texas, and Martyrdom of Fray José de Santiesteban and Fray Alonso Giraldo de Terreros*, ca. 1758–1765, oil on canvas, 82.5 x 115 in (Museo Nacional de Arte, Mexico City)

Paintings of the Virgin of the Macana relate to another genre of images that were popular in the later viceregal era: Franciscan martyr portraits, such as one attributed to José de Páez displaying the friars José de Santiesteban and Alonso Giraldo de Terreros who were killed at the Mission San Saba in Texas. These types of portraits typically depict the individuals killed, along with smaller scenes showing their violent death at the hands of Indigenous peoples. Inscriptions detail the events of the martyrdom and the biography of the martyr. Like paintings of Macana, martyr portraits foregrounded missionaries dying as a result of Native violence and visually eliminated Indigenous struggles under Spanish subjugation. Images showing Franciscan martyr narratives were common in monastic spaces because they were thought to inspire future missionaries who might die on the northern frontiers of New Spain.

Images of Macana were intended for a Franciscan audience. They functioned as a powerful testament to the Franciscan mission to convert Native peoples at a time when Spanish administrators felt the religious order was failing. This helps to explain why an event from the late 17th century was an important subject in the later 18th century, and why we do not have a larger number of paintings (as we do for other miraculous Marian apparitions such as the Virgin of Guadalupe). The legend of Macana, as portrayed here, served a specific Franciscan agenda.

“Devout Indians” and “Barbarians”

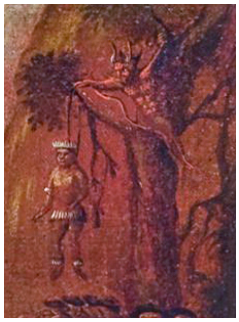


Figure 2.3.11.14: Detail of hanged man and the Devil. *The Virgin of the Macana*, second half of the 18th century, oil on canvas

In paintings of the Virgin of the Macana, we see two types of Indigenous people: the violent barbarians who kill the Franciscan friars and pious Indigenous figures who kneel before the Virgin Mary, reformed of their violent habits. In Vetancurt’s book, he

claims the Devil advised Pueblo peoples to engage in the violent insurrection. In other scenes, violent "barbarians," driven by un-Godly motives, attack the Franciscans as well as the Marian statue. In their attacks, they wield the macana, a weapon, as previously noted, that wasn't used by the Pueblo peoples. This was a means to underscore the trope of the barbarian—historical accuracy wasn't important. The devil himself actually makes an appearance in the painting, holding the rope by which the Native man is hanged (even as the Devil is understood to have encouraged the revolt). The hanged man is represented as the man who struck the statue of the Virgin in the scene directly below this one.



Figure **2.3.11.15**: Miguel Cabrera, *Pintura de castas, 16. Indios gentiles*, 1763 (Museo de America, Madrid)

In Colonial Spanish American art, the "barbarian" was commonly represented half-naked, wandering through rural settings, and in need of spiritual intervention. From early 16th-century **maps** and **prints** of the Americas showing bands of naked cannibals to 18th-century ***casta*** paintings (such as a panel by Miguel Cabrera showing *indios genitles*) depicting nomadic tribes at the edges of the empire, the iconography of the uncivilized "barbarian" remained popular throughout colonial visual culture (as well as in Europe).



Figure **2.3.11.16**: Attributed to José de Páez, *Destruction of the Mission of San Saba in the Province of Texas, and Martyrdom of Fray José de Santiesteban and Fray Alonso Giraldo de Terreros*, ca. 1758–1765

One aspect of these paintings did change over time. The locations in which Natives were represented. In the early 1500s, images of Indigenous people were located in places like Central Mexico where the Spaniards had defeated the powerful **Mexica Empire.** Representations of "barbarians" were enlivened with careful renderings of plants, natural topographic features, and animals found in this region. After the success of the Pueblo Revolution, artists began to show Natives on the edges of the Spanish empire—in Texas, New Mexico, and California (such can be seen in José de Páez's martyr portraits of friars José de Santiesteban and Alonso Giraldo de Terreros in Texas). Such paintings were used as visual evidence of the need for tighter colonial administration of these areas.

In *The Virgin of the Macana*, the miraculous intervention of the Virgin Mary transforms the uncivilized, violent Native into one who is subdued and converted to Christianity, here symbolized by the Native men kneeling beside her in the foreground. The "devout Indian" became a common trope throughout the 300 years of Spanish control in the Americas and was intended to show

the successful conversion of Native peoples. Showing Native peoples before and after Christian conversion emphasizes the power of the Virgin's intervention during the Pueblo Revolution, and by extension, the success of the Franciscan mission system in New Mexico.

Revolutionary Images

Colonial paintings of the Virgin of the Macana are important because they reveal the process in which Franciscans obscured Indigenous discontent by rendering Native groups as violent savages with no justification for their resistance. Vetancurt's account and the later images of the Virgin of the Macana focus on Pueblo violence and idolatry, and reference the tense political environment in late 17th-century New Mexico. The representation of Native resistance, spiritual conquest, and the triumph of Catholic dogma underline the extraordinary effort undertaken to convert Native Peoples. However, re-contextualizing devotional paintings such as *The Virgin of the Macana* in the New Mexico History Museum to include a less biased history of the Pueblo Revolution makes it possible to visualize alternatives readings of the violence against Native people, as well as their historic resistance.

Notes:

[1] Augustín de Vetancurt, *Teatro mexicano: descripción breve de los sucesos ejemplares de la Nueva-España en el Nuevo Mundo Occidental de las Indias* (Madrid: J. Porrúa Turanzas, 1960), 103.

[2] Antonio García Cubas, *El libro de mis recuerdos: narraciones históricas, anecdóticas y de costumbres mexicanas anteriores al actual estado social, ilustradas con más de trescientos fotograbados* (Mexico City: Imprenta De Arturo Garcia Cubas, 1904), p. 64.

Additional resources

Ilona Katzew,"The Virgin of the Macana: Emblem of a Franciscan Predicament in New Spain," *Colonial Latin American Review* 12, no. 2 (2003): pp. 169–198

Luisa Elena Alcala, "The Images of the Devout Indian: The Codification of a Colonial Idea," *Contested Visions in the Spanish Colonial World*, ed. Ilona Katzew (Los Angeles: LACMA, 2011)

Images of the Natives in the Art of New Spain, 16th to 18th centuries (Mexico City: Banamex, 2005)

Learn about Columbus' Landing and Erasing Native Resistance with the project Unsettling Journeys

Emmanuel Ortega, "Hagiographical Misery and the Liminal Witness: Novohispanic Franciscan Martyr Portraits and the Politics of Imperial Expansion," in *Visualizing Sensuous Suffering and Affective Pain in Early Modern Europe and the Spanish Americas*, ed. Lauren G. Kilroy-Ewbank and Heather Graham (Leiden: Brill, 2018), pp. 234–65.

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2.3.12: Mission San Antonio de Valero and the Alamo

by DR. LAUREN KILROY-EWBANK

Page ID
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Figure **2.3.12.1**: The Alamo, formerly part of Mission San Antonio de Valero, San Antonio, Texas (photo: Daniel Schwen, CC BY-SA 4.0)

Before the Alamo

Few places in the U.S. conjure as many images and legends about heroism and nationhood as the Alamo in San Antonio, Texas. The Alamo is an icon of American identity—like Gettysburg or Pearl Harbor—and as with these equally famous historic sites, our perception of the Alamo is malleable, as are the stories it purports to tell.

The site is firmly rooted in the popular imagination, having been the subject of countless works of literature, film, prints, paintings, cartoons, postcards, and even folklore. Long before it became an emblem of U.S. history though, the Alamo had been a Spanish mission that eventually became a ruin that was “repaired, rebuilt, and redefined.” [1] Yet a single event—the battle of 1836—overshadows the Alamo’s long and complex past. Today, visitors pay reverence to the Texians who died there while fighting the Mexican General Santa Ana—not to the holy Catholic saints who once filled the building’s niches nor to the Tejanos (Mexican settlers from Texas) who also died at the Battle of the Alamo. The current representation of the Alamo as the site of patriotic heroism and brave sacrifice eclipses Spain’s earlier colonial presence and the history of the site’s ruination, reconstruction, and reframing.



Figure **2.3.12.2**: Map of the Viceroyalty of New Spain c. 1800, with Mexico City and San Antonio highlighted with red boxes

Mission San Antonio de Valero

Franciscan missionaries began to establish missions in what is today Texas beginning in the seventeenth century because this area was on the *camino real* (or royal road) that originated in the viceroyalty of New Spain's capital, Mexico City. Forty missions originally dotted the Texan landscape, but only 9 survive today. None is more well-known than Mission San Antonio de Valero (which would later become the Alamo), established in 1718 on the west bank of the San Antonio River. Like the initial missionary centers constructed after the waves of conquest after 1521 in central Mexico, the San Antonio de Valero's purpose was to convert local Indigenous people, including the Payayes, Ypanis, Xaranames, Zanas, and others. Soon after its establishment, the mission was moved across the river (to the east bank) and construction began in 1744 on a church (thought to be made of adobe) that would collapse. Construction eventually began on the stone and mortar structure that partially remains today. Adobe was a more common building material in this area, so the decision to use stone and mortar possibly associated the building with more Europeanized building practices (such as Spanish imperial buildings constructed in other parts of New Spain) and a clear deviation from local building types.



Figure **2.3.12.3**: Lower half of the entry on the façade, Alamo/Mission San Antonio de Valero (photo: Noconatom, CC BY-SA 4.0)

An account in 1772 describes the building under construction as having a transept and cross-vaulted roof, complete with a dome. This building was never completed though. Friar Sáenz, who wrote the 1772 account, describes the façade as having scalloped-shell niches with sculptures of saints Dominic and Francis in them, each framed by solomonic (twisting) columns. Dominic and Francis are patron saints of the Franciscan and Dominican orders respectively—and were representatives of broader missionary efforts of the Spanish Crown. He notes the beauty of the façade and its carvings too. Decorative relief carvings also animated the rounded arch entryway on the façade.



Figure **2.3.12.4**: Detail of the façade of the Alamo/Mission San Antonio de Valero (photo: David R. Tribble, CC BY-SA 3.0)

On the second level, St. Clare of Assisi and St. Margaret of Cortona (both female Franciscans) were to be carved and inserted into the niches (although descriptions cast doubt as to whether they ever were installed). A sculpture of the Virgin of the Immaculate Conception was intended for the central niche (but was never installed). The façade was originally flanked by two towers that,

along with the barrel vault and the dome, collapsed circa 1762. Like most missions, the church was connected to a larger complex with a cloister, atrium, and more—today, only part of the church remains. The famous façade we know today was actually a chapel.

The Spanish conversion efforts involved in the missionary project in Texas, as elsewhere, involved dislocating, transforming, and converting local Indigenous communities, and the iconography of the façade may have played a role in this with its inclusion of saints associated with the evangelizing efforts of the Spanish Crown and religious orders.



Figure **2.3.12.5**: An 18th-century retablo from New Spain; it is possible that the retablos that no longer exist looked something like this (albeit probably smaller). Main altar inside Santa Prisca y San Sebastián, gilded wood, plaster, Taxco, Guerrero, Mexico (photo: Javier Castañón, CC BY-NC-ND 2.0)

Elaborate *retablos* (or altarpieces) once stood inside the mission as well. Unfortunately, they no longer remain and the sculptures once adorning them do not either (or were dispersed elsewhere without records that could tell us where they are now). Written inventories do list the images that once appeared on them. On the main altar, one apparently could have seen the Virgin of Sorrows, Saint Francis, Christ Crucified, John the Evangelist, Saint Clare, and Saint Joseph (among others). The wooden altarpiece was gilded, as was in style at the time, and retablos in churches like Santa Prisca and San Sebastián in Taxco, Mexico give us a sense of what this may have looked like.



Figure **2.3.12.6**: Mission San José y San Miguel de Aguayo, founded 1720; restored in the 1930s (photo: Shiva Shenoy, CC BY 2.0)

The remains of the façade point to the classicizing forms employed by the architects of the church, including the rounded arch of the doorway flanked by niches. It is an adaptation of a Roman triumphal arch motif, which had become popular again during the Renaissance. In essence, it looks similar to a Roman **triumphal arch** in its design, and also had associations with power and conquest. It is interesting to consider this choice and its interpretation today. While such classical language was found at other missions, this was not the *en vogue* architectural language found in New Spain's bigger and older cities, or even at other Texas missions (where ultrabaroque designs were preferred). It is possible that this more restrained, classicizing ornament was intended to call to mind visions of the early Church in its simplicity as well as its formation within the boundaries of the Roman Empire. With the initial waves of colonization, friars often modeled themselves and their built environment on the early church because they perceived it as purer and therefore more ideal.

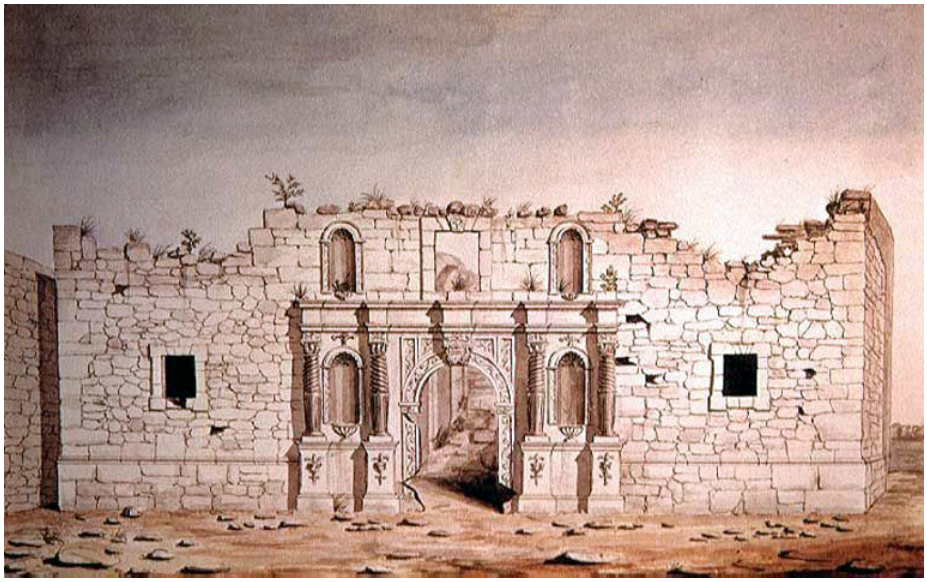


Figure **2.3.12.7**: Edward Everett, *View of the Alamo church*, 1847 (Amon Carter Museum, Fort Worth)

Abandonment and transformation: The mission becomes the Alamo

Mission San Antonio de Valero was abandoned in 1793 when it was secularized—the first of the Texas missions where this occurred. Its altars were removed in 1824 and this is when many of its statues were relocated or lost. Most of the mission's

structures have also been lost. As noted earlier, the Alamo's iconic façade that today graces tourist trinkets and postcards was actually the chapel attached to the larger mission church.

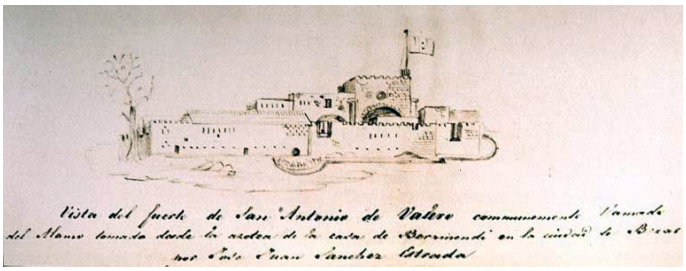


Figure 2.3.12.8: José Juan Sánchez Navarro, earliest known view of the Alamo, ca. 1835–36 (Western Americana Collection, Beinecke Library, Yale University)

The mission served as barracks for the Alamo Company (a military unit that came from Alamo de Parras, a town on the other side of the Rio Grande river, and which gave its name to the building we see today) and for the Mexican army until 1835, when Texians temporarily took the Alamo. It was at this moment that the famous battle involving the Mexican General Santa Ana occurred, in which Mexican troops defeated the Texians who sought independence from Mexico. The Mexican victory was brief; shortly thereafter Mexico would lose the war and Texas in the Mexican-American War. An early view of the Alamo by José Juan Sánchez Navarro shows how the artist envisioned the space as a fortified space, with turrets and tall, thick walls. It does not look like this any longer (if it ever really did).

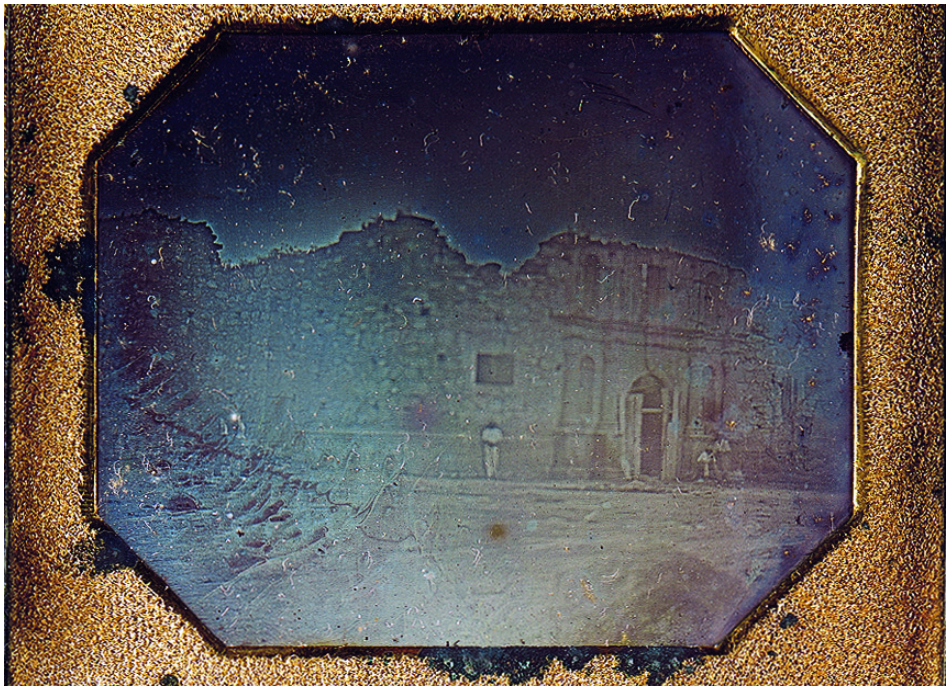


Figure 2.3.12.9: Earliest known photograph taken in Texas, 1849 daguerrotype, photographer unknown (Center for American History, University of Texas at Austin)

Throughout the nineteenth century, Mission San Antonio de Valero—now known as the Alamo—suffered neglect and vandalism. After the battle of the Alamo in 1836, most of what remained of the façade's sculptures were gone, and the building was badly damaged, much of it rubble. After Texas was annexed by the U.S. in 1845, the Alamo's surviving structure was eventually given a roof (the gable was added in 1850), and it functioned as a storage depot and commissary. A daguerrotype from 1849 shows the damage to the chapel's façade before the gable was added. After the Catholic Church sold the building in 1883, there were plans to transform it into a hotel.

It was not yet the shrine it would come to be in the following century.



Figure **2.3.12.10**: Now with the façade restored and the addition of the gable. Alamo buildings in use as Army supply depot, c. 1850–1870 (The San Antonio Light Collection, UT Institute of Texan Cultures)

Restoring the Alamo

Restoration of the Alamo started at the end of the nineteenth century when the Daughters of the Republic of Texas (DRT) took over the care of the building (after controversial discussions regarding responsibility for its caretaking). What people see today is the result of restorations that began in 1915.

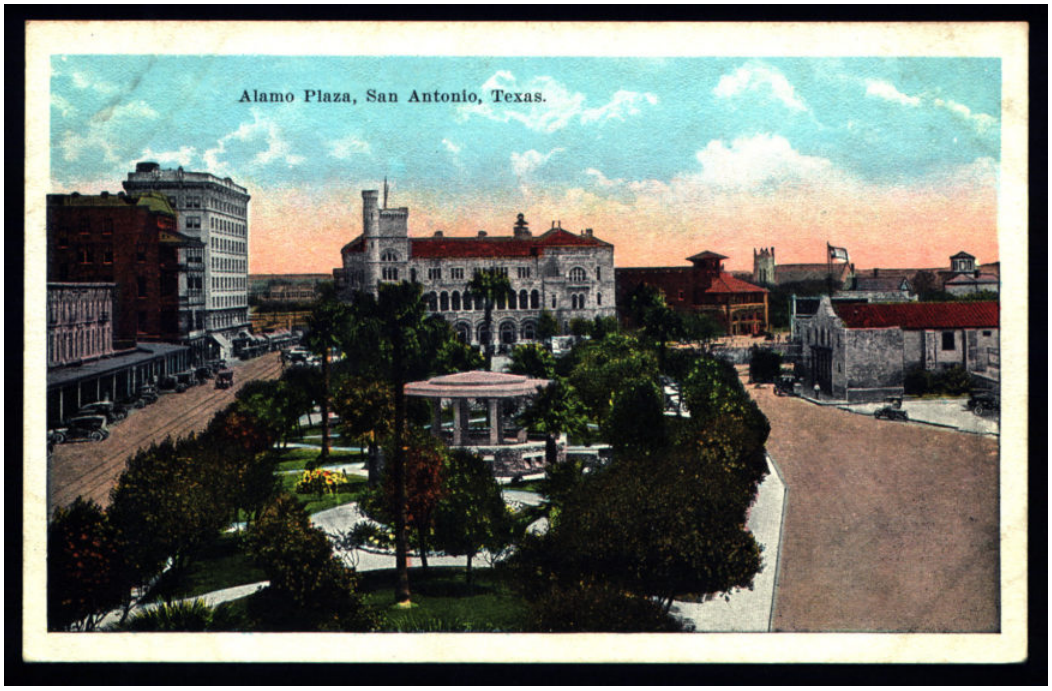


Figure **2.3.12.11**: The Alamo Plaza souvenir postcard, c. 1900 (Collection of Randell Tarín)



Figure **2.3.12.12**: Alamo gift shop and Centennial Museum

Much of what had been added after 1836 was removed, once again altering the site's appearance and how people understood it. Newly created buildings would also participate in memorializing and historicizing the Alamo. The gift shop was built to look as if it were constructed centuries earlier, but in reality was made in 1937 as a Centennial Museum to honor the hundredth anniversary of Texas independence. It displayed artifacts until the DRT transformed it into a store to sell souvenirs. The Arcade was built in the 1930s as a WPA project to beautify the site and help people find work during the Great Depression. This simulated historical "authenticity" aids in the performance of the primary narrative—the battle of 1836—not the Spanish mission.

Even the way that visitors engage with the space has dramatically changed, attesting to the importance of understanding both the site's physical location and historical context. Where once a large mission structure stood, visitors now only see a remnant that occupies only one-third the original footprint. The Alamo sits in the middle of downtown San Antonio, below towering skyscrapers. The juxtaposition is jarring, although you'd be hard pressed to find commercial images that show the building in its present urban context.

The cultural memories of the mission/the Alamo

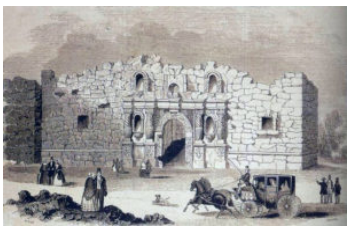


Figure 2.3.12.13: Picture depicting he Alamo as a stylish promenade ground. Gleason's Pictorial Drawing-Room Companion, 1854 (DRT Library at the Alamo, San Antonio, TX)

Drawings, prints, paintings, and photographs have participated in creating this cultural memory of the Alamo. Drawings and prints in the mid-nineteenth century use the ruined space as a backdrop for elites in their fine clothing and carriages, in line with other artistic and literary movements that glorified the ruin. History paintings depict the Battle of the Alamo, with the chapel serving as its own character within the story instead of a mere backdrop.

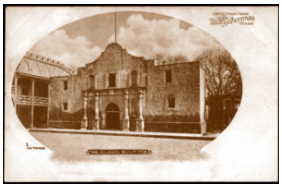


Figure 2.3.12.14: The Alamo, souvenir postcard, c. 1900 (Collection of Randell Tarín)

Early twentieth-century postcards often isolate the chapel, with little sense of the city around it gone. The longer history of the space as a mission is often obscured too. In the later twentieth and now in the twenty-first century, Latinx (including Chicanx) artists offer a new lens through which to remember the Alamo, with recent exhibitions such as "The Other Side of the Alamo: Art

Against the Myth" in 2018. From César Martínez's black and white photographs to Daniela Riojas's digital photographic images, these artists draw attention to the ways this cultural icon signifies painful injustices and racial disparities. They are pushing back against the myth.



Figure **2.3.12.15**: Daniela Riojas, "We Built It, We Will Dismantle It," 2018, photograph, 20 x 16 inches

The complicated history of this place, a mission, ruin, battleground, emblem of patriotism, symbol of racial disparity, and tourist destination, has added yet one more layer to its story: in 2015, the Alamo became a **UNESCO World Heritage Site** as part of the San Antonio missions.

Notes:

[1] Donald Langmead, *Icons of American Architecture: From the Alamo to the World Trade Center* (Greenwood Press, 2009), p. 3

Additional resources

Holly Beachley Brear, *Inherit the Alamo: Myth and Ritual at an American Shrine* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2010)

James Early, *Presidio, mission, and pueblo: Spanish architecture and urbanism in the United States* (Dallas: Southern Methodist University Press, 2004)

Richard R. Flores, *Remembering the Alamo: Memory, Modernity, and the Master Symbol* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2002)

Gloria Fraser Giffords, *Sanctuaries of earth, stone, and light: the churches of northern New Spain, 1530–1821* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2007)

Todd Hansen, , ed. *The Alamo Reader: A Study in History* (Mechanicsburg, PA: Stackpole Books, 2003)

Peña, Daniel. "Remember the Alamo (Differently)," *Texas Observer* (22 Aug 2017)

Jacinto Quirarte, *The Art and Architecture of the Texas Missions* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2002)

Ramos, Raul. "The Alamo is a rupture," *Guernica*, 19 Feb 2019

Susan Prendergast Schoelwer, *Alamo Images: Changing Perceptions of a Texas Experience* (Dallas: DeGolyer Library, 1985)

Susan Prendergast Schoelwer, "The Artist's Alamo: A Reappraisal of Pictorial Evidence, 1836–1850," *Southwestern Historical Quarterly, vol.* 91 (April 1988)

Alexandra Minna Stern, "On the Road with Chicana/o History: From Aztlan to the Alamo and Back," *Pacific Historical Review* 82, no. 4 (2013), pp. 581–587

Tomas Ybarra-Frausto, "Imagining a more expansive narrative of American Art." *American Art* 19, no. 3 (Fall 2015), pp. 9–15

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2.3.13: Nativity group, from Guatemala

by **DR. LAUREN KILROY-EWBANK**

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Figure **2.3.13.1**: *Nativity*, 18th century, Guatemala, polychromed wood, gilt silver, glass, Jesus 24.4 cm, Angel 45.7 cm, Mary 50.8 cm, Joseph 52.7 cm (The Metropolitan Museum of Art; photo: Steven Zucker, CC BY-NC-SA 2.0)

Mary and Joseph kneel before the Christ Child, who rests on his back with his legs and arms tucked up—as newborns are prone to do. Both parents look down reverently at the child. An elaborate, delicate golden halo encircles Mary's head, whereas Joseph has a golden crown resting on his. Hovering above the family is the archangel Gabriel, his wings and arms outstretched in a gesture of presentation and protection, as if to call attention to the birth of the son of God and to signal his defense of him.



Figure **2.3.13.2**: The Christ Child in the *Nativity*, 18th century, Guatemala, polychromed wood, gilt silver, glass, 24.4 cm (The Metropolitan Museum of Art; photo: Steven Zucker, CC BY-NC-SA 2.0)



Figure **2.3.13.3**: Map of the Kingdom of Guatemala in New Spain (underlying map © Google)

These four delicately carved, painted, and gilded figures form the Nativity, the occasion of the birth of Jesus Christ. Currently unknown artists produced them in 18th-century Guatemala, which at this time was part of the **Spanish viceroyalty of New Spain** after these Maya lands had been invaded and waves of conquests had begun in 1524. The country of Guatemala today was then part of the Audiencia of Guatemala, which encompassed Chiapas in Mexico south-east to Costa Rica.

During the viceregal period (c. 1525–1821), Guatemala would become renowned for its silver objects and polychromed wooden sculptures. In the 18th century in particular, sculptures from this region were dispersed across all of the **Spanish viceroyalties**, especially smaller sculptures of the Nativity. Small-scale sculptures like this grouping were often modeled on larger-scale sets made for altarpieces.

Sculptures and patrons in colonial Guatemala

This Nativity group was likely intended for private devotion given the intimate scale of the sculptures. The fineness and quality of the carving, *estofado* (textile decoration, described more below), and the gilt silver (gold-painted sliver) adornments suggests that someone of elite status owned them for their private domestic chapel (called an oratory). It is also possible that they belonged to nuns in a convent or a confraternity because Guatemalan sculptures of this subject and scale have been associated with both types of groups who were also active patrons of art.



Figure **2.3.13.4**: *Nativity*, 18th century, Guatemala, polychromed wood, gilt silver, glass, Jesus 24.4 cm, Mary 50.8 cm, Joseph 52.7 cm (The Metropolitan Museum of Art; photo: Steven Zucker, CC BY-NC-SA 2.0)ce)

A dynamic grouping

In this Nativity group we can see how the artist used the textiles to add dynamism and volume to each figure, and the scene as a whole. Mary and Joseph are draped with extra garments that swoop around them, helping to frame their bodies and adding to their three-dimensional physicality. Gabriel's garments flutter outwards at the bottom and, together with the long textile around his neck, give the impression of motion to match the position of his arms and legs. Even the Christ Child, who wears only swaddling clothes, gives the impression of movement with his posture.



Figure **2.3.13.5**: The Archangel Gabriel, from the *Nativity*, 18th century, Guatemala, polychromed wood, gilt silver, glass, Angel 45.7 cm (The Metropolitan Museum of Art; photo: Steven Zucker, CC BY-NC-SA 2.0)

The sense of movement and the complexity of the figures (in their composition as much as their style) is accentuated further by the gilt silver additions (such as the crown, staff, and halo) that rise into the air and the shimmering quality of the figures. The gold

reflects light, and even the flesh of the figures—especially Jesus—has a pearlescent sheen. Imagine flickering candlelight reflecting across the surfaces of these sculptures.



Figure **2.3.13.6**: Saint Joseph, from the *Nativity*, 18th century, Guatemala, polychromed wood, gilt silver, glass, Joseph 52.7 cm (The Metropolitan Museum of Art; photo: Steven Zucker, CC BY-NC-SA 2.0)

The importance of Joseph

The artist shows the Holy Family as many other artists of the day did, showing Mary as an ideal, beautiful, modest woman, and Joseph as a young, handsome, and virile man. Prior to the 16th century in Europe, Joseph was often shown as elderly, and Josephine devotion was not really a priority. But in the 16th century his image transformed, with artists depicting him youthfully, as in this Nativity group. Devotion to Joseph increased, and by the seventeenth century he occupied a premier place in Spain and its viceroyalties. There are several reasons for this change, among them the suggestion by the post-Tridentine art theorist Joannes Molanus that he had to be shown this way. [1] Molanus argued that depicting Joseph young, virile, and strong made sense because he would not have been able to complete the journey to Egypt, to protect his wife and child, and to maintain his chastity if he were too elderly. Joseph became increasingly associated with the family, hard work, and conversion. In fact, he would become the patron saint of New Spain. Scholars often attribute Joseph's elevation to the Catholic Reformation, the response to the Protestant Reformation—a time in which saints became more popular, and the Catholic Church stressed the sanctity of marriage especially and the importance of the family unit. Saints were supposed to offer models for Christians to follow; Joseph as the protective, devoted father made for what Catholics at the time felt was a strong male model.

Joseph's visage is even modeled on Christ, with dark hair and beard, which—like other sculptures and paintings of the time—helped to cement the relationship between father and son. Joseph, as Christ's foster father, was not related by blood to the son of God, but the visual alignment of these figures helped to communicate the idea that Joseph and Jesus were bonded, and that Joseph was a nurturing father.



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Figure **2.3.13.7**: The top of Joseph's flowering staff, from the *Nativity*, 18th century, Guatemala, polychromed wood, gilt silver, glass (The Metropolitan Museum of Art; photo: Steven Zucker, CC BY-NC-SA 2.0)

Another way in which artists helped to encode the idea that Joseph was young and virile was to show him accompanied by a flowering staff—such as we see here in gold. The delicate staff ends in flowers, each with carefully articulated petals, and with a dove alighting on top. The story of Joseph's staff comes from the Gospel of Matthew and the non-biblical text called the Protoevangelion of James, both of which recount that Joseph's staff blossomed with flowers when he was chosen among widowers by God in the Temple to wed Mary.



Figure **2.3.13.8**: Joseph's crown, from the *Nativity*, 18th century, Guatemala, polychromed wood, gilt silver, glass (The Metropolitan Museum of Art; photo: Steven Zucker, CC BY-NC-SA 2.0)

Joseph's golden crown is also important, and alludes to his coronation in heaven after his death. Before the 16th century, Joseph was rarely depicted wearing a crown. Like the tendency to display him young in the 16th century, the decision to show him crowned happened at the same time, as he became one of the most popular saints of the Counter Reformation period. Joseph's death is not discussed in the Gospels, and this moment in his life was elaborated on by Counter-Reformation authors who felt liberty to embellish his life story. As they recounted, after his death, Joseph was resurrected and eventually crowned by Jesus in heaven, so the crown symbolizes the saint's exceptional role.



Figure **2.3.13.9**: The Christ Child, from the *Nativity*, 18th century, Guatemala, polychromed wood, gilt silver, glass, Jesus 24.4 cm (The Metropolitan Museum of Art; photo: Steven Zucker, CC BY-NC-SA 2.0)

Reality effects and luxury materials

Polychromed, or painted, wooden sculpture was common on the Iberian Peninsula (Spain and Portugal), and the tradition came to the Americas with Spanish colonization. Creating a sculpture like the Nativity was a collaborative process, involving a sculptor, painter, and gilder. A sculptor would carve the wood to make the figures, but a painter (sometimes more than one) would then bring the figures further to life by painting the flesh tones. This process of enlivening is called *encarnación*, or "incarnation," the idea that adding the flesh tones brought the figure to life. Silver or gold leaf would be applied by yet another specialist, known as a gilder.



Figure **2.3.13.10**: The Archangel Gabriel, from the *Nativity*, 18th century, Guatemala, polychromed wood, gilt silver, glass,Angel 45.7 cm (The Metropolitan Museum of Art; photo: Steven Zucker, CC BY-NC-SA 2.0)

Working in wood allowed the sculptor to create naturalistic details, some of which are subtle. Wood is more supple than a material like marble, and easier to work with than bronze. In the Nativity group, we can see the sculptor's skill at woodworking to create reality effects. Christ's body looks like a baby's, with its rolls and chubby arms. Joseph's right hand has visible veins snaking their

way under his skin. The fingers of Mary and Joseph each have carefully delineated fingernails. All of these details are further enlivened by the paint. Notice the painter has even added pink tones to the figures' cheeks and eyelids—and to Gabriel's knees, as if blood courses through their veins. Was the angel possibly kneeling moments ago before fluttering above?



Figure **2.3.13.11**: Detail of Mary, from the *Nativity*, 18th century, Guatemala, polychromed wood, gilt silver, glass, Mary 50.8 cm (The Metropolitan Museum of Art; photo: Steven Zucker, CC BY-NC-SA 2.0)

Polychromed wooden sculptures throughout the Iberian and Ibero-American world were often made more life-like with the addition of other materials—glass eyes, eyelashes, real hair, teeth, and additional elements that might be needed for a specific subject. The goal was to develop a more naturalistic appearance for the holy figures to aid Christian devotees in their worship. In this Nativity group, the *estofado* designs replicate silks and brocades. The sculptures all have glass eyes and eyelashes. Mary's halo and Joseph's crown are made of gilt silver—their expense not only highlighting the holy couple's divine status, but also signifying the wealth and status of the patron. Silver and gold embellishments commonly adorned sculptures at this time.



Figure **2.3.13.12**: Detail of the *estofado* on Mary, from the *Nativity*, 18th century, Guatemala, polychromed wood, gilt silver, glass (The Metropolitan Museum of Art; photo: Steven Zucker, CC BY-NC-SA 2.0)

Estofado

Colonial Guatemalan sculptors are renowned for their expertise using the technique known as *estofado* (also called *sgraffito)*. The word comes from *estofa*, meaning textile or stuff. On sculpture, it is the replication of expensive fabrics (like silk or brocade), such as we see on Mary, Joseph, and Gabriel, and which was intended to add a luxurious quality to sculptures.

How was it made? First, thin gold leaf was applied to the wood, then layers of paint added over it. Once ready, the artist would scratch away designs on the surface to reveal the gold underneath. Even if nothing was scratched away, the gold added a luminous shimmer to the paint—if the layer was thin enough, making the surface more reflective. Most common among the designs scratched to reveal the gold were flowers, foliate imagery, other elaborate designs, and even rhomboid shapes—many of which we see on the Nativity group figures.

The carving, painting, gilding, and *estofado* all express the careful, highly skilled work of sculptors, painters, and gilders to make even small sculptures like these four.

Worldly renown

The careful attention to details and the naturalistic modeling of the bodies all point to the expertise of sculptors, painters, and gilders working in colonial Guatemala. Even on the small-scale of these Nativity figures, we can still see why Guatemala was renowned in the viceroyalties for its sculpture.

Notes:

[1] Molanus's ideas were first published in *De Picturis et Imaginibus Sacris, Liber unus, tractans de vitandis circa eas abusibus ac de earundem signijicationibus* (Louvain, I 570). Editions thereafter were titled *De Historia Sanctarum Imaginum et Picturarum.* See *De Historia SS. Imaginum, pp. 269–73.*

Additional resources:

See these sculptures on The Met's website: **Angel**, **Mary**, **Joseph**, and **Jesus**

María Concepción García Saiz, "La escultura en Guatemala," in *El país del Quetzal: Guatemala maya e hispana* (Madrid: Sociedad Estatal para la Acción Cultural Exterior, 2002)

The Grandeur of Viceregal Mexico: Treasures from the Museo Franz Mayer/ La grandeza del México virreinal: tesoros del Museo Franz Mayer (Houston. Texas and Mexico City: The Museum of Fine Arts, Houston and Museo Franz Mayer, 2002)

Tesoros, Treasures, Tesouros, the Arts in Latin America, 1492–1820, exhibition catalogue (Philadelphia: Philadelphia Museum of Art, 2006)

Learn about a Calvary group from Guatemala on Vistas

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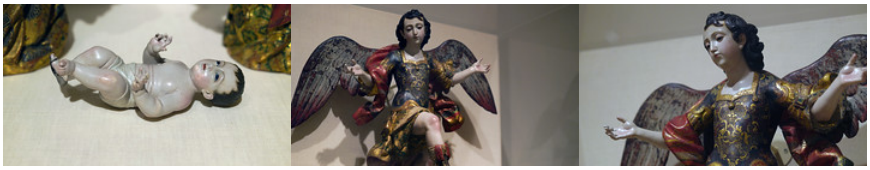
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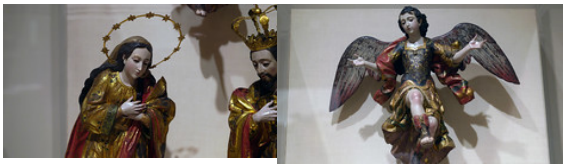
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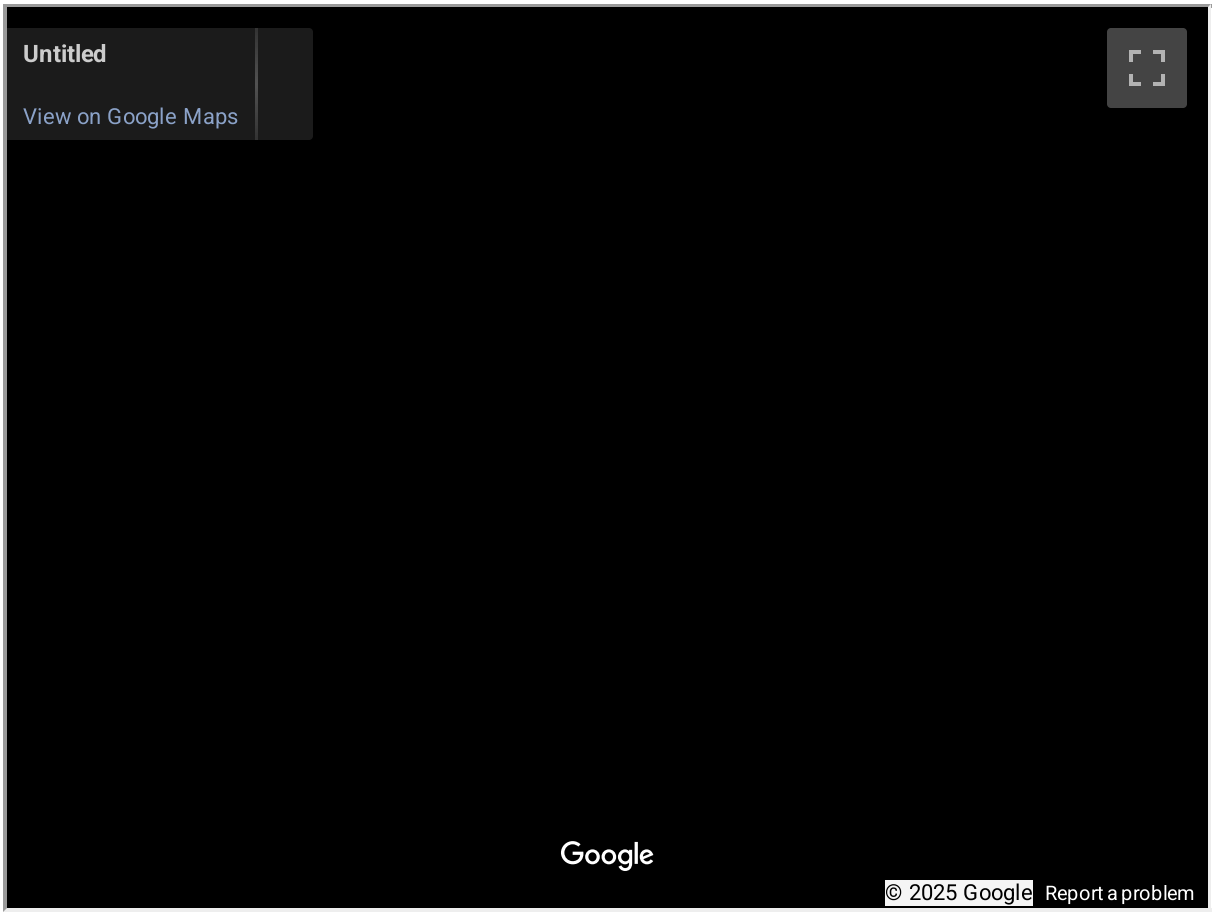
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2.3.14: Jerónimo de Balbás, Altar of the Kings (Altar de los Reyes)

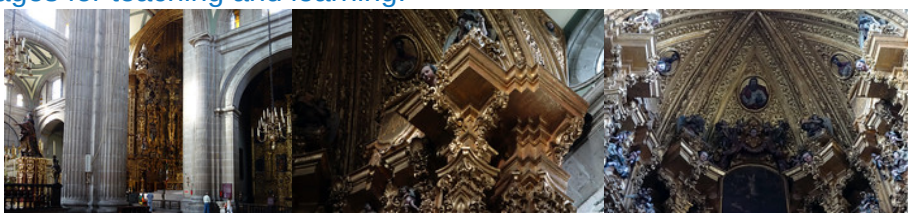
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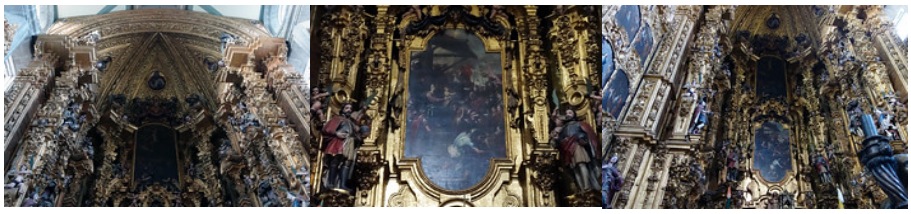
Video **2.3.14.1**: Jerónimo de Balbás, *Altar of the Kings (Altar de los Reyes)*, 1718-37, Metropolitan Cathedral of the Assumption of the Most Blessed Virgin Mary (Mexico City)



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- **11.3: North America c. 1500 - 1900 (I)** by Smarthistory is licensed CC BY-NC-SA 4.0.

2.3.15: Church of Santa Prisca and San Sebastian, Taxco, Mexico

by DR. LAUREN KILROY-EWBANK

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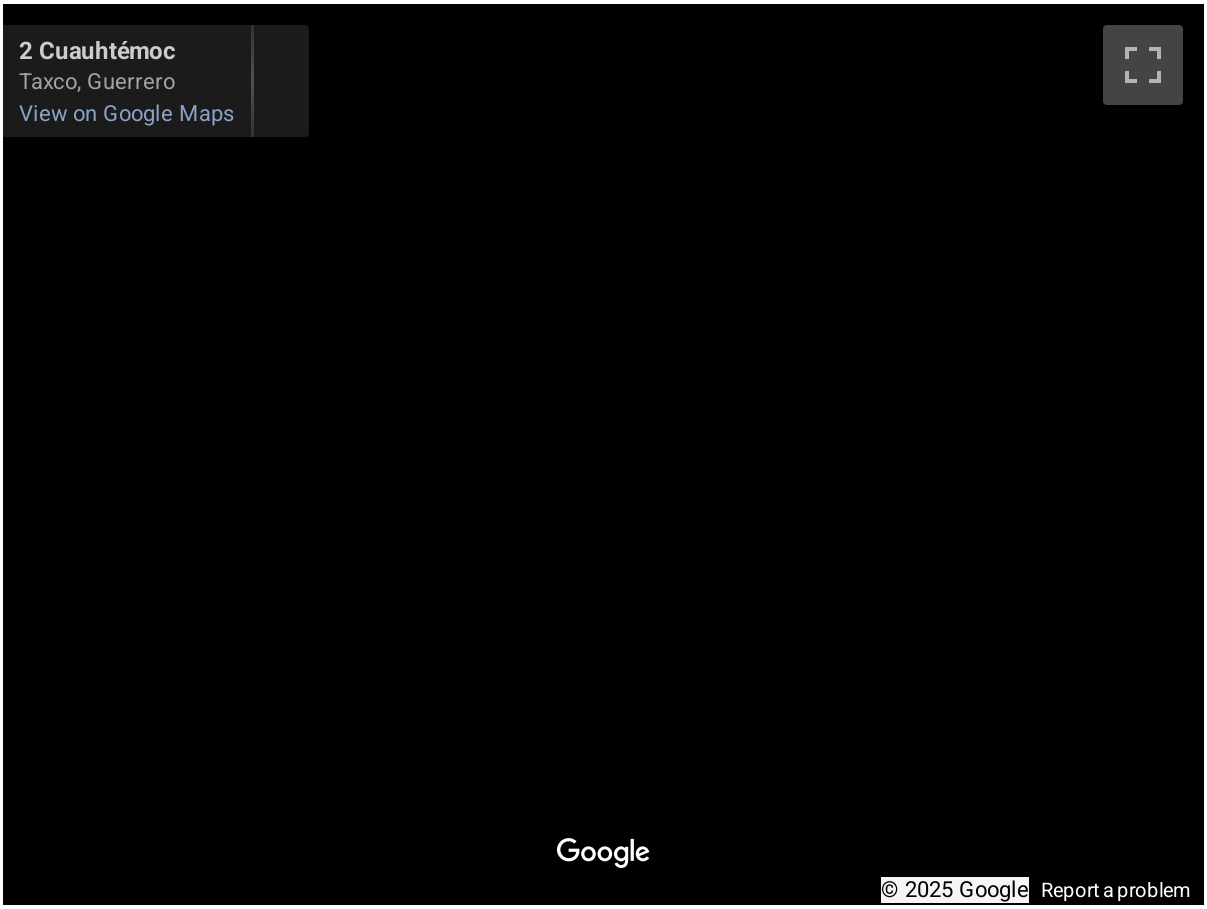


Figure **2.3.15.1**: Church of Santa Prisca y San Sebastián, 1751–58, Taxco, Guerrero, Mexico (photo: Luidger, CC BY-SA 3.0)



Figure **2.3.15.2**: Map of New Spain (underlying map © Google)

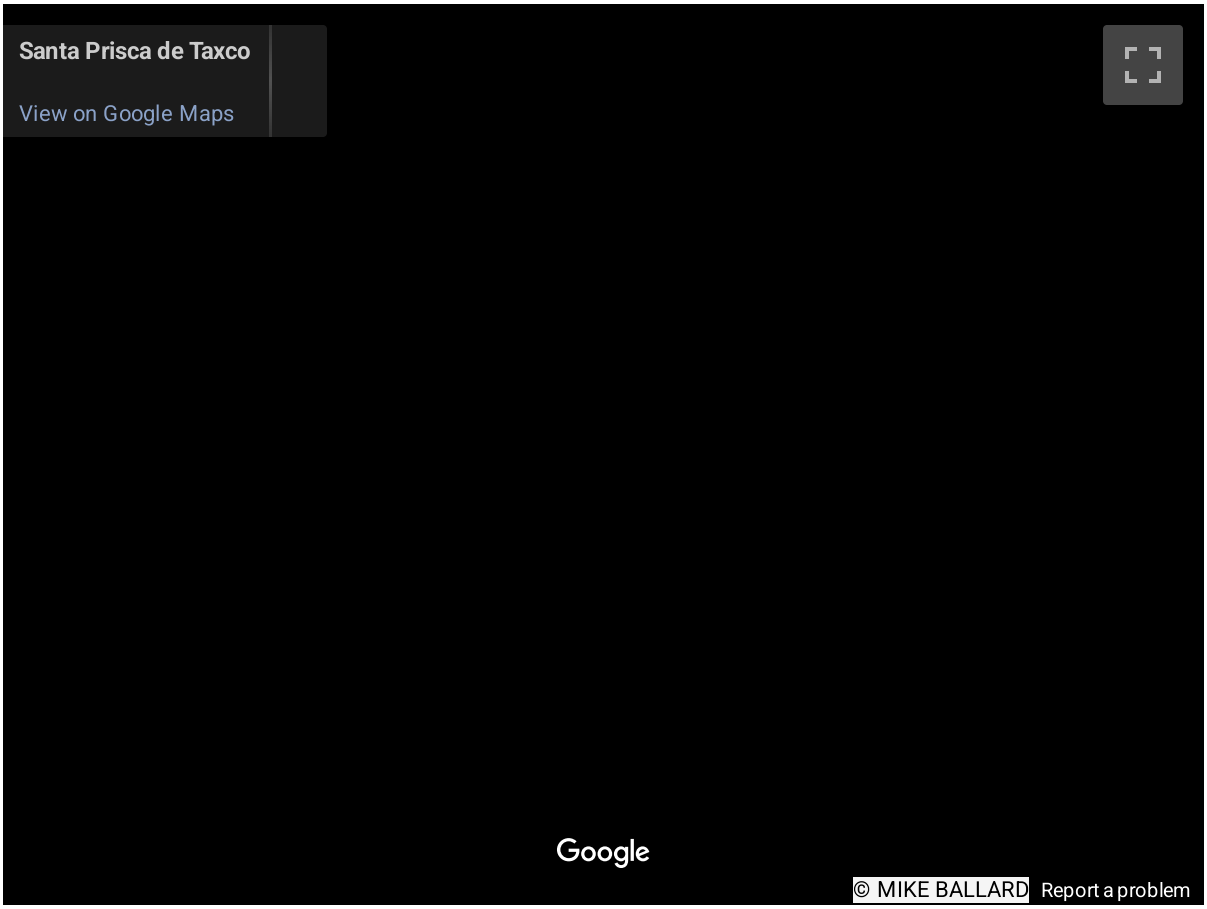
In the early morning with the rising sun, the apricot-peach colored stone of the church of Santa Prisca and San Sebastián in Taxco, Guerrero, Mexico, seems to radiate with light. On a hill towering above the city around it, the church's tall bell towers beckon people to enter its doors. The elaborate carvings on the façade and towers also seem to writhe with life. As shadows pass over the surface throughout the day, you could swear the building was moving. Imagine how striking it is to then enter the church and be completely overwhelmed with walls that vibrate with gold. This church perfectly embodies the architectural style that has been labeled "ultrabaroque," which lasted from approximately 1720 to 1780 in the viceroyalty of New Spain. More specifically, it is an example of the complex, intricate churrigueresque style, which originated in Spain and was transformed in the Spanish Americas.



Ultrabaroque architecture in a silver mining town

The parish church of Santa Prisca and San Sebastián is a useful example to discuss ultrabaroque, churrigueresque architecture. While most churches from New Spain (as elsewhere) were built in stages over long periods of time (such as the Cathedral of Mexico City), this church was built in a short period of time and so fully embodies this style. The project was overseen by the architect Diego Durán Berruecos (though some sources claim the architect was Cayetano de Sigüenza) between 1751 and 1758.

Taxco was an important 18th-century silver-mining location and prior to colonization was a Nahua town. When miners found silver in 1716, the city of Taxco experienced a boom. One miner, José de la Borda, amassed an incredible fortune, and he commissioned new artistic projects, among them the Santa Prisca church. Like many Catholic Christians, Borda felt that paying for good works would shorten his time in Purgatory. Many churches have multiple patrons, so Santa Prisca and San Sebastián is also important because it was funded by a single major donor during his lifetime.



The façade

When standing in front of the church's façade, it seems to stretch endlessly into the sky. If you take a step back, it is possible to make out the logic of the design. It is divided into three parts (what has been called an ABA construction). Two towers (A) flank a central portion (B); the towers are identical and mirror one another. The architect emphasized the verticality of the façade by placed it back from the towers, giving an impression that the towers squeeze the central section. This sense of compression leads our eyes upward.



Figure **2.3.15.3**: Façade of the church of Santa Prisca y San Sebastián, 1751–58, Taxco, Guerrero, Mexico (photo: Frankmx, CC BY-SA 3.0)



Figure **2.3.15.5**: Retablo-façade of Santo Domingo Yanhuitlan, 16th century, Oaxaca (photo: Eduardo Robles Pacheco, CC BY 2.0)

The ornamentation of the façade also directs our eyes upward. The central section displays a riot of decoration, although all of it is in fact carefully composed. It looks similar to a *retablo* (altarpiece) that you might see within a church's interior, and for this reason it is called a retablo-façade. A retablo was often divided into multiple levels with columns that framed sculptures and paintings. Retablo-facades originated in New Spain in the 16th century, with the construction of mission churches like Santo Domingo Yanhuitlan. Over time, the style of retablo-facades changed as the appearance of retablos themselves were transformed, from the more sober classicism we find at Yanhuitlan to the ultrabaroque-churrigueresque at Santa Prisca.



Figure **2.3.15.5**: Niche-pilaster with Saint Paul, the church of Santa Prisca y San Sebastián, 1751–58, Taxco, Guerrero, Mexico (photo: Frankmx, CC BY-SA 3.0)

Santa Prisca's façade is organized into compartments on different levels. On the first level is a rounded arched doorway flanked by pairs of columns, which then flank a niche-pilaster. A niche-pilaster is a defining feature of ultrabaroque architecture in Mexico. It is a flattened squared column (a pilaster) on which is sculpture that appears to use the column as a niche. Here, the recessed pilaster is set deeper than the pair of solomonic columns that frame it. Sculptures of saints Peter and Paul (apostles of Jesus and founders of the See of Rome) appear on the niche-pilasters.



Figure **2.3.15.6**: Detail of the façade of the church of Santa Prisca y San Sebastián, 1751–58, Taxco, Guerrero, Mexico (photo: Elias Zamora, CC BY-SA 4.0)

On the second level an enormous rounded relief sculpture depicting the Baptism of Christ is flanked by pairs of Solomonic columns (columns that spiral and twist) that flank more niche-pilasters that contain the church's patron saints, Prisca and Sebastian. Coats of arms, scalloped shells, scrolling vines, and putti fill in other spaces on the façade's central section.



Figure **2.3.15.7**: Belltower, Church of Santa Prisca y San Sebastián, 1751–58, Taxco, Guerrero, Mexico (photo: AlejandroLinaresGarcia, CC BY-SA 4.0)



Figure **2.3.15.8**:Dome of the church of Santa Prisca y San Sebastián, Taxco, Guerrero, Mexico (photo: júbilo haku, CC BY-NC-ND 2.0)



Figure **2.3.15.9**: Detail of estípite column, Altar of the King (photo: Steven Zucker, CC BY-NC-SA 2.0)

The tops of the towers continue the riotous ornament found in the center, with *estípite* columns (another element associated with the ultrabaroque), engaged columns, grotesques, and other intricate ornament. Interestingly, the architect left the lower portion of the towers unadorned, only puncturing them with four windows framed in a scalloped, foliate design. This clever design forces your eye to ascend above the façade.

If you walk to the side of the church, this complex ornamentation disappears, but the large dome over the church's crossing is now visible. Covered with shimmering polychrome tiles that have stars on them, the dome gives the impression of the heavens above

the church. The tiles come from Puebla, a city further south that was famous for its glazed ceramic tile production.



Figure 2.3.15.10: Altars inside Santa Prisca y San Sebastián, 1751–58, Taxco, Guerrero, Mexico (photo: Javier Castañón, CC BY-NC-ND 2.0)

Inside the church

Santa Prisca has one of the few interiors that is original to the 18th century. Many churches were gutted and redone in a neoclassical style in the 19th century, so it is rare to experience one that is preserved. While the plan of the church is simple—a single nave with a transept (crossing)—the interior would never be described as simple.

Walking inside, visitors are immediately overwhelmed by the profusion of ornamentation. Stacked corinthian pilasters (in light pink) articulate the walls, and they have been rusticated to give a rougher design. We get the impression that they are multiplying before our eyes. While the walls are white/light pink, the retablos in the space are all in gold. Everything seems to vibrate before our eyes, making the space dynamic; it was designed to overwhelm congregants entering the church.



Figure 2.3.15.11: Isidore Vicente Balbás, Main altar inside Santa Prisca y San Sebastián, 1751–58, Taxco, Guerrero, Mexico (photo: Javier Castañón, CC BY-NC-ND 2.0)



Figure 2.3.15.12: Main altar inside Santa Prisca y San Sebastián, Taxco, Guerrero, Mexico (underlying © Google)



Figure 2.3.15.13: Jerónimo de Balbás, Altar of the Kings (Altar de los Reyes), 1718-37, Metropolitan Cathedral of the Assumption of the Most Blessed Virgin Mary (Mexico City)

Twelve gilt retablos fill the space. The main retablo was produced by Isidore Vicente Balbás, son of Jerónimo who had created the main altar in the Cathedral of Mexico City, known as the **Altar of the Kings**. Isidore borrowed from his father's design, creating an elaborate altarpiece that overwhelms the senses. Estípite columns form the retablos along with niche-pilasters.

Forms seem to dissolve, as if they are no longer solid, yet some figures are identifiable. At the center we see the Virgin Mary (behind glass), the Sacred Heart of Jesus above her, Saint Peter further above, and God the Father at the very peak. Other saints, including Prisca and Sebastian, are also noticeable. Paintings of varying sizes are found on most of the retablos, and they were made by some of the most important painters of the day—such as Cristóbal de Villalpando and Miguel Cabrera.

An exceptional church

The Church of Santa Prisca and San Sebastián may not have been located in a metropolitan city such as Mexico City or Puebla, but it expresses the fantastic wealth that some individuals amassed in New Spain. Also, because of its short construction time and excellent state of preservation, it is considered by many to be the best expression overall of the churrigueresque, "ultrabaroque"

style that was popular in New Spain at this time. It seems to perfectly encapsulate Borda's claim that "God has given to Borda and Borda gives to God." [1]



Figure **2.3.15.14**: Church of Santa Prisca y San Sebastián, Taxco, Guerrero, Mexico (photo: Hdlrosaa, CC BY-SA 4.0)

Notes:

[1] Robert Mullen, *Architecture and Its Sculpture in Viceregal Mexico* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1997), p. 176

Additional resources

Learn more about the **church from the World Monuments fund**

James Early, *The Colonial Architecture of Mexico* (Southern Methodist University Press, 2001)

James Oles, *Art and Architecture in Mexico* (London: Thames & Hudson, 2013)

Ichiro Ono, *Divine excess: Mexican ultra-baroque* (San Francisco: Chronicle Books, 1996)

Elisa Vargas Lugo de Bosch, *La iglesia de Santa Prisca de Taxco* (Mexico City: Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, Instituto de Investigaciones Estéticas, Coordinación de Humanidades, Coordinación de Difusión Cultura, 1999)

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SECTION OVERVIEW

2.3.16: Crowned nun portraits

2.3.16.1: Crowned nun portraits, an introduction

2.3.16.2: Crowned Nun Portrait of Sor María de Guadalupe

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2.3.16.1: Crowned nun portraits, an introduction

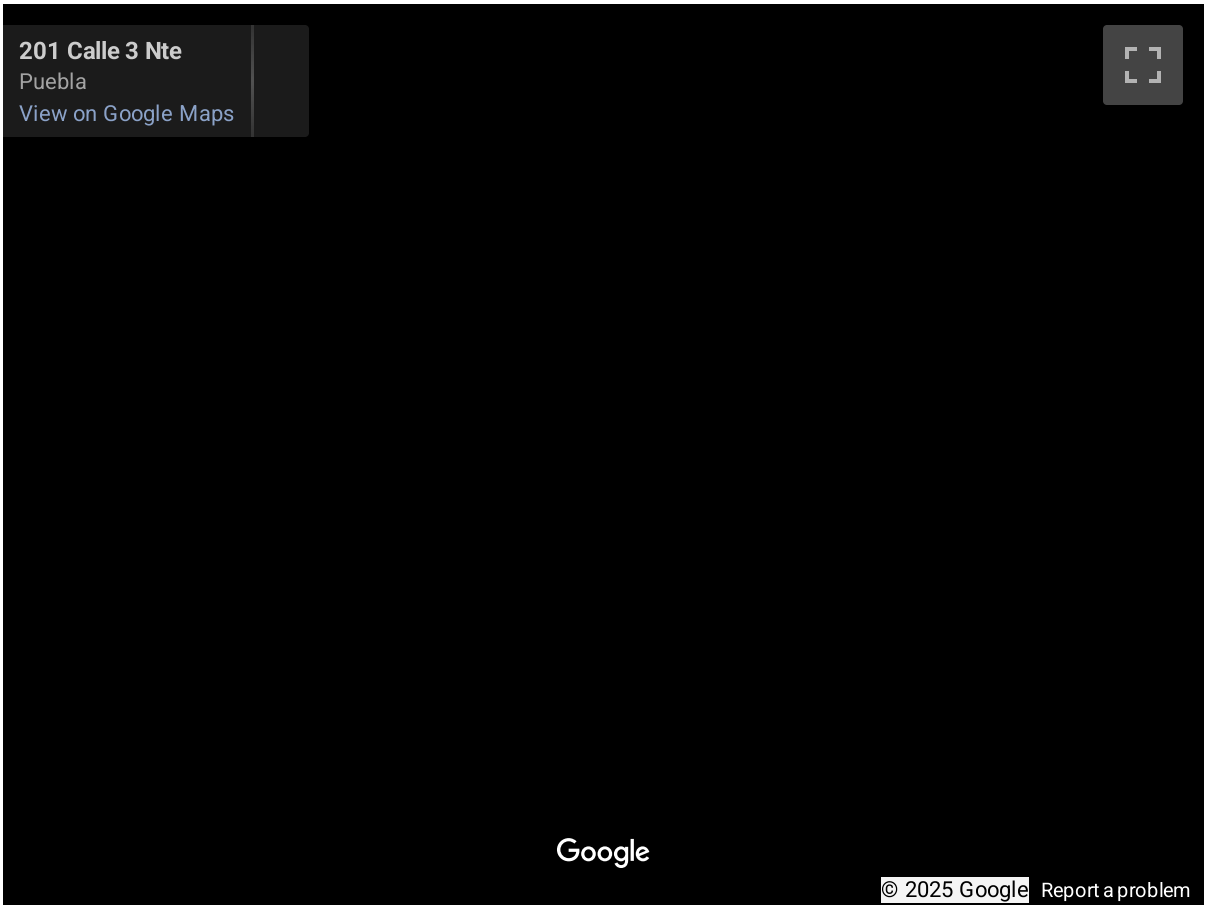
by **DR. LAUREN KILROY-EWBANK**

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Figure **2.3.16.1.1**: Artist currently unknown, *Crowned Nun Portrait of Sor María de Guadalupe* (detail), c. 1800, oil on canvas (Banamex collection, Mexico City; photo: Steven Zucker, CC BY-NC-SA 2.0)

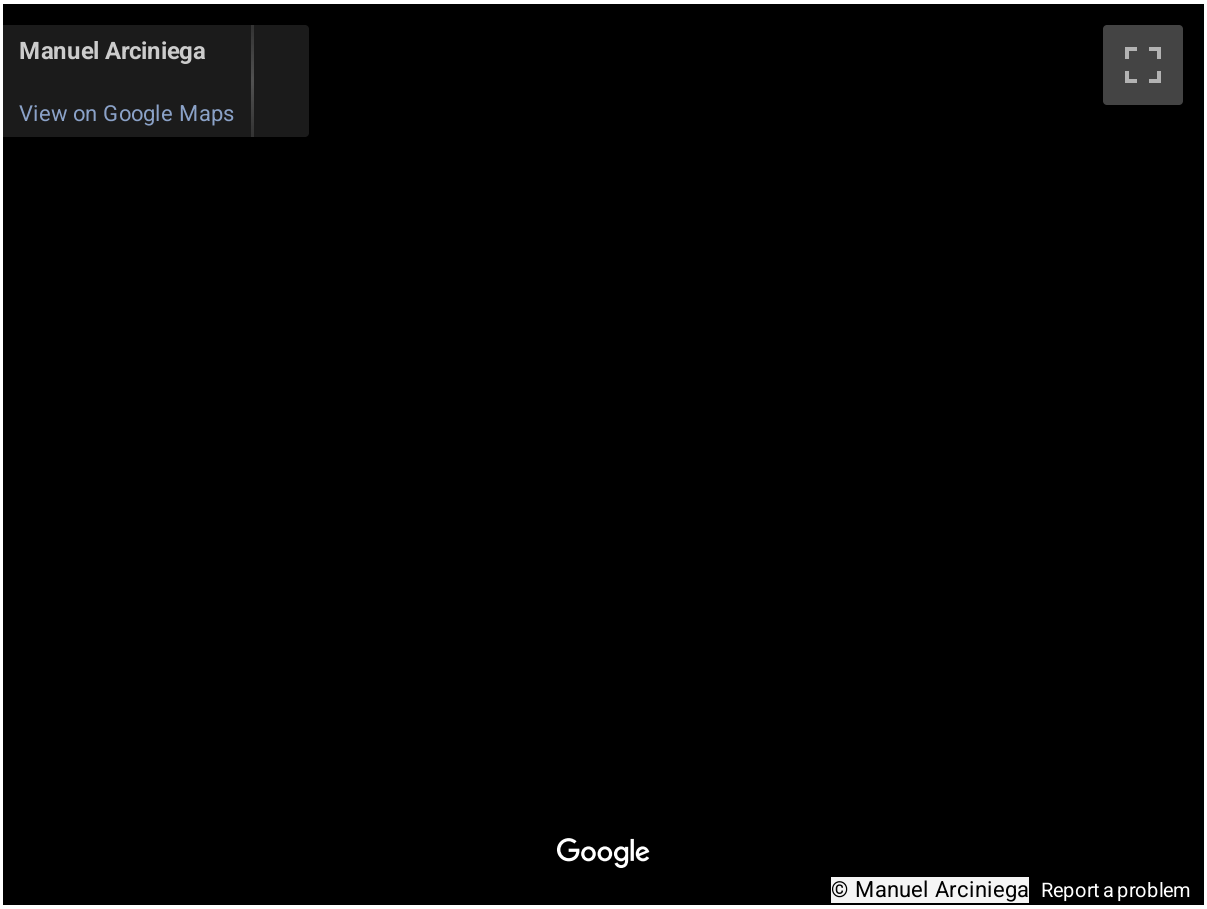
One of the most famous types of female portraits in the **colonial Spanish Americas** are the *monjas coronadas*, or crowned nuns, so named for the elaborate floral crowns atop their heads. In these portraits, nuns are accompanied by objects such as candles, religious badges (*escudos*), a ring, dolls, flowers, and crowns. These portraits were made on the occasion of a nun's profession (literally when she took the veil to officially enter a convent as a professed nun). Why were such lavish portraits of nuns created on the occasion of their profession, and who were they for? To answer this question, this essay looks at a few portraits from the viceroyalty of **New Spain**.



Convent church of Santa Catalina (painted yellow), Puebla, Mexico

Nuns in New Spain

In New Spain there were 52 convents (22 in Mexico City, 11 in Puebla, 5 in Oaxaca, with the others distributed across the viceroyalty). The first female religious order to appear in the Spanish colony was the Conceptionists, but eventually there were Carmelites, Poor Clares, Jeronymites, Ursulines, Recollect Augustinians, and Capuchins. Nuns were understood to be integral to the health of society since they prayed on behalf of people to help shorten sinners' time in Purgatory. Nuns lived cloistered in a convent, meaning that once they entered they did not leave (except perhaps on the occasion of creating another convent somewhere else). The four main objectives of a nun's life were chastity, obedience, enclosure, and poverty (at least for some nuns).



Grills inside the convent church of the ex-convent of Santa Mónica, Puebla

The actual space of the convent, and the nuns who lived within it, became important symbols in urban spaces and emblems of civic pride. A church was often connected to a convent; while nuns did not enter it, their presence could be heard or sensed through a grill that lay people could observe while in church.



Figure **2.3.16.1.2**: José de Alcíbar, Sor María Ignacia de la Sangre de Cristo, 1777, oil on canvas, 180 x 190 cm (Museo Nacional de Historia, Mexico City)



Figure **2.3.16.1.3**: Artist currently unknown, *Sor Magdalena de Cristo*, 1732, oil on canvas, (Museo ex-convento de Santa Mónica, Puebla; photo: Luisalvaz, CC BY-SA 4.0)

Nuns became increasingly important in the 17th and 18th centuries, and this is reflected in the increase in female religious orders, convent buildings, and objects associated with them. It is likely that the injection of silver into the economy from local silver mines meant more families acquired wealth, allowing them to pay the dowry needed to permit their daughters entry into a convent. A marriage dowry was more expensive than one needed for a convent, so becoming a nun was often a beneficial alternative for young women of elite families. While nuns might never see their families again, many could live a life of comfort inside the convent. Some orders, like the Conceptionists, had servants, could play music, and had libraries. The famous nun Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz had a large, exceptional library and scientific instruments at her disposal. It was primarily the wealthy orders for which the *monjas coronadas* were painted—many of them produced by the most famous artists of the day. This genre of portraiture began in the 18th century and continued into the early 19th century. There are also portraits of crowned nuns painted on the occasion of their death.



Figure **2.3.16.1.4**: Artist currently unknown, *Sor María Antonia de la Purísima Concepción Gil de Estrada y Arrillaga*, c. 1777, oil on canvas, 81 x 105 cm (Museo Nacional del Virreinato, Mexico)

Portraits of crowned nuns



Figure **2.3.16.1.5**: Artist currently unknown, *escudo de monja with the Virgin of the Immaculate Conception*, 18th century, Oil on copper with tortoise frame, 5.9 cm in diameter (San Antonio Museum of Art)

In a portrait of Sor Madre Maria Antonia de la Purísima Concepción, the young nun looks out towards us. She wears the long blue mantle associated with the Conceptionist order (which was supposed to mimic the Virgin Mary's blue mantle). Her white blouse is crimped into pleats, which was time consuming—suggesting the importance of this moment in a nun's life. Fastening her habit is a circular disc, called an *escudo* de monja. Her religious badge (most of which were painted on copper and were often in a tortoiseshell frame) shows the Virgin of Guadalupe on it, surrounded by saints. It was common for the *escudo* to show Marian imagery (imagery related to the Virgin Mary), most often the subject of the Virgin of the Immaculate Conception. Nuns were meant to model themselves on Mary and to also become the spiritual brides of Christ. Nuns were required to be chaste and pure (virginal), as Mary was.



Figure **2.3.16.1.6**:Artist currently unknown, *Sor María Antonia de la Purísima Concepción Gil de Estrada y Arrillaga*, c. 1777, oil on canvas, 81 x 105 cm (Museo Nacional del Virreinato, Mexico)

Sor (Sister) María also holds in her right hand a doll of the Christ Child, elaborately dressed, and in her left hand she holds a floral bouquet (which includes a heart, within which is the Christ Child). In other portraits, nuns might carry a candle decorated with flowers and jewels. Atop her head, she wears a black veil embroidered with gold and an ornate floral crown. The flowers were often made of wax or fabric.



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Figure **2.3.16.1.7**: José de Alcíbar, *Madre María Ana Josefa de Señor San Ignacio*, 1795, oil canvas, 104 x 84 cm (Szépmüvészeti Múzeum/Museum of Fine Arts, Budapest)

Nuns also often wore a ring on one of their fingers. Many of these objects represent the actual objects used in the profession ceremony when a nun took her vows as a bride of Christ. The ring, for instance, symbolizes a nun's mystical marriage to Christ, and the floral crown signifies the glory of immortality won by female chastity and thus relates to a nun's virginal status. Interestingly, the statue of the Christ Child suggests that the nun will perform the role of a "mother"—she is at once bride to Christ and caretaker of his young self.



Figure 2.3.16.1.8: Artist currently unknown, *Crowned Nun Portrait of Sor María de Guadalupe*, c. 1800, oil on canvas (Banamex collection, Mexico City; photo: Steven Zucker, CC BY-NC-SA 2.0)

Patrons and viewers

Nuns themselves were not typically the viewers of their own portraits, so these images did not serve as models for their behavior after entering convent walls. Portraits of crowned nuns were typically commissioned by a nun's family as a last act of vanity before their daughter joined the convent. The extravagant clothing and paraphernalia would have been costly, and a portrait like this advertised a family' wealth.



Figure 2.3.16.1.9: Inscription with details of the nun's lineage and profession details. Artist currently unknown, *Crowned Nun Portrait of Sor María de Guadalupe*, c. 1800, oil on canvas (Banamex collection, Mexico City; photo: Steven Zucker, CC BY-NC-SA 2.0)

These representations also functioned as official documents recounting their daughter's lineage. They often include lengthy inscriptions noting the name of the recently professed nun, her parents' names (and that she is their legitimate daughter), the date of her profession, the name of the convent that she entered, and sometimes the date of her death. In a portrait of **Sor María de Guadalupe**, the inscription at the bottom of the painting lists her name, that she is the legitimate daughter of Don Pedro Belasquez de la Candena and Doña Ana Maria Rodgrigues de Polo. It also notes that she was a nun in the Convent of the Immaculate Conception in the city of Puebla, and that she professed on July 4, 1800.

Nuns' portraits did not only serve as biographical documentation and a memento for the young woman's family. They also functioned as potent symbols that these sitters were performing a necessary duty to the community at large: they prayed for the broader community's redemption and salvation. Additionally, the crowned nuns reminded viewers that the sitters, by remaining pure and virginal in an enclosed paradise (the convent), became new Eves to populate a Garden of Eden. Such messages increased a family's social status because in such a painting their daughter was shown forever performing her role as a faithful, chaste bride of Christ who aided in the salvation of New Spain's population.

Additional resources:

Watch a **video about a nun portrait**

Virginia Armella de Aspe, and Guillermo Tovar de Teresa, *Escudos de monjas novohispanas* (Mexico City: Gusto, 1993)

James M. Córdova, *The Art of Professing in Bourbon Mexico: Crowned-Nun Portraits and Reform in the Convent* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2014)

Martha J. Egan, "Escudos de monjas: Religious miniatures of New Spain," *Latin American Art Magazine, Inc.* 5, no. 4 (1994).

Kirsten Hammer, "Monjas coronadas: The Crowned Nuns of Viceregal Mexico" in *Retratos: 2,000 Years of Latin American Portraits*, ed. Elizabeth P. Benson (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004)

Monjas coronadas: vida conventual femenina en Hispanoamérica (Mexico City: Concaculta, 2003)

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2.3.16.2: Crowned Nun Portrait of Sor María de Guadalupe

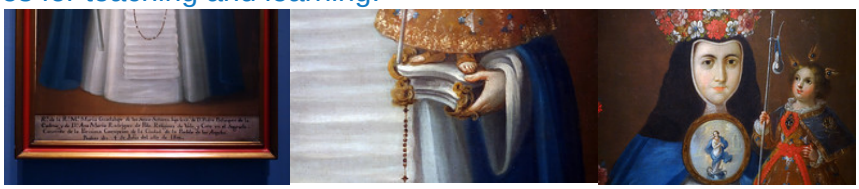
by DR. LAUREN KILROY-EWBANK *and* **DR. BETH HARRIS**

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Video **2.3.16.2.1**: Crowned Nun Portrait of Sor María de Guadalupe, c. 1800, oil on canvas (Banamex collection, Mexico City)

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- **11.3: North America c. 1500 - 1900 (I)** by Smarthistory is licensed CC BY-NC-SA 4.0.

CHAPTER OVERVIEW

3: South America c. 1500 - 1900

Spain and Portugal divided South America to exploit resources and convert souls.

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SECTION OVERVIEW

3.1: Viceroyalty of Peru

The viceroyalty encompassed modern-day Peru as well as much of the rest of South America, the Portuguese controlled what is today Brazil.

1534–1820 C.E.

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3.1.1: A beginner's guide

3.1.1.1: Introduction to the Viceroyalty of Peru

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3.1.1.1: Introduction to the Viceroyalty of Peru

by DR. ANANDA COHEN-APONTE

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Figure **3.1.1.1.1**: The Inka asks what the Spaniard eats. The Spaniard replies: "Gold," from Felipe Guaman Poma de Ayala, *The First New Chronicle and Good Government* (or *El primer nueva corónica y buen gobierno*, c. 1615 (image from **The Royal Danish Library, Copenhagen**)

Francisco Pizarro and the conquest of Peru

In the early sixteenth century, the **Inka** Empire was in a state of turmoil due to a succession dispute between half-brothers Atahualpa and Huascar. They shared the same father, the penultimate Inka ruler Huayna Capac, who had died suddenly in 1527 without choosing an heir to the throne. Atahualpa, based in the northern Inka city of Quito, was in the process of consolidating the northern reaches of the empire in modern-day Ecuador and Colombia while Huascar commandeered **Cuzco** in the south. The half-brothers instigated a civil war that rocked the empire's foundations to its core. Atahualpa and his powerful army ultimately managed to defeat Huascar and ascend to the throne.

It was at this very same time, however, that Spanish conquistador Francisco Pizarro arrived on South American soil. With news of white-skinned strangers arriving in the northern highland city of Cajamarca, Atahualpa traveled northward to greet the new arrivals in November of 1532. Atahualpa arrived in Cajamarca with a large retinue of attendants and soldiers. While the initial encounter between the Inka and the conquistador was an amicable one, tensions flared after the Spanish friar and translator Vicente de Valverde handed Atahualpa a breviary (liturgical book) to ascertain his receptiveness to Christianity, a religion about which the Inkas, of course, had no knowledge whatsoever.



Figure **3.1.1.1.2**: Inka *quipu* (Museo Larco, Lima, Peru; photo: **Claus Ableiter**, CC BY-SA 3.0)

Since the *quipu* served as the primary system of communication in the Inka empire, Atahualpa had no concept of a "book" in the European sense of the term. According to the chroniclers of the Spanish conquest, Atahualpa threw the book to the ground. This perceived act of disrespect—of throwing the sacred book, and by extension, the word of God—to the ground provided the conquistadors with justification for ambushing the city and taking Atahualpa as their captive.

This pivotal moment in the Spanish conquest reveals the fundamental cross-cultural misunderstandings that took place during the early years of the Spanish invasion. While a number of translators facilitated dialogues between Spanish conquistadors and Quechua-speaking Inkas, their radically different world views and ways of life often defied simple linguistic translation. In his attempt to negotiate with Pizarro, Atahualpa promised to fill up a room measuring twenty-two feet long, seventeen feet wide, and eight feet high with gold and silver as ransom in exchange for his freedom. He agreed that the room would be filled entirely with gold, and then with silver twice over, all within the span of two months. The indigenous chronicler Felipe Guaman Poma de Ayala (ca. 1535–after 1616) illustrated this scene in his ***El primer nueva corónica i buen gobierno*** (*The First New Chronicle and Good Government*), a 1,189-page manuscript written to King Philip III (1578–1621) in protest of Spanish colonial rule.
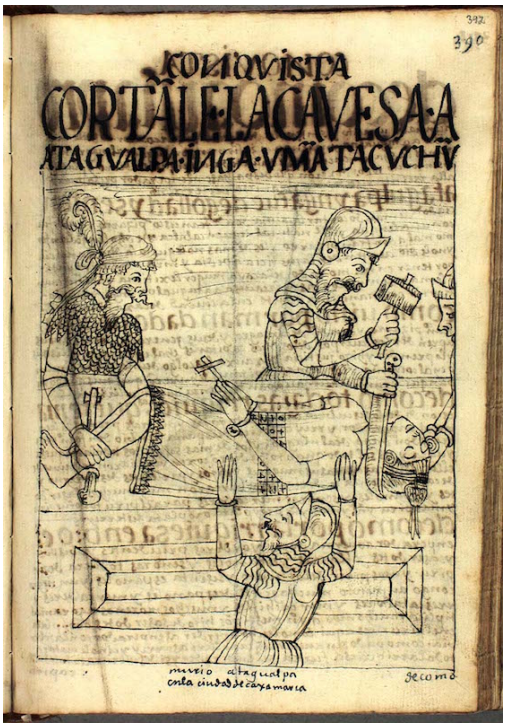


Figure **3.1.1.1.3**: The execution of Atahualpa Inka in Cajamarca: Umanta kuchun, they behead him from Felipe Guaman Poma de Ayala, *The First New Chronicle and Good Government* (or *El primer nueva corónica y buen gobierno*, c. 1615, p. 386 (image from **The Royal Danish Library, Copenhagen**)

Despite Atahualpa's miraculous success in coordinating donations of precious metals, he was publicly garroted (strangled) in 1533 on trumped up charges of idolatry and for the murder of Huascar. Pizarro's army invaded the Inka capital of Cuzco on November 15, 1533, thus solidifying the Spanish triumph over the Inka empire. In some ways, the Spanish victory was inevitable. Inka stone and wooden weaponry were no match for Spanish metal armor, swords, and harquebuses (a type of proto-musket).

Pizarro and his army also capitalized on the deep political fractures within the Inka empire caused by the succession battle and received ample support from Atahualpa's detractors. Nevertheless, Inka resistance delayed the full consolidation of Spanish colonial rule in the Andes until the execution of Tupac Amaru, the last ruler of the Neo-Inka state, a semi-autonomous faction that ruled from 1535 until 1572 in the secluded tropical outpost of Vilcabamba.

The effects of the Spanish conquest

The Spanish conquest of the Inka Empire brought about fundamental changes to the Andean social, political, and cultural landscape. The dismantling of Tawantinsuyu (the Quechua term for the Inka Empire) resulted in the irrevocable loss of Inka self-governance and the implantation of Spanish colonial rule. Spaniards quickly established themselves throughout the newly conquered region, often in pre-Hispanic urban centers. The former subjects of the Inka empire were forcibly resettled into

indigenous settlements known as *reducciones*, while Spaniards settled in cities throughout Andean South America inhabited primarily by Spanish and *criollo* (Latin American-born Spaniards) residents. High tribute quotas were imposed on indigenous peoples that required participation in laborious public works projects and the **mining of precious metals** on a rotational basis. Inka religion became the target of Spanish missionaries, who associated it with idolatry and devil-worship based on a profound misunderstanding of Inka religious practice.



Figure **3.1.1.1.4**: *Kero Vessel*, Inka, lacquered wood, Colonial, Peru, 18.7 x 17.6cm (**Brooklyn Museum**)

Spanish colonial rule, which lasted from 1534 into the 1820s exerted a profound and destructive impact on the lives of Peru's indigenous inhabitants. However, the conquest and colonization of the Andes did *not* result in the complete eradication of indigenous peoples or indigenous practices. The visual arts of the colonial Andes stand as a testament to the resilience of native peoples in the post-conquest world. Native Andeans continued to express themselves artistically alongside and in collaboration with Spanish, *mestizo*, *criollo*, Asian, and African-descended peoples. Pre-Columbian artistic traditions cultivated over the course of several millennia entered into dynamic contact with imported European models to produce stunning and culturally complex works of art.



Figure **3.1.1.1.5**: Map showing the Viceroyalty of Peru (**Mapping Globalization project**, © 2006 Anandaroop Roy)

The Viceroyalty of Peru was established in 1542 and encompassed part or all of modern-day Venezuela, Panama, Colombia, Ecuador, Peru, Bolivia, Chile, Paraguay, Uruguay, and Argentina, and even some of Brazil, making it the largest viceroyalty in the Spanish Americas. By the eighteenth century, however, the Peruvian viceroyalty dramatically reduced in size with the establishment of the Viceroyalty of New Granada in 1717 and the Viceroyalty of Río de la Plata in 1776.



Figure **3.1.1.1.6**: Map of colonial Peru

At its height, the Viceroyalty of Peru was a burgeoning administrative district and hotbed of artistic activity. The coastal city of Lima, founded in 1535 by Pizarro, was assigned the capital of the viceroyalty for its accessibility and proximity to crucial trade routes—Cuzco's high altitude and relative isolation was deemed an obstacle to Spanish political and economic interests. Artistic centers emerged throughout the viceroyalty's major cities, including Lima, Cuzco, and Arequipa in present-day Peru, Quito in present-day Ecuador, and La Paz and Potosí in present-day Bolivia. The new artistic and architectural traditions that emerged under Spanish rule played a critical role in ensuring that the viceroyalty's inhabitants were devout Catholics and loyal subjects of the Spanish crown.

At the same time that the visual arts reflected Spanish colonial interests, however, they also held the power to challenge and subvert them. The visual traditions borne out of colonialism are often layered with multiple registers of meaning that transmitted different messages depending on the cultural identity of the viewer. The arts of colonial Peru are neither fully pre-Columbian nor fully European, but a dynamic combination of both.

Additional resources

Kenneth Andrien, *Andean Worlds: Indigenous History, Culture, and Consciousness under Spanish Rule, 1532–1825* (Albuquerque: The University of New Mexico Press, 2001).

"South America, 1600–1800 A.D." on the Met Museum Timeline

María Rostworowski de Diez Canseco, *History of the Inca Realm* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1999)

Peru: Kingdoms of the Sun and the Moon (Montreal: Montreal Museum of Fine Arts, 2012)

Kris Lane, "Conquest of Peru" (Oxford Bibliographies, 2011)

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3.1.1.2: Portrait Painting in the Viceroyalty of Peru

by **DR. ANANDA COHEN-APONTE**

Page ID 179730

Portraiture functioned as an important artistic genre for wealthy elites to assert power and legitimacy in the Viceroyalty of Peru. From an art historical perspective, portraits also transmit a wealth of information about prevailing trends in clothing, jewelry, and other accessories with which the sitters are represented.

Portraits as visual documents



Figure **3.1.1.2.1**: Andrés Sanchez Gallque, *Three Mulatto Gentlemen of Esmeraldas*, 1599, oil on canvas, 92 × 175 cm (Prado, Madrid)

Any discussion of colonial Andean portraiture must begin with Andrés Sanchez Gallque's T*hree Mulatto Gentlemen of Esmeraldas* from 1599, as it is the first signed and dated canvas in South America. The indigenous Quito artist depicts three men of indigenous and African descent. Don Francisco, at center, is flanked by his sons Don Pedro on his left and Don Domingo on his right.



Figure **3.1.1.2.2**: Andrés Sanchez Gallque, detail, *Three Mulatto Gentlemen of Esmeraldas*, 1599

All three of the men wear clothing associated with varying cultural affiliations. The stiff ruff collars and sleeves (called *lechuguillos*, or "little lettuces") pay homage to Spanish and Flemish styles.

All three wear Andean *uncus*, or tunics, but the lustrous sheen of the fabrics suggests that they were fashioned from imported silk. Their necklaces derive from shells found along the coast of Ecuador, while the elaborate gold earrings and nose rings were likely fashioned out of gold extracted from mines in Colombia.

These men, in effect, embody a global material aesthetic made possible by the Spanish colonial enterprise. Taking up nearly the entirety of the picture plane, these men appear almost larger than life. Their open stance and steel-tipped spears further communicate a sense of power and authority.

A consideration of the historical context under which this portrait was produced, however, tells a different story. Don Francisco was the *cacique* (local indigenous ruler) of Esmeraldas, which had previously been an independent Afro-indigenous community on the north coast of Ecuador. In 1597, he submitted to Spanish authorities and the area became incorporated into the colonial bureaucracy. The judge responsible for this transfer of power, Juan de Berrio, commissioned this portrait as a gift to the Spanish King Philip III to commemorate his subjugation of the region. The portrait reveals the tensions of power at play in the realm of visual representation; Don Francisco and his sons assert the same kind of colonial authority to which they are also subjected. This image also demonstrates the power of portraits to act not only as depictions of an individual's likeness, but as a visual "document" employed to commemorate political deeds.

Commemorative Portraits

Portraiture also became a tool for promoting alliances between members of the Spanish and indigenous elite. *Marriage of Martín de Loyola with the Ñusta Beatriz and of Don Juan de Borja with Doña Lorenza Ñusta de Loyola*, an anonymous canvas dating to c. 1680 that hangs in La Compañía Jesuit church in Cuzco, commemorates two marriages between Inka-descended women and prominent members of the Jesuit order.

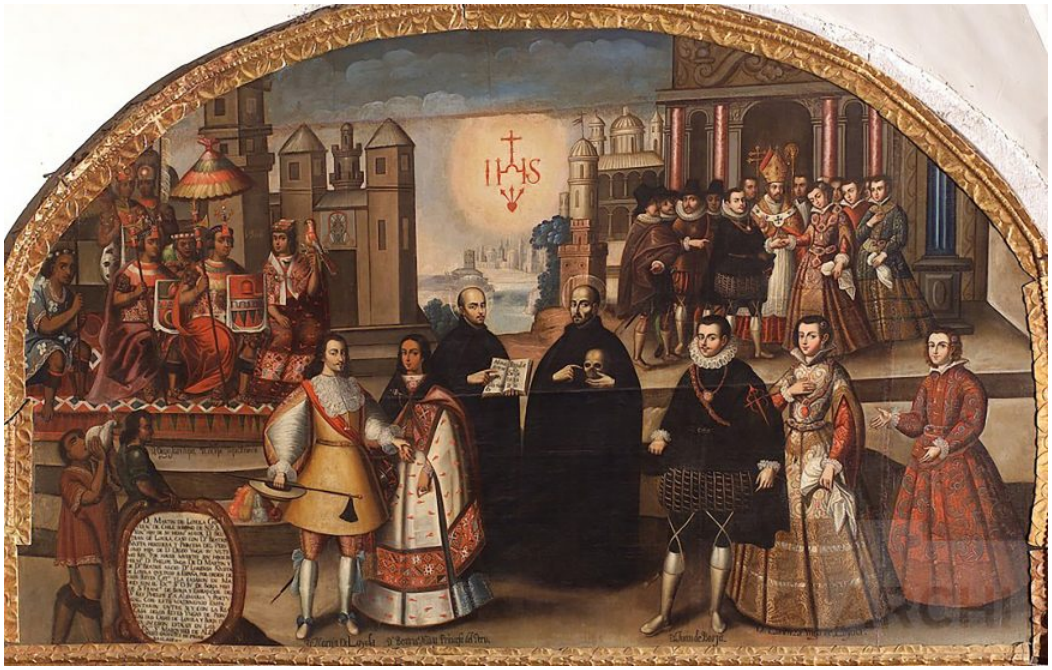


Figure **3.1.1.2.3**: Wedding of Martín de Loyola with the Ñusta Beatriz and of Don Juan de Borja with Doña Lorenza Ñusta de Loyola, c. 1680 (La Compañía Jesuit church, Cuzco)

The cartouche at the lower left, a common feature in colonial paintings, provides a biographical sketch of the figures depicted in the scene. The two central figures wearing black cloaks are St. Ignatius of Loyola, the founder of the Jesuit order, and St. Francis Borgia, who holds a human skull. On the left, Martín de Loyola, nephew of St. Ignatius, is shown marrying Beatriz Coya, a direct descendant of the Inka ruler Huayna Capac. To the right, Count Juan Enríquez de Borja y Almanza, grandson of St. Francis Borgia, marries the daughter of Martín de Loyola and Ñusta Beatriz.

The painting is not a realistic portrayal of reality, given the nearly forty-year gulf that separates the two marriages. Moreover, the former marriage occurred in Cuzco's central plaza while the latter was performed in Madrid. Both locales are depicted in the respective backgrounds of the wedded couples. Instead, it is a commemorative portrait intended to demonstrate the seamless mixture of Spanish and Inka elite blood into perpetuity.



Figure **3.1.1.2.4**: Effigies of the Inkas or Kings of Peru, c. 1725 (Convento de Nuestra Señora de Copacabana, Lima, Peru)

Portraits depicting the lineage of Inka and Spanish kings served as another means for solidifying links between the Inka and Spanish aristocracy. *Effigies of the Inkas or Kings of Peru* (c. 1725) depicts portraits of Inka kings from Sinchi Roca to Atahualpa, followed by portraits of Spanish monarchs from King Charles V to Ferdinand VI. At the top left and right are portraits of Manco Capac and Mama Huaco, the mythical founders of the Inka empire. Textual glosses identify and describe the deeds of each king. A portrait of Christ at the top center holding an olive branch, sword, and cross creates a compositional triangulation that places him at the apex of a hierarchy of rulership. Paradoxically, the Inka kings are positioned closest to Jesus rather than their Spanish successors.

The organization of the image creates a productive tension between two types of visual readings: viewing the image as composed of a tripartite spatial scheme with Christ and the Inkas occupying the “celestial” plane; or viewing it in conjunction with linear time, from left to right and top to bottom, implying a narrative of progress culminating in Spanish power.



Figure **3.1.1.2.5**: Atahualpa and Charles V (detail), *Effigies of the Inkas or Kings of Peru*, c. 1725

Other aspects of the image show more definitive assertions of colonial power. The figure of the Inka king Atahualpa, located in the second-to-last cell in the middle row, looks directly at the Spanish King Charles V, pointing his lowered staff toward the Spanish king as a gesture of submission. Charles V points his finger to an illuminated cross, suspended in air to symbolize the entry of Catholicism to Peruvian lands. Atahualpa’s offering gesture served to normalize the conquest as a natural transfer of power.

These eighteenth-century lineage portraits attest to a renewed interest in the Inka past at a time when privileges granted to indigenous elites began to be curtailed under the Spanish Bourbon monarchy (1700–1808). *Effigies of the Inkas or Kings of Peru* asserts the primacy of the Spanish monarchy while also attesting to Inka cooperation in the creation of a Christian colony. Loyalty served as a crucial tool of political diplomacy in Spanish-Inka negotiations.

Elite criollo portraits



Figure **3.1.1.2.6**: Pedro José Diaz (attr.), *Portrait of Doña Mariana Belsunse y Salasar*, c. 1780, oil on canvas, 198.4 x 127.2 cm (Brooklyn Museum)

Elite *criollos* (people born in the Americas, but of Spanish lineage) also commissioned large-scale portraits for display within private residences. *Portrait of Doña Mariana Belsunse y Salasar* (c. 1780), attributed to the artist Pedro José Diaz, depicts a wealthy member of Lima society who rose to local fame due to her involvement in a marital scandal. Belsunse y Salasar was unhappily married to an older man and decided to request a one-year grace period before consummating the marriage. She spent the subsequent year as a nun in a local convent where she stayed until he died. Upon his death, she resumed her life in Lima society and married one of his younger relatives, Agustín de Landaburru y Rivera.



Figure 3.1.1.2.7: Detail, Pedro José Diaz (attr.), *Portrait of Doña Mariana Belsunse y Salasar*, c. 1780, oil on canvas, 198.4 x 127.2 cm (Brooklyn Museum)

This portrait was painted after her return from the convent and displays a confident woman expressed through her three-quarter pose and direct eye contact with the viewer. Her finely detailed blue silk dress with lace sleeves reflects popular European fashions of the eighteenth century. The arched doorway looks out onto a tree-lined walkway with a fountain at the center, representing a park that she and her second husband donated to the city of Lima around 1755. This strategic inclusion in the portrait served as a means to highlight her social largesse and civic engagement. She delicately holds a fan in the right hand to connote modesty. The array of silver objects and jewelry in the portrait emphasize Belsunse y Salasar's access to luxury goods, which she touches or wears as a means of embodying and even "performing" wealth. Unlike *Effigies of the Inkas or Kings of Peru*, which communicated power through recourse to history, *Portrait of Doña Mariana Belsunse y Salasar* remains firmly rooted in the present.

Identity and rebellion

Indeed, it was members of the criollo elite like Doña Mariana whose sights were fixed on the prospect of a future sovereign nation state — independent of Spain. At precisely the same moment when her portrait was painted in Lima, the southern Andean regions of Cuzco and La Paz were embroiled in bitter political conflict. The indigenous-led Tupac Katari Rebellion (1777–1780) in Alto Peru (present-day Bolivia) and Tupac Amaru Rebellion (1780–1783) sought to overthrow Spanish colonial rule and institute an indigenous power structure that drew inspiration from the Inka empire. The political conflict emerged largely as the result of increased economic burdens on indigenous peasant communities in the eighteenth century. These violent insurrections pitted natives against Spaniards, mestizos against criollos, and even native Andeans against each other, who were divided between Loyalist and Rebel factions.

The aftermath of the Tupac Amaru rebellion incurred around 100,000 deaths, the vast majority of whom were indigenous. These anticolonial rebellions exerted a cataclysmic impact on the colonial power structure, but they did not directly lead to independence. The movements for South American independence in the 1820s were largely dominated by criollos who resented their secondary status to *peninsulares* (Spaniards born on the Spanish peninsula) under the new Bourbon dynasty. The establishment of **Latin American** nations in the nineteenth century led to the development of new artistic genres, art academies, and arenas for the display of artworks. Nevertheless, colonial art left a longstanding legacy on the modern and contemporary arts of the Andes. Many of the portraits of South America's liberators, for example, retain the same preference for flatness and poses found in eighteenth-century colonial portraits.

Additional resources:

Susan Verdi Webster, *Lettered Artists and the Languages of Empire: Painters and the Profession in Early Colonial Quito* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2017)

Thomas Cummins, “Three Gentlemen from Esmeraldas: A Portrait Fit For a King,” in *Slave Portraiture in the Atlantic World*, ed. Agnes Lugo-Ortiz et al., 118-45. (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 126-38.

Learn more about the *Portrait of Doña Mariana Belsunse y Salasar*

Read more about Tupac Amaru II and his legacy

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SECTION OVERVIEW

3.1.2: 16th century

3.1.2.1: Introduction to religious art and architecture in early colonial Peru

3.1.2.2: Early Viceregal Architecture and Art in Colombia

3.1.2.3: Textiles in the Colonial Andes

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3.1.2.1: Introduction to religious art and architecture in early colonial Peru

by **DR. ANANDA COHEN-APONTE**

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Signaling Spanish dominance in Cuzco, Peru

The transmission of Christianity to the Andes was both an ideological and artistic endeavor. Early missionaries needed to construct new spaces of worship and create images illustrating the tenets of the faith to recent converts.

The Convent of Santo Domingo in **Cuzco** (also spelled Cusco) offers an early glimpse into the evangelizing zeal of Peru's mendicant orders' project to create Christian structures atop the ruins of this recently conquered pre-Columbian city.

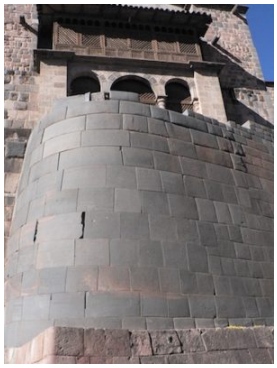


Figure **3.1.2.1.1**: Remains of the Qorikancha, Inka masonry below Spanish colonial construction of the church and monastery of Santo Domingo, Cusco, Peru, c. 1440 (photo: Sarahh Scher, CC BY-NC-SA 2.0)

The church was founded by the Dominican order in 1534 and built directly on the remains of the Coricancha (also spelled Qorikancha, meaning "golden enclosure"), Cuzco's most important **Inka** (also spelled Inca) religious temple. The remains of the Inka temple form a curved foundation for the church. A small chapel rests on top of the curved wall at the back of the main church.

The placement of a Spanish Christian structure atop a decapitated Inka temple is a symbolic act of power and subjugation. The church serves as a material manifestation of the "triumph" of Christianity over paganism, hovering over the ruins of a conquered civilization. On the other hand, the Convent of Santo Domingo pays homage to both Spanish and Inka traditions. The church has an austere fortress-like façade with a three-arched entryway supported by Solomonic columns. Above that, the shuttered balcony is reminiscent of Hispano-Islamic (often termed *mudéjar*) architectural antecedents. Four of the original rooms of the Coricancha became incorporated into the cloister of the Church, giving both the exterior and interior a culturally mixed architectural signature. The finely cut masonry and trapezoidal windows of the original Inka structure became juxtaposed with the convent's **Baroque** architectural flourishes modeled on European churches.

The Coricancha's former function as an Inka religious temple dedicated to the sun does not necessarily disappear with the arrival of Christianity, but rather becomes intertwined with Christian notions of divinity. By choosing the most sacred site of the former empire as a site for conversion and worship, the Dominican missionaries recognized the transcendent power the Coricancha once held, and reoriented it toward a new dogmatic enterprise.



Figure **3.1.2.1.2**: Solomonic columns on the facade of the church Santo Domingo, Cusco, Peru (image: **AlemaPE-Tours**)



Figure **3.1.2.1.3**: 12-sided stone, Inka stone masonry, Cuzco, Peru (image: **Gvillemin**, CC BY SA 3.0)

The sixteenth- and seventeenth-century chronicles of the conquest of Peru are rife with references to the unparalleled quality of Inka stonework; the Spaniards marveled at the ability of Inka stonemasons to produce mortarless structures whose stones were so closely aligned that one could not even fit a knife through their seams.

What at first sight may seem like an architectural incongruity, the interplay of Inka and Spanish stonework demonstrates the continued importance of Inka art forms in the colonial period as well as the intercultural exchanges that occurred in the making of colonial Cuzco.



Figure 3.1.2.1.4: Map showing the location of Collao relative to Cusco



Figure 3.1.2.1.5: Portrait of Francisco Álvarez de Toledo, 16th century, oil on canvas (Museo Nacional de Arqueología, Antropología e Historia del Perú).

The missionary activities of the Dominican order extended far into southern Peru in the Lake Titicaca region. Clustered in this region of southern Peru, the missions of Juli, Pomata, and Chucuito share a number of similar features.

These mission churches formed a critical component of indigenous towns known as *reducciones* or *pueblos de indios*, which were instituted by the controversial Viceroy Francisco de Toledo during his appointment from 1569–1581. *Reducciones* were intended to isolate indigenous communities from their ancestral lands and shrines as a means of exerting political control and facilitating their conversion to Christianity.

The Church of La Asunción in the town of Chucuito, for example (in the Collao region of southern Peru) forms part of a large collection of Dominican mission complexes dedicated to the evangelization of native Andeans. The expansive adobe church emulates the large-scale mission churches of New Spain, also known as ***conventos***. Like its colonial Mexican counterparts, the Church of La Asunción features a large atrium surrounded by a colonnade. The extensive outdoor space would have accommodated large congregations and also resonated with **pre-Columbian Andean traditions** of outdoor worship.



Figure **3.1.2.1.6**: Facade, La Asunción, 1581-1608, Chucuito, Peru (image: **Juan Pablo El Sous**)

A restrained classicizing Renaissance-style carved stone façade frames the entry portal, flanked by pilasters and columns and topped with a pediment. Two carved niches on each side of the doorway may have originally contained sculptures of saints. The decorative relief carving along the arch and pediment provided an opportunity for Chucuito stonemasons to showcase their skills.

Early religious painting

Early painting of colonial Peru also served the didactic purpose of instructing indigenous people in the tenets of Catholicism through the language of images. European iconography traveled to the Andes through robust transatlantic trade networks that brought prints, pigments, paintings, brushes, and other art-related materials from Italy and Flanders by way of Seville, Spain.



Figure **3.1.2.1.7**: Bernardo Bitti, *The Resurrection of Christ*, 1603 (La Compañía church, Arequipa)

European artists also traveled to South America to help meet the growing demand for religious images. One such artist was the Italian émigré **Bernardo Bitti**. Bitti, a member of the Jesuit order, trained in Rome, where he spent the early part of his artistic career. He subsequently spent time in Seville before arriving in Lima in 1575. He worked throughout the Viceroyalty of Peru, completing artistic commissions in Cuzco, Arequipa, La Paz, Potosí, and Chuquisaca.

One of his best-known paintings, entitled *The Resurrection of Christ* and dating to 1603, hangs in the Capilla San Ignacio in Arequipa's La Compañía church. Christ's serpentine, elongated figure pays homage to Italian **Mannerist** painters such as **Jacopo Pontormo** and **Correggio**.

A number of Bitti's disciples emulated his characteristic muted color palette consisting of pastel pinks and blues and crisply folded drapery, extending Bitti's artistic influence far into the seventeenth century. Bitti's uncluttered compositions transmitted Biblical themes in a direct and engaging manner.

Additional resources

SAFE (Saving Antiquities for Everyone), Cultural heritage at risk: Peru

Introduction to Andean Cultures

The lofty ambitions of the Inca, National Geographic

The Inca road, Smithsonian Magazine

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3.1.2.2: Early Viceregal Architecture and Art in Colombia

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3.1.2.3: Textiles in the Colonial Andes

by DR. ANANDA COHEN-APONTE

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Figure **3.1.2.3.1**: **All-T'oqapu Tunic**, Inka, 1450–1540, camelid fiber and cotton, 90.2 x 77.15 cm (Dumbarton Oaks, Washington D.C.)

> ***As in the sacred temples of the Christians, and in the Apostolic Palace of the Pope of Rome, the royal or imperial palaces [of the Inkas] were commonly whitewashed with gesso or lime, and during solemn festivals they were accustomed to adorning them with beautiful and rich tapestries, and for those of the greatest solemnity they would add brocades and fabrics of gold.Gonzalo Fernández de Oviedo, Historia general y natural de las Indias (General and Natural History of the Indies), 1492–1549***

This statement, made by the Spanish naturalist and historian Gonzalo Fernández de Oviedo, describes the public use of textiles among the Inka in his *Historia general y natural de las Indias* (*General and Natural History of the Indies*), written between 1492–1549. Textiles were important in **Inka culture**, with the highest quality examples worth more than gold or any other luxury item.



Figure 3.1.2.3.2: *Atahualpa, Fourteenth Inka*, c. mid-18th century, oil on canvas, 23 ½ x 21 11/16″ (Brooklyn Museum of Art, New York)

Textiles remained important items after the Spanish conquest in the Viceroyalty of Peru. In general, non-religious art enjoyed widespread consumption among the Viceroyalty of Peru's diverse populace. Clothing, tapestries, drinking cups, and portraits helped express social identities as well as the negotiation of cultural boundaries. Many pre-Columbian artistic traditions continued into the colonial period and became invigorated with new materials and systems of manufacture. This was certainly true of textiles.

Unkus



Figure 3.1.2.3.3: Tunic (Uncu), c. 17th century. Camelid fiber, silk, metallic thread, 67.9 x 78.7 cm (Brooklyn Museum of Art, New York)

Although indigenous men were expected to adopt European-style dress, specialized weavers continued to produce *uncus*, or tunics, for special ceremonial occasions. A man's tunic (above) dating to the seventeenth century features a colonial reinterpretation of a pre-Columbian weaving tradition. The tunic contains a band of ***tocapu*** along the bottom edge, which may symbolize the wearer's geographical or ethnic affiliation.



Figure 3.1.2.3.4: Tunic (Uncu), detail, ca. 17th century. Camelid fiber, silk, metallic thread, 67.9 x 78.7 cm (**Brooklyn Museum of Art, New York**)

Some of the colonial *tocapu* seem to lack any specific meanings and appear somewhat generic, leading some scholars to suggest that *tocapu* became associated with a generalized notion of "Inkaness" used as a way to assert elite indigenous status. A set of rampant lions with raised paws is embroidered along the bottom edge of the backside of the tunic, betraying its colonial manufacture. Lions are animals commonly used in European art whose iconography circulated throughout the Americas after the Spanish conquest.

This type of tunic would have been commissioned by members of the indigenous elite and worn during ceremonial occasions such as civic processions and religious festivals including the feast of Corpus Christi. We see individuals wearing specialized tunics in **paintings** showing the procession during this feast. Tunics woven in an Inka style allowed native Andean elites to reenact and reinvent Inka power within a new colonial context.

Tapestries



Figure 3.1.2.3.5: Tapestry with Pelican, late 17th-early 18th century (Textile Museum, Washington, DC)

Tapestries also reveal a great deal about artistic cross-fertilization in the colonial Andes. Inka tunics belonged to a small segment of the population who claimed ties to the indigenous elite, while tapestries were enjoyed by a broader cross-section of the population (albeit the wealthy who could afford luxury goods). Textiles such as *Tapestry with Pelican* adorned the interiors of private residences as wall hangings or served as backdrops for religious and civic processions. The tapestry, which dates to the late seventeenth or early eighteenth century, attests to the robust trans-Pacific Manila galleon trade with which the Viceroyalty of Peru was engaged.



Figure **3.1.2.3.6**: Tapestry with Pelican, detail, late 17th-early 18th century (Textile Museum, Washington, DC)

The iconography of the tapestry derives, in part, from embroidered Chinese silks that arrived in the Americas in large numbers after the fall of the Ming Dynasty in 1644. The pelican is depicted feeding her young with droplets of her own blood. As art historian Elena Phipps points out, this represents the Pelican in Her Piety, a common symbol employed by missionaries to represent Christ's sacrifice. This serves as a reminder of the frequent presence of Christian themes even among artworks intended for private, non-religious consumption. The colorful tapestry also contains dogs, rabbits, parrots, horses, and Chinese mythological animals nestled among flowers and foliage giving it the appearance of a supernatural forest.

Textile murals



Figure **3.1.2.3.7**: Mural painting imitating the appearance of textiles, 17th century, Chapel of Canincunca, Peru (Photo: Ananda Cohen-Aponte)

Tapestries figured so prominently in colonial Andean life that artists adapted their designs to a variety of artistic media. By the late seventeenth century, a number of rural churches throughout the Cuzco diocese featured "textile murals" that mimicked expensive brocades, laces, and tapestries but depicted with tempera paint applied to the walls in *fresco secco* (mural painting on dry plaster) technique.

One of the most impressive examples of a textile mural can be found at the chapel of Canincunca dedicated to Nuestra Señora de la Candelaria in the Quispicanchi Province just twenty miles southeast of the city of Cuzco. The entire interior of the chapel appears to be "draped" with sumptuous wall hangings, which upon closer inspection are in fact *trompe l'oeil* paintings that imitate the design and texture of cloth. The textile patterns consist of urns with flowering bouquets and counterposed s-shaped curves with leafy appendages. The patterns and color scheme resemble surviving examples of colonial textiles with interlaced vegetal motifs and floral ornamentation.



Figure **3.1.2.3.8**: Mural painting imitating the appearance of textiles, detail, 17th century, Chapel of Canincunca, Peru (Photo: Ananda Cohen-Aponte)

Although the textile murals at Canincunca are in the religious context of a church setting, the designs themselves are abstract and contain no explicit references to Christianity. Textile murals hovered at the intersection of religious and secular art, endowed with sacredness by virtue of their location within religious spaces. The notion of "clothing" a church with painted simulations of cloth may have also participated in the personification of the church as a living, bodily entity, whose resonances with Andean beliefs around the animated quality of the natural world would have been especially palpable.

Additional Resources

Elena Phipps, Johanna Hecht, and Cristina Esteras Martín, eds., ***The Colonial Andes: Tapestries and Silverwork, 1530–1830*** (New Haven: Yale University Press and The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2004)

Ananda Cohen Suarez, *Heaven, Hell, and Everything in Between* (Austin: The University of Texas Press, 2016)

Ananda Cohen Suarez, **Painting Beyond the Frame: Religious Murals of Colonial Peru**, on MAVCOR

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SECTION OVERVIEW

3.1.3: 17th and 18th centuries

3.1.3.1: Guaman Poma and the First New Chronicle and Good Government

3.1.3.1.1: Guaman Poma and The First New Chronicle and Good Government

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SECTION OVERVIEW

3.1.3.1: Guaman Poma and the First New Chronicle and Good Government

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3.1.3.1.1: Guaman Poma and The First New Chronicle and Good Government

by **DR. LAUREN KILROY-EWBANK**

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Figure **3.1.3.1.1.1**: The author kneeling alongside the king of Spain before the Pope. Title page from Felipe Guaman Poma de Ayala, *The First New Chronicle and Good Government* (or *El primer nueva corónica y buen gobierno*, c. 1615 (image from **The Royal Danish Library, Copenhagen**)

A very long letter

If you love to write letters, imagine writing one that is almost 1200 pages—complete with 398 full-page illustrations. Sound ambitious? Well, in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth century, the indigenous Andean man, don Felipe Guaman Poma de Ayala, actually wrote such an extensive letter in pen and ink addressed to the Spanish king (at one point Philip II, and then Philip III). It was called *The First New Chronicle and Good Government* (or *El primer nueva corónica y buen gobierno*, c. 1615). Guaman Poma wrote about Andean peoples prior to the arrival of Europeans in the 1530s as well as documented the current colonial situation ("Andean" refers to the Andes mountains, in what is today Peru). He was keen to record the abuses the indigenous peoples suffered under the colonial government, and hoped that the Spanish king would end them. Guaman Poma hoped to have *New Chronicle* printed when it arrived in Europe, and for this reason he borrowed from type-setting conventions when writing the textual inscriptions accompanying his illustrations, such as those on the frontispiece to his letter (above). It also explains why he left his images in black-and-white.



Figure **3.1.3.1.1.2**: "The Inka asks what the Spaniard eats. The Spaniard replies: 'Gold,'" from Felipe Guaman Poma de Ayala, *The First New Chronicle and Good Government* (or *El primer nueva corónica y buen gobierno*), c. 1615, p. 371 (image from **The Royal Danish Library, Copenhagen**)

While the first part of the manuscript addresses Andean life and culture prior to the invasion of the Spaniards, the second half focuses on viceregal life and administration (viceregal refers to the administrator who ruled the Spanish colony in the name of the king from the Conquest of 1534 until independence from Spain in 1820). For the viceregal section of the letter, Guaman Poma discusses topics as broad as parish priests and local native administrators to religious and moral considerations and viceregal towns and cities. So *New Chronicle* is not only ambitious in length, but also in scope!

Significance

This amazing letter is special for several other reasons. First, it is the most famous manuscript from South America dated to this time period in part because it is so comprehensive and long, but also because of its many illustrations. Few illustrated manuscripts survive from this time period, and Guaman Poma's has no rival. Second, it is important for what it tells us about pre-Hispanic Andean peoples, especially the Inka. While the Inka had an advanced recording system that used knots on cords, called khipus, researchers have not yet been able to translate them. Guaman Poma's discussion of Inka culture provides us with information that would otherwise be lost to us, even if we have to be aware that he wrote this information a generation after the Spaniards defeated the Inka. Finally, the letter is written in Spanish, two indigenous languages (Quechua and Aymara), and Latin—highlighting the various languages Guaman Poma knew. One might even consider the many images a fifth, purely visual language, one that combined Andean and European systems of representation.



Figure **3.1.3.1.1.3**: "The hermit priest Martín de Ayala instructs Guaman Poma and his parents in the Christian faith," from Felipe Guaman Poma de Ayala, *The First New Chronicle and Good Government* (or *El primer nueva corónica y buen gobierno*), c. 1615, p. 17 (image from **The Royal Danish Library, Copenhagen**)

A brief biography of Guaman Poma

Born around 1525, Guaman Poma was a descendent of the royal Inka on his mother's side and the pre-Inka Yarovilka dynasty on his father's side. He had a half-brother, Martín de Ayala, who was a mestizo (meaning that one of his parents was Spanish) and worked as a priest, eventually converting Guaman Poma's family to Christianity. He claims that his brother also taught him to read and write.

Because he could read and write in several languages, Guaman Poma worked as an administrator and scribe in the Andean colonial government. On several occasions he attempted to have lands near Huamanga (today, a province in Peru), which were at the center of a dispute, returned to his family. Ultimately, he was exiled from Huamanga after he was charged with falsely claiming he was a noble entitled to these lands.

Guaman Poma also worked with the Mercedarian friar, Martín de Murúa, who had traveled from Spain in the 1580s to Peru to help convert the native peoples of the Andes to Christianity. Murúa completed two different historical chronicles, which included color illustrations, the *Historia general del Piru* (*General History of Peru*) and the *Historia del origen y genealogía de los reyes Incas del Piru (History of the origin and genealogy of the Inka Kings of Peru*, 1590. Guaman Poma completed some of the images in the manuscript known as the *Galvin Murúa*—attesting to the productive working relationship between these two men (despite Guaman Poma expressing some dissatisfaction with Murúa in his *New Chronicle*). A distinct advantage of working with Murúa, however, was that it afforded Guaman Poma access to his library—influencing some of the information and drawings contained in his letter to the King.

Guaman Poma the artist

Guaman Poma's illustrations offer insight into his perception of the Andean past and colonial present. They don't simply duplicate the text, but often complement it. Throughout his letter, Guaman Poma's drawings pay scant attention to the details of individual faces, though he does render detailed clothing. For example, some of the most famous illustrations from *New Chronicle* are those depicting the male Inka rulers (called the Sapa Inka).



Figure **3.1.3.1.1.4**: The first Inka, Manco Capac Inka, from Felipe Guaman Poma de Ayala, *The First New Chronicle and Good Government* (or *El primer nueva corónica y buen gobierno*), c. 1615, p. 86 (image from **The Royal Danish Library, Copenhagen**)

The image of the first Sapa Inka (above), called Manco Capac, shows the ruler standing in the center of the page, dressed in the appropriate regalia for a Sapa Inka. He wears a man's tunic, called an *unku*, that has an elaborate, decorative band around his midsection. This is the ***tocapu***, and it is reserved for the Inka ruler as a way to identify him and signal his special status. Manco Capac also wears elaborate sandals, earspools, and a special fringed ornament on his head, called the *mascaypacha* (and only worn by the Sapa Inka). A cape frames him from behind, and he holds a special staff and a weapon in his outstretched arms.

Maps

One of the most fascinating images from the manuscript depicts what Guaman Poma titles a "*mappa mundi* of the kingdom of the Indies" in other words, the Andean region (*mappa mundi* means "map of the world").



Figure **3.1.3.1.1.5**: Mappa Mundi of the Indies of Peru, showing the quatripartite division of the Inka empire of Tawantinsuyu, from Felipe Guaman Poma de Ayala, *The First New Chronicle and Good Government* (or *El primer nueva corónica y buen gobierno*), c. 1615, p. 1001-02 (image from **The Royal Danish Library, Copenhagen**)



Figure **3.1.3.1.1.6**: Detail, Mapa Mundi of the Indies of Peru, showing the quatripartite division of the Inka empire of Tawantinsuyu, from Felipe Guaman Poma de Ayala, *The First New Chronicle and Good Government* (or *El primer nueva corónica y buen gobierno*, c. 1615, p. 86 (image from The Royal Danish Library, Copenhagen)

Guaman Poma's map shows the Andean "Indies" divided into four parts, with the Spanish Crown's coat of arms and the papal (Pope's) coat of arms at the center. The four parts of the world are based on the earlier Inka division of their empire, known as *Tawantinsuyu*, or realm of the four quarters. Each realm had a different name, and was associated with specific ethnic groups. In Poma's *mappa mundi*, we see each region represented by a male and female couple, along with a coat of arms representing the quarter. Important cities are labeled, along with rivers and mountains.

For example, in the realm to the left of center, known as Chinchaysuyu, we see the *Audiencia* of Quito (an administrative unit in the Spanish Empire) labeled just below the ruling couple (left). Fantastic beasts like unicorns, monkeys, hairy men, and creatures reminiscent of dragons and large flying fish, dot the fringes of the land. A mermaid waves below the moon on the upper left corner. While some of these spatial conventions and fantastical creatures borrow from medieval European mapping traditions, Guaman Poma blends them with Andean concepts of space and symbols.

The Symbolism of Space

Throughout his manuscript, Guaman Poma uses space to communicate Andean notions of power—specifically the complementary concepts of *hanan* (upper) and *hurin* (lower). The *mappa mundi* offers a nice example of these concepts. The couple in the center is the Sapa Inka Tupac Yupanqui (an early Inka king) and his *coya* (queen consort) Mama Ocllo (who was also his sister). The *suyus*,

or regions, of Chinchaysuyu and Antisuyu represent *hanan* (upper) positions, while Cuntisuyu and Collasuyu are *hurin* (lower). While the *hanan* regions are considered superior, they also complement the lower regions. Neither could exist without the other, and represent broader binary yet complementary concepts like male/female or left/right. Another example of this complementary relationship between *hanan* and *hurin* can be seen in the plan of the Inka capital **Cusco**.

Guaman Poma uses these spatial concepts in other ways in his manuscript—sometimes to draw attention to someone's importance. For instance, on the frontispiece of the manuscript (top of page) the pope is in the *hanan* position (reader's left, but right side of the page), while the Spanish king and Guaman Poma are in the *hurin* position. In this way, Guaman Poma likely intended to convey the superiority of the Pope.

The Conquest, Civil War, and Revolts

In chapter 19 of *New Chronicle*, Guaman Poma recounts the Spanish Conquest and ensuing civil wars that erupted in the Andes. The images accompanying the text reveal the Spanish lust for gold and some of the key events of the Conquest.

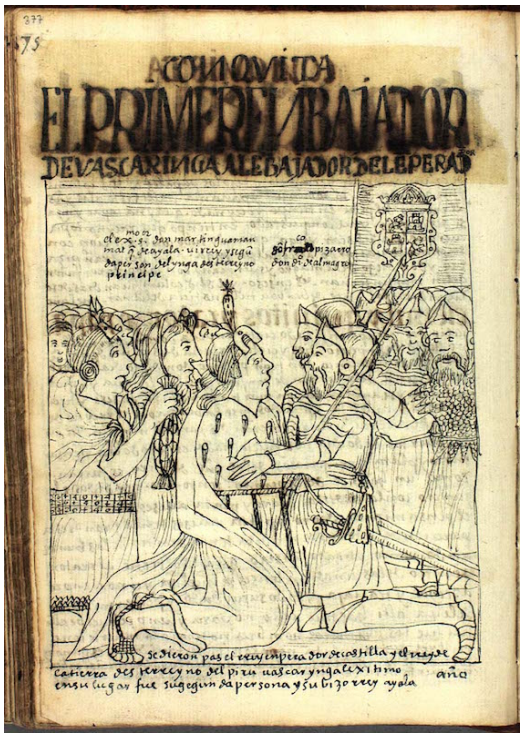


Figure **3.1.3.1.1.7**: "Don Martin de Ayala, the first ambassador of Huascar Inka and father of Guaman poma, greets Don Francisco Pizarro and Don Diego de Almagro, ambassadors of the Spanish king," from Felipe Guaman Poma de Ayala, *The First New Chronicle and Good Government* (or *El primer nueva corónica y buen gobierno*), c. 1615, p. 377 (image from **The Royal Danish Library, Copenhagen**)

In one we see the Spanish conquistadors Francisco Pizarro and Diego Almagro, **dressed in Spanish armor and leading troops** (p. 373). Another image (above) shows the same conquistadors as they interact with Guaman Poma's father, Don Martin de Ayala, who is noted as an ambassador to the Sapa Inka, Huascar Inka.
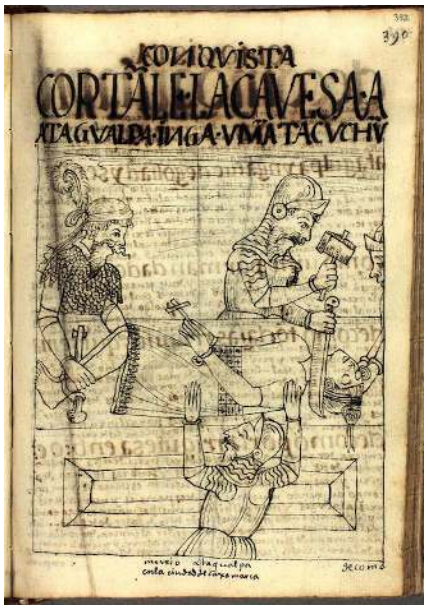


Figure **3.1.3.1.1.48**: "The execution of Atahualpa Inka in Cajamarca: Umanta kuchun, they behead him," from Felipe Guaman Poma de Ayala, *The First New Chronicle and Good Government* (or *El primer nueva corónica y buen gobierno*), c. 1615, p. 386 (image from **The Royal Danish Library, Copenhagen**)

One of the most disturbing scenes of the Conquest is the beheading of Sapa Inka Atahualpa in the city of Cajamarca (above). Huascar Inka and Atahualpa were brothers who both sought to control the Inka Empire after their father died. Eventually, Atahualpa would defeat his brother during a civil war, and Atahualpa would then be captured by Pizarro. The illustration of Atahualpa's execution shows him bound on a hard surface, his hands clasping a cross—a reference to his conversion to Christianity just prior to his death. A Spanish soldier holds a knife to his neck, as well as a mallet. Atahualpa's eyes are closed, signaling that he is dead. The illustrations from this chapter portray the complexity and chaos of this time.



Figure **3.1.3.1.1.9**: "The execution of Tupac Amaru Inka by order of the Viceroy Toledo, as distraught Andean nobles lament the killing of their innocent lord," from Felipe Guaman Poma de Ayala, *The First New Chronicle and Good Government* (or *El primer nueva corónica y buen gobierno*), c. 1615, p. 453 (image from **The Royal Danish Library, Copenhagen**)

The following chapter details "good government" after the Spanish Conquest. In one illustration, we see **the capture of Tupac Amaru Inka** (p. 451), who led a series of revolts against the Spaniards as he and others attempted to retain an Inka state or empire free of the Spaniards.

Another image (left) shows Tupac Amaru's execution in 1572, which mimics the death of Atahualpa Inka during the Conquest. Guaman Poma used the same basic composition and motifs, but this time with Tupac Amaru's prone body resting above a group of weeping Andean peoples to highlight their suffering.

Tupac Amaru's death is considered the end of the Conquest though he would remain a symbol of protest and revolt in the Andes throughout the colonial period, specifically the uprising led by Tupac Amaru II in the eighteenth century. (Fun fact: the hip-hop artist Tupac Shakur was named after Tupac Amaru II).

It is impossible to discuss all aspects of Guaman Poma's Chronicle, but hopefully this essay provides a sense of the importance of his letter as a resource for learning about Inka and colonial Andean culture. While it never made its way into the hands of the Spanish king, and was never published and distributed as Guaman Poma intended, today the manuscript is available in its entirety online from the **Royal Library of Denmark**, where the original Chronicle is kept.

Additional resources:

The entire maunscript of Felipe Guaman Poma de Ayala's New Chronicle from the Royal Library of Denmark

A facsimile of the *Historia general del Piru* (also called *The Getty Murúa*)

Essays on The Getty Murúa from the Getty Museum

Rolena Adorno, *Guaman Poma: Writing and Resistance in Colonial Peru* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2000).

Felipe Guaman Poma de Ayala, *The First New Chronicle and Good Government*, trans. Roland Hamilton (Austin: University of Texas PRess, 2009).

Guaman Poma de Ayala: The Colonial Art of an Andean Author (NYC: Americas Society, 1992).

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3.1.3.1.2: “Bad Confession” in Guaman Poma’s The First New Chronicle and Good Government

by DR. ANANDA COHEN-APONTE

Page ID
179738



Figure **3.1.3.1.2.1**: Bad confession. Page 590 from Felipe Guaman Poma de Ayala, *The First New Chronicle and Good Government* (or *El primer nueva corónica y buen gobierno*, c. 1615 (image from **The Royal Danish Library, Copenhagen**)

“The Bad Confession”



Figure **3.1.3.1.2.2**: Bad confession. Page 590 from Felipe Guaman Poma de Ayala, *The First New Chronicle and Good Government* (or *El primer nueva corónica y buen gobierno*, c. 1615 (image from **The Royal Danish Library, Copenhagen**)

An Andean woman kneels with her hands clasped in prayer. Her indigenous identity is conveyed by her style of dress; she wears a *lliclla* (shawl) fastened with a *tupu* (garment pin) that opens to reveal ***tocapu***-like designs on her dress underneath. She looks up at the priest, with tears in her eyes, as he rams his left foot in her abdomen. The violent image becomes all the more poignant on closer inspection of her swollen belly, indicating the woman’s pregnancy, which is described in the accompanying text.

This image, entitled “The Bad Confession,” is in Felipe Guaman Poma de Ayala’s illustrated manuscript, known the ***The First New Chronicle and Good Government*** *(El primer nueva coronica i buen gobierno*), dated to around 1615. The first half of Guaman Poma’s illustrated manuscript provides a comprehensive description of Inka imperial history as well as an encyclopedic account of life under Inka rule, covering topics as diverse as the ritual calendar, agricultural practice, religious beliefs, different ways of burying the dead, and the various professions of the empire’s inhabitants. The second half of the manuscript details the abuses committed by the Spaniards during the early period of colonial rule in the **Viceroyalty of Peru**. Guaman Poma’s vivid imagery

provides some of the only surviving visual sources that reveal the often violent treatment that indigenous people endured under their Spanish rulers.



Figure **3.1.3.1.2.3**: Executioner: the cruel parish priest metes out punishment indiscriminately. Page 596 from Felipe Guaman Poma de Ayala, *The First New Chronicle and Good Government* (or *El primer nueva corónica y buen gobierno*, c. 1615 (image from **The Royal Danish Library, Copenhagen**)

"The Bad Confession" image participates in a larger visual and textual argument about the ability for native Andeans to rule themselves without Spanish intervention. Indeed, Guaman Poma presents the colonial period as a "Pachacuti," a Quechua term that he uses to refer to a world turned upside down. As part of his plea to King Philip III, Guaman Poma strategically argues that Christianity existed in the Andes long before the Spanish invasion and that it is the Spaniards who are the exemplars of "bad Christians." The visual mechanics of "The Bad Confession" support this thesis.

Hanan and hurin

The drawings in *The First New Chronicle and Good Government* often correspond to the Andean spatial hierarchies of *hanan* and *hurin*. *Hanan* is associated with dominance, masculinity, and superiority while *hurin* holds the connotations of weakness and femininity. [1] Within an Inka context, *hanan* and *hurin* were not conceived as occupying dichotomies of superior and inferior but were instead considered complementary relationships bound through systems of reciprocity. In this new colonial context, however, Guaman Poma has strategically deployed these concepts to highlight the depravity of the Spaniards.



Figure **3.1.3.1.2.4**: Bad confession. Page 590 from Felipe Guaman Poma de Ayala, *The First New Chronicle and Good Government* (or *El primer nueva corónica y buen gobierno*, c. 1615 (image from **The Royal Danish Library, Copenhagen**)

In "The Bad Confession," the woman occupies the *hanan* part of the composition (the internal right) while the priest is situated in the *hurin* segment (the internal left), thus displaying the moral superiority of the Andean woman, who is inflicted with physical violence in her most vulnerable region. In this "world upside down," the priest, the supposed embodiment of morality, succumbs to a morally reprehensible act.

Illustrated manuscripts in early colonial Peru

There only exist three known illustrated manuscripts produced in early colonial Peru: two versions of Mercedarian friar Martín de Murúa's account, separately titled *History of the Origin and Royal Genealogy of the Inka Kings of Peru* (*Historia del origen y genealogía real de los reyes ingas del Perú*, c. 1590–1615) and *History of Peru* (*Historia del Pirú*, 1616). The latter, which contains thirty-eight stunning watercolor illustrations depicting the lives of the Inka nobility, has recently undergone extensive conservation at the Getty Research Institute in Los Angeles. The third and most well-known of the three is Guaman Poma's *New Chronicle* (1615). The dearth of Peruvian manuscripts stands in stark contrast to the 1,000+ illustrated manuscripts that survive from colonial Mexico. The likely reason for this is because there did not exist a manuscript tradition in the pre-Columbian Andes as there did in pre-Hispanic **Mesoamerica**. The notion of drawing images and writing on paper had no precedent in the Andes until the arrival of the Europeans.



Figure **3.1.3.1.2.5**: Inka ruler, in Martín de Murúa's *Historia general del Piru*, completed in 1616, Pen and ink and colored washes on paper bound between pasteboard covered with morocco leather Leaf: 28.9 × 20 cm (11 3/8 × 7 7/8 in.), Ms. Ludwig XIII 16 (83.MP.159) (**The J. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles**)

Nevertheless, these three manuscripts offer a compendium of Andean life both before and after the conquest of the Inkas. The wealth of information they provide has been of critical importance to archaeologists, historians, art historians, and anthropologists as a means to understand Inka history as well as the lived experience of indigenous peoples in the early years of Spanish colonial rule.

Notes:

[1] See Mercedes López-Baralt, "From Looking to Seeing: The Image as Text and the Author as Artist," in *Guaman Poma de Ayala: The Colonial Art of an Andean Author*, ed. Rolena Adorno et al. (New York: Americas Society, 1992), pp. 14–31.

Additional Resources

The entire manuscript of Felipe Guaman Poma de Ayala's *New Chronicle* from the Royal Library of Denmark

A facsimile of the *Historia general del Piru* (also called *The Getty Murúa*)

Essays on The Getty Murúa from the Getty Museum

Scientific Investigation of Martín de Murúa's Illustrated Manuscripts (Getty)

Rolena Adorno, *Guaman Poma: Writing and Resistance in Colonial Peru* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2000)

Felipe Guaman Poma de Ayala, *The First New Chronicle and Good Government*, trans. Roland Hamilton (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2009)

Guaman Poma de Ayala: The Colonial Art of an Andean Author (NYC: Americas Society, 1992)

Lisa Trever, "Idols, Mountains, and Metaphysics in Guaman Poma's Pictures of Huacas," *RES: Anthropology and Aesthetics*, no. 59/60 (2011): 39–59.

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SECTION OVERVIEW

3.1.3.2: The Church of San Pedro de Andahuaylillas

3.1.3.2.1: The Church of San Pedro Apóstol de Andahuaylillas

3.1.3.2.2: Luis de Riaño and Indigenous collaborators, The Paths to Heaven and Hell, Church of San Pedro de Andahuaylillas

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3.1.3.2.1: The Church of San Pedro Apóstol de Andahuaylillas

by NORMA BARBACCI, **DR. STEVEN ZUCKER** *and* **WORLD MONUMENTS FUND**

Page ID
179740



Video **3.1.3.2.1.1**: The Church of San Pedro Apóstol de Andahuaylillas, 1570-1606, stone, adobe, kur-kur, Andahuaylillas (Peru)

Additional resources

High resolution and 360 photographs (Yale)

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3.1.3.2.2: Luis de Riaño and Indigenous collaborators, The Paths to Heaven and Hell, Church of San Pedro de Andahuaylillas

by **DR. ANANDA COHEN-APONTE**

Page ID
179741



Figure **3.1.3.2.2.1**: San Pedro Apóstol de Andahuaylillas, Peru, 16th century (photo: **Bex Walton**, CC BY 2.0)

The Sistine Chapel of the Americas

The **Church of San Pedro de Andahuaylillas** located outside of Cuzco contains an expressive decorative program that has earned it the title of the "**Sistine Chapel** of the Americas." Filled with canvas paintings, statues, and an extensive mural program, the level of artistry and extravagance afforded to this church certainly rivals its counterparts in Renaissance Italy.



Figure 3.1.3.2.2.2: Nave looking toward the mural depicting *The Paths to Heaven and Hell*, San Pedro Apóstol de Andahuaylillas, Peru (photo: courtesy World Monuments Fund)

One of the church's most well-known images is the mural painted on the interior entrance wall depicting an allegory of good and bad faith.



Figure 3.1.3.2.2.3: Luis de Riaño and indigenous collaborators, *The Paths to Heaven and Hell*, c. 1626, San Pedro Apóstol de Andahuaylillas, Peru (photo: courtesy World Monuments Fund)

The subject matter

Painted by the criollo artist Luis de Riaño and indigenous assistants, *The Paths to Heaven and Hell* transmits an important message to parishioners as they exit the church of the moral decisions they will confront on their spiritual journey. The two paths refer

directly to a biblical passage which states,

> ***Enter through the narrow gate. For wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to destruction, and many enter through it / But small is the gate and narrow the road that leads to life, and only a few find it.***
>
> ***Matthew 7:13–14***



Figure **3.1.3.2.2.4**: Luis de Riaño and indigenous collaborators, *The Paths to Heaven and Hell*. RIght: detail of the Devil holding a rope, and an allegorical female figure guiding a young man; right: the soul on the righteous path to the heavenly Jerusalem, c. 1626 (San Pedro Apóstol de Andahuaylillas, Peru)

A nude figure wearing nothing but a white sheet around his waist walks cautiously down the narrow and thorny path to the Heavenly Jerusalem, with three lines emanating from his head that lead to a representation of the Holy Trinity as three identical male figures. A thick rope also connects his back to the composition on the left of the doorway, where the Devil attempts to pull him over to the left side.



Figure **3.1.3.2.2.5**: Luis de Riaño and indigenous collaborators, *The Paths to Heaven and Hell*, detail of the feast, c. 1626 (San Pedro Apóstol de Andahuaylillas, Peru)



Figure **3.1.3.2.2.6**: Luis de Riaño and indigenous collaborators, *The Paths to Heaven and Hell*, detail of the Hell mouth, c. 1626 (San Pedro Apóstol de Andahuaylillas, Peru)

At the foreground of the scene is a banquet attended by four individuals feasting on wine, fish, bread, pie, and fruits. A mouth of Hell rears its head to the left of the path to Hell, its mouth agape with a naked sinner falling into his maw.

At the forefront of the scene is an allegorical female figure guiding a young man standing directly below the rope held by the devil. The path culminates at a castle engulfed in flames guarded by deer poised on the roof with bows and arrows.

The paths to Heaven and Hell were familiar tropes in medieval Christianity, with frequent representations in paintings, manuscript illuminations, and stage sets. Despite its decline in popularity in Europe by the Renaissance, this type of allegorical imagery carried great import in the colonial Andes.

The didactic iconography, painstakingly labeled with relevant biblical passages, was ideal for preaching Catholic doctrine to Andean parishioners. In fact, it is highly likely that Juan Pérez Bocanegra, the parish priest who commissioned the murals and accompanying decorative program, would have conducted his sermons using the murals as a focal point.

A New Jerusalem in the Andes



Figure **3.1.3.2.2.7**: Hieronymus Wierix, *The Narrow and Wide Path*, c. 1600, engraving, 18.3 × 10.9 cm

The mural is based on a print by Hieronymus Wierix entitled *The Narrow and Wide Path*, which Riaño copies relatively faithfully. One significant modification, however, can be found in the depiction of the path to Heaven. In the mural version, Riaño has added an additional figure at the doorway to the Heavenly Jerusalem holding a key. This individual likely represents Saint Peter the Apostle, the patron saint of Andahuaylillas. As the universal head of the church, Saint Peter held the keys to the kingdom of Heaven. Parishioners were thus given the implicit message that the church of their very community constituted a New Jerusalem on Andean soil. Indeed, the act of entering and exiting the church left congregations with a palpable reminder of the spiritual pilgrimage necessary for attaining salvation—and one that could be understood within the immediate parameters of their existence rather than as a place only to be visualized and imagined.

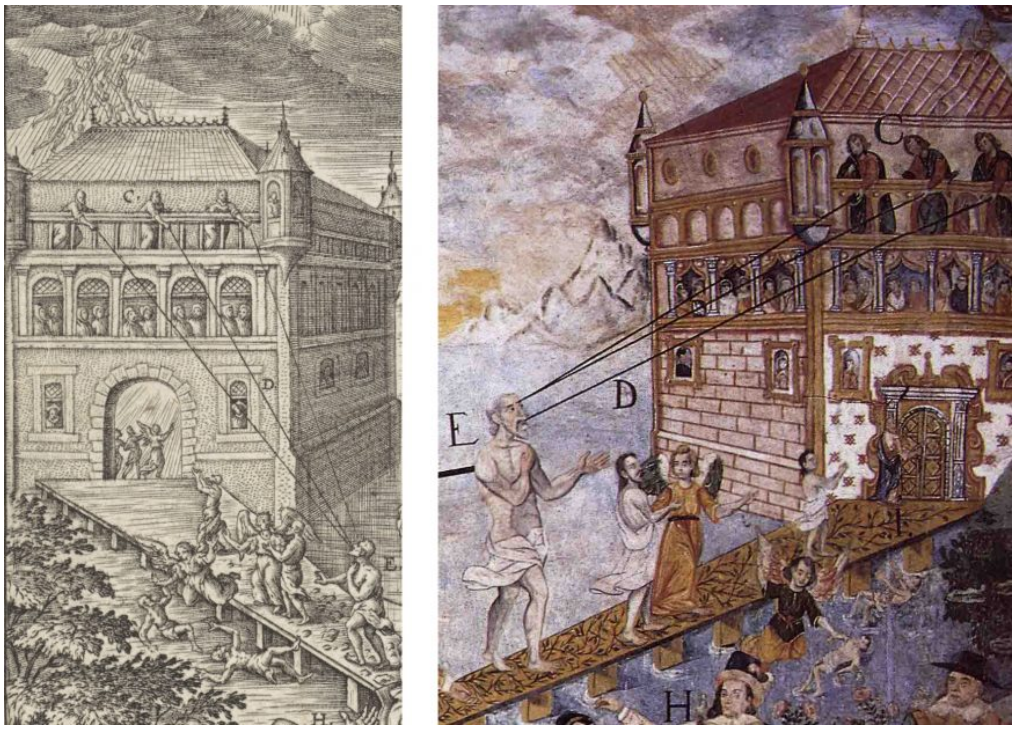


Figure 3.1.3.2.2.8: Left: Hieronymus Wierix, *The Narrow and Wide Path*, detail of the Heavenly Jerusalem, c. 1600; right: Luis de Riaño and indigenous collaborators, *The Paths to Heaven and Hell*, detail of the Heavenly Jerusalem, c. 1626 (San Pedro Apóstol de Andahuaylillas, Peru)

The path to Hell also contains an intriguing detail that is only visible upon close inspection of the mural. Three barely visible figures are seated in a devil-driven canoe beneath the mouth of Hell. The central figure wears an Inka-style tunic with a checkerboard pattern around the collar. Such regalia would have been worn by curacas, or local indigenous leaders. Another nearby indigenous figure ingests liquid from an Inka-style aryballos vessel called an urpu, probably filled with chicha. The figures differ dramatically from the rest of the mural in both content and style. They are painted using rougher strokes, indicating the hand of an assistant to Riaño. Moreover, the cultural specificity of the figures, linking them directly to the Inka past through objects and regalia, suggest that the assistant was of indigenous background.

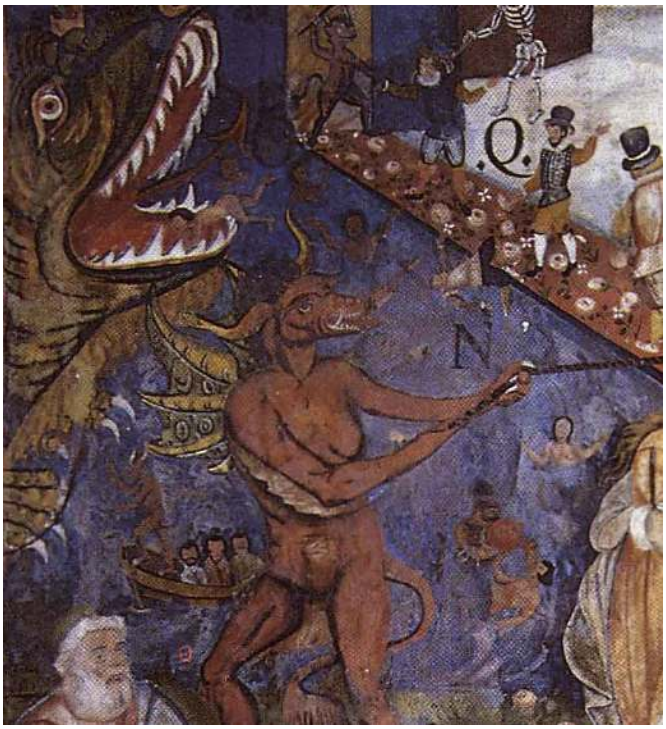


Figure **3.1.3.2.2.9**: Luis de Riaño and indigenous collaborators, *The Paths to Heaven and Hell*, detail of indigenous figures behind the Devil, c. 1626 (San Pedro Apóstol de Andahuaylillas, Peru)

Despite the obvious visual conflation of Andean ritual practices in association with the Christian concept of Hell, these figures were granted visibility in a religious arena that sought to eradicate Andean ancestral cultures. *The Paths to Heaven and Hell* infuses Christian iconography with local referents to facilitate a more personalized and culturally meaningful point of access for the seventeenth-century parishioners of Andahuaylillas.

Additional resources:

Ananda Cohen-Aponte, *Heaven, Hell, and Everything in Between: Murals of the Colonial Andes* (University of Texas Press, 2016)

More about the paintings in San Pedro Apóstol de Andahuaylillas

San Pedro Apóstol de Andahuaylillas at the World Monuments Fund

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This page titled 3.1.3.2.2: Luis de Riaño and Indigenous collaborators, The Paths to Heaven and Hell, Church of San Pedro de Andahuaylillas is shared under a CC BY-NC-SA 4.0 license and was authored, remixed, and/or curated by Smarthistory.

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3.1.3.3: Bernardo Bitti, Coronation of the Virgin

by **DR. CHRISTA IRWIN**

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European-style paintings in colonial Lima

In the Peruvian city of Lima, a visitor will encounter a bustling modern city, the natural beauty of the coast, and numerous references to the city's layered past, including the **ruins** of structures made by indigenous cultures, and churches built during the colonial period. Filling those churches are paintings and sculptures that call to mind a tradition not born in South America, but in western Europe — that of the Renaissance, with its illusionistic devices, technical virtuosity, and figural narratives. Some of these paintings (along with books and prints) were imported from Spain, Flanders, and Italy. Some were painted by émigré artists resident in Lima. But why were European artists making paintings in colonial Lima?



Figure **3.1.3.3.1**: The Peruvian city of Lima, Peru (photo: **Allan Grey**, CC BY-SA 2.0)

Bernardo Bitti was one of many artists who made the journey across the Atlantic in this period as part of the Spanish Crown's effort to colonize and evangelize the indigenous populations of what is today Mexico, Central America, and parts of South America. Bitti was a sixteenth-century artist from Camerino, Italy, in the Marches region, who produced paintings for churches throughout the Peruvian viceroyalty. He arrived in Lima, the viceroyalty's capital, in 1575. Looking at Bitti's work in Peru offers an opportunity to better understand the practice of evangelization. It also helps us to recognize that what we consider as **Italian Renaissance** art was not just a European phenomenon, but a global event.

An international Renaissance

The year 1492 is firmly planted in the western consciousness, as the fateful year that Christopher Columbus accidentally landed in Santo Domingo in what is now called the Dominican Republic. It also happens that this thing we call the **Renaissance**, an influential period of artistic and cultural achievement, took place contemporaneously, in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. What then happens when we begin to consider this period of art making in correspondence with the beginnings of international encounters? The resulting collisions of belief, history, and art allow us to consider the period as one that was not localized in places like Italy and Flanders, but was in fact international in its scope.



Figure **3.1.3.3.2**: Bernardo Bitti, *Coronation of the Virgin*, 1575 – 80, Church of San Pedro, Lima, Peru, tempera (photo: **Jonathan.adrianzen**, CC BY-SA-4.0)

The Coronation of the Virgin

Bitti's first project in Lima was a large altarpiece depicting the Coronation of the Virgin, for the Jesuit Church of San Pedro. The subject matter is fairly straightforward, an image of the Virgin Mary rising into the heavens, to be crowned by Christ to her right, God the Father to her left, and a dove representing the Holy Spirit overhead, while angels playing musical instruments gather in celebration.



Figure **3.1.3.3.3**: Diego Valadés, *Rhetorica christiana : ad concionandi et orandi vsvm accommodata, vtrivsq[ue] facvltatis exemplis svo loco insertis…*, 1579 (**Internet archive**)

The painting would have been an important opportunity for the Jesuits to offer an appropriate representation of Christian doctrine to a potentially diverse audience of Lima's citizens, which would have included viewers of many cultural backgrounds. Due to the diversity of the audience and the language and faith barriers between them, missionaries in Latin America relied on European imagery as tools for communication. In an image from Diego de Valades's *Rhetorica Christiana*, printed in 1579, a Franciscan friar stands at a pulpit preaching, while simultaneously pointing to images displayed around the space to illustrate his points.



Figure 3.1.3.3.4: Church of San Pedro, completed 1638, Lima, Peru (photo: **Manuel González Olaechea**, CC BY-SA-3.0)

The context of the Counter Reformation

Bernardo Bitti was a painter, but also a Jesuit, who traveled to Lima as part of the order's evangelization efforts. The Jesuits were at the forefront of global missionary efforts during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Issues and ideas from Europe intersected with the agenda of missionaries in Latin America. Throughout colonization, the Catholic Church remained embroiled in the **Counter Reformation**, a campaign to reinvigorate the Church and reform, where necessary, after suffering the criticisms of the Protestant Reformers in Northern Europe. Bitti's *Coronation of the Virgin* did contribute important narrative information about Christian belief, but it also served as visual propaganda of the Catholic Church's reform.

There are several elements to this painting that highlight Bitti's attention to the Counter-Reformation agenda. Most important is the glorification of the Virgin Mary. The painting serves as a reminder of her divinity and an encouragement to worship her as queen of heaven. In this period, the Catholic Church re-asserted its dedication to the Cult of the Virgin, partly in response to criticisms from the Protestant Reformers. Between 1545 and 1563, the Council of Trent (a meeting of Church officials, convened to address the crisis of the Reformation, and among many other proclamations), affirmed the value of worshipping the saints, and the Virgin Mary. The Council also instructed that sacred art was a valid and appropriate undertaking.

Bitti's painting would have served as a Counter-Reformation example of how art should serve its didactic and devotional functions. It is clear and legible. The composition is symmetrical, with the most important figures easy to locate, and their significance over the other figures made clear by the attention paid to them by surrounding angels. Additionally, the painting represents the Virgin's crowning, not by just Christ, or God the Father, but by the Holy Trinity, the inclusion of the white dove completing this all important triad. Bitti's inclusion of the Trinity as three separate entities was a critical iconographic choice. European commentators were careful to instruct artists of this period to be clear in their depictions of the Trinity, never as three identical figures, or one body with multiple faces, but as an older man, a younger man, and a dove. For Bitti, painting in Lima for a diverse audience of Europeans and newly converted indigenous viewers, the accurate depiction of the Trinity would have been of particular importance.



Figure **3.1.3.3.5**: Detail showing the Holy Trinity in Bernardo Bitti's *Coronation of the Virgin* (photo: **Jonathan.adrianzen**, CC BY-SA-4.0)

Representations of the Trinity were potentially problematic in the Andes, where the indigenous populations had for centuries followed polytheistic religions. Christian missionaries sought to stamp out any residue of such pagan beliefs and traditions. A painting presented by Christian clergy of three beings, representative of God, could be confusing for the local indigenous converts. These same missionaries vehemently prohibited the worship of multiple gods.

The matter was further complicated when Europeans learned that some Andean religions pictured their gods in threes. For example, three statues of the god representing the Sun stood in Cuzco; Apointi, Churiinti, Intiquaqui were the father Sun, the son Sun, and the brother Sun. Upon learning of this predisposition for a conception of a trinity in the local indigenous religions, the clergy attempted to use this potential complication to their advantage. They preached the idea that the pre-Christian existence of a trinity was merely a precursor for the true Trinity that the indigenous populations were now learning about. For them, the truth had been laying in wait, but obscured, for centuries. Images of the Trinity would become common in Spanish colonial art as tools to engage the locals with a familiar image but ones that needed to be appropriately presented according to Catholic doctrine.



Figure **3.1.3.3.6**: View of the *Coronation of the Virgin*, Church of San Pedro, Lima, Peru (photo: **Jonathan.adrianzen**, CC BY-SA-4.0)

Bitti's paintings were also tools implemented to aid in the imposition of western European culture onto the indigenous Andean people. Bitti's figural, narrative, illusionistic style of representation was steeped in the traditions of Italian Renaissance aesthetics. It was informed by the concept of Leon Battista Alberti's "painting as window," which contrasted violently with the centuries old visual traditions of the Andes, where art tended to be more abstract, geometric, and not representational. So, while it was certainly important for Bitti to use his altarpiece to communicate Christian narrative appropriately, this painting was also a weapon used by the Europeans in their campaign to replace ancient Andean beliefs and culture with their own understanding of the world.

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3.1.3.4: Alonso de Ovalle, Tabula geographica regni Chile

by **DR. CATHERINE E. BURDICK**

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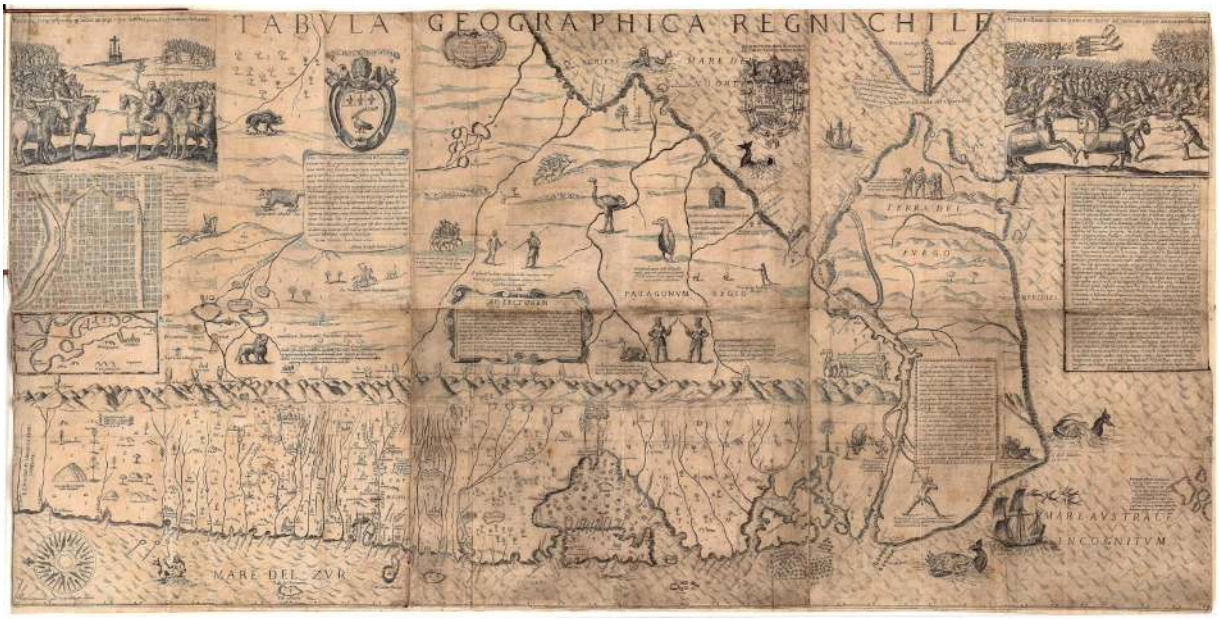


Figure **3.1.3.4.1**: Alonso de Ovalle, *Tabula geographica regni Chile*, 1646, 57 x 116 cm (John Carter Brown Library, Brown University)

What images might enhance a map of a distant land in a remote corner of the world? Might lava-spewing volcanoes, a strutting penguin, and gold mines captivate your attention? All of these fascinating miniatures and more embellished one of the earliest maps of Chile that was disseminated in Europe.

In 1646, a Chilean man named Alonso de Ovalle published an illustrated text titled *Historical account of the Kingdom of Chile* (*Histórica relación del reyno de Chile*) to inform Europeans of the history and characteristics of his homeland, and he created a pictorial map of Chile to accompany it. More accurately, Ovalle produced two versions of his map of Chile, a smaller rendition that was bound within most copies of his book, and a larger and more detailed version that we know of through only two extant copies. One copy of the larger map (measuring 57 x 116 cm) is in the collection of the John Carter Brown Library, and it is called the *Tabula geographica regni Chile*. [1]



Figure **3.1.3.4.2**: Map showing the Viceroyalty of Peru



Figure **3.1.3.4.3**: Map of Chile and Argentina, showing Patagonia and the Strait of Magellan (underlying map © Google)

From 1542 until 1818, Chile was part of the administrative district of the Viceroyalty of Peru, one of four viceroyalties that Spain created in the Americas to better govern the population. The Viceroyalty of Peru was governed from Lima, and in Ovalle's day consisted of nearly the entirety of South America (beyond Brazil, which was controlled by Portugal). During the eighteenth century, as Spain established two additional viceroyalties in South America, the Viceroyalty of Peru was reduced to what are now the nations of Chile, Peru, and Bolivia.

Alonso de Ovalle was born in approximately 1601 to an elite family in the Chilean capital, and in 1618 he joined the Jesuits. In 1640 he became the first Jesuit to hold the newly created office of Chilean procurator general (a religious diplomat) to Rome and Spain, and he passed the years 1642–1650 carrying out this office in Europe.

Taking advantage of the presses in Rome, Ovalle created his book and his maps describing Chile to attract missionaries and royal investors in support of Jesuit efforts there. His published works also exemplify the zealous pride of homeland that characterized many *criollos* (American-born peoples of European heritage). *Criollos* such as Ovalle felt a deep attachment to the Americas, and a desire to convey to Europeans how their particular homelands were uniquely wonderful places marked by productivity and wealth.



Figure **3.1.3.4.4**: Animals roam the lands, including deer, a *ñandú* or rhea (which looks like an ostrich), and a penguin to the right. Detail of Alonso de Ovalle, *Tabula geographica regni Chile*, 1646, 57 x 116 cm (John Carter Brown Library, Brown University)

The significance of the Tabula geographica

Ovalle's *Tabula geographica* is significant for various reasons, including its rarity as an early cartographic visualization of Chile. As Spain's most remote territory in the Americas, primarily accessible via the treacherous Strait of Magellan or overland routes across Argentina, Chile maintained an insularity during the seventeenth century that limited knowledge of its geography and characteristics in Europe. As a further complication, because Chile did not obtain a printing press until the early nineteenth century, we currently have few maps of this region from the colonial era by Chilean authors. This is one reason why Ovalle's map is so important. He provided detailed information about a land that was inaccessible to many. In his map, Ovalle also inserted tiny images of local flora, fauna, geographical characteristics, and Indigenous practices (past and present), allowing viewers to associate the features of the area with the particular regions where they occur.

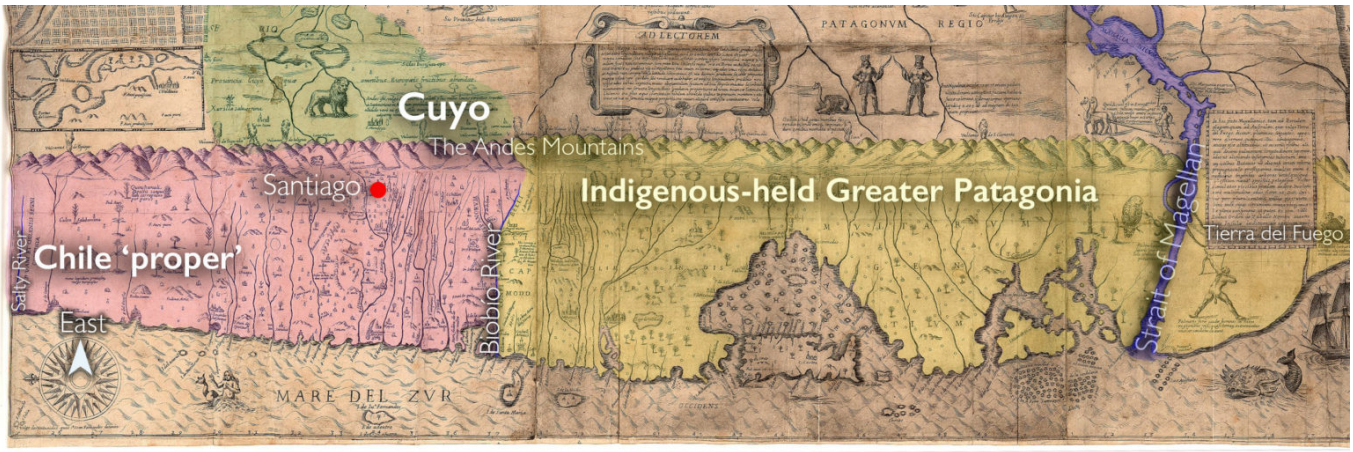


Figure **3.1.3.4.5**: Detail showing 'Chile proper' at lower left, Cuyo just across the Andean cordillera, and southern Chile from Patagonia southward. Alonso de Ovalle, *Tabula geographica regni Chile*, 1646, 57 x 116 cm (John Carter Brown Library, Brown University)

Organization

The large version of the *Tabula geographica regni Chile* is a horizontal east-up map (meaning that the map is oriented with the east at the top) showing Chile in three sections. The first section is "Chile proper," a narrow ribbon of land confined by the natural limits of the Andean cordillera (the mountain range) to the east and the Pacific Ocean to the west, as well as by the Peruvian border at the Salty River (*Río Salado*) to the north and frontier with the Indigenous Mapuche (who live in Chile and Argentina) and their neighbors at the Biobío River (*Río Biobío*) in the south. The second region indicated in the *Tabula geographica* is Cuyo, a province located east of the Andes that pertained to the Diocese of Santiago de Chile.

The third area, by far the largest of the three, was located south of the Biobío River and was not formally part of Chile at the time the map was made. Comprised of the vast terrain of Patagonia down to the Strait of Magellan and Tierra del Fuego, Ovalle conveyed this section as a potential region of southward Spanish expansion.

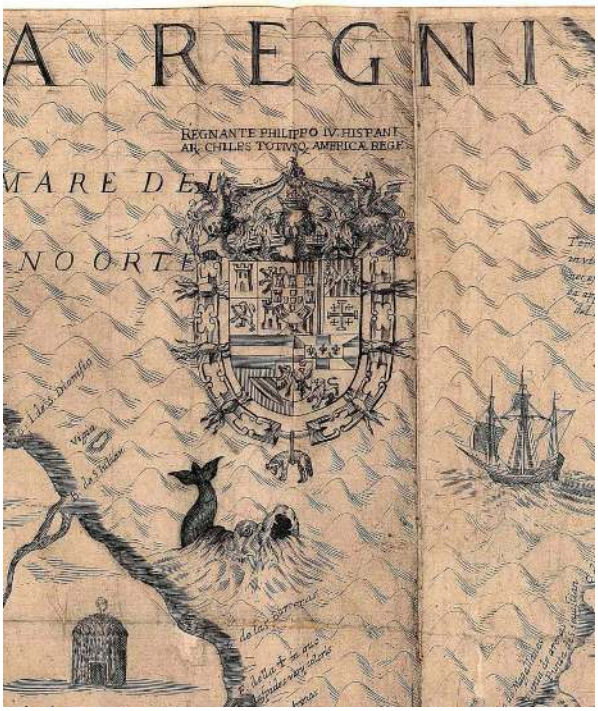


Figure **3.1.3.4.6**: The coat of arms of Philip IV, with insignia of the Order of the Golden Fleece (including the ram pendant), threatened by a sea monster. Detail of Alonso de Ovalle, *Tabula geographica regni Chile*, 1646, 57 x 116 cm (John Carter Brown Library, Brown University)

In the upper area of the map, Argentina provides a backdrop for additional images and symbols. For instance, the Spanish royal coat of arms and the papal coat of arms are arranged beneath the title. Here Ovalle inserted a bit of comic relief at the expense of the Spanish King, Philip IV; a playful detail shows a sea monster poised to devour the ram pendant dangling from the collar of the Order of the Golden Fleece that frames his coat of arms, as if to attack the very emblem of the Crown's authority.



Figure **3.1.3.4.7**: Lively beasts roam Argentina including an armadillo (called a *quirquincho* in Chile; center), a lion-like puma (bottom), and different birds. A hunting scene appears on the right side. Detail of Alonso de Ovalle, *Tabula geographica regni Chile*, 1646, 57 x 116 cm (John Carter Brown Library, Brown University)

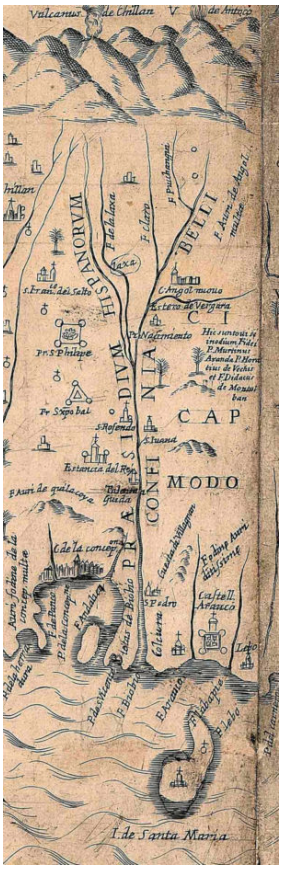


Figure **3.1.3.4.8**: The Biobío River and the Spanish forts San Cristóbal (triangular) and San Filipe (rectangular). Detail of Alonso de Ovalle, *Tabula geographica regni Chile*, 1646



Figure **3.1.3.4.9**: A *ñandú* or rhea. Detail of Alonso de Ovalle, *Tabula geographica regni Chile*, 1646

Miniature illustrations bring Ovalle's map to life and offer insight into his perceptions of the benefits and comforts of Chile. These tiny pictures also helped Europeans to envision Chile as a comfortable and productive land that was like Spain and Italy in many ways, yet also contained fascinating features that were unknown in Europe. Among these depicted features, mineral wealth in the form of mines and medicinal plants are dispersed throughout "Chile proper."

In Patagonia (specifically in Tierra del Fuego), images such as an Indigenous man with a tail suggest mythologies adapted from other maps and prints, for instance from the **illustrations** produced during the early seventeenth century under the voyage of Dutch explorer Joris van Spilbergen. Lively beasts roam Argentina; we can identify an armadillo (called a *quirquincho* in Chile), a lion-like puma, a penguin, and a relative of the ostrich called a *ñandú* (all of which are visible in different images throughout this essay).

Hunting scenes are also featured, involving wild animals rarely encountered in Europe and Indigenous techniques for tracking or trapping them. Hunting is often a veiled metaphor for militarism, and it is no surprise that the Spanish effort to conquer and Christianize the Indigenous south is also expressed in the *Tabula geographica*. The Arauco War, as this long-running effort was termed, is signaled by the Spanish forts along the Biobío River and narrated by paired scenes of war and peace in the map's upper corners. The Biobío River was the contentious border between Spanish-held Chile and the Indigenous southern region, labeled in

the map as *PRAESIDIUM HISPANORUM* (Spanish garrisons) on the north and CONFINIA BELLI (limits of war) on the south. The Spanish forts San Cristóbal (triangular in shape) and San Filipe (rectangular in shape) are seen just north of the river.



Figure **3.1.3.4.10**: In the background of the battle scene in the upper right corner, Spanish canons shoot at Indigenous forces who hold bows. The rest of the print shows a chaotic battle scene. Alonso de Ovalle, *Tabula geographica regni Chile*, 1646. Image from the John Carter Brown Library, Brown University, Providence, Rhode Island.

The battle scene at the upper right corner juxtaposes Spanish canons with Indigenous bows to suggest Spanish dominance. By contrast, the upper-left inset commemorates a peace treaty established in 1641 between the Governor of Chile and a Mapuche leader. Ovalle included these scenes because he wanted to express to the King of Spain and to the Pope that Chile had entered an era of peace with the neighboring indigenous peoples, an ideal moment for amplifying Jesuit efforts to convert this population to Christianity.



Figure **3.1.3.4.11**: The Peace Treaty of Quillín of 1641 between Spanish and Mapuche authorities. Detail of Alonso de Ovalle, *Tabula geographica regni Chile*, 1646, 57 x 116 cm (John Carter Brown Library, Brown University)

Complex histories and meanings

As early modern pictorial cartographies of the Spanish Americas became more widely appreciated during the twentieth century, scholars began to study the diversity of meanings and functions that they held for their makers and audiences as well as the sources that inspired them. The *Histórica relación del reyno de Chile* has been reissued by several Chilean historians, sparking renewed interest in examining the details of the *Tabula geographica*. The commentaries of these historians have led to new information, providing a better understanding of the complex histories and cultural meanings embedded in this map. Today scholars recognize that meanings of colonial-era cartography shift across regions and audiences, and that Ovalle, a Mapuche *cacique* (tribal leader), a Spanish King, a Pope, and prospective Jesuit missionary would have each read the *Tabula geographica* in a very different way.

Notes:

[1] The other large map is preserved in Paris at the Bibiothèque nationale de France as a loose sheet measuring 68 x 121 cm.

Additional Resources

The *Tabula geographica regni Chile* (1646) by Alonso de Ovalle at the John Carter Brown Library, at Brown University, Rhode Island

The *Tabula geographica regni Chile* (1646) by Alonso de Ovalle at the Bibiothèque Nationale de France

Alonso de Ovalle, *Histórica relación del Reyno de Chile y de las missiones y ministerios que exercita en el la Compañía de Jesús* (Rome: Francisco Cavallo, 1646).

Catherine Burdick, “The remedies of the machi: visualizing Chilean medicinal botanicals in Alonso de Ovalle’s *Tabula geographica* (1646),” *Colonial Latin American Review* vol. 26 no. 3 (2017), pp. 313–334.

Alejandra Vega Palma, “La *Tabula geographica regni Chile* de Alonso de Ovalle,” en *Histórica relación del Reyno de Chile y de las missiones y ministerios que exercita en el la Compañía de Jesús* (Santiago: Patrimonio Cultural de Chile, 2012), pp. 63–70.

Lawrence C. Wroth, “Alonso de Ovalle’s Large Map of Chile, 1646,” *Imago Mundi* vol. 14 (1959), pp. 90–95.

This page titled 3.1.3.4: Alonso de Ovalle, Tabula geographica regni Chile is shared under a CC BY-NC-SA 4.0 license and was authored, remixed, and/or curated by Dr. Catherine E. Burdick, "Alonso de Ovalle, Tabula geographica regni Chile," in Smarthistory, March 2, 2021, accessed November 11, 2022, https://smarthistory.org/alonso-de-ovalle-chile.

3.1.3.5: Diego Quispe Tito, Last Judgment, 1675

by DR. ANANDA COHEN-APONTE

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Figure **3.1.3.5.1**: Diego Quispe Tito, *Last Judgment*, oil on canvas, 1675 (Convento de San Francisco, Cusco, Peru)

Indigenous Andean painters such as Diego Quispe Tito reinvigorated Cuzco's artistic scene after the death of the Italian Jesuit painter **Bernardo Bitti** and other Spanish and Italian painters who traveled to the Viceroyalty of Peru in the late sixteenth century to establish their artistic careers. Quispe Tito imbued his compositions with powerful religious imagery that combined Italian, Flemish, and Indigenous pictorial traditions.

The end of time



Figure **3.1.3.5.2**: Diego Quispe Tito, detail of Hell, *Last Judgment*, oil on canvas, 1675 (Convento de San Francisco, Cusco, Peru)

His painting of the *Last Judgment* from 1675 located in the Convento de San Francisco in Cuzco provides an enduring reminder of the fate of humanity on Judgment Day. Sinners in hell depicted along the lower register of the composition receive an array of bodily tortures — we see individuals stretched across medieval breaking wheels, burning in bubbling cauldrons, and engulfed within the jaws of a Hell mouth. The souls in heaven (at the top), by contrast, surround the ascended Christ in an orderly formation.

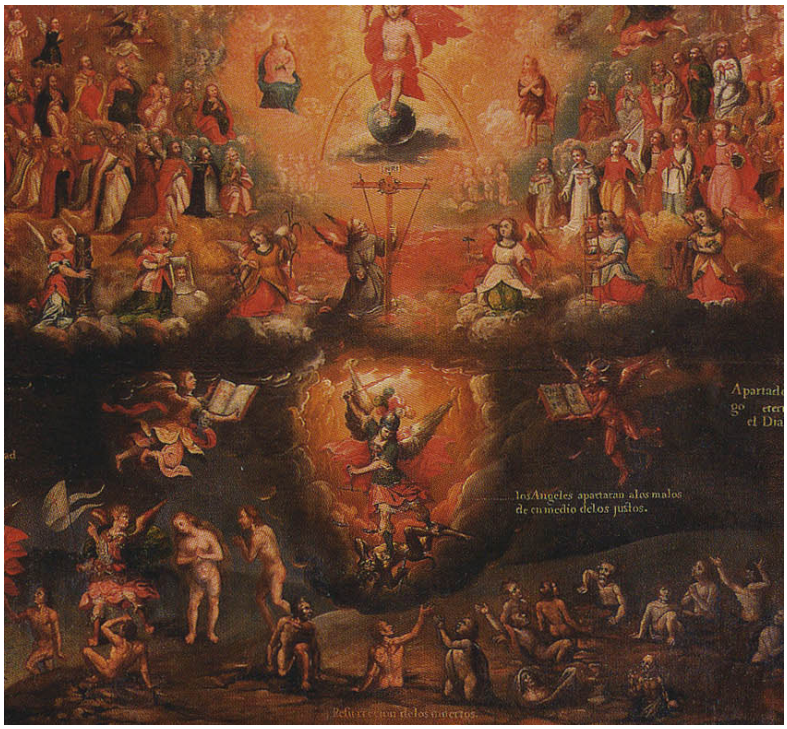


Figure 3.1.3.5.3: Diego Quispe Tito, detail of Heaven, *Last Judgment*, oil on canvas, 1675 (Convento de San Francisco, Cusco, Peru)

Word and image

Quispe Tito's canvas retains a strict tripartite scheme of Heaven, Purgatory, and Hell through the use of textual glosses to delimit the painting's three compositional layers. The texts describe their accompanying scenes in vivid detail, thereby creating a strong interaction between linguistic and visual representation. The glosses add an additional layer of meaning to the image that would have been accessible only to the privileged few that were literate in Spanish. Nevertheless, the visual cues alone provide ample information about Christian eschatology (End of Days) for the purposes of instruction and evangelization.



Figure 3.1.3.5.4: Detail, Diego Quispe Tito, "There is no longer any remedy in hell, where there is no order to be had but [instead] eternal confusion," *Last Judgment*, oil on canvas, 1675 (Convento de San Francisco, Cusco, Peru)

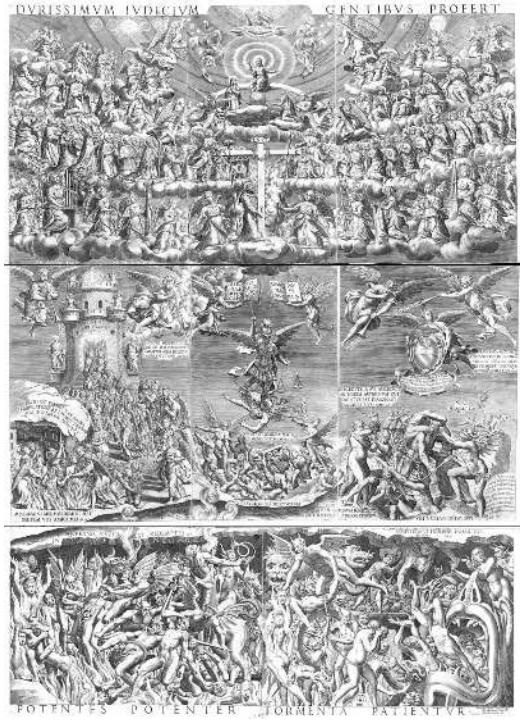


Figure **3.1.3.5.5**: Philippe Thomassin, *Last Judgment*, 1606, engraving

The *Last Judgment* is modeled from a 1606 engraving by Philippe Thomassin, a French-born engraver who spent the majority of his life in Rome. It remains unclear whether Quispe Tito had access to Thomassin's original engraving or a seventeenth-century copy by the Flemish engraver Matthaeus Merian. Regardless of the precise source used by Quispe Tito, his *Last Judgment* reveals the importance of European models in colonial Andean painting, while at the same time demonstrating the creativity of seventeenth-century artists in determining the painting's color palette and incorporating unique compositional details.



Figure **3.1.3.5.6**: Tadeo Escalante, *Last Judgment*, 1802 (Church of Huaro located just outside of Cuzco)

Christian themes related to the End of Days continued to preoccupy Andean patrons and artists throughout nearly the entirety of the colonial period. For example, the mestizo artist Tadeo Escalante produced a mural painting of the *Last Judgment* in 1802 at the church of Huaro located just outside of Cuzco.

Escalante's and Quispe Tito's compositions share the very same print source, despite being produced over a century apart. Escalante's bright color palette and preference for flattened, simplified forms, however, signals a major turning point in colonial Andean painting that occurred shortly after Diego Quispe Tito completed his painting.

Additional Resources:

Ananda Cohen-Aponte, *Heaven, Hell, and Everything in Between: Murals of the Colonial Andes* (University of Texas Press, 2016)

Rodríguez Romero, Agustina & Siracusano, Gabriela (2010) "El pintor, el cura, el grabador, el cardenal, el rey, y la muerte. Los rumbos de una imagen del Juicio Final en el siglo XVII." *Eadem Utraque Europa* 6 (nos. 10-11): 9-29.

Read more about the arts of the Spanish Americas

Learn more about engraved sources for paintings in colonial Andean art on *Project on the Engraved Sources of Spanish Colonial Art*

Philippe Thomassin's *Last Judgment* and other sources

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3.1.3.6: Parish of San Sebastián, Procession of Corpus Christi series

by CAROLINE GILLASPIE

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179745



Figure **3.1.3.6.1**: Parish of San Sebastián, detail from the Procession of Corpus Christi series, c. 1680, oil on canvas (Museo del Arzobispado, Cusco, Peru)

Worlds collide

Inka, Spanish, and Christian traditions come together in this 17th century painting of a religious procession in Cusco (in present day Peru). At the time, much of South America was a Spanish colony governed as a viceroyalty (a viceroy was someone who ruled as a representative of a monarch—in this case, the King of Spain). Cusco was part of the Spanish viceroyalty of Peru which lasted from the 16th to the 19th century. To make matters more complicated, Cusco was also the former capital of the Inka Empire.

Parish of San Sebastián is part of a series of eighteen canvases (sixteen of which survive) that depict the religious festival of Corpus Christi in Cusco. These large paintings (they range from 6 feet square to 7 x 12 feet) were painted by at least two artists and were made for the Santa Ana parish church in Cusco, located in the Andes mountains.

The procession



Figure **3.1.3.6.2**: Bishop (detail), *Parish of San Sebastián*, in the Procession of Corpus Christi series, c. 1680, oil on canvas (Museo del Arzobispado, Cusco, Peru)

Corpus Christi, meaning “body of Christ” in Latin, is a celebration of the Catholic doctrine of transubstantiation—the transformation of the wine and bread of the Eucharist into the actual blood and body of Christ. The religious processions that accompany this festival have been compared to ancient Roman triumphs, which generally celebrated military victories. The triumphal Corpus Christi processions celebrate Christ as victor and metaphorically allude to the triumph of Christianity over pagan religions (the Corpus Christi festival is still celebrated in Cusco today).

In the painting, we see the Eucharistic host (the sacramental bread) along with a statue of a saint, paraded along a processional path. A bishop on the far right (see image left) carries a monstrance containing the Eucharistic host (a monstrance is a vessel used to display the host). In addition to the bishop, other members of the San Sebastián parish community—including clergy members, government officials, and leaders of the indigenous Inka population—were included in the procession, while elite citizens of Cusco witness the procession from their windows. This annual triumphal procession signaled the dominance of Spanish colonizers over the indigenous population. Conveniently, Corpus Christi coincided with the Inka solstice celebration of *Inti Raymi*, or “Festival of the Sun,” leading to conflation of these festivities and aiding Christian conversion efforts.



Figure **3.1.3.6.3**: Cart and procession (detail), *Parish of San Sebastián*, in the Procession of Corpus Christi series, c. 1680, oil on canvas (Museo del Arzobispado, Cusco, Peru)



Figure **3.1.3.6.4**: José Caudi, Processional Cart in Juan Bautista Valda, Solenes fiestas (Valencia, 1663)

In addition to the figures, we see a processional cart in the center, on top of which appears a statue of Saint Sebastian. These carts appear throughout the series and were based on structures used for religious processions in Spain celebrating the festival of Our Lady of the Immaculate Conception. The carts resemble ships’ hulls and are modified from illustrations the artists in Cusco saw in

a Spanish festival book (left). In this case, Saint Sebastian, who appears tied to a tree and pierced with arrows to represent his martyrdom, has replaced the Virgin Mary.

Leading the procession is an Inka *kuraka* who acts as a standard bearer (see bottom image). Also referred to as *caciques*, these local rulers of indigenous descent were granted privileges (*cacicazgos*) by the Spaniards and allowed to maintain a position of leadership after the Spanish conquest in the Andes. By the early-seventeenth century, twenty-four *caciques* held this hereditary office—making this an exclusive position. In exchange for their acculturation and adoption into the Spanish hierarchy, *caciques* were required to implement Spanish law among the indigenous population.



Figure **3.1.3.6.5**: Portrait of Don Marcos Chiguan Topa, c. 1740-45 (Museo Inka, Cusco, Peru)

To maintain their status, it was necessary for *caciques* to prove their indigenous heritage. *Caciques* were often the subject of portraits that sought to authenticate their sitters' political position. These images derive from traditional Spanish portraiture (the visual representation of rulers was not an established tradition in Inka culture). *Cacique* portraits, such as the *Portrait of Don Marcos Chiguan Topa*, included panels of text that referenced the subjects' indigenous heritage. Additionally, elements of traditional Inka costumes were often employed to emphasize the *caciques*' Indian-ness and therefore validate their positions as *kurakakuna*.

Caciques were sometimes depicted wearing tunics that evoke indigenous textiles through their intricate designs, as well as crowns that included a *mascapaycha*, a red-colored fringe that covered the forehead that was traditionally a symbol of Inka royalty. It was traditionally worn on the crown of the *Sapa Inka* (or "unique Inka," the preeminent ruler during pre-Hispanic times). Breeches and long sleeves with lace were often added as traditional Spanish elements.



Figure **3.1.3.6.6**: Cacique (detail), *Parish of San Sebastián*, in the Procession of Corpus Christi series, c. 1680, oil on canvas (Museo del Arzobispado, Cusco, Peru)

Costume: Inka + Spain

The *cacique* depicted leading the procession in the *Parish of San Sebastián* canvas wears an Inka tunic (*uncu*) with modifications to incorporate Spanish costume elements, like lace sleeves. The highly detailed garment, which includes a sun face on the front, is meant to indicate Andean nobility. The *cacique's* crown also features a *mascapaycha* to distinguish his status. The crowns of the *caciques* depicted in the series were accompanied by other details such as feathers, flowers, birds, and rainbows. This particular *mascapaycha* in *Parish of San Sebastian* features a rainbow topped with a silver globe with feathers and banners, as well as two curiquenque birds, all typical of pre-Hispanic Inka noble insignia.

The *mascapaycha* as an emblem of Inka royalty was adopted by *caciques* during the colonial period to reference their descent from previous Inka rulers and imply their legitimate status. This detail marks the *cacique* as an Inka elite, yet acts as a sign of difference between this indigenous figure and his Spanish colonizer to whom he is subjected. Through participation in these Corpus Christi processions, *caciques* were able to bear the emblems of their indigenous heritage while proclaiming their loyalty to the Spanish state.

Incorporating the viewer

In the foreground of the painting we see fourteen people of diverse ethnicities, alluding to the heterogeneity among the population of Cuzco. While the procession's standard-bearer wears regalia indicating his pre-Hispanic roots and political status, the figures in the foreground do not appear in Inkaic costume. These citizens seem distanced from the elite *cacique* who actively participates in the festivity because of their lack of status symbols, as well as their cropped appearance at the bottom of the composition. Because of this distinction in social status, the onlookers at the bottom of the canvas, along with the viewers outside the canvas, participate only indirectly in this procession.

Performance in colonial Spanish America

The participation of *caciques* in Christian festivities like Corpus Christi may be read as a performance of their "otherness" as distinct from their Spanish colonizers. This performance aided in converting the indigenous populations to Catholicism and strengthening Spanish control. By wearing the *mascapaycha* and other traditional costume details, these Inka elites embody the pre-Hispanic rulers from whom they claim to descend. This depiction of indigenous performance in a European, Christian festivity draws attention to the conflation of Inka and Christian traditions that may allude to both a celebration of indigenous heritage as well as subordination to Spanish dominance.

Additional resources:

Watch Corpus Christi in Cusco (May 2013)

Read more on indigenous elites in the Colonial Andes

Thomas B. F. Cummins, "We Are the Other: Peruvian Portraits of Colonial Kurakakuna," in *Transatlantic Encounters: Europeans and Andeans in the Sixteenth Century*, ed. Kenneth J. Andrien and Rolena Adorno (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991), pp. 203-231.

Carolyn Dean, *Inka Bodies and the Body of Christ: Corpus Christi in Colonial Cuzco, Peru* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1999).

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3.1.3.7: Master of Calamarca, Angel with Arquebus

by ABIGAIL LAPIN DARDASHTI

Page ID
179746



Figure **3.1.3.7.1**: Master of Calamarca, *Archangel with Gun, Asiel Timor Dei*, before 1728, oil on canvas and gilding, 160 x 110 cm (Museo Nacional de Arte, La Paz, Bolivia)

Guns, angels and fashion—three unexpected elements that co-exist in the Master of Calamarca's painting *Archangel with Gun, Asiel Timor Dei*. Depictions of androgynous, stunningly attired, harquebus (a type of gun) carrying angels were produced from the late-seventeenth century through the nineteenth century in the viceroyalty of Peru (a Spanish colonial administrative region which incorporated most of South America, and was governed from the capital of Lima, c. 1534–1820). First appearing in Peru these images were widespread throughout the Andes, in places such as La Paz, Bolivia, and as far as present-day Argentina. Representing celestial, aristocratic, and military beings all at once, these angels were created after the first missionizing period, as Christian missionary orders persistently sought to terminate the practice of pre-Hispanic religions and enforce Catholicism.



Figure **3.1.3.7.2**: Master of Calamarca (detail), *Archangel with Gun, Asiel Timor Dei*, before 1728, oil on canvas and gilding, 160 x 110 cm (Museo Nacional de Arte, La Paz, Bolivia)

The harquebus is a firearm with a long barrel created by the Spanish in the mid-fifteenth century. It was the first gun to rest on the shoulder when being fired and was at the forefront of military weapon technology at the time. During the early eighteenth century, the Bolivian painter, the Master of Calamarca—identified as José López de los Ríos—or his workshop created a well known series of paintings depicting angels with harquebuses, which included *Archangel with Gun, Asiel Timor Dei*. The Latin inscription of *Archangel with Gun, Asiel Timor Dei* indicates the name of the angel, Asiel, and a particular quality: Fears God. This painting was found by itself, but was likely part of a larger series that included angels performing other activities such as drumming and holding lances.



Figure **3.1.3.7.3**: Bartolomé Román, *Archangel Raphael*, c. 1628–1647 (Church of San Pedro de Lima, Peru)

The Catholic Counter Reformation held a militaristic ideology that portrayed the Church as an army and angels as its soldiers. The armed angel in *Asiel Timor Dei* represented this philosophy: its gun and mere existence protects faithful Christians. Although the Council of Trent (1545–1563) had condemned all angelic depictions and names but those of Michael, Gabriel, and Raphael in the mid-sixteenth century, this ban was observed neither in the Viceroyalty of Peru nor in Baroque Spain. In fact, angels appeared in paintings in the royal convents of Las Descalzas Reales and Encarnación in Madrid, Spain. Some of the angels in the paintings of both these convents (painted by Bartolomé Román in the early seventeenth century) were reproduced and sent to the Jesuit Church of San Pedro in Lima, Peru. The workshop of the famed Spanish artist Francisco de Zurbarán also sent paintings of angels to the Monastery of Concepción in Lima. The Spanish Inquisition later prohibited the cult of angels in the mid-seventeenth century, but depictions of angels still flourished in the "New World."



Figure **3.1.3.7.4**: Jerome Wierix, *Holy Trinity with Archangels*, c. 1586-1600

Prints by Flemish engraver Jerome Wierix depicting the seven archangels—Michael, Gabriel, Raphael, Uriel, Jehudiel, Barachiel, Sealtiel, all of whom appear in the Book of Enoch—may have circulated throughout the Andes in the seventeenth century, and influenced angelology discourse in the Americas. European prints were widespread in the Americas because they were cost effective and circulated easily. However, the attire, name, and pose of angels such as the one in *Asiel Timor Dei* separate such angelic depictions from European prints, making it specifically American.

In Catholic teachings, angels explained the spiritual function of the cosmos, and thus could easily stand in for sacred indigenous beings. The asexual body of the angel in *Asiel Timor Dei* is consistent with biblical descriptions. Conversely, early American

images often alluded to angels' connection to certain indigenous sacred planets and natural phenomena, such as rain, hail, stars and comets.

The Aymara and Quechua peoples in the Andes may have associated the harquebus-bearing angel with Illapa, the Andean deity associated with thunder. Catholic angels were also equated with Inka tradition through the myth of the creator god Viracocha and his invisible servants, the beautiful warriors known as huamincas. The Latin inscriptions in the upper left corner of the painting *Asiel Timor Dei* are approximates of the original names of angels, and were related to the names of planetary and elemental angels in indigenous religions.

Military beings



Figure **3.1.3.7.5**: Jacob de Gheyn, Instruction for the Use of the Musket, Fire, from *The Exercise of Arms*, 1607

Firearms did not exist in the Americas before the Spanish conquests, and there is evidence suggesting indigenous people saw guns as supernatural manifestations. Paintings of angels with guns were perhaps representative of both the power of the Spaniards over indigenous people and protection offered to faithful Christians. Prints from the 1607 series, *The Exercise of Arms*, by the Dutch Mannerist engraver Jacob de Gheyn, may have inspired paintings such as *Asiel Timor Dei*. These prints were models for specific military positions and demonstrated how to fire a gun. However, the Andean paintings differ from the prints, since they combine local dress and do not present realistic military positions. The angel in *Asiel Timor Dei* holds the gun like a professional, close to his chest. Although the gun is ready for firing, the angel does not hold the trigger, nor does he hold it at eye level. Contrary to the aggressive face of Gheyn's soldier, the face of the angel is serene. The figure is graceful and almost looks like a dancer. The extended lines of the angel's body recall the Mannerist style still preferred in the Americas in the seventeenth century (Mannerism was a style that came after the Renaissance, in the early 1500s).

Aristocratic beings

The dress of the angels with guns corresponds to the dress of Andean aristocrats and Inka royalty, and is distinct from the military attire of Gheyn's harquebusiers. The dress of *Asiel Timor Dei* was an Andean invention that combines contemporary European fashion and the typical dress of indigenous noblemen. While colonial gentlemen were aware of fashion trends in Europe through the dissemination of prints, they invented certain outfits that came from Spanish America, such as the overcoat with large balloon-like sleeves. The excess of textile in *Asiel Timor Dei* indicates the high social status of its wearer. The elongated plumed hat is a symbol of Inka nobility, as feathers were reserved for nobles and religious ceremonies in pre-Hispanic society. The broad-brim hat on which the feathers are planted was in style in France and Holland around 1630.



Figure 3.1.3.7.6: Master of Calamarca (detail), *Archangel with Gun, Asiel Timor Dei*, before 1728, oil on canvas and gilding, 160 x 110 cm (Museo Nacional de Arte, La Paz, Bolivia)

During the first half of the eighteenth century, when *Asiel Timor Dei* was painted, the use of gold and silver became prohibited in the clothing of nobility. The military was, however, exempt from this rule. The angels with guns personify at once the military, aristocracy, and sacred beings, and were adorned with the most lavish attire. Francisco de Ávila, a priest in Peru who studied native customs, described the second coming of Christ as an event during which an army of well-attired angels with feathered hats would descend from the heavens. Ávila's writings directly allude to the angels with guns, and to the late Viceregal belief that portrayed the first conquistadores as messengers from God.

Additional resources:

Kelly Donahue-Wallace, "Religious Art, 1600-1785," *Art and Architecture of Viceregal Latin America, 1521-1821* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2008).

Eleanor Goodman, "Portraits of Empire: Notes on Angels and Archangels in the Spanish World," in *Art in Spain and the Hispanic World: Essays in Honor of Jonathan Brown*, ed. Sarah Schroth (London: Pal Holberton, 2010), 395-411.

Julia P. Herzberg, "Angels with Guns: Image and Interpretation," *Gloria in Excelsis: The Virgin and Angels in Viceregal Painting of Peru and Bolivia*, Barbara Duncan, ed. (New York: Center for Inter-American Relations, 1986).

Ramón Mujica Pinilla, "Angels and Demons in the conquest of Peru," *Angels, Demons and the New World*, eds. Fernando Cervantes and Andrew Redden (Cambridge University Press, 2013).

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3.1.3.8: Melchor Pérez de Holguín, Entry of the Viceroy Archbishop Morcillo into Potosí

by AGNIESZKA ANNA FICEK

Page ID
179747



Figure **3.1.3.8.1**: Melchor Pérez de Holguín, *Entry of the Viceroy Archbishop Morcillo into Potosí*, 1716, oil on canvas, 240 x 570 cm (Museo de América, Madrid)



Figure **3.1.3.8.2**: Map showing the Viceroyalty of Peru

In this painting, a man of importance and his retinue enter a city through an elaborately decorated arch (seen on the far right). A crowd of soldiers, attendants, and clerics surround this important individual, who is seated under a baldachin (ceremonial canopy) to indicate his status. People peek out of windows to watch the elaborate event that we see unfolding in three different moments of time in the famous Andean "silver city" of Potosí that produced incalculable amounts of silver for the Spanish Crown during the **colonial period** (c. 1534–1820). The procession moves across the canvas, with events unfolding in different parts of the city within two inset scenes at the top center and left.

Melchor Pérez de Holguín represents the triumphal entry of Viceroy Archbishop Diego Morcillo Rubio de Auñón, who was a colonial official and bishop in the **Viceroyalty of Peru**. With his careful attention to detail and his desire to capture the city at its peak, Pérez de Holguín conveys the wealth and splendor of this jewel of the Spanish Crown and the elaborate fanfare with which Morcillo's entry in 1716 was met. Morcillo had come from elsewhere in the viceroyalty to the more remote city of Potosí to make his entrance.

Conquistador Francisco Pizarro had led Spanish forces to invade what is now known as Perú in 1531, and for the next four decades, Spanish conquistadors continued to wage war against the Indigenous people and the powerful Inka Empire as they established the Viceroyalty of Peru. High in the Andes Mountains, the city of Potosí was founded in 1545 after a large vein of silver was discovered in the mountain that would be named the "Cerro Rico," or the "Rich Hill." People flocked to the city, transforming it into the gem of the Andes—at least for a time. While the magnitude of silver mining is unknown, locals contend that Spaniards could have built a silver bridge from Potosí (in Bolivia today) to Madrid and still have silver to carry over. By 1573, Potosí was one of the largest cities in the world, and by the seventeenth century Potosí became a glittering urban marvel.



Figure **3.1.3.8.3**: Right side of the painting showing the triumphal arch under which the Viceroy Archbishop Morcillo and his retinue pass. The viceroy is under a baldachin. Melchor Pérez de Holguín, *Entry of the Viceroy Archbishop Morcillo into Potosí* (detail), 1716, oil on canvas, 240 x 570 cm (Museo de América, Madrid)

A triumphal entry

In the Spanish Colonial world, the triumphal entries (*entradas* in Spanish) of viceroys in major cities were a display of propaganda and political allegiances, and had a long history in Europe dating back to the Middle Ages. The viceroy was considered a stand-in for the King of Spain and was treated with the fanfare and pageantry upon entering a city as would be expected of royalty. Morcillo's *entrada* into Potosí in 1716 was such an important event that colonial officials from all over the Viceroyalty of Peru came to watch the pageantry and power on display. Chroniclers recorded it in great detail, and Pérez de Holguín captured it in paint. [1] Pérez de Holguín, who lived in Potosí, recorded the events in a continuous narrative across three scenes: the viceroy entering the city, his reception by political and church leaders in the main square, and the evening festivities that followed.

This painting was most likely commissioned by Don Francisco Gambarte, a successful local businessman and elite member of the community. The intended audience were powerful *potosinos* (people who lived in Potosí) who would have understood the work as a symbol of the influence and prestige of their city.



Figure **3.1.3.8.4**: An example of a processional painting. Anonymous Cusco artist, *Procession of Corpus Christi*, c. 1700–1800 (Museo Pedro de Osma)

The procession

Processional paintings were a common form of colonial Peruvian art. Works showing the **procession of Corpus Christi** show similar processional traditions as those in Potosí in colonial Peruvian cities: elaborate baldachins, streets decorated with tapestries and paintings, and well-dressed citizens lining the processional route. The *Entry of the Viceroy Morcillo*, however, does not show a religious procession, but the entry of a political figure into a remote but important city in his dominion.



Figure **3.1.3.8.5**: Right side of the painting showing the triumphal arch under which the Viceroy Archbishop Morcillo and his retinue pass. The viceroy is under a baldachin. Melchor Pérez de Holguín, *Entry of the Viceroy Archbishop Morcillo into Potosí* (detail), 1716, oil on canvas, 240 x 570 cm (Museo de América, Madrid)

The main register shows the Viceroy's retinue wearing the finest fashion of the day, greeted with a triumphal arch at the city's wall, covered in gold, paintings, and large statues of the archangels: all allusions to the power of the Spanish Crown. In the Spanish American colonies, as in Spain, walking under a triumphal arch was a privilege reserved only for the holders of high office. [2] The viceroy travelled under an embroidered silk baldachin with golden fringe. The arrival of a viceroy, especially to a remote city like

Potosí, was a rare and celebrated occurrence and no cost would be spared to mark the occasion, both to underscore the colonial power of the Spanish administration and to impress upon the viceroy the wealth, culture, and patriotism of the city's population.



Figure **3.1.3.8.6**: *Potosinos* watching the procession; banners and paintings hang from balconies and walls along the route. Melchor Pérez de Holguín, *Entry of the Viceroy Archbishop Morcillo into Potosí* (detail), 1716, oil on canvas, 240 x 570 cm (Museo de América, Madrid)

Along the processional route in the main scene, *potosinos* line the streets and peer out of buildings to catch a glimpse of the cavalcade as it moves to the center of the city. Women are shown wearing their finest clothes and jewels, although they do not take an active part in the procession or the celebrations that follow. The street is decorated with banners and allegorical paintings referring to virtues the Spanish colonizers expected their subjects to embody. Scenes showing classical mythology such as Icarus and Daedalus, Eros and Anteros, and Mercury and Argos speak to humility or warn against unrequited love or deceit, and are decidedly Eurocentric understandings of how one should act.



Figure **3.1.3.8.7**: Top left register of Melchor Pérez de Holguín, *Entry of the Viceroy Archbishop Morcillo into Potosí* (detail), 1716, oil on canvas, 240 x 570 cm (Museo de América, Madrid)

In the inset at the top left, we see Morcillo welcomed into the city center. Pérez de Hoguín has labeled significant buildings around the main plaza (see the annotated image below), such as: the mint (Casa de la Moneda), emphasizing the city's economic

importance in the colony; the Casa del Corregidor, where the *corregidor* (a Spanish colonial official) served in his administrative and judicial function over the city; and the *carcel*, or jail, demonstrating the officials' dedication to enforcing colonial law.



Figure **3.1.3.8.8**: Top left register of Melchor Pérez de Holguín, *Entry of the Viceroy Archbishop Morcillo into Potosí* (detail), 1716, oil on canvas, 240 x 570 cm (Museo de América, Madrid)



Figure **3.1.3.8.9**: Inscription in the lower right, Melchor Pérez de Holguín, *Entry of the Viceroy Archbishop Morcillo into Potosí* (detail), 1716, oil on canvas, 240 x 570 cm (Museo de América, Madrid)

The use of text within the painting allows the artist to not only provide important historical context, but capture the character of the city and its place within the Spanish colonial world. In the lower right, a caption speaks to the ceremony not only in describing the day, but also enumerating all of Morcillo's titles and honors. In this caption, Pérez de Holguín also names the colonial officials who welcomed Morcillo into the city: Don Francisco Gambarte, and Don Pedro Navarro, as well as Don Francisco Tirado, the *corregidor* of the Andean city of Cuenca (present-day Ecuador).



Figure **3.1.3.8.10**: Top center register of Melchor Pérez de Holguín, *Entry of the Viceroy Archbishop Morcillo into Potosí* (detail), 1716, oil on canvas, 240 x 570 cm (Museo de América, Madrid)

In the top center inset scene, Morcillo is seated under a light pink baldachin, on a wheeled platform, while a parade of important figures dressed as knights, Moors, and Inka royalty entertain the crowd.



Figure **3.1.3.8.11**: Morcillo's coat of arms. Melchor Pérez de Holguín, *Entry of the Viceroy Archbishop Morcillo into Potosí* (detail), 1716, oil on canvas, 240 x 570 cm (Museo de América, Madrid)

Pérez de Holguín pays homage to the Viceroy by including Morcillo's family coat of arm at the center of the painting and an angel carrying the papal crown, which symbolizes the Pope's blessing of both the procession and Morcillo's leadership.



Figure 3.1.3.8.12: Conversation between an elderly couple. Melchor Pérez de Holguín, *Entry of the Viceroy Archbishop Morcillo into Potosí* (detail), 1716, oil on canvas, 240 x 570 cm (Museo de América, Madrid)

The artist includes some humor in the procession, showing an older couple remarking on the festivities. The conversation is recorded in snaking, gold text. The old man asks: "Hey girl, when's the last time you saw such a marvel" (*Hija, tilonga has bisto esta marabilla*). The woman, pointing at the procession, answers: "I swear, I have not seen anything so grand for more than one hundred years" (*Alucha en ciento y tanto años no e bisto grandeza tamaña*).



Figure 3.1.3.8.13: A self-portrait of the artist above his signature. Melchor Perez de Holguin, *Entry of the Viceroy Archbishop Morcillo into Potosí* (detail, 1716, oil on canvas, 240 x 570 cm (Museo de América, Madrid)

The artist has also included his own self-portrait next to his signature. By emphasizing his presence at the events, Pérez de Holguín implicitly attests to their accuracy, reminding the viewer that he was there and experienced the events first-hand. Still, it is important to remember that Pérez de Holguín infused his painting with his own biases and narratives about the city, and its place — not just in the viceroyalty but in the world.

Together, the three painted scenes and the textual inscriptions suggest how processions, the performance of colonial authority, and painting were used for political purposes by administrators in the viceroyalty of Peru, especially to demonstrate their power in their dominions.)

Colonial Potosí and the desire to impress

Pérez de Holguín's painting allows us to understand more about the population of this once-great city that at one point was the most important producer of Spanish wealth. It provides insight into how the city's people interacted with those in power and the way that the city was connected to the rest of the viceroyalty.

Local legend states that the founding of Potosí begins with an Indigenous llama herder named Diego Huallpa who hid inside a crack in the mountain while he chased an escaped animal. When he was forced to spend the night inside the mountain, he lit a fire which allowed him to see a thick vein of silver running through the red mountain. The next day, he told the Spanish conquistadors

what he had found, and the city surrounding the Cerro Rico started to grow as more and more Spaniards arrived to find their fortune.

Another local story says that the silver was actually discovered far earlier, by Huayna Capac, the eleventh Sapa Inka. The legend continues to say that when the Andeans began to extract the metal, a thunderous voice bellowed from the sky telling them that the silver was meant for other masters. From then on, the mountain was known as *Potocchi*, the local word for 'thunder', which later became hispanicized to *Potosí*. This story conveys the idea that the Spanish conquest of Peru was justified and predestined.

In the early colonial period, the population of the rough and arid Andean town boomed due to silver mining, as thousands of Spaniards arrived, along with thousands more free and forced Indigenous workers and enslaved Africans. The wealthiest *potosinos* had access to jewels and pearls imported from all over the world, as well as the finest silks and lace.



Figure **3.1.3.8.14**: *Potosinos* watching the procession, and who have hung banners and paintings from balconies and on walls. Melchor Pérez de Holguín, *Entry of the Viceroy Archbishop Morcillo into Potosí* (detail, 1716, oil on canvas, 240 x 570 cm (Museo de América, Madrid)

The excesses enjoyed by the people of Potosi as it boomed with silver mining was magnified by the cost and effort that was needed to import luxury goods into such a remote city so high in the mountains. After 1650, however, the population began to decline as the prices of silver dropped, and the costs of extracting the silver grew. Due to its remote location, it was particularly difficult to import necessary materials to continue extracting silver, and, by the time Pérez de Holguín painted *Entry of Viceroy Morcillo* in the 18th century, the town was considerably less powerful and wealthy than it had been a century prior.

Through the extravagant *entrada* with Morcillo, the people of Potosí hoped to secure the viceroy's favor to revitalize the city and bring it back to its former glory. Even though the city was economically depressed by this time, Pérez de Holguín shows it as a splendorous jewel in the Spanish colonial crown. The citizens of Potosí watch the procession in their finest clothing. Paintings and expensive textiles decorate the city. The city is painted at its finest.

La Montaña Que Come Hombres (The Mountain the Eats Men)



Figure **3.1.3.8.15**: The Cerro Rico. Melchor Pérez de Holguín, *Entry of the Viceroy Archbishop Morcillo into Potosí* (detail), 1716, oil on canvas, 240 x 570 cm (Museo de América, Madrid)

At the very top left corner of the painting, in the background of one of the smaller inset scenes Pérez de Holguín included the Cerro Rico, identifiable by the criss-crossing paths across the mountain's face, and the label that Pérez de Holguín has included in the painting. It is very unusual that the artist has relegated the most iconic feature of the town to the edge of the painting.

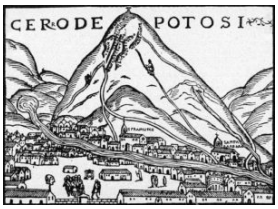


Figure **3.1.3.8.16**: Pedro Cieza de Leon, *Cerro de Potosí*, 1552

Most representations of Potosí privileged the mountain over the city, such as Pedro Cieza de Léon's 1553 woodcut print of the city, or an anonymous watercolor drawing from the end of the sixteenth century, *The Silver Mines of Potosí.* Pérez de Holguín's enormous and detailed painting emphasized life in the city rather than the mountain.

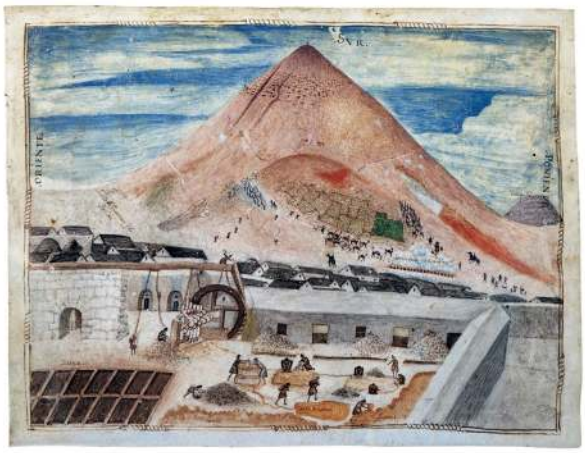


Figure **3.1.3.8.17**: Anonymous Spanish artist, *The Silver Mine at Potosí*, c. 1585, watercolor (The Hispanic Society)

In creating this monument to civic pride, it is possible that the artist wanted to distance his city from the Cerro Rico, which, by the eighteenth century, had a notorious reputation for the brutal working conditions suffered by the Indigenous miners. The conditions were so deadly that the people of the city began to call the Cerro Rico "the mountain that eats men" (la montaña que come hombres). The poverty and destitution of most workers were excluded from Pérez de Holguín's festive and extravagant scenes.



Figure **3.1.3.8.18**: Melchor Perez de Holguin, *Entry of the Viceroy Archbishop Morcillo into Potosí*, 1716, oil on canvas, 240 x 570 cm (Museo de América, Madrid)

A painted construction

Pérez de Holguín creates an opulent vision of the city of Potosí, recalling its history as a majestic metropolis, while disregarding the infamous stories of poverty and exploitation in the mines of the Cerro Rico. The great celebrations that he records, however, did not secure the financial and political help needed to return Potosí to its former glory. A few months following Morcillo's entry into

Potosí, he was replaced as viceroy and the city continued to suffer from increasing economic decline and no longer wielded the political and financial power that had—less than a century before—made it a gem in the Spanish colonial crown.

Notes:

[1] The event is described with great detail by the contemporary chronicler, Bartolomé Arzáns de Orsúa y Vela (1674–1736), whose *Historia de la Villa Imperial de Potosí* serves as an exhaustive primary source on life in the colonial city. Echoing the grandeur shown in Pérez de Holguin's painting, Arzáns' account celebrates the lavishness of Potosí and highlights the city's loyalty to the Crown.

[2] Carolyn Dean, *Inka Bodies and the Body of Christ: Corpus Christi in Colonial Cuzco, Peru (*Durham: Duke University Press, 1999), p. 19.

Additional resources:

Entry of the Viceroy Archbishop Morcillo into Potosí on Google Arts and Culture

Portrait Painting in the Viceroyalty of Peru

Dana Leibsohn and Barbara E. Mundy, ***Vistas: Visual Culture in Spanish America, 1520–1820***, 2015.

Introduction to Andean Cultures

Harun Farocki, *The Silver and the Cross [Das Silber und das Kreuz]*, two-channel video installation, directed by Harun Farocki, 2010 (Berlin: Harun Farocki Filmproduktion, 2010, digital film)

The Hispanic Society of America and Columbia University, "**The Silver Mine a Potosí**"

Richard L. Kagan, *Urban Images of the Hispanic World (*New Haven; Yale University Press: 2000), pp. 151–199

This page titled 3.1.3.8: Melchor Pérez de Holguín, Entry of the Viceroy Archbishop Morcillo into Potosí is shared under a CC BY-NC-SA 4.0 license and was authored, remixed, and/or curated by Agnieszka Anna Ficek, "Melchor Pérez de Holguín, Entry of the Viceroy Archbishop Morcillo into Potosí," in Smarthistory, April 6, 2021, accessed November 11, 2022, https://smarthistory.org/melchor-perez-de-holguin-entry-viceroy-into-potosi/.

SECTION OVERVIEW

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3.1.3.9.1: Our Lady of Cocharcas and the Cuzco School of Painting

by **DR. ANANDA COHEN-APONTE**

Page ID 179749

In 1688, a group of indigenous artists initiated a legal battle that would change the course of artistic production for the rest of the colonial period. Tensions between Spanish and indigenous artists working within the same guild came to a head eleven years earlier, when a group of native artists withdrew from participation in the creation of a triumphal arch for Cuzco's **Corpus Christi** procession (a feast commemorating the institution of the Holy Eucharist). Both parties accused the other of drunkenness and a poor work ethic, undoubtedly fueled by the tensions that arose from Cuzco's hierarchical guild system, which prevented non-elite indigenous artists from assuming master status.

This ultimately led to the formation of an independent indigenous painting workshop known as the Cuzco School of Painting. The legal success of the indigenous painters liberated them from the strict dictates of the Europeanizing styles they were expected to emulate. The Cuzco School developed a unique artistic signature characterized by a bright color palette, flattened forms, indigenous symbolism, and a profusion of gold ornament.

Cuzco School paintings came into such high demand that they were exported to patrons residing in far-flung cities located in present-day Chile and Argentina. In a 1788 publication entitled *Fundación de la Real Audiencia de Cuzco* (Foundation of the Royal Audience of Cuzco), the author even mentions the existence of a market for Cuzco School paintings in Italy.

Our Lady of Cocharcas

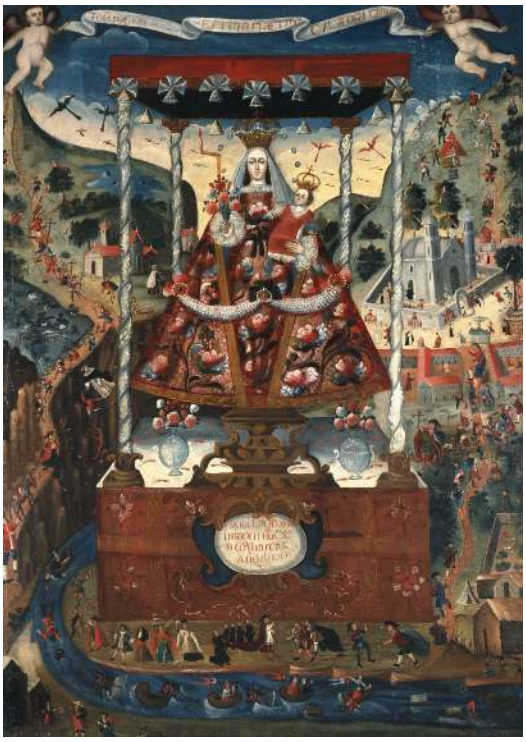


Figure **3.1.3.9.1.1**: Our Lady of Cocharcas, 1765, oil on canvas, 198.8 x 143.5 cm (Brooklyn Museum)



Figure **3.1.3.9.1.2**: Detail, Our *Lady of Cocharcas*, 1765, oil on canvas, 198.8 x 143.5 cm (Brooklyn Museum)

One iconic example of this new Cuzco school aesthetic is an eighteenth-century painting, *Our Lady of Cocharcas*, which depicts the Virgin within an elaborate canopy. The painting commemorates the inauguration of the Sanctuary of Our Lady of Cocharcas in 1623. She wears a mountain-like conical dress that visually referenced the Virgin's association with Pachamama, the Andean mother earth. The gold leaf appliqué draws the eye to the center of the composition, highlighting the Virgin's resplendent vestments.

The artist does not attempt to model the dress's gold and beaded ornamentation around the body; the Virgin looks stiff and flat. This does not by any means take away from the vibrancy of the composition, however. The scene teems with life, populated by hordes of pilgrims paying their respects to the Virgin. Religious and secular themes seamlessly coexist in the background, which features faithful devotees alongside playful scenes of everyday life.

Paintings of sculptures



Figure **3.1.3.9.1.3**: The sculpture of the Virgin of Copacabana in the Basilica of our Lady of Copacobana, Bolivia (photo: **Dennis Jarvis**, CC BY-SA 2.0)

This painting belongs to a broader genre of colonial Andean statue paintings that depict not the Virgin herself, but a representation of the statue of the Virgin that was brought to the town of Cocharcas by an indigenous man named Sebastián Quimichi. A native of Cocharcas, Quimichi embarked on a pilgrimage to the shrine of the Virgin of Copacabana on the shores of Lake Titicaca (which straddles the modern-day border between Peru and Bolivia) in search of a cure for his injured hand.

Moved by the healing powers of the Virgin of Copacabana, he raised funds for the construction of a copy of the Copacabana sculpture so that he could bring it back to Cocharcas to inspire devotion of her in his hometown. The painting depicts the moment in which the statue of the Virgin of Cocharcas is transferred to her newly consecrated sanctuary, celebrated by an astoundingly diverse population of pilgrims, including priests, indigenous peoples, ***mestizos*** (the child of a Spanish man and an Indigenous woman), and Afro Peruvians, both old and young, male and female.

Cuzco School paintings like *Our Lady of Cocharcas* introduced Andean renditions of Catholic subjects that strongly resonated with their viewers and patrons, serving as emblems of piety and local identity.

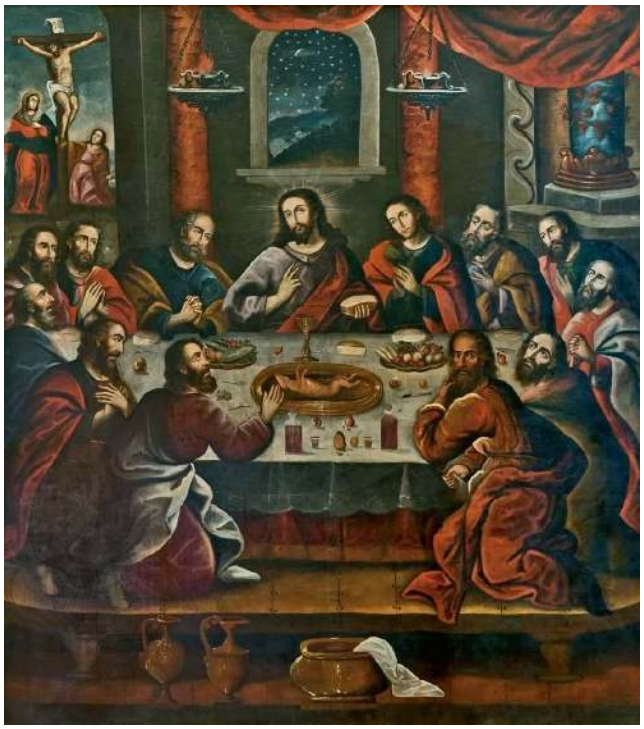


Figure **3.1.3.9.1.4**: Marcos Zapata, Last Supper, 1753 (Cuzco Cathedral)

The longevity of the Cuzco School

Marcos Zapata's *Last Supper*, located in the Cuzco Cathedral, speaks to the longevity of the Cuzco School style in highland Peru. Painted in 1753, the image lacks the bright color palette and gold leaf that characterized many of the earlier paintings. Nevertheless, Zapata retains a similar anecdotal rendering of illusionistic space and compositional intimacy seen in images like *Our Lady of Cocharcas*.

Zapata's desire to imbue his paintings with local flavor is clearly seen in his depiction of the culinary delicacy awaiting the diners' lips. While European artists usually depicted an empty platter at the center of the table (or at times containing the Paschal Lamb), Zapata has filled the requisite platter with a roasted ***vizcacha***, a small rodent native to the Andes. These kinds of subtle inclusions gave Cuzco School paintings a resolute "Andeanness" that appealed to local knowledge and wedded them to the cultural contexts in which they were conceived.

Additional resources:

Read more about the arts of the Spanish Americas

Ananda Cohen-Aponte, *Heaven, Hell, and Everything in Between: Murals of the Colonial Andes* (University of Texas Press, 2016)

Emily A. Engel, "Visualizing a Colonial Peruvian Community in the Eighteenth-Century Paintings of Our Lady of Cocharcas." *Religion and the Arts* 13, no. 3 (2009): 299–339

Carol Damian, "Artist and Patron in Colonial Cuzco: Workshops, Contracts, and a Petition for Independence." *Colonial Latin American Historical Review* 4, no. 1 (1995): 25–53

José de Mesa and Teresa Gisbert, *Historia de la pintura cuzqueña*, 2nd ed. (Lima: Fundación Banco Wiesse, 1982)

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3.1.3.9.2: The Coronation of the Virgin by the Holy Trinity

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3.1.3.9.3: The Child Mary Spinning

by **DR. KATHRYN SANTNER** and **DR. LAUREN KILROY-EWBANK**

Page ID

179751



The Child Mary Spinning, 18th century, oil on canvas, Cusco, Peru, 36 x 28 inches (Collection of Carl & Marilynn Thoma)

Additional resources

The Child Mary Spinning on the Thoma Foundation's website

The **Thoma Foundation's Art of the Spanish Americas collection**

Learn more about the **Cusco School of Painting**

Gaby Greenlee, "Threshold objects: viewing textiles in a colonial Andean painting," *World Art* 7, no. 1 (2017): pp. 37–63

Sabena Kull, "Spinning a Common Thread: Popular Paintings of the Child Virgin in 17th–18th Century Seville and Peru," *Athanor* XXXII (2014): pp. 25–35

Museo Pedro de Osma (Lima: Fundación Pedro de Osma G., 1995)

Los siglos del oro en los virreinatos de América, 1550–1700 (Madrid: Sociedad Estatal para la Conmemoración de los Centenarios de Felipe II y Carlos V, 1999)

Cite this page as: Dr. Kathryn Santner and Dr. Lauren Kilroy-Ewbank, "*The Child Mary Spinning*," in *Smarthistory*, December 21, 2021, accessed November 11, 2022, **https://smarthistory.org/child-mary-spinning/**.

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3.1.3.9.4: Cusco School Artist, Saint Joseph and the Christ Child

by MYA DOSCH

Page ID
179752



Figure **3.1.3.9.4.1**: Cusco School Artist, *Saint Joseph and the Christ Child*, late 17th-18th century, oil on canvas, 109.2 x 81.6 cm (Brooklyn Museum)

From comic relief to a starring role

St. Joseph holds the hand of his foster son, the miraculous Christ Child. The gold-adorned halos of the two figures radiate light into the lush landscape around them. Joseph's wife, the Virgin Mary, is nowhere to be seen, focusing our attention on Joseph's paternal role. Paintings that celebrated St. Joseph as a youthful, caring father skyrocketed to popularity during the 16th and 17th centuries, both in Spain and throughout the Spanish Empire. In earlier European Catholicism, Joseph was considered a peripheral saint (he is only mentioned in the New Testament eight times). In paintings from this earlier period, Joseph was often depicted as an aging man humorously dozing off in a corner at the Nativity. St. Joseph went from comic relief to a starring role in Hispanic devotions by the 17th century. This particular painting of the lively, vigorous St. Joseph is from the Andean region of the Viceroyalty of Peru. The Viceroyalty of Peru (1542-1824) was one of two Spanish Viceroyalties, or administrative districts, in the Americas, which eventually encompassed much of South America. Joseph remains one of the patron saints of Peru to this day.

Why the newfound popularity?

St. Joseph was a figure to whom devotees could relate. Just as the Virgin Mary was a model of the ideal mother and woman, St. Joseph could encourage male believers to emulate his example as a devoted father and husband. Sixteenth-century Italian theologian Isidoro de Isolani argued that Joseph was vital for his role as the honorable head of the Holy Family. St. Joseph was also the patron saint of marriage. In Lima, Peru, praying to a statue of St. Joseph was said to "cure" jealous husbands and restore marital harmony. Joseph's role as model patriarch was particularly important to the Catholic Church, as Christian marriage was a means of structuring the recently converted indigenous populations of the Spanish Americas. By encouraging marriage between Spanish and Indigenous elites, the Spanish crown could consolidate its power. Furthermore, they could attempt to strengthen Christian devotion among the indigenous peoples by promoting the Christian ritual of marriage and outlawing indigenous marriage rites.



Figure **3.1.3.9.4.2**: Landscape (detail), Cusco School Artist, *Saint Joseph and the Christ Child*, late 17th-18th century, oil on canvas, 109.2 x 81.6 cm (Brooklyn Museum)

This image of St. Joseph differs from saints' images elsewhere in the Spanish Empire. It exhibits several of the distinctive features of the regional "Cusco School" of painting (Cusco is the name of this region—in the Central Peruvian Andes of South America). The Cuzco-School style developed as indigenous Andean artists adopted techniques imported by artists from Spain and Flanders. For example, they embraced the Flemish interest in detailed landscapes and atmospheric perspective, seen here in the use of light blue tones to suggest distant hills. Cuzqueño artists also incorporated local details, such as regional flora and tropical birds.



Figure **3.1.3.9.4.3**: St. Joseph (detail), Cusco School Artist, *Saint Joseph and the Christ Child*, late 17th-18th century, oil on canvas, 109.2 x 81.6 cm (Brooklyn Museum)



Figure **3.1.3.9.4.4**: Christ child (detail), Cusco School Artist, *Saint Joseph and the Christ Child*, late 17th-18th century, oil on canvas, 109.2 x 81.6 cm (Brooklyn Museum)

Fabrics received particular attention in Cusco School paintings, and are often adorned with elaborate patterns and gold leaf (a thin layer of gold applied to the surface of painting). In this example, the billowing robes of Joseph and the Christ Child are depicted with incredible intricacy. Gold stamping is present throughout the costumes' brocaded designs, their cuffs, their hems, and their lace trim.

The Inka people of pre-conquest Peru highly valued textiles, and the prestige bestowed by fabrics continued long after the Spanish colonized the region. Cumbi cloth, the highest-quality fabric produced in Peru, was among the most expensive commodities available to a colonial Peruvian individual during the 17th and 18th centuries. A painting such as St. Joseph and the Christ Child, on the other hand, would have cost only one-fifth the price of a mantle of the finest cumbi cloth. Painting could, however, evoke the multicolored lavishness of a textile—and some of its status—but at a much lower cost.



Figure **3.1.3.9.4.5**: Felipe Guaman Poma de Ayala, *Drawing 25: "The First Inka, Manco Capac Inka," Nueva corónica y buen gobierno*, 1615, GKS 2232, 4° (The Royal Library, Copenhagen)

In addition to the opulent textiles, other aspects of the painting infuse the Euro-Christian figures with Andean elements. The bright red sandals worn by the Christ Child, for example, are the same style as those worn by the indigenous Inkan elite. Images of Inkan leaders sporting similar footwear appear in the manuscript by Felipe Guaman Poma de Ayala, *The First New Chronicle and Good Government* (*El primer nueva corónica y buen gobierno*, 1615) (a historical account of the Andes and a critique of Spanish colonial rule sent to the Spanish king).

Visual bilingualism

In the eyes of a colonial Cusqueño (an inhabitant of Cusco) then, this Christ Child might evoke both the Sapa Inka, or supreme Inkan ruler, as well as the Christian savior. Both the Sapa Inka and Christ were associated with solar symbolism: the Sapa Inka was the son of the sun god, and Christ was considered the *lux mundi* or "light of the world." In *St. Joseph and the Christ Child*, both figures have detailed sunburst halos and gleaming gold robes, a reminder of this solar association.

Colonial officials hoped to exploit the similarity between the two figures by substituting the figure of Christ for revered Inkan deities. For example, official colonial observances of *Inti Raymi*, the festival of the sun, celebrated Christ's defeat of the Inka. However, paintings like this one show that the two visual languages could coexist, in spite of official events that championed the Christian over the Inka. Descendants of Indigenous elites proudly displayed paintings of their Inkan forebears alongside Christian images as a means to highlight their noble genealogy. The painting *St. Joseph and the Christ Child* likely hung in a domestic setting, allowing the owners to pray to St. Joseph for marital harmony within the comforts of their own sitting room or bedchamber.

St. Joseph and the Christ Child shows that an Andean consumer could appeal to both their prestigious Inkan heritage and their Christian family values through one single image. While Inkan and Euro-Christian styles may seem like two very distinct "visual languages," *St. Joseph and the Christ Child* reminds us that many colonial viewers could have been fluent in both.

Additional resources:

Maya Stanfield-Mazzi, "The Possessor's Agency: Private Art Collecting in the Colonial Andes," *Colonial Latin American Review* vol. 18, no. 3 (2009, pp. 339-64.

Charlene Villaseñor-Black, *Creating the Cult of St. Joseph: Art and Gender in the Spanish Empire* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2006).

This painting at the Brooklyn Museum

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3.1.3.9.5: Conserving Cuzco School Paintings

- by **THE METROPOLITAN MUSEUM OF ART**

Page ID

179753



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3.1.3.10: Fourteen portraits of the Inka Kings

by CARLA COLON

Page ID

179754

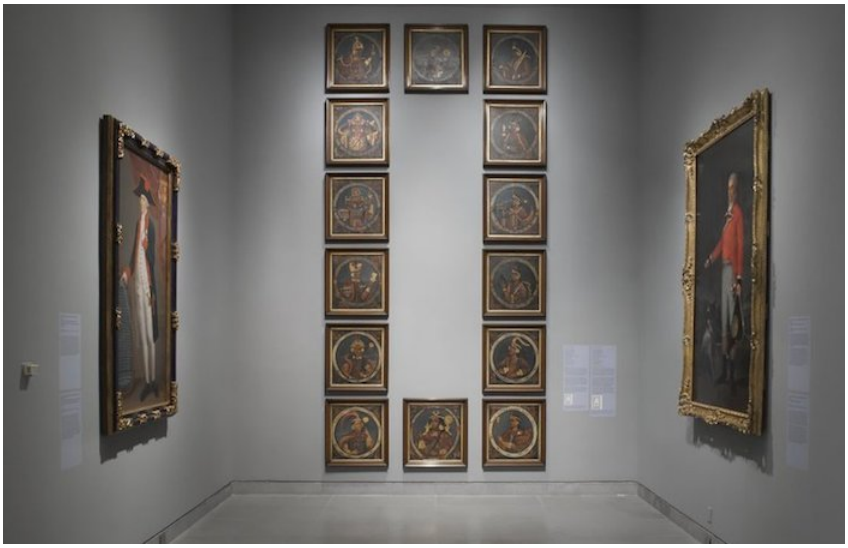


Figure **3.1.3.10.1**: Series of 14 portraits of the Inka Kings, probably mid-18th century, oil on canvas, Peru (Brooklyn Museum)



Figure **3.1.3.10.2**: Felipe Guaman Poma de Ayala, *Nueva corónica y buen gobierno* (*portrait of Tupac Yupanqui, Tenth Inka*), 1615

In the Pre-Hispanic period (the period before Spanish colonization) the Inka did not have a tradition of portrait painting comparable to that of Europeans (the Inka Empire was on the west coast of South America, and included parts of present day Peru, Ecuador, Colombia and Bolivia). However, following the Spanish Conquest (c. 1534) they quickly appropriated European painting conventions. For example, the images of Sapa Inkas (the sovereign Inka emperors) in Felipe Guaman Poma de Ayala's famed illustrated chronicle *El primer nueva corónica y buen gobierno* (*The First New Chronicle and Good Government*, c. 1615) are among the earliest examples of European-style portraiture executed by an indigenous artist.



Figure 3.1.3.10.3: Atahualpa, Fourteenth Inka, c. mid-18th century, oil on canvas, 23 ½ x 21 11/16″ (Brooklyn Museum of Art, New York)



Figure 3.1.3.10.4: Antonia de Herrera, *Historia general de los hechos de los castellanos en las y tierra firme del mar océano*, (fifth decade title page), 1615

The Brooklyn Museum of Art has in its collection a series of fourteen portraits of Inka rulers—one of the portraits depicts the sixteenth-century Inka emperor Atahualpa, dressed in elaborate textiles and wearing golden jewelry. He also holds a royal staff capped with a golden sun, and a golden crown of intertwined snakes rests atop his head.

The Brooklyn series is based on an earlier portrait series which illustrated the Spanish historian and chronicler Antonio Herrera's *Historia general de los hechos de los castellanos en las islas y tierra firme del mar océano (General History of the Deeds of the Castillians on the Islands and Mainland of the Ocean Sea Known as the West Indies)* first published in 1615. *General History*, a four-volume history of the Americas also known as *Décadas*, is a descriptive narration of events focused on the experience of the Spanish conquistadors (a term used for a conquering Spanish or Portugese soldier). The history is divided into eight decades, each of which is introduced by a unique, engraved title page. The title page (left) introducing the fifth decade was the model for the Brooklyn series of Inka rulers.

In both the engraving and the painted series, the figures' postures and regalia as well as the strategies of representation correspond closely. The Inka kings are shown as half-length figures set in decorative roundels on which are inscribed their names and positions in the line of royal succession. Notably absent from the Herrera engraving is the image of Atahualpa. He is, though, included in the Brooklyn series—with an inscription that reads "bastard tyrant Atahualpa." The increased scale of his figure in the roundel deviates from the conventions of the other thirteen portraits, such as those of Huayna Capac or Huascar.[1]

Atahualpa and the Spaniards



Figure **3.1.3.10.5**: Right: *Huayna Capac, Twelfth Inka*, c. mid-18th century, oil on canvas, 23 1/2 x 21 11/16″ (Brooklyn Museum of Art); left: *Huascar, Thirteenth Inka*, c. mid-18th century, oil on canvas, 23 1/2 x 21 11/16″ (Brooklyn Museum of Art)

Atahualpa was the last Sapa Inka before the Spanish Conquest began around 1534. As the inscription on the Brooklyn portrait makes explicit, he was the illegitimate son of Sapa Inka Huayna Capac who died of smallpox in 1528. Although Atahualpa ultimately prevailed in a battle with his elder brother Huascar (born of a different mother) for control of the Inka empire—the timing of the victory was unfortunate. While the civil war raged, the Spanish conquistador Franciso Pizarro, who had landed in present-day Ecuador on his third expedition to the Americas, made his way southward along the western coast of the continent, pillaging and murdering as he traveled. In November of 1523, Atahualpa was celebrating his victory in the city of Cajamarca awaiting the arrival of his prisoner, his brother Huascar. He had learned of Pizarro's expedition party but believed a retinue of less than two hundred men posed little threat. On November 16 Atahualpa, sumptuously attired, rode into the plaza of Cajamarca atop a luxurious litter (a platform for passengers carried by people) accompanied by high ranking Inka nobles and several thousand guards. He was met by the Dominican friar Vicente de Valverde and an interpreter. After a tense exchange in which Atahualpa threw to the ground a book of Catholic prayers offered to him by Valverde, the friar called out to the Spaniards who had hidden themselves, their mounts and artillery in the buildings surrounding the plaza. Pizarro signaled his men to charge, and in the ambush that followed several thousand Andeans were massacred and Atahualpa was taken prisoner.

In captivity, Atahualpa quickly discovered the Spaniards' lust for silver and gold. He offered Pizarro an impressive ransom in exchange for his freedom, promising to fill a room approximately 6.2m x 4.8m to half its height (2.5 meters) with gold objects and the same room twice over with silver objects. For the next eight months, gold and silver streamed into Cajamarca from across the empire. Beginning in June the Spaniards began melting down the cache of treasure and divvying up the spoils. After the ransom had been melted and dispersed—and in response to mounting pressure among the expedition party—Pizarro had Atahualpa executed on July 26, 1533, by garroting (a method of execution by which a tightened metal collar results in strangulation).

Who owned this series?

During the colonial period if you visited the home of a powerful *cacique* (an Indian chieftain or nobleman) you might see royal portraits depicting the succession of Inka kings displayed. Portraits of royal Inka genealogies were especially important in the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries—these aristocratic genealogies were employed by the Inka elite to assert their privileged social status and claim political power in the viceroyalty. Following the Tupac Amaru II rebellion (1780-81), Inkaist imagery (like depictions of the Sapa Inkas) was banned by Spanish colonial authorities who feared that depictions of aristocratic Inka forbearers as well as contemporary Inka nobility would incite subsequent uprisings. Genealogical Inka portraits, such as the Brooklyn series, would have been seen as subversive in this moment.

1. There are two potential sources for the *General History* engravings upon which the Brooklyn series is based. The first are paintings of Pre-Hispanic Inka rulers commissioned in 1572 by the Viceroy Franciso de Toledo and sent to King Phillip II of Spain. The second is a painting commissioned by Inkas of royal descent in Cuzco which depicted Pre-Hispanic Inka rulers and their

descendants. This painting, which was sent to Spain in 1603, served as evidence of the commissioners' royal lineage and established their claim to rights as nobility under Spanish law. Unfortunately since neither of the proposed models for the General History engravings exist any more, we are limited to speculation about its original source.

Additional resources:

These portraits at the Brooklyn Museum

Gold of the Indies on The Metropolitan Museum of Art's Heilbrunn Timeline of Art History

Aste, Richard, ed. *Behind Closed Doors: Art in the Spanish American Home, 1492-1898* (New York: The Brooklyn Museum, Monacelli Press, 2013).

Cummins, Thomas B.F., "We are the Other: Peruvian Portraits of Colonial Kurakakuna, " in *Transatlantic Encounters: Europeans and Andeans in the Sixteenth Century*, ed. by Kenneth J. Andrien and Rolena Adorno (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1991) pp. 203-231.

Terence N. D'Altroy, *The Incas* (Malden and Oxford: Blackwell Publishers Inc, 2002).

Carolyn Dean, "Inka Nobles: Portraiture and Paradox in Colonial Peru," in *Exploring New World Imagery: Spanish Colonial Papers from the 2002 Mayer Center Symposium*, ed. by Donna Pierce (Denver: Frederick and Jan Mayer Center for Pre-Columbian and Spanish Colonial Art, Denver Art Museum, 2005), pp. 80-103.

Diana Fane, ed. *Converging Cultures: Art and Identity in Spanish America* (New York: The Brooklyn Museum in association with Harry N. Abrams, 1996).

This page titled 3.1.3.10: Fourteen portraits of the Inka Kings is shared under a CC BY-NC-SA 4.0 license and was authored, remixed, and/or curated by Carla Colon, "Fourteen portraits of the Inka Kings," in Smarthistory, August 9, 2015, accessed November 24, 2020, https://smarthistory.org/fourteen-portraits-of-the-inka-kings/.

- **11.6: South America c. 1500 - 1900** by Smarthistory is licensed CC BY-NC-SA 4.0.

3.1.3.11: Official Portrait of Bishop Luis Francisco Romero

by **DR. CATHERINE E. BURDICK**

Page ID
179755



Figure **3.1.3.11.1**: Unidentified artist, *Luis Francisco Romero, Bishop of Santiago de Chile and of Quito*, 1718, oil on canvas, 88 x 56 1/3” (Museo del Carmen de Maipú, Santiago, Chile)

A portrait of Luis Francisco Romero, Bishop of Santiago de Chile and Quito, shows this church official surrounded by emblems of his status and authority. Among these symbolic items, the pair of sumptuously adorned miters (the conical hat worn by a bishop) at his elbow conveys not only his position, but also his wealth. Never underestimate the power of a well-chosen accessory!

In the **Viceroyalty of Peru**, official portraits were instrumental in transmitting the power of secular and religious authorities. Their formulaic compositions contained a symbolic visual language that assisted viewers in recognizing a subject’s position and prestige. The individuals featured in such representations included governors, viceroys, bishops, and archbishops. Because these officials were overseen by Spanish kings, viceregal official portraits were an indispensable component of the Spanish colonial enterprise in the southern Andes (and throughout all the Spanish viceroyalties).

Created for display on the walls of government buildings and cathedrals, viceregal official portraits visualized the authorities who had presided over a region. Unlike secular official portraits, these religious paintings were often associated with the reassignment of their sitter to another jurisdiction. Images of Catholic bishops and archbishops were installed in sequence in the meeting rooms of cathedrals to remind successive officials of the accomplishments and ideals of their predecessors.

Portrait of Luis Francisco Romero



Figure \(\
PageIndex
{2}\):
Map showing the Viceroyalties of Peru and New Granada

In one compelling example of colonial Andean religious portraiture we see Bishop Luis Francisco Romero, a powerful Spaniard stationed in South America, at a key transition in his career. This arresting image commemorated Romero's reassignment to Quito, Ecuador in the newly formed Viceroyalty of New Granada following his decade-long stint as bishop of Santiago de Chile. Although its artist is currently unidentified, this work was produced in the Viceroyalty of Peru at an artistic center such as Cusco or Lima and was likely displayed in Santiago.

Romero owed his prominence as a religious official to the centrality of Spanish Catholic authority in the American viceroyalties. When Romero was approximately thirty years of age, King Philip V (the founder of the Bourbon dynasty in Spain) recommended his deployment to South America. In the decades that followed, he held high-level ecclesiastic positions throughout the Viceroyalty of Peru and, upon its initial establishment in 1717, in the Viceroyalty of New Granada. At each post, Romero functioned as a critical extension of imperial power, and as a result Philip V personally lauded his loyalty and service.



Figure **3.1.3.11.3**: Left: Diego Rodríguez de Silva y Velázquez, *Portrait of Juan Francisco de Pimentel, Count of Benavente*, c. 1648, oil on canvas (Museo Nacional del Prado); right: Cristóbal de Aguilar, *Portrait of Pedro de Peralta Barnuevo Rocha y Benavides*, 1751, oil on canvas, 165 × 123 cm (Museo de Arte Universidad Nacional Mayor de San Marcos, Lima)

Portraiture in the Viceroyalty of Peru

Much of what we are seeing in the image of Bishop Romero exemplifies the pictorial conventions for official portraiture that were developed in Lima from Spanish court painting and subsequently adapted in other local artistic centers such as Cusco. In both Spanish and **Andean traditions**, we see the standing subject in an unspecific interior setting accompanied by a hat or crown, and other items that inform viewers of his station and accomplishments. To set off such scenes for audiences, a curtain is pulled aside as if to reveal the subject upon a stage. We can observe all of these characteristics in a Spanish portrait of Juan Francisco de Pimentel, Count of Benavente, in which his military rank is emphasized by his helmet and by the crimson general's sash. Similarly, a portrait produced in Lima of Peruvian historian Pedro de Peralta Barnuevo employs a book, globe, and quill pens to emphasize the sitter's intellectual achievements. This portrait also exemplifies how Andean painters retained the conventional formula and magnificence of the Spanish portraiture tradition, yet presented their sitters with a planarity and rich color palette that brought symbolic contents to the foreground.



Figure **3.1.3.11.4**: Detail of the painting's upper half, Unidentified artist, *Luis Francisco Romero, Bishop of Santiago de Chile and of Quito*, 1718, oil on canvas, 88 x 56 1/3" (Museo del Carmen de Maipú, Santiago, Chile)

In keeping with this established formula, Romero wears the attire of his office and is surrounded by items that divulge his status, education, and wealth. For instance, we can locate his pectoral cross and **ecclesiastic ring**, both insignias of the office of bishop. Near Romero's head we identify his familial coat of arms topped by a tasseled ecclesiastic hat.



Figure **3.1.3.11.5**: Detail of the cartouche and Bishop Romero's clothes, Unidentified artist, *Luis Francisco Romero, Bishop of Santiago de Chile and of Quito*, 1718, oil on canvas, 88 x 56 1/3" (Museo del Carmen de Maipú, Santiago, Chile)

Another common convention in viceregal portraits is the inclusion of a textual cartouche to convey biographical information regarding the sitter, and occasionally the artist's signature. In this painting, the text in the lower left corner imparts Romero's role as Bishop of Santiago de Chile and of Quito in the year 1718. To reiterate this scripted message, the subject stands next to **paired miters** that symbolize his dual posts in Quito and Santiago de Chile. These miters are richly embellished to signify the eminence of both the Church and the sitter, as are the textiles arranged throughout the composition—we can identify miniscule lacework on the rochet, a red velvet curtain, patterned carpet, and delicate designs in metallic thread.



Figure **3.1.3.11.6**: Detail of the painting's upper half, Unidentified artist, *Luis Francisco Romero, Bishop of Santiago de Chile and of Quito*, 1718, oil on canvas, 88 x 56 1/3" (Museo del Carmen de Maipú, Santiago, Chile)

Was the Bishop really so stern?



Figure **3.1.3.11.7**: Chilean women wearing wide skirts. Fernando Brambilla, *The Style of Dress Used by Chilean Women*, 1790 (Biblioteca Nacional de Chile)

While sitters often meet the viewer's stare, Bishop Romero's gaze is atypically cold and gives the impression of scrutinizing onlookers. In portraiture, expressions can transmit ideas about the psychology and experiences of sitters, and Romero's stern features may point to his famously obstinate personality and to his conservative agendas. While in Chile, he implemented strict Catholic protocols aimed at moderating the fashions of local women, particularly the ubiquitous wide skirt that left a portion of the lower leg in full view.

Heaven forbid the immodesty of a strong breeze on colonial Chilean streets!

Ostentation and Andean portraiture



Figure **3.1.3.11.8**: Unidentified artist, *Luis Francisco Romero, Bishop of Santiago de Chile and of Quito*, 1718, oil on canvas, 88 x 56 1/3" (Museo del Carmen de Maipú, Santiago, Chile)

An image imbued with so much ostentation begs the question of its truthfulness. Did the official portraits produced in the Viceroyalty of Peru really convey the wealth of the sitter? Or were depicted luxuries—in this case, textiles, jewels, and a book—merely conventional symbols of status? Luis Francisco Romero's personal inventory confirms that indeed he possessed significant collections of books and paintings, as well as ornate vestments and jewelry much like those seen in his portrait. Also registered in this written inventory were richly decorated miters like those displayed on the table; Romero owned a miter adorned with emeralds and another embellished with gold thread. The general correspondences between the luxury items listed in Romero's personal inventory and those conveyed in his portrait suggest that, at least in this case, the ostentation of Andean official portraiture had significant basis in reality.

Taken altogether, the production of official religious portraiture in the Viceroyalty of Peru drew upon a visual vocabulary inherited from Spanish portraiture traditions and formalized in workshops at Lima to further imperialist agendas. This new pictorial language also drew upon Catholic symbolism and upon carefully selected visual elements that transmitted the status, prestige, and wealth of rendered subjects.

Additional Resources

Retrato de don Luis Francisco Romero, Obispo de Santiago de Chile y de Quito año 1718 | SURDOC

Emily Engel, *Pictured Politics: Visualizing Colonial History in South American Portrait Collections* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2020).

Donna Pierce and Julie Wilson Frick, *Companion to Glitterati: Portraits and Jewelry from Colonial Latin America at the Denver Art Museum* (Denver: Denver Art Museum, 2015).

Maya Stanfield-Mazzi, *Clothing the New World Church: Liturgical Textiles of Spanish America, 1520–1820* (Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 2021).

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3.1.3.12: Portraits of Francisca Ramírez de Laredo and Antonio de Ulloa

Page ID

179756

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SECTION OVERVIEW

3.2: Viceroyalty of New Granada

3.2.1: Juan Pedro López, Our Lady of Guidance

3.2.2: Crown of the Virgin of the Immaculate Conception

3.2.3: Diego Antonio de Landaeta, Portrait of Petronila Méndez

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3.2.1: Juan Pedro López, Our Lady of Guidance

by **DR. KATHRYN SANTNER** and **DR. LAUREN KILROY-EWBANK**

Page ID

179758



Juan Pedro López, *Our Lady of Guidance*, c. 1765–70, oil on canvas, Caracas, Venezuela, 41.325 x 26.5 inches, with original frame by Domingo Gutiérrez (Collection of the Carl & Marilynn Thoma Foundation)

Additional resources

Object page for Our Lady of Guidance, Thoma Foundation

Painters of African descent in the Colonial Spanish America

See another collaboration between Juan Pedro López and Domingo Gutiérrez

This page titled 3.2.1: Juan Pedro López, Our Lady of Guidance is shared under a CC BY-NC-SA 4.0 license and was authored, remixed, and/or curated by Dr. Kathryn Santner and Dr. Lauren Kilroy-Ewbank, "Juan Pedro López, Our Lady of Guidance," in Smarthistory, March 15, 2022, accessed November 11, 2022, https://smarthistory.org/juan-pedro-lopez-our-lady-of-guidance/.

3.2.2: Crown of the Virgin of the Immaculate Conception

by DR. LAUREN KILROY-EWBANK and DR. BETH HARRIS

Page ID
179759



Crown of the Virgin of the Immaculate Conception, known also as the Crown of the Andes, c. 1660 (diadem), c. 1770 (arches), gold and emeralds, Popayán, Colombia, body diameter 34.3 cm (The Metropolitan Museum of Art)

Crown of the Andes backstory

The Crown of the Immaculate Conception is a complex object. There is so much that one can discuss, from Catholic religious performances and dressing statues to Spanish colonialism and the long history of emerald and gold mining in Colombia. It is remarkable that it survives until today, given that many other crowns and metal objects that dressed Catholic religious statues have been melted down over time.

There is also an opportunity to talk about the broader life of the Crown: where it was made, where it moved, and why it is now in The Metropolitan Museum of Art. If you look at the object entry for the Crown on The Metropolitan Museum of Art's website, you will notice the provenance information noted as this:

> ***Confraternity of the Immaculate Conception, Cathedral of Popayán (Colombia); Tomás Olano y Hurtado, Popayán [syndic of the confraternity, granted permission to sell the crown by Pius X in 1914]; his son, Manuel José Olano, Popayán, until 1936; Warren G. Piper, Chicago, until 1938; Oscar Heyman & Brothers, New York, until 1963; Sotheby & Co., London, November 21, 1963; sold to Asscher Diamond Company, Amsterdam, acting on behalf of Oscar Heyman (1888–1970), New York; his daughter, Alice Heyman, New York, 1973–2015; sold to MMA.***

But what does that mean?



Figure **3.2.2.1**: Crown of the Andes featuring as a centerpiece of a dinner, Recess Club in Cleveland, 1936

After the Crown was made, its caretakers were members of the Confraternity of the Immaculate Conception at the Cathedral of Popayán. In the early 20th century, Pope Pius X granted permission to the confraternity to sell the Crown to raise funds for the Cathedral, though this decision was not agreed upon nor considered desirable by all members of the broader church community. Still, it was sold, and by 1936 it was in private hands in the United States, then owned by Warren G. Piper in Chicago. Piper was a gem dealer who undoubtedly found the many emeralds on the Crown of considerable interest. He was the one who provided the nickname: the "Crown of the Andes," and who built up its acclaim in the U.S. by having the Crown go on tour; he also rented it for events. It would be displayed at World's Fairs and other public spaces, and was even displayed in the window of Macy's Department Store in New York City and also at General Motors in Detroit. Besides Piper, the Crown would pass through several other hands before eventually being put up for auction in 1995 by Christie's; it did not sell at that time (though the Colombian government did attempt to buy it back at this time).



Figure **3.2.2.2**: The Crown of the Andes is exhibited in Bromberg's jewelry store, Alabama, 1958 (photo: Bromberg's archive)

The Crown of the Andes is exhibited in Bromberg's jewelry store, Alabama, 1958 (photo: Bromberg's archive)

Between 1973–2015 the Crown was with the Heyman family of New York, before it was sold to The Metropolitan Museum of Art. It had come to The Met's conservation lab a couple of years earlier because of the Crown's state: it was collapsing. There, it underwent extensive conservation efforts to repair damage. Technical studies at this time helped to date the different components of the Crown. Currently, it is on display in the American Art wing at The Met, surrounded by other paintings and silver and gold objects from South America during the period of Spanish control (what is called the viceregal era). Whether it should remain in the collection of The Met is debated, and there are calls, by some parties, for it to be restituted to Colombia, based on questions related to the legality of the initial sale.

Additional resources



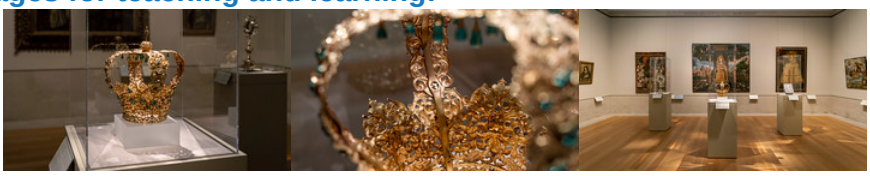
Crown of Andes arrives for World's Fair (1939)

[Introduction to the Spanish viceroyalties]

[Object page from The Metropolitan Museum of Art]

["Where are the boundaries of American art?" On the Crown of the Andes]

SmartHistory images for teaching and learning:



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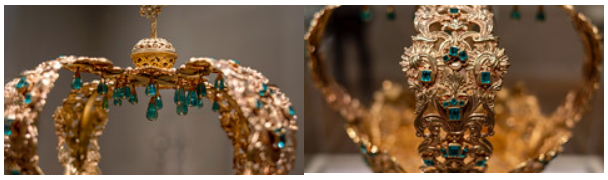
Click on image for larger picture (External link to flickr)



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3.2.3: Diego Antonio de Landaeta, Portrait of Petronila Méndez

by **DR. KATHRYN SANTNER** and **DR. LAUREN KILROY-EWBANK**

Page ID
179760



Diego Antonio de Landaeta, *Portrait of Petronila Méndez*, 1763, oil on panel, Caracas, Venezuela, 6.5 x 7 5/8 inches (Collection of the Carl & Marilynn Thoma Foundation)

Additional resources

This work at the Thoma Foundation

The **Thoma Foundation's Art of the Spanish Americas collection**

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SECTION OVERVIEW

3.3: Viceroyalty of the Río de la Plata

3.3.1: Jesuit Missions of the Río de la Plata

3.3.2: Churches of Chiloé

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3.3.1: Jesuit Missions of the Río de la Plata

- by **UNESCO**

Page ID

179762



Focus on: Jesuit Missions of La Santísima Trinidad de Paraná and Jesús de Tavarangue

In addition to their artistic interest, these missions are a reminder of the Jesuits' Christianization of the Río de la Plata basin in the 17th and 18th centuries, with the accompanying social and economic initiatives.

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3.3.2: Churches of Chiloé

- by **UNESCO**

Page ID

179763



The Churches of Chiloé represent a unique example in Latin America of an outstanding form of ecclesiastical wooden architecture. They represent a tradition initiated by the Jesuit Peripatetic Mission in the 17th and 18th centuries, continued and enriched by the Franciscans during the 19th century and still prevailing today. These churches embody the intangible richness of the Chiloé Archipelago, and bear witness to a successful fusion of indigenous and European culture, the full integration of its architecture in the landscape and environment, as well as to the spiritual values of the communities.

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SECTION OVERVIEW

3.4: Colonial Brazil

3.4.1: Introduction to colonial Brazil

3.4.2: Albert Eckhout, Series of eight figures

3.4.3: Church of São Francisco de Assis, Ouro Preto

3.4.4: Church of Our Lady of the Rosary of the Blacks, Ouro Preto

3.4.5: Mestre Valentim, Passeio Publico, Rio de Janeiro

3.4.6: Sanctuary of Bom Jesus de Matosinhos of Congonhas do Campo, 1757-1872

3.4.7: Carlos Julião, watercolor manuscript

3.4.8: Jesuit Missions of the Guaranis

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3.4.1: Introduction to colonial Brazil

by DR. RACHEL ZIMMERMAN



Figure **3.4.1.1**: "Northeastern South America" in the *Vallard Atlas*, c. 1547, folio 11 (Huntington Library; photo UC Berkeley Library, **www.digital-scriptorium.org**, CC BY-NC 4.0).

Although news of Christopher Columbus's "discovery" of the Americas had already spread across Europe, the Portuguese stumbled upon Brazil by accident. In 1498, Vasco da Gama successfully sailed from Portugal around the southern tip of Africa to India, achieving what Columbus had hoped to accomplish: establishing an overseas route between Europe and Asia. In 1500, Pedro Alvares Cabral set out from Portugal to replicate da Gama's journey to India but veered too far west and landed instead on the shores of Brazil. Although Cabral's team only stayed in Brazil for a few days before continuing on to India, they sent a letter to the Portuguese king to inform him of the discovery. The letter describes peaceful exchanges with naked indigenous peoples who hunted with bows and arrows and slept in hammocks.

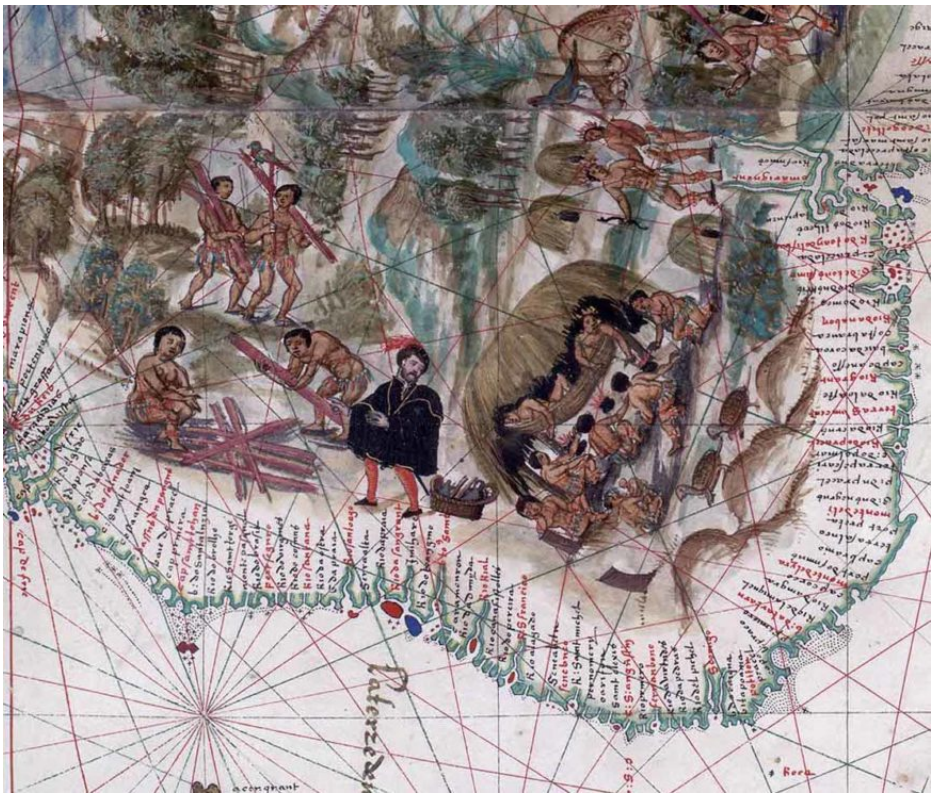


Figure 3.4.1.2: This atlas shows native Brazilians bringing brazilwood to a French merchant dressed in black. “Northeastern South America,” detail of French merchantå in the *Vallard Atlas*, c. 1547, folio 11 (Huntington Library; photo UC Berkeley Library, www.digital-scriptorium.org, CC BY-NC 4.0).

The Portuguese colonization of Brazil was initially quite different from the **Spanish conquest of the Americas**. The Portuguese were more invested in evangelization and trade in Asia and Africa, which included trafficking in enslaved humans, and viewed Brazil as a trade post instead of a place to send larger numbers of settlers. Unlike the extensive stone-built cities of **Mesoamerica** and the **Andes**, indigenous inhabitants of Brazil lived in villages. Rather than launching large military campaigns to conquer empires, the Portuguese engaged in trade with native Brazilians and smaller-scale battles against rival groups. Brazil’s first export to Europe was brazilwood, a tree that produces a red dye and that gave the region its name. Wanting access to brazilwood, the French also created alliances with indigenous groups and competed over control of Brazil for much of the sixteenth century. The French *Vallard Atlas* shows native Brazilians bringing brazilwood to a French merchant dressed in black. The feather skirts are likely a misinterpretation of headdresses.

Converts and Cannibals

Portuguese explorers believed that native Brazilians would be easily converted to Catholicism once the language barrier had been overcome. Franciscan and Jesuit missionaries rushed to Brazil and lived with converted indigenous peoples in *aldeias* (villages) separate from the towns and cities where Portuguese settlers lived. Even though the Pope had forbidden enslavement of Native Americans in 1537, explorers called *bandeirantes* traveled about capturing native Brazilians to sell into slavery. As in the Spanish Americas, some missionaries helped to protect indigenous communities from enslavement, while others exploited indigenous labor.



Figure **3.4.1.3**: "Native Americans kill and eat a prisoner," fold-out plate engraving, 18.4 cm, in *Naaukeurige versameling der gedenk-waardigste zee en land-reysen na Oost en West-Indiën … zedert het jaar 1524 tot 1526* (Leiden: Pieter van der Aa, 1706), vol. 15, part 1, p. 56 (**John Carter Brown Library**)

The letter that announced the Portuguese arrival in Brazil described native inhabitants as complacent and harmless, but later accounts by adventurers and missionaries focus heavily on the practice of ritual cannibalism. Although there is little evidence that indigenous cultures practiced cannibalism, rumors of such actions were viewed as a justification for enslavement. The **association of native Brazilians with cannibalism** has had a lasting effect on the arts even into the twenty-first century. **Tarsila do Amaral's painting** *Antropofagia* (based on the Greek word for cannibalism) is a particularly famous example.



Figure **3.4.1.4**: Map of Brazil in 1644, showing Dutch and Portuguese territories (source: **Carl Pruneau**, CC BY 3.0)

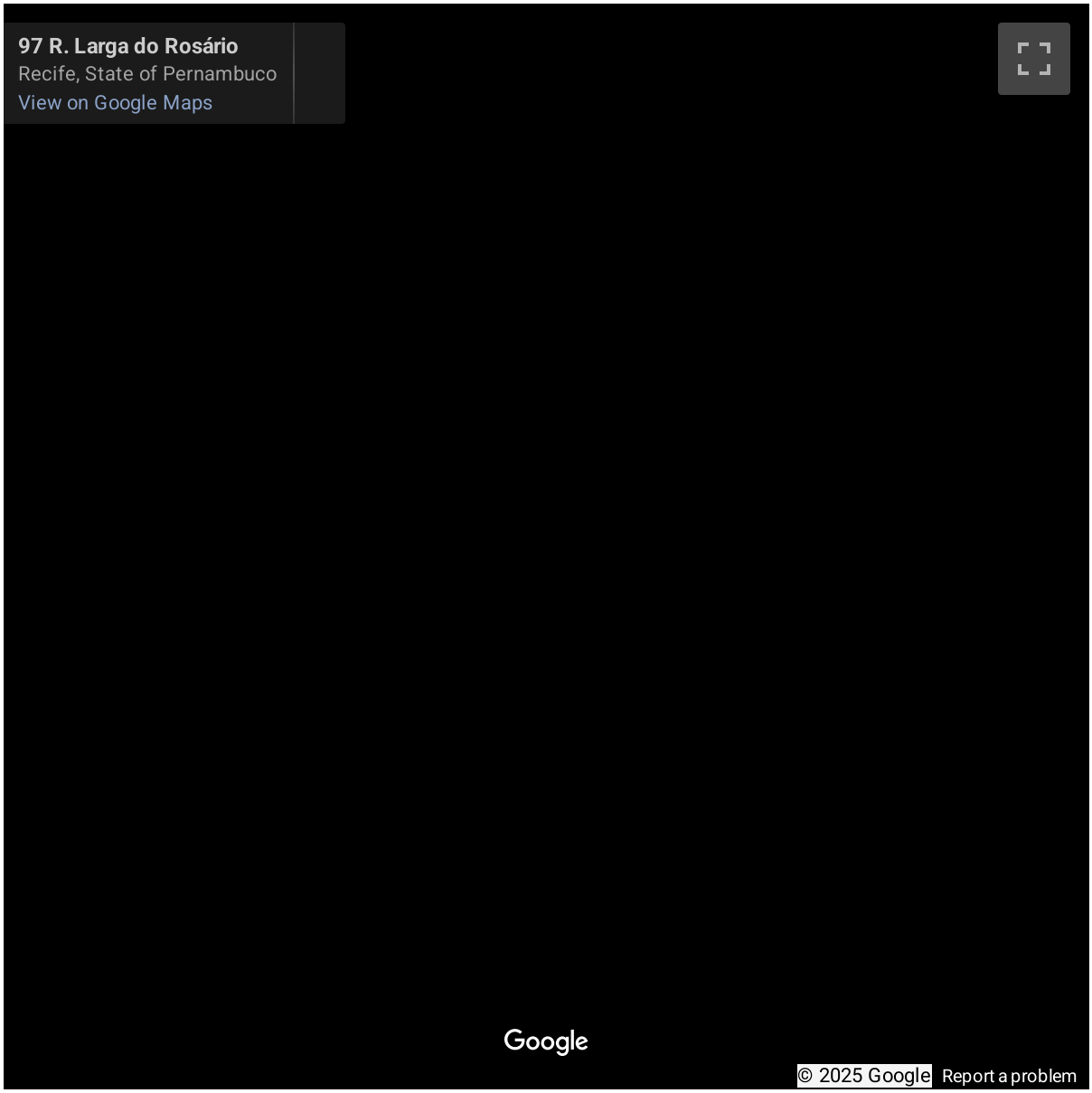
From Sugar to Gold

Sugar soon overtook brazilwood as the colony's most important industry. Europeans forced enslaved Africans to work on sugarcane plantations, providing plantation owners with great wealth. The sugar industry attracted the Dutch, who gained control over the northeast of Brazil from 1630 to 1654. Although short-lived, the Dutch colony produced a substantial number of artworks. The governor Johan Maurits van Nassau was a supporter of scientific exploration. His palace in the capital Mauritsstad (Recife) included botanical gardens and a zoo, and he brought two Dutch painters, **Albert Eckhout** and Frans Post, with him to document the flora, fauna, and customs of Brazil. The merchant and painter Zacharias Wagener, who had been serving military duties in Brazil, also joined the governor's court.



Figure **3.4.1.5**: Frans Post specialized in landscape painting and continued to produce depictions of Brazil such as this one after returning to Europe. Frans Post, *Brazilian Landscape with Anteater*, 1649, oil on canvas 52.8 x 69.3 cm (**Alte Pinakothek**, Munich, CC BY-SA 4.0)

Once the Portuguese had expelled the Dutch, they continued to settle Brazil's vast territory and exploit its resources. In addition to enslaved Africans producing sugar in the Northeast, explorers found gold and diamonds in an inland region called Minas Gerais (General Mines). The abundant gold and diamonds, mined by enslaved individuals, allowed wealth, trade, and artistic production to flourish in the entire Portuguese empire throughout the eighteenth century. As the closest port to the mining region, Rio de Janeiro was named Brazil's new capital city in 1763.



Google Map of Church of Our Lady of the Rosary in Recife in BrazIl

Afro-Brazilians as Artists and Patrons

More enslaved Africans were transported to Brazil than to any other region of the Americas. As a result, Brazil's economy, built environment, and culture are founded on the activities of Africans and people of African descent. Not only were most colonial architectural projects built by enslaved individuals, but some of the most famous artists of colonial Brazil were also people of African ancestry. Antonio Francisco Lisboa, known by the nickname **Aleijadinho** (Little Cripple), was a sculptor in Minas Gerais, and Valentim da Fonseca e Silva, or **Mestre Valentim**, was an architect who worked in Rio de Janeiro. Afro-Brazilians were also active patrons of the arts. Both enslaved and free people of color joined confraternities to celebrate Catholic saints. Confraternity members pooled their resources and commissioned churches where they held religious services. Churches belonging to Afro-Brazilian communities survive all over Brazil, such as the Church of Our Lady of the Rosary in Recife (as seen above).



Figure **3.4.1.6**: Portal of the Academy of Fine Arts, Rio de Janeiro, now in the botanical gardens. The rest of the academy was demolished in 1938 (photo: **Rodrigo Soldon**, CC BY-NC-SA 2.0)

An Unusual Ending

In 1807, Napoleon's army invaded Portugal and the Portuguese royal family fled to Rio de Janeiro. This move transformed Rio de Janeiro into the capital of the Portuguese Empire and dramatically altered the political, economic, and cultural landscape of Brazil. The Portuguese king invited several French artists to Rio de Janeiro (this group is called the French Artistic Mission) who were tasked with the creation of the Academy of Fine Arts. The royal family returned to Portugal in 1821, but the king's son Pedro I remained in Brazil. The following year, Pedro declared independence and named himself emperor of Brazil.

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3.4.2: Albert Eckhout, Series of eight figures

by DR. RACHEL ZIMMERMAN

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Figure **3.4.2.1**: Albert Eckhout, series of eight figures, 1641, oil on canvas (**The National Museum of Denmark**).



Figure **3.4.2.2**: Map of Brazil in 1644, showing Dutch and Portuguese territories (source: **Carl Pruneau**, CC BY 3.0)

In 1630, the Dutch conquered the prosperous sugarcane-producing area in the northeast region of the Portuguese colony of Brazil. Although it only lasted for 24 years, the Dutch colony resulted in substantial art production. The governor Johan Maurits van Nassau-Siegen also encouraged scientific exploration and his palace in Mauritsstad (present-day Recife) included botanical

gardens, a zoo, and a **cabinet of curiosities**. Maurits brought two artists, Albert Eckhout and the landscape painter Frans Post, to Brazil to document the local flora, fauna, people, and customs. One of Eckhout's series of eight paintings helps us to understand how the Dutch artist encoded ethnic differences among the colony's population.

Making order of a foreign world

Eckhout's series consists of four life-size male-female pairs, each representing a different cultural or ethnic category. Although Eckhout collaborated with scientists on other projects, these monumental oil paintings employ the visual language of fine art rather than of scientific illustration. The compositions and poses are based on European portrait conventions and some panels include mythological references.

Eckhout may have used live models, and the level of detail gives the impression that these are portraits. However, they are meant to represent "types" rather than individuals. Much like New Spanish ***casta*** paintings, Eckhout conveys the moral and cultural stereotypes associated with each group. Clothing, jewelry, weapons, and baskets help to indicate the class and level of sophistication of the figures, while the proliferation of tropical fruits and vegetables advertises the natural abundance of the Brazilian land.

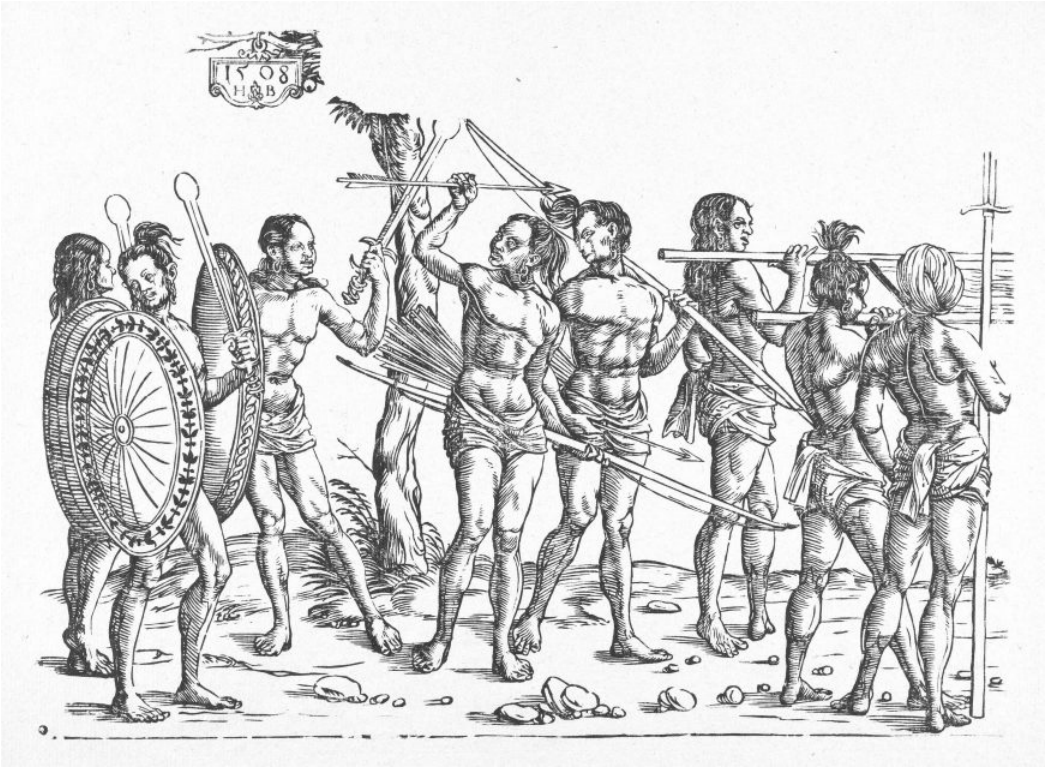


Figure **3.4.2.3**: Hans Burgkmair, Left Side of *King Cochin*, from *Set of Exotic Races*, 1508, printed 1922 by the Kupferstichkabinett, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, woodcut, 26.6 × 35 cm (**The Metropolitan Museum of Art**)

Today, scientists recognize that the idea of separate human races is socially constructed rather than based in genetics. Although the classification of peoples into groups has a long history in Western art and science, skin color was not a major defining factor until around the middle of the seventeenth century—around the same time that Eckhout painted this series. Before this, ethnic groups were conceptualized based on cultural characteristics. For instance, the early 16th-century woodcuts of Hans Burgkmair differentiated the peoples of Africa and India by their hairstyles, material culture, and behaviors, but united all the figures with the same type of idealized body. Eckhout, on the other hand, pays careful attention to skin color and physiognomy as he categorizes the people of Brazil.



Figure **3.4.2.4**: Albert Eckhout, *Coconuts*, c. 1637-44, oil on canvas, 92 x 93 cm (**The National Museum of Denmark**)

Most scholars believe that these paintings were produced in Brazil to be hung in the governor's palace. They may have been arranged around a large room with other paintings by Eckhout, including a portrait of Johan Maurits and still life paintings of tropical fruits and vegetables. The series functioned as an extension of Maurits's cabinet of curiosities, enabling him to "possess" the portrayed figures. After the Dutch lost their Brazilian colony in 1654, Johan Maurits presented the paintings to the king of Denmark, as they had become unwelcome reminders of the failed colony.



Figure **3.4.2.5**: Albert Eckhout, left: **Tapuya woman**, 1641, oil on canvas, 272 x 165 cm; right: **Tapuya man**, 1641, oil on canvas, 176 x 280 cm (The National Museum of Denmark)

Of cannibals and converts

The pair referred to as "Tapuya" represent native Brazilian tribes with whom Europeans were often engaged in battle. Their nudity, save for some leaves, strings, and small adornments, marks them as "uncivilized" in the eyes of the colonialists. The potential eroticism of the woman's nudity is undermined by the references to cannibalism—in addition to the severed limbs that she carries, the dog at her feet probably alludes to the dog-headed cannibals that the ancient Greeks described as living in distant regions of the

world.[1] The Tapuyas' militarism is highlighted by the man's weapons, as well as the distant group of armed figures behind the woman. The snake and spider at the man's feet further emphasize the threat that the Tapuya represented to the Dutch.



Figure **3.4.2.6**: Albert Eckhout, left: **Brazilian woman**, 1641, oil on canvas, 183 x 294 cm; right: **Brazilian man**, 1641, oil on canvas, 272 × 163 cm (The National Museum of Denmark)

In contrast to the Tapuya, the figures referred to as Brazilians are portrayed as having been tamed through their conversion to Christianity. Missionaries (Catholic under the Portuguese and Protestant under the Dutch) organized converted native Brazilians into *aldeias* (villages). The European-style building and tidy rows of trees in the orchard demonstrate European notions of the order that have been imposed on the Brazilian land. Both figures are partially clothed, and the woman's bare breasts emphasize her nurturing role as mother. Unlike the Tapuya man's club, the Brazilian man's bow and arrows, not unlike their European equivalents, are meant for hunting animals rather than humans.



Figure **3.4.2.7**: Albert Eckhout, left: **African woman**, 1641, oil on canvas, 282 x 189 cm; right: **African man**, 1641, oil on canvas, 273 x 167 cm (The National Museum of Denmark)

Africans on either side of the Atlantic

Eckhout's African woman is shown as displaced from her homeland and forced into a world where Africans, Americans, and Europeans interacted. The American plants and native Brazilians fishing on the shore locate her in Brazil, but her hat and basket are African, while her jewelry and the pipe tucked into her waist are European. Although she probably represents a slave, the focus is not on labor but on her sexuality, as the child's ear of corn points toward her genitals. The child's lighter complexion may indicate that he is of mixed heritage: European men frequently had sexual relations, often coerced, with enslaved African women.

The African man literally stands apart from the other figures. He is not situated in Brazil, but in Africa, as indicated by the date palm (which is native to North Africa) and the ivory tusk on the ground, which exemplifies Africa's trade goods. Although the sword, probably modeled after one in Johan Maurits's collection, is more appropriate to a nobleman, the loincloth, ivory tusk, and palm tree probably stem from prints of traders in the Guinea coast, a major slave trading region. This painting is likely intended to portray a merchant involved in the slave trade that brought the woman to Brazil. Both of these representations of African people emphasize their musculature, reinforcing the European conception that Africans were inherently suited to manual labor and, thus, suited to being enslaved.



Figure **3.4.2.8**: Albert Eckhout, left: ***mameluca* woman**, 1641, oil on canvas, 271 x 170 cm; right: **mulatto man**, 1641, oil on canvas, 274 x 170 cm (The National Museum of Denmark)

Between two worlds

The final pair of figures represents people of mixed race. The woman is a *mameluca*, of indigenous and white ancestry, and the man a *mulatto*, of black and white ancestry. The representation of the *mameluca* contains no references to agriculture or child-rearing. Instead, she solely provides voyeuristic pleasure to European males as she smiles cheekily at the viewer. The guinea pig reinforces her sexual availability because Europeans associated guinea pigs with rabbits, traditional symbols of fertility. To a European audience, the loose garment and flowers reference Flora, the Roman goddess of flowers and fertility who was adopted as a symbol for prostitutes and courtesans. In a place with few white women, the *mameluca*'s whiteness made her particularly desirable as a concubine.

In the eyes of Europeans, the so-called mulatto's white ancestry likewise allowed him to rise above other Afro-Brazilians. He is posed in an authoritative military stance in front of a sugarcane field, the Dutch colony's most important source of revenue. Likely tasked with protecting the fields and supervising the slaves, his appearance emphasizes his position within the social hierarchy between free and slave, European and non-European. His clothing is an imaginative mixture of European and foreign garments. While the offspring of enslaved women were born into slavery, children of white fathers were sometimes freed. Although bare feet can function as a visual symbol of enslavement, slaves were forbidden from carrying weapons—thus, the rifle and rapier suggest that he is free.

White supremacy and exploitation

Eckhout may have intended to show the relative levels of "civilization" of the various types of peoples depicted in these paintings, but scholars disagree on the order of such a hierarchy. It is clear that Eckhout viewed the represented ethnic groups to be inferior to white Europeans. The careful attention granted to skin color and physiognomy suggests that Eckhout and his patron believed Europeans possessed not only superior culture and morals, but also biology. The paintings help to convey the message that Europeans had both a right and a duty to control and acculturate foreign peoples.

The Dutch conquest of Brazil was economically motivated. These paintings accentuate the abundance and fertility of the Brazilian land, especially highlighting the lucrative sugarcane fields. The wealth generated by these endeavors, however, depended directly on the subjugation of both African and indigenous peoples. Eckhout's portrayals of the inhabitants of Brazil and Africa as inferior

to Europeans served to justify and advocate for both the enslavement of Africans and the exploitation of the Brazilian land and its inhabitants.

Notes:

1. Rebecca P. Brienen, *Visions of Savage Paradise: Albert Eckhout, Court Painter in Colonial Dutch Brazil* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2006), 124.

Additional resources:

Albert Eckhout's paintings at the National Museum of Denmark

Essay on the visual culture of the Atlantic world from The Metropolitan Museum of Art's Heilbrunn Timeline of Art History

Research materials on Dutch Brazil at the New Holland Foundation

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3.4.3: Church of São Francisco de Assis, Ouro Preto

by DR. RACHEL ZIMMERMAN

Page ID
179767



Figure **3.4.3.1**: Church of São Francisco de Assis (St. Francis of Assisi), c. 1766-94, Ouro Preto, Brazil (photo: **Alexandre Amorim Fotografo**, CC BY-SA 4.0)



Figure **3.4.3.2**: Antonio Francisco Lisboa (sculptor), relief sculpture in the roundel of the façade of the Church of São Francisco de Assis, late 18th century, Ouro Preto, Brazil (photo: **Ricardo André Frantz**, CC BY 3.0)

The relief sculpture contained within a roundel at the center of the façade of the church of São Francisco de Assis in Ouro Preto, Brazil, shows St. Francis receiving the stigmata as Jesus Christ appears in the clouds above. As if propelled by the force of this miraculous event, the architecture around this scene bursts outward.

The façade is filled with an elaborate arrangement of ornament. The entablature curves around the roundel, pushing into the broken pediment. The corners of the pediment (that appear like two sides of a triangle above the columns) are sharply broken and twisted outward.



Figure 3.4.3.3: Church of São Francisco de Assis, Ouro Preto (photo: svenwerk, CC BY-NC-ND 2.0)

To further emphasize the forward projection of the façade, the architect has pushed back the lateral towers, and placed their pilasters and windows to make them appear as if they are angled away from the façade. This dynamic manipulation of forms creates the impression that the structure is expanding from within.

Church design in the early modern Portuguese empire generally favored simple plans and exteriors—a sharp contrast with the church of São Francisco, with its curving geometries and lively ornamentation. How did this structure, located in a remote mining town deep in the inland hills of Brazil, come to represent such an innovative approach to design?

"Rich Town of Black Gold"



Figure 3.4.3.4: The Treaty of Tordesillas in 1494 divided colonial possessions around the world between Spain and Portugal. Everything to the west of the treaty line was property of Spain, and east of the line belonged to Portugal (map: **Ultimadesigns**, CC 0)

Although the Treaty of Tordesillas in 1494 intended to give Spain sovereignty over the Americas, it enabled the Portuguese to claim the easternmost portion of South America in 1500.

The Portuguese initially established settlements along the coast of Brazil to enable natural resources such as brazilwood (from which the colony received its name) and sugar to be shipped back to Portugal. In the 1690s, however, gold—and later, diamonds—were discovered in an inland region of Brazil, subsequently named Minas Gerais ("General Mines"). Minas Gerais was unique within Brazil not only because of its remote location, but also because of the legal restrictions imposed upon the area: in order to protect their mining interests, the Portuguese government banned foreigners from the area, and manufacturing and non-essential agriculture were forbidden.

The church of São Francisco is located in the heart of this gold mining region, in the bustling commercial center of Ouro Preto. The town was originally named Vila Rica de Ouro Preto, meaning "Rich Town of Black Gold" (so named because the gold deposits

contained iron ore, making them appear dark in color). Although it is traditionally considered geographically and culturally isolated, many goods, including artists' materials and tools, were transported across the hilly landscape to Ouro Preto, and the local wealth attracted artists and architects from Portugal.



Figure **3.4.3.5**: The historical center of Ouro Preto, Brazil, with the Church of São Francisco de Assis on the left (photo: **Leandro Neumann Ciuffo**, CC BY 2.0)

Remote yet cosmopolitan

Brazil's gold mining region is famed for church architecture that was unique within the Portuguese empire, and the church of São Francisco is a prime example of this. The Portuguese and Brazilian artists and architects who worked on the church of São Francisco were well-versed in contemporary artistic trends from Europe. Whereas other churches in Brazil at the time tended to reflect the rectangular plans and restrained exterior ornamentation of contemporary churches in Portugal, the dynamic architecture of the church of São Francisco is reminiscent of Italian and central European, rather than Portuguese, church design. For example, the projecting central portion of the façade and broken pediment recall the church of San Domenico in Noto, Sicily.



Figure **3.4.3.6**: Details of the Church of São Francisco de Assis, Ouro Preto and the Church of San Domenico in Noto, Sicily, with broken pediments and supporting columns highlighted in green (photos: **svenwerk**, CC BY-NC-ND 2.0 and **Alessandro Ceci**, CC BY-NC 2.0)

The greatest artist of colonial Brazil

In addition to the ban on foreigners, religious orders were prohibited in Brazil's mining region. Therefore, instead of belonging to the Franciscan monastic order, the church of São Francisco de Assis belonged to a confraternity, a group of local laypeople who joined together in their devotion to Saint Francis. The confraternity members funded the project, hired artists and architects, and oversaw the design.



Figure **3.4.3.7**: Antonio Francisco Lisboa, relief sculpture on the façade of the Church of São Francisco de Assis, late 18th century, Ouro Preto, Brazil (photo: **Ricardo André Frantz**, CC BY 3.0)

Although the confraternity of São Francisco only admitted white members, enslaved Africans constructed the building, and the design has been attributed to the sculptor Antonio Francisco Lisboa: the son of the Portuguese architect Manoel Francisco Lisboa and an enslaved black woman named Isabel. Antonio Francisco Lisboa is better known by the nickname Aleijadinho (sometimes written "O Aleijadinho"), meaning "The Little Cripple," because he reportedly suffered from a chronic disease that left him disfigured. He is considered the greatest artist of colonial Brazil, and the church of São Francisco is among the reasons why.

While the external ornament on the more typical, conservative Portuguese churches was largely relegated to carvings on the door and window frames, the façade of São Francisco contains abundant sculptural ornament. The traditional oculus is replaced by the roundel relief of St. Francis, and the sculpture surrounding the doorway spreads upward, covering the center of the façade with *rocailles*, cherubs, and a depiction of the Virgin Mary.



Figure **3.4.3.8**: Manoel da Costa Ataíde, ceiling painting, interior of the Church of São Francisco de Assis, late 18th century, Ouro Preto, Brazil

Innovation in design

Along with the projecting façade, the diagonally placed altars in the corners of the nave transform the traditional rectangular plan seen in most contemporary Portuguese churches into an elongated octagon. The interior of the church is composed of a single unified space crowned by an exuberant ceiling painting of the Virgin Mary rising to heaven, executed by the Brazilian painter Manoel da Costa Ataíde.

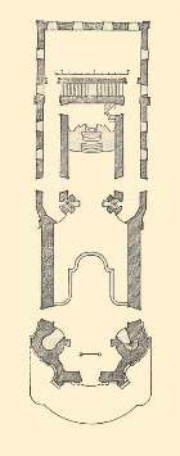


Figure **3.4.3.9**: Plan of the Church of São Francisco de Assis, Ouro Preto, from Germain Bazin, *L'Architecture Religieuse Baroque au Brésil* (Paris: Librairie Plon, 1947)

The octagonal plan and the treatment of the interior decoration as a cohesive whole echoes trends in Italian and central European church design, where elaborate ornamentation combined with architecture and sculpture to create diaphanous spaces meant to evoke a heavenly experience.

Although Lisboa definitely designed and carved much of the decorative ornament, the extent of his contribution to the architectural design remains unclear. The project was officially overseen by two Portuguese designers (the mason Domingos Moreira de Oliveira and the sculptor José Antonio de Brito). However, Lisboa was paid to inspect the finished structure, an honor usually reserved for a

project's architect. Some scholars believe that he designed the church, but that discriminatory laws against people of African descent prevented him from being formally recognized as the architect.

The members of the confraternity of St. Francis hired the region's best artists to create an original and daring design that competed with other churches in the area. Prominently positioned at the center of town, the church of São Francisco proclaims the confraternity's—and the region's—wealth, taste, and religious devotion.



Additional resources:

More about Antonio Francisco Lisboa (Aleijadinho)

Virtual tour of the city of Ouro Preto that includes the church of São Francisco de Assis

Gauvin Alexander Bailey, *The Spiritual Rococo: Decor and Divinity from the Salons of Paris to the Missions of Patagonia* (London: Taylor and Francis, 2017).

Tim Benton, and Nicola Durbridge, "'*O Aleijadinho*': Sculptor and Architect," in Catherine King, ed., *Views of Difference: Different Views of Art* (New Haven: 1999), pp. 146-177.

John B. Bury, "The "Borrominesque" Churches of Colonial Brazil," *The Art Bulletin* 37, no. 1 (1955), pp. 27-53.

Robert C. Smith Jr., "The Colonial Architecture of Minas Gerais in Brazil," *The Art Bulletin* 21, no. 2 (1939), pp. 110-159.

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3.4.4: Church of Our Lady of the Rosary of the Blacks, Ouro Preto

by **DR. MIGUEL A. VALERIO**

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179768



Figure **3.4.4.1**: Church of Our Lady of the Rosary of the Blacks, 18th century, Ouro Preto, Brazil (photo: Juliana Bruder, CC BY-SA 4.0)

Afro-Brazilian brotherhoods

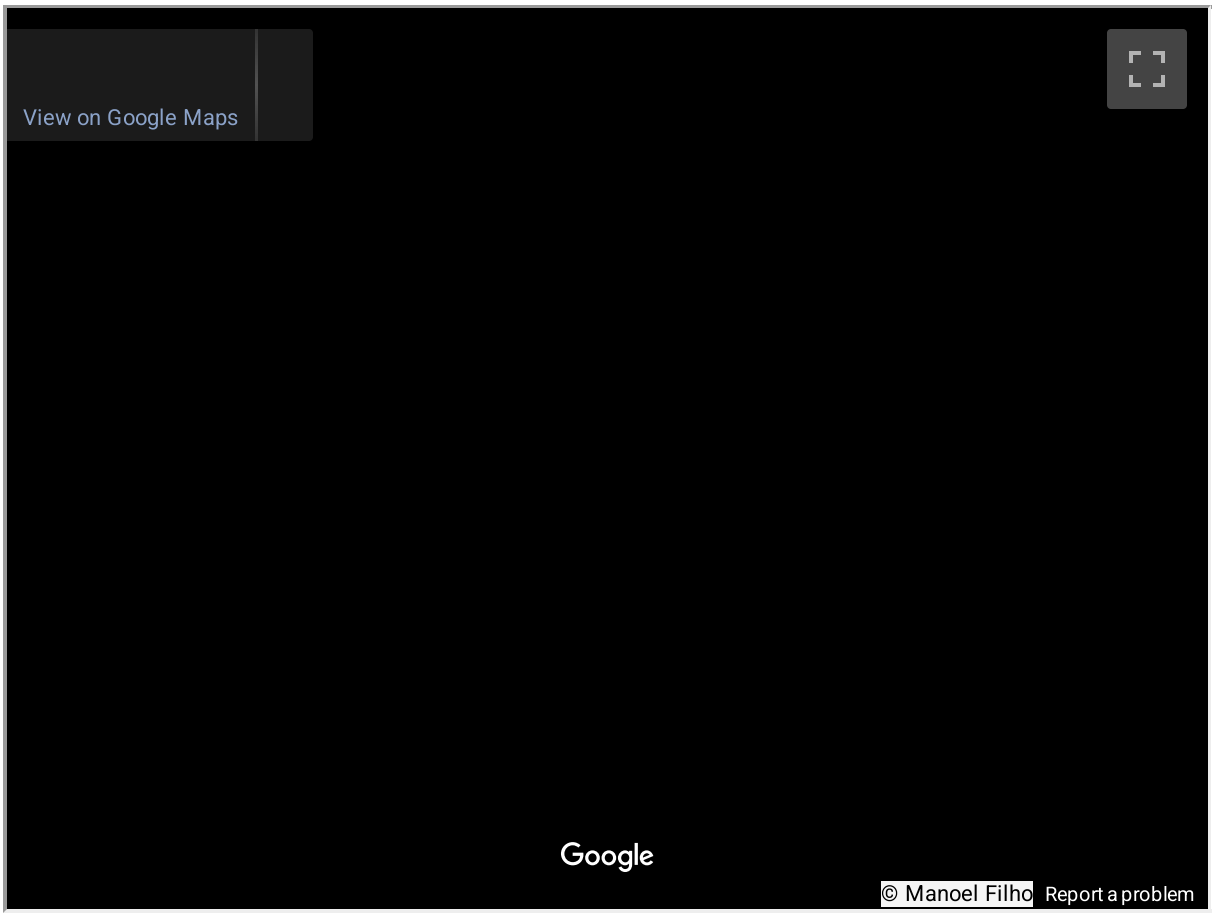


Figure **3.4.4.2**: Map of showing the location of Ouro Preto, Brazil (underlying map © Google)

In eighteenth-century Brazil, people of African descent founded and joined Catholic brotherhoods (lay associations dedicated to Marian and saintly devotions, and charitable work). In a world that provided no safety net for Afrodescendants, brotherhoods allowed Afro-Brazilians to pool resources to care for each other, especially when members fell ill or died. Black brotherhoods included free-born, freed (or manumitted), and enslaved members who paid a small fee to join and to stay active. These fees and other financial activities (such as loan programs and real estate investments) allowed Afro-Brazilian brotherhoods to care for members. The discovery of gold in Brazil during the 1690s also brought wealth to Afro-Brazilian brotherhoods, as members mined for a share of the profit or had their own mines (like the legendary Chico Rey—a mine owner who is said to have financed the construction of his brotherhood's church, St. Iphigenia).

While Catholic brotherhoods were found all over the Spanish and Portuguese empires, only in Brazil did brotherhoods for people of African descent manage to build their own churches. Some of these churches are among colonial Brazil's most beautiful and include work by the best architects and painters of the period, many of whom were black, such as **Aleijadinho** or **Mestre Valentim**. Studying these churches allows us to see how people of African descent expressed themselves through religion, art, and architecture.

Although designed by a white architect, the Church of Our Lady of the Rosary of the Blacks in Ouro Preto is among the most famous of these Black brotherhood churches. In fifteenth-century Portugal, the Dominican Order founded Rosary brotherhoods (brotherhoods dedicated to praying the Rosary and Our Lady of the Rosary) for Blacks as a means of integrating newly arrived Africans into Catholicism. As a result, most Afro-Brazilian brotherhoods were Rosary brotherhoods and many of their churches are dedicated to Our Lady of the Rosary (a Marian advocation that originates with a 12th-century vision of Saint Dominic receiving a rosary from the Virgin Mary to fight heretics).



Our Lady of the Rosary of the Blacks today

An unusual design

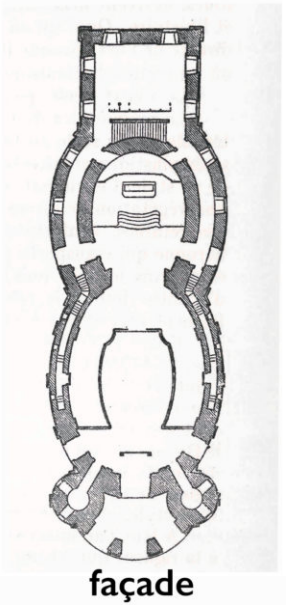


Figure **3.4.4.3**: Plan of Church of Our Lady of the Rosary, Ouro Preto, Brazil

The brotherhood of Our Lady of the Rosary of the Blacks obtained their first chapel in 1716, later replacing the small chapel with the present church in 1764. The brotherhood used the church as their place of worship and, as with many black brotherhood churches in Brazil, continue to do so today.

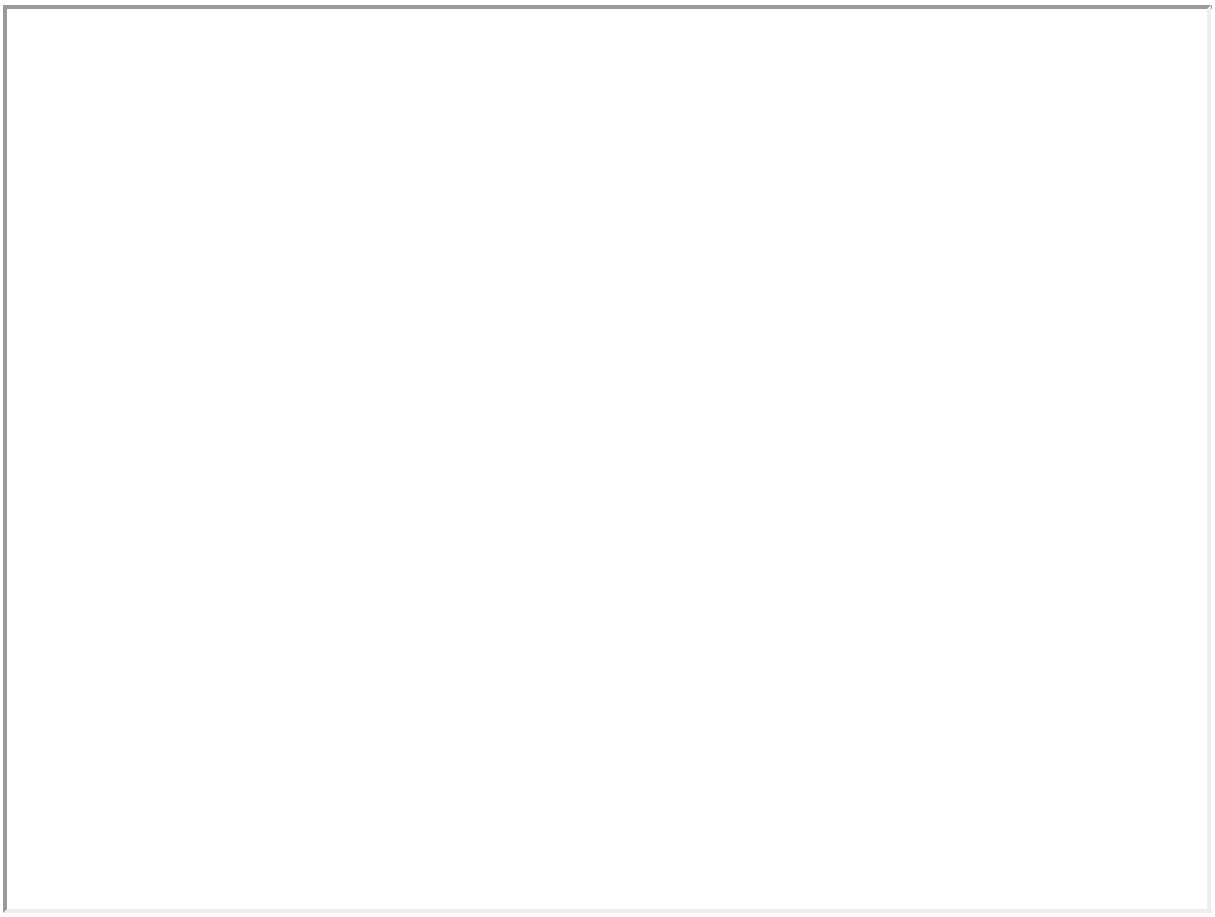
José Pereira dos Santos designed the current plan of two connected ovals shortly before his death in 1764. Only two churches from the period, both designed by Pereira, have this shape: the Rosary of the Blacks and St. Peter in Mariana. This uncommon shape allowed the church to stand out from the customary rectangular structures, thereby indicating the elevated socioeconomic status of its members.



Figure Runaway argument for \eatSpaces?: Left: Church of Our Lady of the Rosary of the Blacks, 18th century, Ouro Preto, Brazil (photo: Juliana Bruder, CC BY-SA 4.0); right: Church of São Francisco de Assis, Ouro Preto, Brazil (photo: svenwerk, CC BY-NC-ND 2.0)

In 1785, the brotherhood commissioned local architect Manuel Francisco de Araújo to update the façade according to prevailing tastes in Brazil. Araújo revised the church's exterior and added the bell towers. The church's façade, like its interior, is in the iconic

Mineiro Rococo style. This style was common in this region and is characterized by its whitewashed walls and elaborate stone moldings, its towers resembling those of the nearby Church of Saint Francis (designed and executed by Aleijadinho).



The present church was completed in 1793, and its interior was finished by Manuel Ribeiro Rosa and José Gervásio de Sousa. This region was home to Black, white, and mixed-race artists but records do not mention a racial designation for Manuel Ribeiro Rosa and José Gervásio de Sousa. In addition to these named artists, extensive building projects such as this one depended on a large workforce that may have included members of the brotherhood.



Figure **3.4.4.5**: Saint Iphigenia, inside the Church of Our Lady of the Rosary, Ouro Preto, Brazil (photo: Giuliano Orlando)

Expressing agency with Black saints

Black brotherhoods made churches their own through devotion to black saints, like the legendary St. Iphigenia (a 1st-century Ethiopian princess), St. Kaleb of Axum (a 6th-century Ethiopian king), and Benedict the Moor and Anthony of Carthage—the latter two lived in Renaissance Italy, first as slaves then as freed, religious men.



Figure **3.4.4.6**: Saints Benedict and Anthony, inside the Church of Our Lady of the Rosary, Ouro Preto, Brazil (photo: Ricardo André Frantz, CC BY 3.0)

The Church of Our Lady of the Rosary of the Blacks contains six side altars with niches ornamented with painted and carved *rocaille* (elaborate ornamentation with pebbles and shells) frames. Inside the niches are statues of the black saints Iphigenia, Kaleb, Benedict, and Anthony. The last two niches (across from one another, and nearest the church's entrance) are dedicated to white saints, namely the Virgin and Child and St. Helena of Constantinople. The rounded walls with these side altars direct the gaze

forward toward a painted wooden arch framing the main altar, and calling attention to the statue of Our Lady of the Rosary at its center**St. Helena and the importance of conversion**

The inclusion of St. Helena, the mother of the Roman Emperor Constantine, among these black saints may initially seem surprising. According to the early Christian father Eusebius of Caesarea, Helena converted to Christianity soon after Constantine became Emperor of Rome in 306 C.E. She convinced her son to convert to Christianity and made it the official religion of the Empire. Later in life, she traveled to Palestine to recover the cross on which Jesus had been crucified, which she brought back to Rome with her. She is shown holding the cross in the sculpture. Her presence in the church speaks to the brotherhood's devotion to the Cross and commitment to spreading Christianity following her example, but through the Rosary rather than the cross.



Figure **3.4.4.7**: Saint Helena, inside the Church of Our Lady of the Rosary, Ouro Preto, Brazil (photo: Giuliano Orlando)

St. Benedict



Figure **3.4.4.8**: Painting of Saint Benedict receiving a rosary from an angel at the entrance to the Church of Our Lady of the Rosary of the Blacks, 18th century, Ouro Preto, Brazil (photo: Ricardo André Frantz, CC BY 3.0)

A ceiling painting of St. Benedict at the entrance of the church includes another reference to St. Helena. The painting shows the black saint receiving a Rosary from an angel. The angel offering Benedict the rosary tells him *In hoc signo vinces* ("by this sign

you will conquer"), the same phrase that appeared to Constantine in Greek before the Battle of the Milvian Bridge. Here, the brotherhood members put their stamp on Christian iconography in two ways:

First, by creating a new narrative of St. Benedict receiving a Rosary on behalf of the black race. Normally St. Dominic of Guzman, the founder of the Dominican Order, is depicted receiving the Rosary from the Virgin Mary, which he then teaches to others. Here a black saint receives it directly from an angel, creating an uninterrupted link between his race and heaven. This is significant because blackness had been seen as evil from the Middle Ages and only whitened through conversion. Here a black saint is given a new instrument of conversion and salvation.

Second, the brotherhood members reshape an existing Christian narrative by replacing the Cross with the Rosary as the symbol of salvation. Thus, the painting declares that the brotherhood members will win admission to heaven through praying the Rosary. In other words, by constantly praying the Rosary, Mary will intercede so God can reward them with eternal life in paradise.

Another message of the painting is that the brotherhood members are charged with converting and catechizing new African arrivals through the Rosary, because the Rosary is a meditation on the principal tenets (beliefs) of Catholicism. Ouro Preto was a new town (originating in the late 17th century) where the black population was predominantly recently enslaved Africans. The membership of the brotherhood was not necessarily made up of African-born members, but the brotherhood made Christianizing newly arrived Africans part of their mission. While colonial Afro-Latin Americans have been generally viewed as the target of conversion efforts by white missionaries, this painting shows Afrodescendants doing lay missionary work themselves.

Afro-Brazilian agency

Ouro Preto's Church of Our Lady of the Rosary of the Blacks speaks to the kind of artistic and socioeconomic agency Afro-Brazilians, whether enslaved, free, or freed, wielded in the eighteenth century. It shows the ways in which Afro-Brazilian brotherhoods manipulated Catholic imagery to give their temples an Afro-centric iconography that expressed their group, Catholic, and racial identity. Beyond that, the Church invites us to think about the ways early modern Afrodescendants expressed themselves through art and other objects.

Additional resources:

Miguel A. Valerio, "Architects of Their Own Humanity: Race, Devotion, and Artistic Agency in Afro-Brazilian Confraternal Churches in Eighteenth-Century Salvador and Ouro Preto." *Colonial Latin American Review*, forthcoming 2021

Virtual tour of the city of Ouro Preto that includes the church of São Francisco de Assis

Gauvin Alexander Bailey, *The Spiritual Rococo: Decor and Divinity from the Salons of Paris to the Missions of Patagonia* (London: Taylor and Francis, 2017)

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3.4.5: Mestre Valentim, Passeio Publico, Rio de Janeiro

by DR. RACHEL ZIMMERMAN

Page ID
179769



Figure **3.4.5.1**: Obelisks, Mestre Valentim, Passeio Publico, Rio de Janeiro, begun 1779, inaugurated 1783 (photo: **Rodrigojordy**, CC BY-SA 4.0)

In the middle of the eighteenth century a series of epidemics ravaged the city of Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. The illness was attributed to the unsanitary air caused by human and animal waste in Lake Boqueirão. The viceroy Luis de Vasconcelos e Sousa ordered the lake to be filled in and a public park, the Passeio Publico (public promenade), to be erected in its place. The park's purpose—to beautify the city and provide a healthy space for outdoor leisure—was suggested by the inscriptions written on two obelisks, "the longing for Rio," and "the love of the public."

The Passeio Publico represented several groundbreaking achievements: the first public park on Brazilian soil, some of the first large-scale bronze sculptures cast in Rio de Janeiro, and a major urban planning commission awarded to an artist of African descent.



Figure **3.4.5.2**: Karl Wilhelm von Theremin, "The entrance of the Passeio Publico," in *Saudades do Rio de Janeiro*, 1835, lithograph and watercolor, 48 x 30.5 cm (Biblioteca Nacional, Rio de Janeiro)

Valentim da Fonseca e Silva, better known as Mestre Valentim (Master Valentim), was born around 1745 in the diamond mining region of Brazil (Serro do Frio, Minas Gerais). His parents were Manoel da Fonseca e Silva, a wealthy Portuguese man, and Amatilde da Fonseca, a woman of African descent. The earliest known account of Valentim's life states that the artist traveled with his family to Portugal as a baby and received an education there before returning to Brazil. While this story about his youth has not been verified with documentary evidence, Valentim arrived in Rio de Janeiro as a young man and worked there for the rest of his life. Although Valentim described himself as a carver, he was one of the viceroy's favorite architects and received numerous important commissions.



Figure **3.4.5.3**: Detail, João Francisco Muzzi, *Joyful and quick rebuilding of the church of the old Monastery of Nossa Senhora do Parto*, 1789 (**Museu do Açude, Rio de Janeiro**)

A painting commemorating the destruction of a convent portrays Mestre Valentim presenting the plans for the building's replacement to the viceroy and other officials. At a time when portraiture was rare in Brazil, this detail was probably included

because a black architect was seen as a novelty. The painting highlights Valentim's dark skin and his humility as he bows down before the well-dressed officials.

Brazil's first public park

Large portions of the city of Lisbon, Portugal—the capital of the empire—were destroyed by earthquake and the resulting fires in 1755, prompting a rebuilding campaign. Enlightenment ideals of producing a beautiful and hygienic city with fresh air, clean water, regular streets, and public parks guided the redesign of the city. These same ideals prompted the construction of the Passeio Publico in the colonial city Rio de Janeiro. At the same time that the Marquis of Pombal worked to revitalize infrastructure and industry throughout Portugal, the viceroy in Rio de Janeiro (the capital of Brazil) embarked on an ambitious campaign to modernize the city, leading to numerous building campaigns, increased access to clean water, and technological advancements, such as securing the tools, resources, and knowledge needed for making large bronze sculptures.



Figure 3.4.5.4: A plan of the city of S. Sebastian of Rio de Janeiro…in the year 1808, printed 1812 (Biblioteca Nacional, Rio de Janeiro).

Mestre Valentim designed a trapezoidal park with the narrow end overlooking the bay, reminiscent of baroque and rococo palace gardens such as that of Queluz outside of Lisbon. Such gardens were often organized into a series of intersecting geometric shapes.



Figure 3.4.5.5: Queluz palace and gardens, Portugal (photo: Jean-Christophe Benoist, CC BY-SA 4.0)

The walkways at 18th century gardens such as Queluz directed the movement of visitors between carefully arranged plots of land ornamented with plants and sculptures. Elaborate fountains formed centerpieces at the main intersections of the walkways.

Pavilions in the *passeio publico*

In the Passeio Publico, two square pavilions originally flanked the terrace overlooking the water. Sadly, today, little of Mestre Valentim's design remains. The park was altered on numerous occasions throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Few of Valentim's sculptures remain in their original locations, the pavilions were first modified into octagonal structures and then eliminated altogether, and the geometric arrangement of the walkways and plants has been entirely replaced with undulating, irregular forms.



Figure **3.4.5.6**: Leandro Joaquim, *Whale fishing*, late 18th century oil on canvas (Museu Histórico Nacional, Rio de Janeiro)

The pavilions contained whimsical displays celebrating the natural resources of Brazil and Rio de Janeiro. The interior of one pavilion was covered in ornaments made of shell, including sculptures of local fish. This pavilion housed Leandro Joaquim's series of paintings of the Rio de Janeiro harbor (now in the Museu Histórico Nacional and Museu Nacional das Belas Artes). These oval paintings highlighted the viceroy's improvements to the city, such as the aqueduct and a large plaza, and the beneficial industries that were conducted on the waterfront, such as fishing and transoceanic trade.

The other pavilion was decorated with sculptures of local birds made of feathers. This pavilion contained a series of paintings (now lost) depicting what were considered Brazil's most important industries: gold, diamonds, sugar, and other agricultural products. The celebration of Brazil's natural resources continued in the sculptures that decorated the park, such as the intertwined caimans featured on one of the fountains. While European travelers typically viewed tropical plants and animals as symbols of strange and backward lands, the Passeio Publico celebrated Rio de Janeiro as both tropical and industrious.



Figure **3.4.5.7**: Mestre Valentim, Alligators Fountain, 1783 (photo: **Rio de Janeiro Department of Conservation**)

The *passeio publico* provided visitors with a venue for various forms of entertainment such as operas, concerts, plays, and festivals honoring the Portuguese royal family. Spending leisure time outdoors was viewed as essential to the physical and mental well-being of the city's wealthy inhabitants.

One of the park's fountains highlights the importance of pleasure with a sculpture of a nude boy holding a placard that states "I am useful even while playing." Valentim injected playfulness into his otherwise orderly and controlled environment with the juxtaposition of the natural and the man-made. For example, he placed a papaya tree next to a painted bronze sculpture of the same plant. The shell and feather interior decorations of the pavilions also allowed visitors to delight in comparing the natural and the artificial.

Additional resources:

Passeio Publico website

John Barrow, *A Voyage to Cochinchina, in the Years 1792 and 1793* (London: T. Cadell and W. Davies, 1806), 81-83.

George Staunton, *An Authentic Account of an Embassy from the King of Great Britain to the Emperor of China* (London: C. Nicol, 1797), pp. 162-64.

Edward J. Sullivan, "The Black Hand: Notes on the African Presence in the Visual Arts of Brazil and the Caribbean," in Joseph J. Rishel and Suzanne Stratton-Pruitt eds., *The Arts of Latin America 1492-1820* (Philadelphia: Philadelphia Museum of Art, 2006), pp. 39-55.

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3.4.6: Sanctuary of Bom Jesus de Matosinhos of Congonhas do Campo, 1757-1872

by DR. RACHEL ZIMMERMAN

Page ID
179770



Figure **3.4.6.1**: Sanctuary of Bom Jesus de Matosinhos, 1757-1872, Congonhas do Campo, Brazil (photo: **Sérgio Mourão** , CC-BY-SA-4.0)

Traveling by horse, mule, or on foot through the hilly countryside of Brazil, pilgrims experienced the suffering and triumph of Jesus Christ upon arriving at the sanctuary of Bom Jesus de Matosinhos in Congonhas do Campo. The sanctuary is situated on a steep hill and contains six small chapels that lead up to a church. Scenes of the life and death of Christ, recreated in sculptures and paintings, greet exhausted pilgrims. This elaborate complex of architecture, sculpture, and painting was intended to provoke an intense emotional reaction.



Figure **3.4.6.2**: Bom Jesus do Monte, begun 1722, Braga, Portugal (**photo: PMRMaeyaert** , **CC-BY-SA-3.0**)

The sanctuary's design was inspired by the site of Bom Jesus do Monte in Braga, Portugal. According Braga was an old, established city, in the 18th century, Congonhas do Campo was a small, remote village that had emerged only recently as a result of a gold rush that brought tens of thousands of immigrants to the area. The sanctuary is a testament to the religiosity of the inhabitants of the region and remains a popular pilgrimage site to this day. Although a city has formed around the sanctuary and pilgrims can now reach the site by car, visiting the sanctuary remains an impressive experience. Next to the church a room displays hundreds of ex-votos, or tokens of thanks gifted to the sanctuary in response to answered prayers.

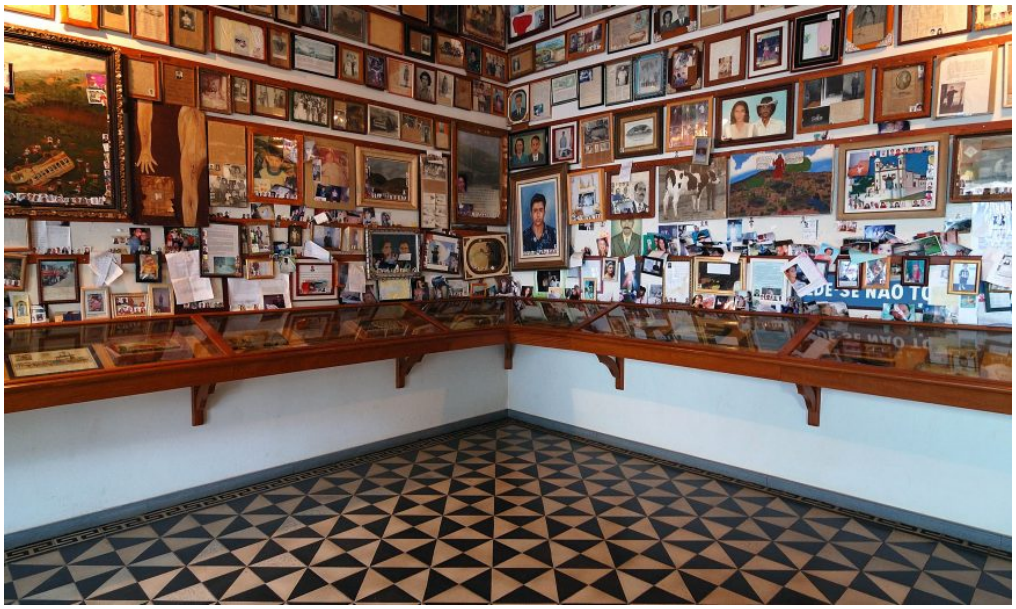


Figure 3.4.6.3: View of the chamber of ex-votos at the Sanctuary of Bom Jesus de Matosinhos (photo: **Rosino** , CC BY-SA 2.0)



Figure 3.4.6.4: Bouças Christ (Senhor de Matosinhos, or Senhor Bom Jesus de Bouças), mid-12th century, or first decades of the 13th century, polychromed wood, 204 x 169 x 33 cm, Matosinhos parish church, Portugal (photo: © **Alexandre Maniés**)

The miraculous reputation

The sanctuary is dedicated to Bom Jesus de Matosinhos, an invocation of Jesus associated with a Polychrome [/ simple_tooltip] wood sculpture on display in the town of Matosinhos, Portugal (see left). This sculpture was believed to have been created by Nicodemus, a man who knew Jesus in his lifetime. The sculpture was said to have been a perfect likeness of Jesus and the first depiction of him to arrive in Portugal.

The sanctuary in Congonhas was commissioned by a man named Feliciano Mendes. In 1757 he became gravely ill, prayed to Bom Jesus de Matosinhos, and was miraculously healed. In return, Mendes promised to build a sanctuary. That same year, he began to collect donations, received official approval for his project, and oversaw construction of the church. By the time Mendes died in 1765, the sanctuary offered regular religious services. The centerpiece of the site was a copy of the Bom Jesus do Matosinhos that had been imported from Portugal. The imported sculpture was initially displayed on the cross on the main altar, but was moved to the sarcophagus at the base of the altar when a second sculpture of the crucified Christ was gifted to the sanctuary in 1787.



Figure 3.4.6.5: Chapels leading up to the Sanctuary of Bom Jesus de Matosinhos, 1757-1872, Congonhas do Campo, Brazil (photo: **public domain**)

Like its counterpart in Portugal, the sculpture of Bom Jesus at Congonhas do Campo is considered an especially powerful vehicle of intercession. Prayers said in front of the sculpture are thought to have a great chance of being answered. As a result, the sanctuary at Congonhas do Campo became a major pilgrimage site with people traveling from afar to ask Jesus for assistance. After Feliciano Mendes' death, devotees continued to donate funds for the creation of the church, atrium, chapels, and many of the sculptures and paintings that were produced over the course of 75 years. Some of the region's most celebrated artists worked on the project including the architect Francisco de Lima Cerqueira, the sculptor Antonio Francisco Lisboa (better known as Aleijadinho), and the painter Manoel da Costa Athaide, among many others.



Figure 3.4.6.6: Map showing the chapels of the stations of the cross on the path leading up to the Sanctuary of Bom Jesus de Matosinhos, 1757-1872, Congonhas do Campo, Brazil

A rich narrative

Pilgrims first encounter a series of six chapels that zigzag up the hill. Inside are sculptural groups representing seven of the stations of the cross, important moments at the end of Jesus' life from the last supper to the crucifixion. The tradition of creating chapels containing depictions of the stations of the cross began in Italy in the fifteenth century. These allowed worshippers to walk from

one event to the next and to reenact the portrayed scenes without needing to travel to Jerusalem where the events had originally occurred.

At Congonhas do Campo, Antonio Francisco Lisboa and his workshop created the sixty-four painted wood sculptures that make up the seven scenes and Manoel da Costa Athaide painted the sculptures and the illusionistic interiors found in some of the chapels. Instead of entering the chapels, visitors peer through windows to witness the events recreated inside. The figures are portrayed with exaggerated poses and facial expressions to create a sense of drama and to elicit an emotional response in the viewer.



Figure **3.4.6.7**: Antonio Francisco Lisboa, A view through the window of a chapel showing the *Last Supper*, Sanctuary of Bom Jesus de Matosinhos (photo: **Mariahaversa**, CC-BY-SA-4.0)

After climbing up the hill, visitors reach an elaborate curving staircase that leads to the church. On top of the banisters are twelve nearly life-size stone sculptures of Old Testament prophets. These prophets foretold the coming of Jesus, and each sculpted figure holds an unrolled scroll with their prophecy inscribed in Latin. Antonio Francisco Lisboa also designed these sculptures. Their proportions and forms are distorted to provide a powerful effect when viewed from below.



Figure **3.4.6.8**: Antonio Francisco Lisboa, sculptures of Old Testament prophets, Sanctuary of Bom Jesus de Matosinhos, Congonhas do Campo, 1757-1872, soapstone (Photo: **Lima Andruška**, CC BY-SA 2.0)

Lastly, pilgrims enter the church. Paintings above the choir and along the edges of the ceiling depict Old Testament scenes that parallel events in Jesus' life. Paintings on canvas hang on the walls and portray scenes from the life of Mary before she gave birth and scenes of the life of Jesus, all arranged sequentially with the earliest stories near the entrance and the later scenes near the main altar. These Old and New Testament images lead up to the defining moments on the main altar: the crucifixion and death of Jesus. In addition to the sculptures of the crucifixion and the sarcophagus, the ceiling painting above the altar depicts Jesus being placed in the tomb, again surrounded by Old Testament scenes.



Figure **3.4.6.92**: Bernardo Pires da Silva, Ceiling painting over the main altar, Sanctuary of Bom Jesus de Matosinhos (photo: **public domain**)

While this focus on suffering and death may seem grim, Jesus is believed to have sacrificed himself in order to free his followers from the sin committed by Adam and Eve (depicted above the choir, opposite the main altar) and enable them to gain salvation. The center of the ceiling in the nave highlights the culmination of Jesus' suffering with a depiction of the Trinity: God the Father, Jesus

holding the cross, and the Holy Spirit represented as a dove (see “Virtual Tour” in additional resources below). The initial plan for the sanctuary emphasized Christ’s resurrection with additional chapels behind the church; however, these were never built.

Additional Resources:

Virtual Tour

UNESCO World Heritage List

George Kubler, “Sacred Mountains in Europe and America,” in *Christianity and the Renaissance: Image and Religious Imagination in the Quattrocento* , eds. T. Verdon and J. Henderson (Syracuse, 1990), p. 413 – 41.

Myriam Andrade Ribeiro de Oliveira, *O Aleijadinho and the Santuario de congonhas: Aleijadinho and the Congonhas Sanctuary* (Brasília: IPHAN, 2006) **PDF**

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3.4.7: Carlos Julião, watercolor manuscript

by DR. RACHEL ZIMMERMAN

Page ID
179771



Figure 3.4.7.1: Carlos Julião, left: "A soldier departing from a crying woman"; right: "Surveillance of the diamond mines," in *Noticia Summaria do Gentilismo da Asia*…, c. 1780–1800, watercolors (Biblioteca Nacional, Brazil). The manuscript came into the possession of the National Library of Brazil in 1947, but the library did not make any records about the acquisition.

What do images of Hindu deities, Brazilian customs, and Peruvian arts have in common? They are each represented in an eclectic collection of watercolors from the end of the eighteenth century. The artist, known by his Portuguese name Carlos Julião, was Italian by birth, but he worked as an engineer for the Portuguese military. Julião traveled around inspecting fortresses, evaluating security measures, and maintaining Portuguese authority. He traveled on military expeditions to a variety of Portuguese possessions including Brazil, North Africa, India, and China.

Julião's manuscript contains more than 80 watercolors and consists of three sections:

1. **"A short account of paganism in Asia"**
   The paintings of the Hindu deity Vishnu inform viewers about a region of the globe that was part of the Portuguese empire. While other parts of the manuscript are based on eyewitness accounts, this section was copied from another source.
2. **"Figures of the customs of Whites and Blacks in Rio de Janeiro and Serro do Frio" (Brazil)**
   The section of the manuscript that depicts scenes from Brazil is quite famous and is frequently used to learn about life in late eighteenth-century Brazil. The images are some of the relatively few depictions of clothing, customs, and religious celebrations in Brazil during this period, many of the paintings are the earliest known representations of certain practices.
3. **"Peruvian Vases and Textiles"**
   The final section of the manuscript depicts objects from Peru which was under Spanish control.

In the 18th century, the Enlightenment ideals of scientific discovery inspired many explorers to travel throughout the world documenting the landscapes, animals, plants, and people that they encountered. Julião likely considered himself an Enlightenment scholar and his manuscript a scientific project. Scientific expeditions should not, however, be viewed as neutral or unbiased. Recording and organizing information according to a European worldview was another method of asserting control and

establishing European primacy. After all, Julião's travels were military expeditions that sought to solidify and expand Portuguese power.

Besides the title pages introducing each section, the only other written text in the manuscript is copied from another manuscript on Hindu religion. The Brazilian and Peruvian sections do not include explanatory texts. The title pages do indicate that the writer of the title pages and the painter are the same person, Carlos Julião.

"A short account of paganism in Asia"

The first section, "A short account of paganism in Asia," is a copy of a text about the Hindu religion of India. The original manuscript that Julião copied has not been found but was probably the work of a Jesuit missionary in India in the 1500s whose goal was to understand Hinduism as a means to convert Indians to Christianity. [1] Julião may have seen the original text while stationed in Goa, India from 1774–79.



Figure **3.4.7.2**: Vishnu appears as Matsya in the form of a fish and slays Sankhasura. Carlos Julião, "1st Incarnation Matsya Avatar," in *Noticia Summaria do Gentilismo da Asia*…, c. 1780–1800, watercolor (Biblioteca Nacional, Brazil)



Figure **3.4.7.3**: Pahari School, *Matsya*, c. 1760, gouache on paper (© Trustees of the British Museum)

Julião included 10 watercolors that focus on Vishnu and his various incarnations (avatars). His painting of the first incarnation illustrates a story about a conch demon named Sankhasura who steals the vedas (the sacred texts). Vishnu appears as Matsya in the form of a fish and slays Sankhasura. Julião's depiction of this scene, showing Matsya holding Sankhasura by the hair, differs from typical representations that show the demon within a conch shell (such as in a watercolor from the Pahari School from India). In Julião's version, Sankhasura is only shown standing in the water on two legs. Although the text repeatedly mentions the conch,

Julião does not portray Sankhasura with a conch body. We might ask why? It is unclear why he did not show Sankhasura emerging from a conch shell, but it was perhaps because he was not particularly concerned with iconographic detail. It is also possible that the manuscript he was copying might have omitted the conch body. Unfortunately, this part of the manuscript has not yet been subject to art historical study, but perhaps future research will offer a more concrete explanation.

By the late 18th century, Indian paintings of the incarnations of Vishnu had long been circulating in Europe and had been repeatedly copied, with varying degrees of accuracy, by European printmakers. Hindu artists understood the narrative and its significance differently than did Christian European artists who often emphasized naturalistic bodies and an illusion of three-dimensionality at the expense of narrative details. [2] Julião's painting exemplifies such European priorities. His watercolor focuses exclusively on the large muscular bodies of Matsya and Sankhasura, whereas Indian representations of the story often include the vedas, shown in a watercolor from the Pahari School from India as four standing figures. As a copy of another text, this section of Julião's manuscript differs markedly from the other two about Brazil and Peru. Yet, like the next two sections, this part of the manuscript collects and visually represents information about a part of the world that Europeans wished to dominate.

"Figures of the customs of Whites and Blacks in Rio de Janeiro and Serro do Frio"

In the second section of Julião's manuscript, he focuses on depictions of people in Brazil. The images depict soldiers, white people of various socioeconomic positions, Indigenous people, Black workers and celebrants, and lastly, the grueling working conditions in the diamond mines.



Figure 3.4.7.4: Carlos Julião, "Black Queen Festival," in *Noticia Summaria do Gentilismo da Asia*…, c. 1780–1800, watercolor (Biblioteca Nacional, Brazil)

Several pages depict a religious procession that Julião likely witnessed during his years in Brazil. The procession was an elaborate spectacle that filled the streets of cities each year. The watercolor of the "Black Queen Festival" provides evidence for strong cultural connections between celebrations in Central Africa and Brazil. These links are significant as they highlight that many Central Africans who were forcibly brought to Brazil already practiced Catholicism in their homeland, and demonstrate that Central Africans were able to maintain their culture despite enslavement.

The participants are members of the brotherhood of Our Lady of the Rosary, an organization that allowed free and enslaved Afro-Brazilians to support their community and to join together in Christian worship. The procession includes both a king and a queen (people that the rosary brotherhood elected to serve in those roles during the celebrations). Julião paints the queen with attendants, musicians, and dancers who display a mixture of Central African and European clothing and status symbols. The queen

and the musicians wear European-style clothing with African additions—the queen's red cape and the fabric wrapped around the musicians' hips. The attendants holding the cape and umbrella—an important symbol of status in Central Africa—wear wrap skirts and sashes over their bare chests. The feathers on the figures' heads and the musical instruments are also Central African in origin.

Over a span of three hundred years, enslavers forcibly transported almost five million Africans to Brazil. These Africans and their descendants adapted the cultures that they brought from various regions of Africa to circumstances in Brazil. The painted procession relates to a ritual called *sangamento* from the **Kingdom of Kongo** in Central Africa. The Kongo king converted to Christianity in 1491, and his son introduced new rituals that celebrated the adoption of Christianity. Since positive relationships with Europeans—through trade and shared Christian belief—strengthened political power in the Kongo kingdom, the ritual incorporated Christian elements and European symbols of status.



Figure **3.4.7.5**: Carlos Julião, "Two Indigenous Brazilians," in *Noticia Summaria do Gentilismo da Asia…*, c. 1780–1800, watercolor (**Biblioteca Nacional, Brazil**)



Figure **3.4.7.6**: Adriaen Collaert, "Allegory of America," from the *Four Continents*, 1580–1600, engraving (**The Metropolitan Museum of Art**)

In contrast to paintings of events that Julião witnessed, all of his depictions of Indigenous Brazilians rely on longstanding stereotypes and tropes. In one example, an Indigenous man and woman stand bare-chested in a landscape, wearing only feathered skirts. Although some Indigenous groups wore feather headdresses, the feather skirts are a misleading addition that Europeans had incorrectly associated with native Brazilians since the sixteenth century. The man holds a bow and arrow, and the monkey sitting on the woman's shoulder is a mico, a species that Julião likely saw frequently in Brazil; the armadillo in the lower left corner is also native to Brazil.

These animals and tools for hunting are appropriate to the region, but their inclusion in the painting is related to exoticized European imagery of the Americas rather than Julião's experiences with actual Indigenous people. For instance, the bow and arrows and armadillo feature prominently in Adriaen Collaert's print called the "Allegory of America." Like the watercolor, the print emphasizes Native American nudity, weaponry, and connections to the landscape and animals. The print also includes scenes of warfare and cannibalism, further reinforcing a European view of Indigenous people as dangerous and uncivilized. Julião's depictions of Brazilians combine a desire to document for educational purposes with a reliance on existing narratives about foreign places and peoples. These narratives served to justify European domination of these peoples.

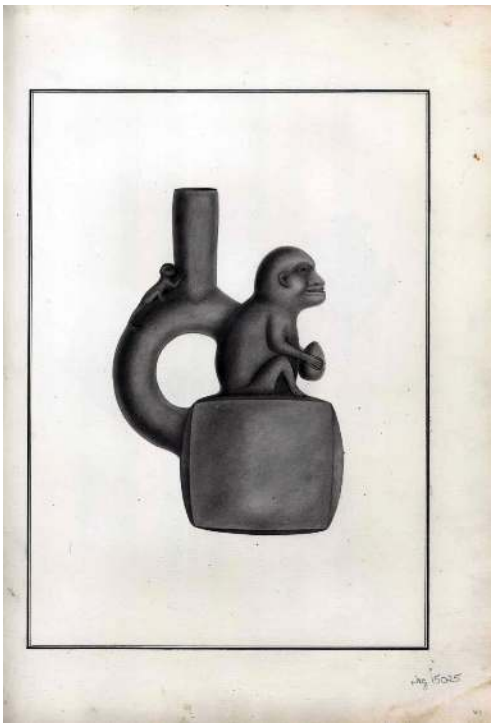


Figure **3.4.7.7**: Carlos Julião, "Monkey Vessel," in *Noticia Summaria do Gentilismo da Asia…*, c. 1780–1800, watercolor (Biblioteca Nacional, Brazil)

"Peruvian Vases and Textiles"



Figure **3.4.7.8**: Chimú, *Feline Bottle*, 12th–15th century, ceramic (The Metropolitan Museum of Art)

The last section of Julião's manuscript represents textiles and ceramics from the Andes, an area that he never visited. [3] Julião writes that the objects had been rescued from a Spanish shipwreck off the coast of Portugal. The ceramics and textiles are carefully delineated with geometric precision against a blank background, suggesting that they are meant to serve as scientific documents rather than as objects within a still-life composition.

One of the ceramics that he portrayed is a black stirrup-spout vessel in the shape of a cube, with a seated monkey atop the cube and an even smaller monkey holding onto the spout. The painting closely resembles the smoothly finished and precisely sculpted vessels produced by the Chimú in Peru before Spanish forces arrived in the region. Even though Julião notes that the wrecked ship that carried these objects was laden with silver, he portrays items that inform viewers about Andean cultures instead of the

commercially valuable silver. This further suggests that his intent in creating the watercolor images was to learn about and document different cultures throughout the world. This is also supported by the fact that, unlike the other sections of the manuscript, here he records cultural objects from a region that he had not visited and that was under Spanish rather than Portuguese control. His intention with the manuscript as a whole appears to have been to compile as much information as he could gather about cultures that were foreign to him.

An outsider's perspective

While the manuscript can be seen as the project of an Enlightenment scholar, the imperial context in which Julião lived is also important. As part of the military, Julião worked to enforce Portuguese control throughout the globe. This control was under pressure from locals who sought autonomy and from other European powers who wanted to colonize those regions. Julião was not only gathering information but was also exerting military power over the cultures and places that he observed. The watercolors present Hindu religion, Brazilian customs, and Andean artworks as seen through the eyes of a European colonizer, who may have had little knowledge of the cultures and peoples that he portrayed. The images are useful records of shipwrecked items, Brazilian clothing, and other customs; however, they need to be viewed as constructed images rather than as objective documents.

Notes:

[1]Three other Portuguese artists also produced copies of the manuscript with illustrations that vary in number, composition, subject matter, and style. Two of the other copies can be seen here: **Notiçia Summaria do Gentilismo da Azia, (il 228) 18th c., Biblioteca Nacional de Portugal** and **Noticia Summaria do Gentilismo da Azia, (cod. 607) after 1759, Biblioteca Nacional de Portugal.**

[2] Robert del Bontá, "**Engraving India in 17th- and 18th-century Europe**," *Art in Print* 4, no. 4 (2014): pp. 20–25.

[3] The reverse side of some of these images contain loose sketches of landscapes and figures. Scholars do not know how these unfinished sketches fit in with the rest of the manuscript and they may be the result of Julião reusing paper.

Additional resources:

Downloadable pdf of Carlos Julião's manuscript

Cécile Fromont, "Dancing for the King of Congo from Early Modern Central Africa to Slavery-Era Brazil," Colonial Latin American Review 22, no. 2 (2013): pp. 184–208.

Cécile Fromont, ed. *Afro-Catholic Festivals in the Americas: Performance, Representation, and the Making of Black Atlantic Tradition* (Pennsylvania State University Press, 2019).

Silvia Hunold Lara, "Customs and Costumes: Carlos Julião and the Image of Black Slaves in Late Eighteenth-Century Brazil," *Slavery & Abolition: A Journal of Slave and Post-Slave Studies* 23, no. 2 (2002): pp. 123–146.

Maria Manuela Tenreiro, "Military Encounters in the Eighteenth Century: Carlos Julião and Racial Representations in the Portuguese Empire," *Portuguese Studies* 23, no. 1 (2007): pp. 7–35.

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3.4.8: Jesuit Missions of the Guaranis

- by **UNESCO**

Page ID

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Jesuit Missions of the Guaranis: San Ignacio Mini, Santa Ana, Nuestra Señora de Loreto and Santa Maria Mayor (Argentina), Ruins of Sao Miguel das Missoes (Brazil)



The ruins of São Miguel das Missões in Brazil, and those of San Ignacio Miní, Santa Ana, Nuestra Señora de Loreto and Santa María la Mayor in Argentina, lie at the heart of a tropical forest. They are the impressive remains of five Jesuit missions, built in the land of the Guaranis during the 17th and 18th centuries. Each is characterized by a specific layout and a different state of conservation.

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SECTION OVERVIEW

3.5: Amazonian

3.5.1: Mundurukú Headdress- a glimpse of life in the Amazon rainforest

3.5.2: Kayapó Headdress- a glimpse of life in the Amazon rainforest

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3.5.1: Mundurukú Headdress- a glimpse of life in the Amazon rainforest

by **DR. JAGO COOPER** and **DR. STEVEN ZUCKER**

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Headdress (*coifa*), before 1869, Arara, Mutum and Macaw(?) feathers, cord, 40 x 24 cm, Mundurukú people, Para, Brazil (The British Museum)

Special thanks to Dr. Jago Cooper, Kate Jarvis, Matthew Cock, and The British Museum.

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3.5.2: Kayapó Headdress- a glimpse of life in the Amazon rainforest

by **DR. JAGO COOPER** and **DR. STEVEN ZUCKER**

Page ID

179775



Headdress, 20th century, feathers (Anodorhynchus Hyacinthinus and Psarocolius Decumanus) and plant materials, approximately 1 m x 60 cm, Kayapó (Cayapo) people, Para, Brazil (The British Museum)

Special thanks to Dr. Jago Cooper, Matthew Cock, Kate Jarvis and The British Museum

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CHAPTER OVERVIEW

4: Latin America c. 1800–1900

Artists in Latin America expressed both a sense of pride in indigenous traditions and an appreciation for European ideas of liberty.

c. 1821 - 1900

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  - 4.1.1: Independence from Spanish rule in South America
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- 4.4: Colombia in the 19th century Carmelo Fernández, The Strait of Furatena in the Minero River
- 4.5: Photography Marc Ferrez, Slaves at a Coffee Yard in a Farm, Vale do Paraiba, Sao Paulo

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SECTION OVERVIEW

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4.1.1: Independence from Spanish rule in South America

by DR. MAYA JIMÉNEZ

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Figure **4.1.1.1**: Sally James Farnham, *Equestrian Portrait of Simón Bolivar*, dedicated 1921, bronze, 13 feet 6 inches tall (located at Central Park South and Avenue of the Americas, New York City) photo: **David Shankbone**, CC BY 2.5

The roots of Independence

The extensive **Spanish colonies in North, Central and South America** (which included half of South America, present-day Mexico, Florida, islands in the Caribbean and the southwestern United States) declared independence from Spanish rule in the early nineteenth century and by the turn of the twentieth century, the hundreds of years of the Spanish colonial era had come to a close. How did this happen? The **Enlightenment** ideals of democracy—equality under the law, separation of church and state, individual liberty—encouraged colonial independence movements in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. The Enlightenment began in eighteenth-century Europe as a philosophical movement that took science, reason, and inquiry as its guiding principles in order to challenge traditions and reform society. The results of these changes in thought are reflected in both the American and French revolutions—where a monarchical form of government (where the King ruled by divine right) was replaced with a Republic empowered by the people.

In Spain, the occupation by Napoleon during the Peninsular War (1808-1814) also inspired liberators to fight against foreign invaders. The examples of rebellion in the British Colonies, France, and Spain empowered Latin American revolutionaries who speculated on whether independence was a realistic and viable alternative to colonial rule. The term “Latin America” originated in the nineteenth century, when Argentinean jurist Carlos Calvo and French engineer Michel Chevalier, in reference to the Napoleonic invasion of Mexico in 1862, used the term “Latin,” referring to those whose national language—like Spanish—was derived from Latin, to denote difference from the “Anglo-Saxon” English-speaking people of North America.



Figure **4.1.1.2**: Pedro José Figueroa, *Simón Bolívar: Liberator of Colombia*, c. 1820, oil on canvas, 95 x 64 cm (**Museo Nacional de Colombia, Bogotá**)

It was largely the creoles who instigated the fight for liberation. Creoles remained connected to Europe through their ancestry and since they were often educated abroad, these ideas of self-determination held great appeal for them. Peninsulares on the other hand were more directly tied to Spain in ancestry and allegiance. In 1793, the Colombian creole Antonio Nariño, who would later serve as military general in Colombia's struggle for independence, printed a translation of the French *Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen*, demonstrating the bilingual and bicultural aspect of Latin American independence. Translations of speeches made by the founding fathers of the United States, including Thomas Jefferson and John Adams, also circulated in Latin America.

Not all creoles however, believed in independence and democracy—in fact, there existed an opposition of creole royalists who supported the Spanish Crown and allied themselves with the *Peninsulares*. Creole patriots (as opposed to the royalists) were attracted to the idea of independence and thought of themselves as Latin Americans, not as Spaniards. Despite having been born and raised in a Spanish viceroyalty to Spanish parents, they were culturally connected to Latin America. Situated at the interface of both identities, creole patriots considered themselves descendants of, but different from, the Spanish.

Simón Bolívar

In 1819, Simón Bolívar (above) articulated a concept of a Latin American identity that was racially unique, stating that "our people are nothing like Europeans or North Americans; indeed, we are more a mixture of Africa and America than we are children of Europe….It is impossible to say with any certainty to which human race we belong."[1] With this newfound sense of Latin American identity, creole revolutionaries approached independence from the standpoint of the Enlightenment, but with an added cultural dimension informed by their local experiences.

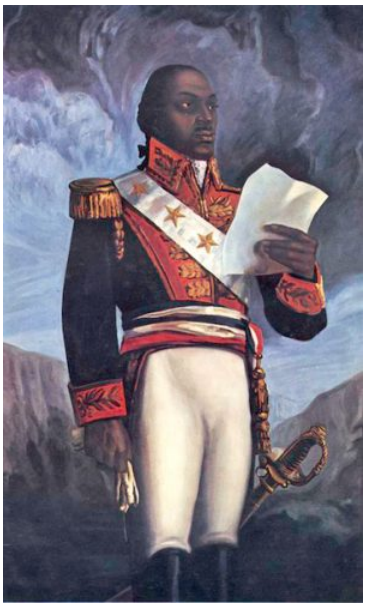


Figure **4.1.1.3**: Général Toussaint Louverture (**Kurt Fisher Haitian History Collection, New York Public Library**)

The first two, and most notable, countries in the Americas to gain independence were the United States (1776), led by General George Washington, and Haiti (1804), led by Toussaint L'Ouverture (left). Other Latin American countries, with the exception of Cuba and Puerto Rico, also embarked on their struggles for independence in the early nineteenth century—Chile and Mexico, for example, began in 1810, though their autonomy was not secured until later: Chile in 1818 and Mexico in 1821. Since territories were freed in sections with the ultimate goal of liberating an entire viceroyalty, the fight for independence came slowly and in stages.

In the northern part of South America, Simón Bolívar initiated his fight for independence by liberating the countries that formed part of the Viceroyalty of New Granada. On August 30, 1821, Gran Colombia, a conglomerate of recently freed countries formerly part of the Viceroyalty of New Granada (including modern-day Colombia and Venezuela), was established at the Congress of Cúcuta (see map below). At this same congress, Bolívar was elected president.

Following the liberation of Ecuador in 1822, and of Panama in 1821, Gran Colombia grew with the inclusion of both these countries. In his attempts to liberate as much of Latin America as possible, Bolívar traveled further south and freed Bolivia in 1825—a country whose name pays homage to its liberator.



Figure **4.1.1.4**: Map of Gran Colombia (1824)

Heroes, Martyrs, and Liberators

Despite economic volatility and political upheaval, there was a desire among nationals for artists to document Latin America's autonomy and in the process create a new Latin American iconography. Portraits of liberators, allegorical depictions of independence, and representations of important battles comprised the artistic production of the early nineteenth century. Tied to the desire to establish a national identity, portraiture and history painting were in high demand—the former documented the likenesses of revolutionary figures, while the latter recorded the major battles and landmark events of independence. While these genres existed before independence, their popularity significantly increased in the early nineteenth century.

With the exception of Mexico, Cuba, and Brazil, there existed no government-sponsored art school or established artistic communities in early post-independence Latin America. As a result, artists were either trained within small art studios, or by working artists, or in many cases were not formally trained at all—which helps to explain the diversity of styles in early nineteenth century painting. Often neglected or even wrongfully categorized, the early nineteenth century is a time of transformation when both artists and viewers were adapting to a changing society, articulating a sense of national identity, and in the process, creating a new artistic tradition.

Portraits

El Libertador Simón Bolívar was born in 1783 in Caracas, Venezuela to an aristocratic family. He was tutored by Simón Rodríguez, who introduced Bolívar to the work of Enlightenment philosopher Jean-Jacques Rousseau—specifically his ideas on the origins of inequality. Bolívar's privileged background also permitted him to travel abroad, and in 1804 he met the French Emperor Napoleon Bonaparte and the Prussian naturalist, and explorer, Alexander von Humboldt who had travelled extensively in Latin America and ignited Bolívar's patriotism.

Bolívar posed for Colombian painter Pedro José Figueroa, a descendant of a colonial family of portraitists and miniature artists. In *Simón Bolívar: The Liberator of Colombia* (above), Figueroa emphasizes Bolívar's military triumph through the three medals that decorate his uniform: the Order of the Liberators of Venezuela, the Cross of Boyacá and the Liberators of Cundinamarca. In another portrait by Figueroa (below), The Liberator is depicted in military uniform with large gold epaulettes, a sword dangling from the waist, and a prominent belt with his initials "S.B." imprinted on the buckle.



Figure **4.1.1.5**: Pedro José Figueroa, *Bolívar and the Allegory of America*, 1819, oil on canvas, Museo Quinta de Bolivar, Bogotá (Ministerio de Cultura de Colombia)

In both portraits by Figueroa, Bolívar appears almost entirely frontal, his posture stiff and anatomy awkward—a colonial aesthetic that the artist carries over into the nineteenth century. Privileging textures, color, and clothing, these paintings stress the historical or social importance of the sitter. The use of text within a portrait—another hallmark of colonial painting—appears in the two Figueroa portraits of Bolívar, as well as in *Portrait of Bolívar in Bogotá* by José Gil de Castro (below). In each of these portraits, the use of text helps to reinforce Bolívar's heroism, stating yet again, and this time in written form, that he is indeed *El Libertador*. While military dress seems to be a consistent feature in the portraiture of Bolívar, his facial features and skin tone change according to artist. Despite the fact that Bolívar was a creole, Figueroa calls attention to his uniquely Latin American character by depicting him with darker skin—a reference to the racial mixing that characterized Latin America after colonization.



Figure **4.1.1.6**: José Gil de Castro, *Portrait of Bolívar in Bogotá*, 1830 (**Museo Nacional de Arqueologia, Antropoligia, e Historia del Perú, Ministerio de Cultura del Perú**)



Figure **4.1.1.7**: Jacques-Louis David, *Napoleon in His Study at the Tuileries*, 1812, oil on canvas, 203.9 x 125.1 cm (National Gallery of Art)

In contrast to Figueroa, Gil de Castro presents Bolívar in a full-length portrait, providing a view of both The Liberator and his surroundings. The format and composition of the portrait, as well as the pose, recall *The Emperor Napoleon in His Study at the Tuileries* by the French artist Jacques-Louis David (left). The interior view of both portraits provide further information about the personalities of these generals. In the case of Napoleon, for example, David includes a copy of Plutarch's *Lives* on the floor, in an attempt to position Napoleon within an ancient lineage. In Gil de Castro's portrait of Bolívar, the globe placed prominently in the background announces Bolívar's worldliness and regional ambitions, as reflected in his liberation of multiple Latin American countries.

The military attire and heroic pose of Bolívar, shown with one hand tucked inside his jacket and his body positioned at an angle, recall the portrait of Napoleon. Though both portraits represent interiors—far from any battle—Bolívar and Napoleon proudly wear their military uniforms. The military heroism of Bolívar is further accentuated by the red banner of text at the top, which reads "Peru recalls the heroic deeds revered to its Liberator." Painted in 1830, the year of Bolívar's death, Gil de Castro depicts an aging yet noble Bolívar, quite different from the young liberator seen in Figueroa's earlier portrait (top of page). The strong similarities between *Portrait of Bolívar in Bogotá* and *The Emperor Napoleon in His Study at the Tuileries*, as well as with other full-length portraits of military generals, suggest that even after independence Latin American artists continued to look to Europe for artistic models.

History Painting

While portraiture could capture the personality and physical features of a hero, its potential to convey narrative was limited. History painting solved this problem, allowing artists to record the pivotal battles or moments in the wars of independence. Additionally, and perhaps more importantly, history painting was often imbued with moral lessons about heroism and patriotism. As a result, in European art it was considered the most elevated genre of painting—above still life, landscape, and portraiture.



Figure 4.1.1.8: José María Espinosa, *Battle of Palo River*, c. 1850, oil on canvas, 81 x 121 cm (Museo Nacional de Colombia, Bogotá)

Historical subjects were also painted by some of the same artists who created portraits of the heroes of Latin American independence. This was the case with the Colombian creole painter José María Espinosa, a largely self-taught artist who specialized in miniature portraits, but who had also served in General Nariño's Campaign of the South. Painted from memory but based on first-hand experience, Espinosa memorialized the battle of Palo River. Probably due to his lack of experience with this new genre, Espinosa organized his composition as if it were a landscape. Focusing on the topography and vegetation of Colombia rather than on particular military heroes and pivotal moments, Espinosa's *Battle of Palo River* (above) is better understood as a landscape view rather than a representation of the particulars of an historical event. His landscapist approach is also reflected in his handling of the composition, in which he delineates foreground, middle ground, and background, creating an illusionistic sense of deep space. In the foreground, the ground closest to the viewer, two military soldiers energetically ride on horseback, while in the middle ground the battle intensifies near the river, all culminating in a peaceful sunset. The cropped tree positioned at right frames the event, which unfolds in various stages culminating in the background.

The end of Gran Colombia

Despite the ambition of Gran Colombia, it remained politically complex, and worsened when Bolívar proclaimed himself dictator in 1828, a move he justified by pointing to insurrections. He became increasingly unpopular and that same year survived an assassination attempt. After 1828, Bolívar retreated to Santa Marta, Colombia where he died in 1830 while awaiting voluntary exile in Europe. Despite his attempts to create unity, and with the wars of independence now over, Latin American countries no longer saw a reason for partnership. Gran Colombia dissolved in 1830, and in the ensuing decades the countries of Colombia, Venezuela, Ecuador and Panama, as we know them today, were established.

[1]As quoted in Marie Arana, *Bolivar: American Liberator* (Simon and Schuster, 2013), p. 223.

Additional resources:

Vistas: Visual Culture in Spanish America, 1520-1620 (Fordham University)

Art of the Spanish Americas on The Metropolitan Museum of Art's Heilbrunn Timeline of Art History

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4.1.2: Early Scientific Exploration in Latin America

by DR. MAYA JIMÉNEZ

Page ID
179779



Figure **4.1.2.1**: Friedrich Georg Weitsch, *Alexander von Humboldt and Aimé Bonpland at the Foot of the Chimboraz*, 1806, oil on canvas, 163 x 226 cm (Bildarchiv Preussischer Kulturbesitz)

The eighteenth and nineteenth centuries saw a growth in the inland exploration of Latin America. The desire of travelers, mainly European scientists, artists, and writers, was not to settle new frontiers. Many of these regions were colonized, or, in some cases, had even become independent from European imperial powers. Rather, the goal of these explorers was to understand the area's botany, topography, people, and traditions. The knowledge they acquired came mainly from first-hand experience, in keeping with the **Enlightenment** idea of empiricism, which valued the concrete and measurable.

Disseminating knowledge


RELATION
ABRÉGÉE
D'UN VOYAGE
FAIT DANS L'INTERIEUR
DE L'AMÉRIQUE
MÉRIDIONALE.
Depuis la Côte de la Mer du Sud, jusqu'aux Côtes du Brésil & de la Guiane ;
& descendu LA RIVIERE DES AMAZONES ;
Par M. DE LA CONDAMINE, de la même Académie.
A PARIS,
Chez la Veuve PISSOT, Quay de Conti, à la Croix d'Or.
M. DCC. XLV.

Figure **4.1.2.2**: Charles Marie de la Condamine, *An Abridged Account of a Journey Made in the Interior of South America (Relation abrégée d'un voyage fait dans l'interieur de l'Amerique méridionale)*, 1745

The distribution of these observations through various media (including books, prints, photographs, and watercolors) had a significant effect on how Latin America was conceptualized both locally and internationally. Travel books, in particular, catered to a foreign readership that could only dream of visiting far away places. For example, in the early eighteenth century, French

naturalists, geographers, and engineers on the La Condamine Expedition explored the northern parts of South America—particularly Ecuador—with the goal of measuring the arc of the equatorial meridian. La Condamine's publications in Europe helped spur interest in exploration.

The Spanish priest and botanist José Celestino Mutis was also one of the earliest researchers to contribute to the scientific documentation of Latin America, in this case through the Royal Botanical Expedition to New Granada, which began in 1783. At the turn of the nineteenth century, Mutis traveled extensively, documenting with extreme accuracy the flora of Colombia, among them the *Mutisia Clematis*, commonly known as clematis and named after the explorer himself. Botanical watercolors of these finds were valued first and foremost for their scientific accuracy, but their elaborate composition and vibrant use of color also demonstrate a concern for artistic technique and aesthetics.



Figure **4.1.2.3**: Salvador Rizo, *Mutisia Clematis*, watercolor from José Celestino Mutis y Bossio, *Flora de la Real Expedición Botanica del Nueva Reyno de Granada*

The Humboldt expedition

The most prominent explorer of Latin America during this time was the Prussian Alexander von Humboldt, who, together with French botanist Aimé Bonpland, surveyed the region from 1799 to 1804. Humboldt and Bonpland traveled more than 6,000 miles, through Venezuela, down the Orinoco River, through the Amazonian jungle, up towards Cuba, then back down to Colombia, Ecuador, and Peru, traversing the Andes, sailing the Pacific Ocean northward toward Mexico, then back to Cuba, and finally to France, with a stop in New York. From this exhaustive voyage emerged some of the most detailed maps of the area, as well as documentation of multiple new species of flora and fauna.

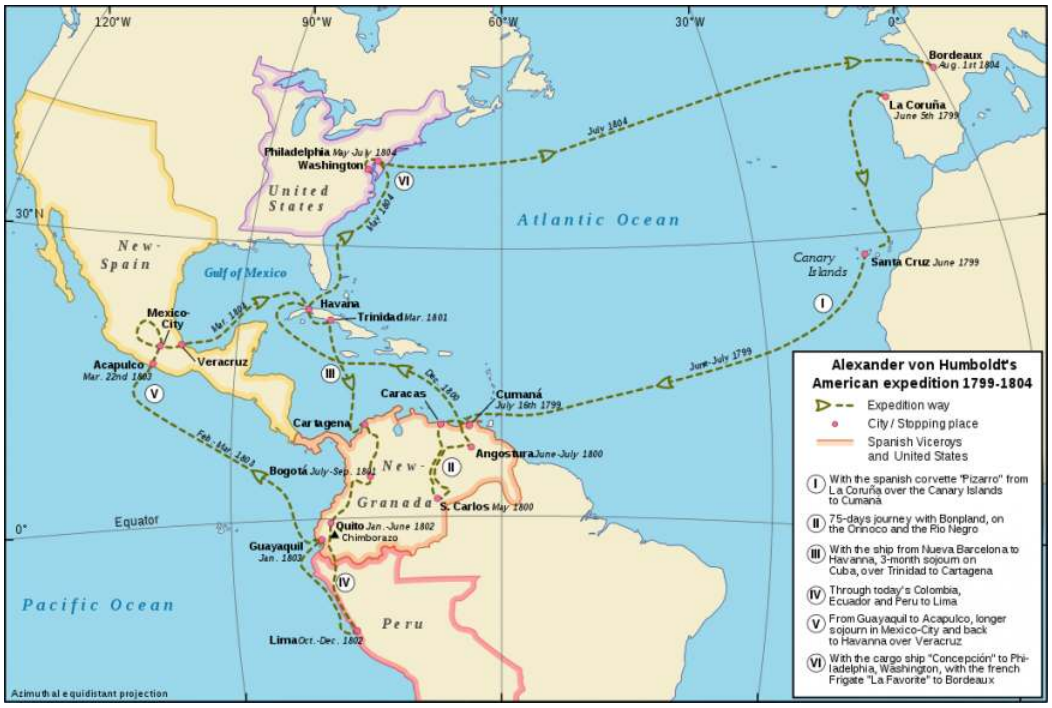


Figure **4.1.2.4**: Map of Alexander von Humboldt and Aimé Bonpland's American expedition, 1799-1804 (source: **Alexrk**, CC BY-SA 2.5)

Equipped with a variety of scientific instruments including thermometers, compasses, telescopes, and microscopes, Humboldt's aim was to scientifically document the unique topography of Latin America. But he also hoped to capture the emotional intensity of these mysterious territories: in his writings, words such as a "grandeur" and "marvel" appear alongside scientific measurements, demonstrating the extent to which Humboldt was both a scientist and a romantic.

Humboldt's and Bonpland's findings appeared in various publications, one of which was *Views of the Mountain Ranges and Monuments of the Indigenous Peoples of America (Vues des Cordillères et monuments des peuples indigènes de l'Amérique*) (1810-1813), featuring 69 engravings. The centerpiece of the publication, *Chimborazo Seen from the Tapia Plateau, Ecuador* (below), occupies the entirety of two pages. This landscape captures the geological and environmental diversity of the region—including the immensity of the volcano (the highest in Ecuador), the recognizable plants on site, and the variations in the terrain (from an arid climate in the foreground to a snowy peak in the background).



Figure 4.1.2.5: Alexander von Humboldt, *Chimborazo Seen from the Tapia Plateau, Ecuador*, hand-colored engraving, in *Vues des Cordillères et monuments des peuples indigènes de l'Amérique*, 1810

These engravings were composite views, meaning that they were based on various drawings of different sites. This reflects the general trend of the time: to present images of nature that were grounded in research, yet expressed visually in ways that were picturesque—a word that is usually understood as meaning "quaint" or "charming," but which in this case has a broader meaning, referring to views of nature that were enhanced versions of reality. Humboldt's journey and writings sparked a strong interest in Latin America, prompting explorers, artists, and scientists to travel there, Including the American painter **Frederic Edwin Church**, Italian geographer **Agustin Codazzi**, and British scientist Charles Darwin.

Re-conquest through science

Though they brought much new knowledge to light, the activities of these explorers in many ways represented a re-conquest of Latin America, an inevitable result of the fact that the mapping, representation, and documentation of the region and its people was largely pursued by Europeans rather than locals. Such expeditions by outsiders contributed to the idea that Europeans were the sole "creators" of scientific knowledge.

Even if some Latin Americans did pursue such projects, their views of the territory were shaped in part by European modes of thought and representation: the perspective of the outsider looking in. And despite the existence and growth of scientific interest among locals, explorers, for their part, still preferred to romanticize Latin America "as a primal world of nature, an unclaimed and timeless space occupied by plants and creatures (some of them human), but not organized by societies and economies; a world whose only history was the one about to begin." [1]

1. Mary Louise Pratt, *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation*, (New York: Routledge, 1992), p. 126

Additional resources:

Empiricism and the Enlightenment from the Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy

The Humboldt Digital Library

Frederic Edwin Church on The Metropolitan Museum of Art's Heilbrunn Timeline of Art History

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4.1.3: Costumbrismo

by DR. MAYA JIMÉNEZ

Page ID
179780



Figure **4.1.3.1**: Francisco “Pancho” Fierro, *Aguador (Water Carrier)*, c. 1850-60, watercolor, 25.8 x 19.5 cm (Museum of Art of Lima)

Tipos drawn from the everyday

During the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, explorers and travelers (mainly of European descent) in Latin America, popularized a genre called *costumbrismo*: the depiction of local folklore, including social “types” and genre scenes.

Despite the fact that these scenes were often documented firsthand, the depictions themselves often followed the popular forms of fictionalized local “types” (or *tipos*), such as street-sellers, tortilla makers, *gauchos* (cowboys), *poblanas* (women from Puebla, Mexico), and tribesmen. Reproduced in prints, photographs, watercolors, and drawings, these circulated nationally and internationally, helping to shape both the perception of Latin America abroad, and the creation of a sense of national identity at home.



Figure **4.1.3.2**: Carl Nebel, “Poblanas,” from *Picturesque and Archeological Voyage in the Most Interesting Part of Mexico (Voyage pittoresque et archéologique, dans la partie la plus intéressante du Mexique)*, 1836

The pleasing and the picturesque

German artist Carl Nebel, who traveled throughout Mexico from 1829 to 1834, documented people of different regions in a lavish 1836 publication called *Picturesque and Archeological Voyage in the Most Interesting Part of Mexico* (The word "picturesque" refers not only to the quaint, charming nature of the subjects, but also to an idealized view of nature and human beings).

Nebel's book featured 50 hand-colored lithographic prints accompanied by a written introduction by Alexander von Humboldt, a Prussian naturalist who explored Latin America. Among Nebel's depictions of local "types" is an image of *poblanas* (people from Puebla, in East-Central Mexico). The women are identified as being from Puebla by their simple white blouses and vibrantly colored and patterned skirts. The man at left is dressed in typical cowboy attire, with a broad hat, heavy shawl, and loose pants. The lack of any architectural detail or geographic reference, as well as the display of the *poblanas* from the front and back, reveals how Nebel stressed dress as a marker of regional identity.



Figure **4.1.3.3**: Jean-Baptiste Debret, "Native Village in Cantagalo," from *Picturesque and Historical Voyage of Brazil (Voyage pittoresque et historique au Brésil)*, 1834-9

Travel books such as Nebel's catered to a diverse and international viewership that included both "armchair tourists" and potential explorers. The French painter Jean-Baptiste Debret, who lived in Brazil from 1816 to 1831 and published his *Picturesque and Historical Voyage of Brazil* in 1834, also focused on local typologies. As seen in "Native Village in Cantagalo," Debret depicts women and men in much the same stereotypical way they were depicted in the colonial era: naked, barefoot, and nomadic.



Figure **4.1.3.4**: Francisco “Pancho” Fierro, *Tapada limeña*, c. 1850-60, watercolor on paper, 25.8 x 19.5 cm (Museum of Art of Lima)



Figure **4.1.3.5**: Alberto Henschel, *Fruitseller in Rio de Janeiro*, c. 1870

A craze for the exotic

The watercolors of Peruvian artist Francisco “Pancho” Fierro, which were widely copied and sold, also feature many *tipos*. One of the most popular was the *tapada*, a woman who wore a *sayo* (skirt) and *manto* (shawl) to cover herself except for only one eye. In *Tapada*, the spareness of the composition focuses attention on the texture, color, and patterns of the woman’s costume. But because we are unable to see her face, the *tapada* lacks a specific identity—instead, she represents an ideal of femininity. The *tapada* became a symbol of mystery and seduction that melded with other problematic European beliefs about women in Latin America.

Photography eventually replaced prints, with postcards and *cartes de visite*, reaching wide circulation by the mid-nineteenth century. The photographs ability to “capture” reality made them scientifically significant, but they had wider appeal, as well: thanks to their portability and affordability, *cartes de visite* made “armchair tourism” even more accessible than books or prints.



Figure **4.1.3.6**: Marc Ferrez, *Bahian Woman*, 1882, albumen print



Figure **4.1.3.7**: Guido Boggiani, *Caduveo Girl*, 1897

Marc Ferrez was one of the first in Brazil to create *cartes de visite*. Catering to the demands of tourists, Ferrez photographed the Afro-Brazilian women of Salvador de Bahia (the capital of the Brazilian state of Bahia).

In *Bahian Woman*, Ferrez presents a composition similar to the work of Fierro and Nebel, in which a centralized figure is set against a blank background. Ferrez presents the woman as an exotic "**other**," adorned in elaborate traditional costume and jewelry that identifies her as a follower of the Afro-Brazilian religion of Candomblé, which combined Christian and Western African spirituality. These women, commonly known as *bahianas*, stood out both inside and outside the state of Bahia, and reflected the amalgam of African and European culture that characterized Colonial Brazil.

Similarly, Guido Boggiani's depiction of a woman from the Gran Chaco, *Caduveo Girl* features a similarly exotic representation of a native woman. Here, the subject is isolated and markers of cultural difference like her tattooed body are overtly emphasized. Like the *tapadas*, who solicited intrigue and mystery, these images of native women were designed to appeal to a European appetite for the exotic.

Additional resources:

“Pancho” Fierro images at the Museum of Art of Lima

Debret’s *Picturesque and Historical Voyage of Brazil (Voyage pittoresque et historique au Brésil)*, digital version from the New York Public Library

Short bio of Marc Ferrez from The J. Paul Getty Museum

Essay on Marc Ferrez’s urban photographs from the Google Cultural Institute

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4.1.4: Latin American artistic pilgrimages to Paris

by **DR. MAYA JIMÉNEZ**

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179781



Figure **4.1.4.1**: Francisco Laso, *Inhabitant of the Cordillera of Peru*, 1855, oil on canvas, 138 x 88 cm (Museo de Arte de Lima)

Latin American pioneers

The allure of Paris has attracted artists from all over the world. In the 19th century, Latin American artists eagerly traveled to this artistic capital, in part because of the absence of an official art school, established art market, or proper exhibition venues back home. Skipping the famed but somewhat dated École des Beaux-Arts (the official art academy of France), these artists enrolled in private, independent, and affordable art studios, like the Académie Julian. They were exposed to new subject matters (like the female nude) and new artistic styles (like **Impressionism**). The conditions of these artists' trips—whether government-funded or family sponsored, and the artistic studio in which they enrolled—often determined the course of their careers.

Audiences were difficult to please. When they returned home, these artists challenged the conservative tastes of patrons and critics, who often resented what they considered "modernist" ideas of foreign-trained artists. While in Paris, Latin American artists found that critics did not flinch at their adoption of these new styles, yet they did expect to see certain subjects they considered typical for artists from the Americas—including local types and costumes, iconic landscapes and ruins, and genre scenes (as in **popular *costumbrismo*** paintings). Even though Latin American artists tried to represent themselves as cosmopolitan, internationally trained artists, French critics sometimes felt differently. Latin American artists, including Epifanio Garay, Francisco Laso, and Francisco Oller, found the need to balance their local identities while also navigating international networks of artistic exchange in the French artistic capital.

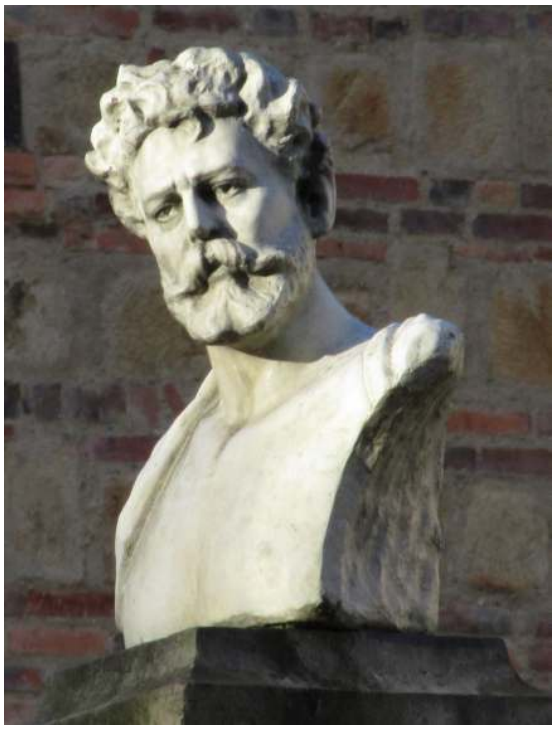


Figure **4.1.4.2**: A bust of Epifanio Garay in Bogotá, Colombia (photo: Felipe Restrepo Acosta, CC BY-SA 4.0)

Making Paris theirs

Artists from various Latin American countries joined in this artistic pilgrimage. Typically their trip followed a similar pattern of studying abroad for a few years, only to return home to either establish or teach at an art academy, or at their own art studio. In Colombia, the painter Epifanio Garay taught at the recently established Escuela de Bellas Artes in Bogotá (founded in 1886), introducing the controversial yet academic tradition of drawing from the live nude model.



Figure **4.1.4.3**: Francisco Laso, *Self portrait in native costume*, 1868, albumen print, 242 x 212 cm (Museo de Arte de Lima)

Peruvian painter Francisco Laso traveled many times to Paris, and in Lima taught at his own art studio and worked on large commissions for both the Peruvian government and the Catholic Church. Puerto Rican artist Francisco Oller studied in Paris and throughout Europe, and in 1870 established an art school in San Juan, in which he mentored the next generation of Puerto Rican artists, including women artists.

As diverse and wide-ranging as the careers of these three artists might seem, their education abroad prepared and inspired them for their careers back home. Rather than replicate the work of their French mentors, these Latin American artists carefully blended the local and the foreign, the old and the new, crafting a new type of painting that reflected a more international and cosmopolitan art scene.



Figure 4.1.4.4: Epifanio Garay, *Levite Woman from the Ephraim Mountains*, 1899, oil on canvas, 139 x 198.5 cm (National Museum of Colombia, Bogotá)

Epifanio Garay



Figure 4.1.4.5: Alexandre Cabanel, *The Birth of Venus*, 1863, oil on canvas, 130 x 225 cm (Musée d'Orsay)

This was the case with Colombian Epifanio Garay, who painted *The Levite's Wife from the Ephraim Mountains*—the first female nude in Colombian painting—fourteen years after his return from Paris. In the French capital he had been exposed to academic nudes such as Alexandre Cabanel's *The Birth of Venus* and others by William-Adolphe Bouguereau, his teacher at the Académie Julian.

Garay treaded carefully in his depiction of the first female nude in Colombian painting. For example, the painting shows a biblical nude, rather than the casual depiction of nakedness and is similar in style to French academic painting with its idealization of the female figure. Despite the religious context, the issue of nudity created such a controversy that in Bogotá the canvas was exhibited separately from other works of art. In Paris, however, this canvas would have most likely not have even raised an eyebrow, demonstrating strong differences in artistic temperament and religious conservatism.

Francisco Laso

For Peruvian artist Francisco Laso, who arrived in Paris in 1843 and again in 1851, and studied in the private *atelier* of Swiss painter Charles Gleyre, his goal was not necessarily to garner acclaim in his capital city, Lima, but rather abroad, in Paris. At the 1855 Universal Exhibition in Paris, Laso was one of two artists to represent Peru. His country was one of only two Latin American countries (the other being Mexico) to have their artistic work displayed internationally.



Figure **4.1.4.6**: Francisco Laso, *Inhabitant of the Cordillera of Peru*, 1855, oil on canvas, 138 x 88 cm (Museo de Arte de Lima)

Laso exhibited two paintings, including *The Inhabitant of the Cordillera of Peru*, featuring a man standing prominently in the center of the composition, and occupying most of the picture plane. He holds a figurative jar in both hands. The figure commands the viewer's attention and respect. The **Moche** ceramic portrait jar of a man whose hands are tied behind him depicts a victim that, according to art historian Natalia Majluf, stands as an "allegory of the oppression of the Peruvian Indian." [1] However, French critics interpreted the ceramic vessel as one made by the man himself, rather than by his ancestors, thus missing the point—the struggle of the Amerindian in colonial and post-independent Peru. This misinterpretation effectively stereotyped the man as a simple potter, similar to the *costumbrista* types of potters, tortilla makers, and cowboys that circulated in the travel accounts of Johann Moritz Rugendas and Carl Nebel. When French critics caricatured the inhabitant and reduced him to a *costumbrista* type, this led not only to its misunderstanding, but also to the painting's renaming to *Indian Potter*.



Figure **4.1.4.7**: Francisco Oller y Cestero, *The Wake*, 1893, oil on canvas, 269.24 x 411.47cm (Museum of History, Anthropology, and Art, University of Puerto Rico, Rio Piedras)

Francisco Oller

Countering these cultural stereotypes, Puerto Rican Francisco Oller depicted his native island through landscapes, still-life paintings, and genre paintings, the culmination of which can be seen in his monumental canvas, *The Wake*, exhibited in both Puerto Rico and France. Here, Oller depicts a quotidian rural occurrence, where locals (including clergymen, farmers, and children) gather for a wake in a typical countryside Puerto Rican home. Details, such as the palm trees in the background and the plantains in the interior, as well as the straw hats, laced tablecloth, and woven baskets, help to situate the wake in a uniquely Puerto Rican setting. In so doing, the painting speaks to a Puerto Rican sense of place and identity, introducing a self-conscious authenticity to *costumbrismo*.



Figure **4.1.4.8**: Francisco Oller, *Hacienda La Fortuna*, 1885, oil on canvas, 66 x 101.6 cm (**Brooklyn Museum**)

Famously known as the first Impressionist painter of Puerto Rico, Oller applied paint directly from the tube or with a palette knife, and purposefully called attention to the manner in which the work was painted. Even his interest in genre paintings, which depicted daily occurrences, reveals the influence of Impressionists like French artist Camille Pissaro, whom Oller briefly mentored.

Garay, Laso, and Oller were among the earliest artists in their countries to travel to Paris. By the twentieth century, this was no longer the case. As art historian Michele Greet has demonstrated, with an increase in government funding, cheaper modes of transatlantic navigation, and a the precedent of 19th-century travelers, there were more than 300 Latin American artists living and working in Paris between World War I and World War II, including Mexican **Diego Rivera**, Brazilian Tarsila do Amaral, and Uruguayan **Joaquín Torres-García**.

Notes:

1. Natalia Majluf, "'Ce N'est Pas Le Pérou,' or, the Failure of Authenticity: Marginal Cosmopolitans at the Paris Universal Exhibition of 1855," *Critical Inquiry*, vol. 23, no. 4, 1997, p. 878.

Additional resources:

Read about an exhibition of Francisco Oller's work at the Brooklyn Museum in 2016

Transatlantic encounters: Latin American artists in interwar Paris

Michele Greet, *Transatlantic Encounters: Latin American Artists in Paris Between the Wars* (Yale, 2018).

Maya Jiménez, "A Cosmopolitan Ambition: La Regeneración and the French Academic Nude in 19th-Century Colombia," *H-ART. Revista de historia, teoría y crítica de arte*, no. 7 (2020): 159–176. **https://doi.org/10.25025/hart07.2020.09**

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4.1.5: Landscape Painting in Nineteenth-Century Latin America

by **DR. MAYA JIMÉNEZ**

Page ID
179782



Figure **4.1.5.1**: José María Velasco, *The Valley of Mexico (Valle de México)*, 1877, oil on canvas, 160.5 x 229.7 cm (Museo Nacional de Arte, INBA, Mexico City), photo: Steven Zucker, CC: BY-NC-SA 2.0

Painting local landscapes in Mexico

Renowned Mexican landscapist José María Velasco painted views of the Valley of Mexico more than seven times. In one of his famous versions, called the *Valley of Mexico* (1877), Velasco painted the valley on site from the hill of Santa Isabel. Different from his earlier versions, Velasco raised the horizon line, allowing for the sky to occupy only one-third, rather than half the composition. This in turn allowed him to expand the foreground and include an eagle perched on a prickly pear cactus with a snake in his beak—a clear reference to the founding of the city of Tenochtitlan by the Mexica, who had resided in the Valley of Mexico prior to the arrival of Europeans.



Figure **4.1.5.2**: Detail of José María Velasco, *The Valley of Mexico (Valle de México)*, 1877, oil on canvas, 160.5 x 229.7 cm (Museo Nacional de Arte, INBA, Mexico City), photo: Steven Zucker, CC: BY-NC-SA 2.0

According to the Mexica, their patron deity—Huitzilopochtli—had told the them to look for a sign similar to this one so that the Mexica would know where to settle after making a long journey from their ancestral homeland. In Velasco's painting, the eagle seems to have just flown from its perch on the cactus, and is ascending towards the sky, its prey still firmly held.



Figure **4.1.5.3**: José María Velasco, *The Valley of Mexico (Valle de México)*, 1877, oil on canvas, 160.5 x 229.7 cm (Museo Nacional de Arte, INBA, Mexico City), photo: Steven Zucker, CC: BY-NC-SA 2.0

Additional references to Mexico's pre-Hispanic past can be seen in the middle ground. Here, we find Mexico City and Lake Texcoco, both associated with the former Mexica capital city of Tenochtitlan. Behind the lake, and in the far distance, rise the

recognizable peaks of the volcanoes of Iztaccihuatl and Popocatepetl.

A close admirer of nature, Velasco also took the time to record the changing colors and shapes of clouds. In this particular canvas, one can make out the white puffy cumulus clouds near the center, in contrast to the thin, almost feathery cirrus clouds around the edges. Through these historic and observed references, Velasco does not provide a composite view of nature, but rather makes clear that the represented territory is indeed Mexico City.



Figure **4.1.5.4**: Eugenio Landesio, *El valle de México desde en cerro del Tenayo*, 1870, oil on canvas, 126 X 190 cm (Museo Nacional de Arte, INBA, Mexico City), photo: Steven Zucker, CC: BY-NC-SA 2.0



Figure **4.1.5.5**: José María Velasco, *The Valley of Mexico from the Santa Isabel Mountain Range (Valle de México desde el cerro de Santa Isabel)*,1875, oil on canvas, 137.5 x 226 cm (Museo Nacional de Arte, INBA, Mexico City), photo: Steven Zucker, CC: BY-NC-SA 2.0

Trained at the **Academy of San Carlos** in Mexico City, under the leadership of Italian painter Eugenio Landesio (1810–1879). Velasco devoted his career to depicting the regions, volcanoes, and sites of Mexico, particularly the historic Valley of Mexico. Velasco, like many other Latin American artists in the nineteenth century, developed interests in painting the local landscape. They sought to document the land accurately and descriptively, working to create a sense of pride in their country's past, present, and future.

European and U.S. artists had traveled to different countries in Latin America to paint the land, but had sought to create images of virgin or unspoiled nature, often with a romantic flair. Local artists, on the other hand, often imbued their views of nature with either historic or regional specificity, as we see in Velasco's *View of the Valley of Mexico*.

The Volcanoes of Chimborazo and Cotopaxi



Figure **4.1.5.6**: Rafael Troya, *Cotopaxi*, 1874, oil on canvas, 93 x 161 cm (Museo 'Guillermo Perez Chiriboga' del Central de Ecuador)



Figure **4.1.5.7**: Frederick Edwin Church, *Cotopaxi*, 1862, oil on canvas, 121.9 x 215.9 cm (Detroit Institute of Arts), photo: Steven Zucker, CC: BY-NC-SA 2.0

In Ecuador, painters Joaquín Pinto and Rafael Troya documented the famous volcanoes of Chimborazo and Cotopaxi, the two highest peaks in Ecuador. Alongside the German explorers William Reiss and Alphons Stübel, Troya depicted these natural wonders, painting on site on more than 800 canvases. His depictions differ from those of foreign artists, such as German scientist Alexander von Humboldt, who sought to capture Cotopaxi in a scientifically methodical way, or American painter Frederic Edwin Church's apocalyptic vision of the volcano. Instead, Troya captures the simple yet grandiose presence of this iconic volcano in paintings like *View of Cotopaxi from Tiopulo*. While Pinto's and Troya's works were made for an international audience, and were shipped to Germany where they were then copied into prints, they nevertheless sparked a local interest in rediscovering sites from their country.

Painting the landscape of the Caribbean



Figure **4.1.5.8**: Francisco Oller, *Landscape with Royal Palms*, c. 1897, oil on canvas, 46.9 x 34.9 cm (Ateneo Puertorriqueño)

In the Caribbean, a somewhat different phenomenon unfolded. Local artists tended to depict their native landscapes as a result of their own journeys abroad. Cuban painter Esteban Chartrand and Puerto Rican painter Francisco Oller both trained abroad in France. In the case of Chartrand, he studied under the famous French landscape painter Theodore Rousseau, who formed part of the Barbizon School of landscape painters near Fontainebleau. Oller studied under various renowned French masters, including Thomas Couture and **Gustave Courbet**. Like Courbet, who painted the rural customs of his native Ornans, Oller recorded the folkloric customs of the Puerto Rican countryside.



Figure **4.1.5.9**: Esteban Chartrand, *Cuban Landscape*, 1879, oil on canvas (Palacio de los Capitanes Generales, Havana, Cuba)

Paintings such as *Landscape with Royal Palms* communicate a strong sense of Puerto Rican identity through the elevation of the palm tree, which would eventually become the logo of the New Progressive Party, one of the two major political parties in Puerto Rico. Known for its physical strength and ability to withstand strong winds, the royal palm sits humbly yet majestically in this rural Puerto Rican landscape.

The palm tree was not only a trademark of Puerto Rico, but of all of the Caribbean, as seen in Chartrand's *Yumurí Valley*. In this more expansive landscape, Chartrand depicts not only the rugged and bountiful terrain of Cuba, but also the simplicity of rural life in his native Matanzas, located on the northern shore of Cuba.

An awakened national spirit

Works by artists like Velasco, Troya, Chartrand, and Oller offer an alternative to depictions by foreign artists. Minor yet significant details like the palm tree may seem lost in the work of foreigners, who instead focus on more iconic sites. Yet even when depicting something as iconic as the mountain, Cotopaxi, the view of the insider may differ, since for locals these views were not exotic, but rather a part of their immediate world waiting to be repurposed, for an awakening nationalist spirit. Depicting local sites allowed native artists to craft a new sense of cultural identity, while also reclaiming their historical past.

Additional resources

Read more about **Picturing the Americas from the Tierra del Fuego to the Arctic** from the Terra Foundation for American Art

Read more about Velasco's ***The Valley of Mexico from the Santa Isabel Mountain Range***

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4.1.6: The challenge of the nude in 19th-century Latin American painting

by **DR. MAYA JIMÉNEZ**

Page ID
179783

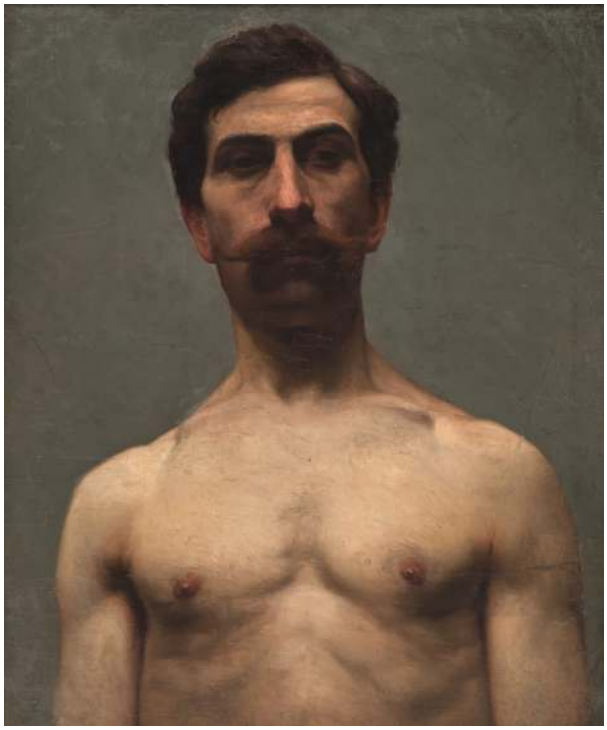


Figure **4.1.6.1**: Francisco Antonio Cano, *Model of the Académie Julian*, c. 1898, oil on canvas, 61 x 51 cm (**Colección del Banco de la República, Bogotá, Colombia**)

Artists have often studied the nude either by copying it from prints, manuals, illustrations, and sculptures, or directly from a live model. A common practice in European and U.S. art academies of the 19th century, the practice of drawing from life was not accepted in most Latin American art academies (with the exception of the **Academy of San Carlos** in Mexico City) until the early twentieth century. Even then, it was largely restricted to male students. The nude was considered morally offensive among religious and political conservatives throughout much of Latin America, and even in the United States, and so it became a sensitive subject for artists to depict. **[1]** For this reason, Latin American artists who wished to excel in their ability to paint the nude had to seek an artistic education either in Mexico or abroad in cities like Paris or London.



Figure 4.1.6.2: Carlos Baca-Flor, Female Academy, c. 1893-95, charcoal on paper, 48 x 62.5 cm (MALI, Museo de Arte de Lima)

At the Académie Julian in Paris, the practice of life drawing was considered integral to an artistic education. It was at this art school that Peruvian Carlos Baca Flor excelled in the study of the nude model and Colombian artist Francisco A. Cano was first exposed to it. Cano painted numerous nude studies, formally known as ***académies***, and among them *Model of the Académie Julian*. In this painting, we see a bust-length, nude man, who looks directly towards viewer. Presented against a stark background and illuminated by natural light, Cano captures the subtle curves of the human body through careful chiaroscuro (shading). While Cano's nude studies reflected a considerable part of his artistic education abroad, back home these works were never exhibited, though there were sometimes private commissions. [2]



Figure 4.1.6.3: Felipe Santiago Gutiérrez, *The Huntress of the Andes*, c. 1891, oil on canvas, 102 x 159 cm (Colección Andres Blaisten)

The mythological nude

On the few occasions that nude paintings were publicly shown, the subject was almost always represented in the context of mythology. Mexican artist Felipe Santiago Gutiérrez's *Huntress of the Andes* and Chilean Valenzuela Puelma's *Nymph of Cherries* are two examples. Gutiérrez's painting alludes to Diana, the Goddess of the hunt, who is set against the backdrop of the Andes Mountains. While Gutierrez situates her in the Andean landscape, with snow covered peaks in the background, it is the female nude that dominates the picture plane. Diana is not presented in the act of hunting, but rather at rest, her body stretched diagonally across the animal pelt and her hand placed over her bow and arrow.



Figure 4.1.6.4: Alfredo Valenzuela Puelma, *Nymph of Cherries*, c. 1889, oil on canvas (Pinacoteca de la Universidad de Concepción, Chile)



Figure 4.1.6.5: Titian, *Venus of Urbino*, 1538, oil on canvas, 119.20 x 165.50 cm (Galleria degli Uffizi, Florence)

Puelma, who had trained in the studio of French painter Jean Paul Laurens, depicts a nymph, a mythological spirit of nature usually depicted in a female guise. Here, the nymph is also depicted in a reclining position, as was common with female nudes painted by male artists, from as early as the Italian Renaissance (by artists like Titian) and throughout the nineteenth century (as in the case of Manet). The nymph provocatively looks out towards the viewer, her mouth partly open and her hand gesturing to the scattered cherries in the foreground. Her seductive pose and the tantalizing nature of the sweet cherries transform this female nude from a mythological subject, into an eroticized one. It was not enough to simply shroud the female nude in Classical mythology (or in some cases Biblical narratives, as in the case of Colombian Epifanio Garay), male artists were also expected to minimize her eroticism, demonstrating how the female nude, whether mythological or not, relied on a different set of viewing standards that sought to transcended physical desire and linked the ideal nude to spiritual beauty. [3]



Figure **4.1.6.6**: Manuel Vilar, *Tlahuicole, the Tlaxcaltecan General, Fighting in the Gladiatorial Sacrifice*, 1851, painted plaster, 216 x 135 x 132 cm (Museo Nacional de Arte, Mexico City)

Differing standards



Figure **4.1.6.7**: Athanadoros, Hagesandros, and Polydoros of Rhodes, *Laocoön and his Sons*, early first century C.E., marble, 7'10 1/2″ high (Vatican Museums)

Not only the gender of the artist, but also that of the model played an important role in the reception of many of these artworks. The male nude was not met with as much concern as the female nude. Spanish artist Manuel Vilar's *The Tlaxcalan General Tlahuicole Doing Battle on the Gladiator's Stone of Sacrifice* and even Cano's *Model of the Académie Julian* do not show explicit nudity, but they nevertheless feature bare chested men. Vilar's Tlaxcalan general relies heavily on exposed and indeed exaggerated musculature, a reference to the Aztec warrior's heroic death as a martyr. Vilar based Tlahuicole on the ancient Greek statue of *Laocoön and his Sons*, demonstrating the strong influence of Graeco-Roman Classicism on the subject of the nude. Despite its subject matter and artistic influence, Vilar covers the figure's genitalia with a leaf— an overt reference to the controversial nature of the nude.



Figure **4.1.6.8**: Eduardo Sívori, *The Maid's Wakeup*, 1887 (Museo Nacional de Bellas Artes, Argentina)

A path towards modernism

Argentine Eduardo Sívori, who also trained under Jean Paul Laurens, pushed his luck even further, when he exhibited *The Maid's Wakeup* in 1887 in Buenos Aires. Devoid of any historical or mythological narrative, Sívori depicted a naked, rather than nude woman, and a working woman, rather than an idealized one. The casual, unheroic nature of her nakedness, and the humility of her bedroom differed greatly from the classicizing nudes of other Latin American artists. In portraying a common woman, rather than an ideal one, and in not providing any legitimate reason for her nakedness, Sívori pushed the limits of acceptability. After exhibiting *The Maid's Wakeup* to positive acclaim in Paris, at the Salon des Artistes Français of 1887, he encountered an entirely different response in Buenos Aires. One critic from the conservative newspaper, *El Censor*, protested not only the woman's nudity, but also the fact that she was a simple maid, rather than a goddess. [4] Despite these criticisms, Sívori and others established a precedent of challenging moral conventions, ultimately paving a path towards modernism in Latin America. [5]

Notes:

[1] In the United States, the practice of live modeling was controversial at the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, and especially under the instruction of Thomas Eakins. See Amy Werbel, *Thomas Eakins: Art, Medicine and Sexuality in Nineteenth Century Philadelphia* (Yale University Press, 2008).

[2] For more information, see Juan Camilo Escobar Villegas, *Francisco Antonio Cano: 1865-1935* (Museo de Antioquia, 2003): 114-129.

[3] Maya Jiménez. "A Cosmopolitan Ambition: La Regeneración and the French Academic Nude in 19th-Century Colombia". H-ART. Revista de historia, teoría y crítica de arte, no. 7 (2020): 159-176. https://doi.org/10.25025/hart07.2020.09

[4] Laura Malosetti, *Los primeros modernos: Arte y Sociedad en Buenos Aires a fines del siglo XIX* (El Fondo de Cultura Económica de México, 2001): 77.

[5] Maya Jiménez, "Modernism and the Nude in Colombian Art," *Nineteenth-Century Art Worldwide* 12, no. 1 (Spring 2013), http://www.19thc-artworldwide.org/spring13/jimenez-modernism-and-the-nude-in-colombian-art (accessed August 16, 2021).

Additional resources:

Read about the history of the nude in Western art at the Metropolitan Museum of Art

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4.2.1: The Academy of San Carlos

by **DR. MAYA JIMÉNEZ**



Figure **4.2.1.1**: Site of the Academy of San Carlos in Mexico City since 1791 (photo: Steven Zucker)

From its beginnings in the sixteenth century, the **Viceroyalty of New Spain** had been home to many accomplished artists. Some of these were Amerindian artists who used their knowledge of sculpture and graphic arts to produce works for ***conventos*** and **codices**; others, were of Spanish birth or heritage and worked mainly in the tradition of European painting and sculpture. By the eighteenth century, this European-based tradition had gained enough popularity and renown in New Spain that prominent artists such as **Miguel Cabrera** began to advocate for the establishment of an official art academy in Mexico City.

An official art academy for New Spain

Spain established the Academy of San Fernando in 1752 in Madrid—an official art school that, like art other academies across Europe, was designed to train artists in drawing, painting, and sculpture. This became the model for the earliest art academy in the Americas—the Academy of San Carlos in Mexico City, founded in 1785 under the leadership of Spanish engraver Jerónimo Antonio Gil (see medal above). Most of the faculty members were, like Gil, of Spanish descent, and the artistic lessons promulgated at San Carlos were likewise similar to those taught at the Academy of San Fernando across the Atlantic Ocean.



Figure **4.2.1.1**: Jerónimo Antonio Gil, Prize of the Royal Spanish Academy (with profile bust depicting the Spanish king, Charles III), 1777, bronze, 44 x 4.5 mm (Museo del Prado, Madrid)



Figure **4.2.1.2**: Andrés López, *Portrait of Don Matías de Galvez y Gallardo as Vice Protector of the Academy of San Carlos*, 1790-1791 (Museo Nacional del Virreinato, Tepotzotlán, Mexico)

Gil developed an arts curriculum that included engraving, sculpture, painting, and architecture. As in the European academies, all students began their artistic education by first drawing from two-dimensional models (prints and drawings) and then progressing to three-dimensional examples, often plaster copies of classical statuary such as the ***Nike of Samothrace***, which later decorated the courtyard of the Academy of San Carlos (this sculpture was excavated in 1863 but illustrates the use of casts of antiquities for study at the Academy). The collection of copies of classical sculpture—allude to the fact that art instruction at the academy was centered on **Neoclassicism**, a style of the late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth centuries that sought to emulate the classical art of ancient Greece and Rome. A distinguishing characteristic of Neoclassicism, and one that paralleled the artistic vision of Gil, was the crisp delineation of form, which placed an emphasis on line rather than color (hence the academy's focus on drawing in the curriculum). The recent archeological discovery of ancient Roman sites such as Herculaneum and **Pompeii** inspired both the interest in the classical (ancient Greek and Roman) style as well as moralizing subjects about patriotism, nationalism, and courage—ideals founded in 18th century Enlightenment philosophy that helped inspire the Mexican independence movement.

Art education in a colonial context

Andrés López's *Portrait of Don Matías de Galvez y Gallardo as Vice Protector of the Academy of San Carlos* provides a view of the school and its students, as much as of its director, the Viceroy of New Spain (a viceroy rules a colony on behalf of a king), whose portrait it shows. While the Viceroy commands the viewer's attention in the foreground, one cannot help but be distracted by the background where we see two *mestizo* children in tattered clothes make their way towards the background where drawing students measure a classical sculpture in order to faithfully render it on paper. What this scene implies is that, through attendance at the Academy, unruly children are transformed into disciplined students, from provincial artisans to sophisticated artists. Additionally, by depicting the Viceroy as pointing towards the two children, the López alludes to the mission of the Academy—to educate and professionalize artists, including those of mixed heritage. This depiction of unruly *mestizo* children also serves as a reminder that the goal of the Spanish colonizers in Latin America was to "civilize" the indigenous population in all aspects of daily life—including religion and art.



Figure 4.2.1.3: José Gil de Castro, *Portrait of Bolívar in Bogotá*, 1830 (Museo Nacional de Arqueologia, Antropoligia, e Historia del Perú, Ministerio de Cultura del Perú)

Students at the Academy of San Carlos were not only transformed into artists; they were also made more cosmopolitan, since their education was formally aligned with Europe. However, this cosmopolitanism was not a simple adoption of European ideas and techniques. The art historian Maria Fernández writes that "far from passively absorbing and naively imitating European trends, Mexican cosmopolitanism in the visual arts manifests as active exchanges: adaptations, translations, innovations, and deliberate contestations of European hegemony."[1] Latin American artists, whether trained at the academy or abroad, did not passively imitate international trends, but rather adapted and localized them.

Neoclassical style, indigenous themes

In portraiture, such as in Gil de Castro's *Portrait of Bolívar in Bogotá*, as well as in history painting, Neoclassicism was considered the academic style par excellence. As in Europe, Neoclassicism allowed Latin American artists to address nationalist values that were rooted in the present yet informed by the classical past. Mexican painters such as Juan Cordero, who had trained at the Academy of San Carlos and in Rome, adapted quickly to this new mode of representation. In 1850, while in Italy, Cordero painted *Christopher Columbus at the Court of the Catholic Monarchs*, shown at the 1851 exhibition of the Academy of San Carlos.*Columbus Before the Catholic Monarchs* was a turning point in the career of Cordero and in the history of Mexican art, and became one of the first paintings by a Mexican artist to depict a scene from colonial history.



Figure 4.2.1.4: Juan Cordero, *Christopher Columbus at the Court of the Catholic Monarchs*, 1850, oil on canvas, 180.5 x 251 cm (Museo Nacional de Arte, INBA (MUNAL), Mexico City)

In 1869, director Ramón Alcaraz introduced a prize in the category of history painting for the exhibitions held at the Academy of San Carlos. Indigenous subjects dominated the genre of history painting until 1881 in large part due to the restoration of the Republic in 1867 and the triumph of Mexico's first indigenous president, Benito Juárez. In Félix Parra's *Episodes of the Conquest: Massacre of Cholula*, the Spanish conquest is not depicted in the context of discovery, as it was in Cordero's work, but rather in the context of tragedy. Parra documents the bloody execution of the residents of Cholula by the Spanish conquistador Hernan Cortés, who stands proudly at the center. As Cortés's men plunder the city of Cholula, exemplified by the figure at the right who greedily examines an object of value, the remaining victims try to save themselves and their families. A woman at left leans over her child, perhaps dead, in order to reach her deceased husband, who lies on his back with his arms outstretched, recalling the martyred image of Jesus on the cross.



Figure **4.2.1.5**: Félix Parra, *Episodes of the Conquest: The Massacre of Cholula*, 1877, oil on canvas, 65 x 106 cm (Museo Nacional de Arte INBA (MUNAL), Mexico City)

On the other hand, José Obregón's *The Discovery of Pulque* is entirely indigenous in subject matter, documenting an event that took place before the time of the Spanish Conquest. Obregón depicts a young woman, Xochitl, offering *pulque*, a viscous alcoholic beverage made of maguey plants, to the Aztec Emperor Tecpancaltzin, shown seated on his throne. A woman at the far left holds the actual maguey plant, considered sacred to the Aztecs. She and her companions appear humble because of their tattered clothes and subjugated poses, while the men to the right of the composition, surrounding the Aztec emperor, are clearly of a higher status, as reflected in their feathered headdresses.



Figure **4.2.1.6**: José María Obregón, *The Discovery of Pulque*, 1869, oil on canvas, 189 x 230 cm (Museo Nacional de Arte, INBA (MUNAL), Mexico City)

In keeping with his interest in classicism, Obregón depicts the scene according to the principle of "noble simplicity and quiet grandeur" which the German art historian Johann Joachim Winckelmann articulated in *Reflections on the Painting and Sculpture of the Greeks* in 1755. Rather than portray the figures in this history painting with dramatic gestures, as might befit such an event, the artist depicts the calm and serene poses typical of classical art. Yet by classicizing Mexico's pre-Hispanic past, Obregón Europeanized his indigenous subjects demonstrating his adaptation rather than imitation of European trends.

Obregón's *The Discovery of Pulque* is further fictionalized, since this drink was known to Mesoamerican cultures before the Aztecs. By presenting the beverage within the context of discovery, Obregón's painting speaks to European interest in innovation, invention, and exploration. Nevertheless, by representing the Aztec as the cultivators of maguey plants and creators of *pulque*, Obregón counters the prevalent iconography of the era that commonly depicted the Spanish, not the indigenous people, as "discoverers" and "creators," as seen in Cordero's *Columbus Before the Catholic Monarchs*.



Figure 4.2.1.7: Manuel Vilar, *Tlahuicole, the Tlaxcaltecan General, Fighting in the Gladiatorial Sacrifice*, 1851, painted plaster, 216 x 135 x 132 cm (Museo Nacional de Arte, INBA (MUNAL), Mexico City, photo: Steven Zucker)

The Spanish-born sculptor Manuel Vilar also capitalized on the glorification of the indigenous people, as seen in his larger-than-life size sculpture, *The Tlaxcalan General Tlahuicole Doing Battle on the Gladiator's Stone of Sacrifice.* Captured by the Aztecs during a flowery war against Tlaxcala, Tlahuicole was taken prisoner; however, after defeating various warriors, he was pardoned and asked to join the Aztec army. Tlahuicole declined the offer and instead accepted his fate in a ritual sacrifice. Depicted in a heroic and idealized state, as noted by his firm stance and idealized body, Vilar adheres to a style of Neoclassicism that he also helped to disseminate at the Academy of San Carlos.

A unique blend

Though artists from New Spain were educated in the latest European trends and techniques at the newly-established Academy of San Carlos, their works nevertheless exemplify a range of solutions to the challenge of representing the complex history and context of New Spain. Interestingly, they achieved this through a complex synthesis of both local and global influences, demonstrating the continuing development of Mexican cosmopolitanism.

Notes:

1. María Fernández, *Cosmopolitanism in Mexican Visual Culture* (University of Texas Press, 2014), p. 7.

Additional resources:

Mexico and Central America, 1600-1800, essay from The Met's Heilbrunn Timeline of Art History

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4.2.2: Mexican Independence

by DR. MAYA JIMÉNEZ



Figure 4.2.2.1: Anonymous, *Allegory of Independence* (detail), 1834 (Museo Histórico Curato de Dolores, Guanajato, INAH)

The first two, and most notable, countries in the Americas to gain independence were the United States (1776), led by General George Washington, and Haiti (1804), led by Toussaint L'Ouverture. Other Latin American countries soon followed, with exceptions such as Cuba and Puerto Rico, embarking on their struggles for independence in the early nineteenth century. However, since territories were freed in sections with the ultimate goal of liberating an entire viceroyalty, the fight for independence came slowly and in stages.

Mexican independence

The Mexican struggle for independence began with the *Grito de Dolores* (Cry of Dolores). In September of 1810, Miguel Hidalgo, the parish priest of the small town of Dolores in central Mexico, uttered the country's cry for independence. He called not only for liberation from Spain, but also for the end of slavery and the return of lands to the indigenous inhabitants. A highly educated creole, Hidalgo had read the works of Enlightenment writers and had been an important community organizer in Dolores. While Hidalgo's efforts led to both the stripping of his priestly title and his gruesome execution, his cry set in motion the Mexican fight for independence.



Figure **4.2.2.2**: Antonio Serrano, *Portrait of Miguel Hidalgo*, 1831 (Museo Nacional de Historia, Mexico City)



Figure **4.2.2.3**: Statue of Virgin de los Remedios, thought to have been brought to Mexico in the 16th century (Basilica de Santa Maria de los Remedios, Cholula, Mexico)

Hidalgo's visual trademarks were his baldness and religious dress—both shown in Antonio Serrano's *Portrait of Miguel Hidalgo* (above). He is depicted inside his study, minimally decorated with books, a desk, and a small reproduction of the **Virgin of Guadalupe** (below). While the library reflects Hidalgo's erudition, the depiction of the iconic Virgin of Guadalupe alludes to both his faith and the image's historical significance in the struggle for independence: Hidalgo marched with a banner decorated with the Virgin of Guadalupe, a foil to the Virgin of los Remedios (left), which was used by the Spanish loyalists. In this way, the Virgin of Guadalupe became a symbol of Mexican resistance and independence, and was featured on the earliest Mexican flag.



Figure 4.2.2.4: Miguel Cabrera, *Altarpiece of the Virgin of Guadalupe with Saint John the Baptist, Fray Juan de Zumárraga and Juan Diego* (Museo Nacional de Arte, INBA)

After Hidalgo's failed attempts at instigating a revolution, José María Morelos, another revolutionary priest, and the army general Agustín Iturbide continued the struggle (IIturbide had originally fought for the Spanish royalists, but he switched sides following his dismissal from the armed forces due to accusations of unwarranted violence and misuse of funds). The Plan of Iguala, a proclamation which Iturbide authored together with the rebel leader Vicente Guerrero in 1821, proclaimed Mexico's independence from Spain while reaffirming the country's alliance with the Roman Catholic Church and establishing equal rights for both *criollos* and *peninsulares*. On August 24, 1821, with the signing of the Treaty of Córdoba, Spain finally recognized the independence of the First Mexican Empire, led by none other than Iturbide himself.



Figure 4.2.2.5: Anonymous, *Allegory of Independence*, 1834 (Museo Histórico Curato de Dolores, Guanajato, INAH)

An allegorical history painting

In Mexico, historical narratives were often symbolically depicted, as in *Allegory of Independence* (above) by an unknown painter. The seated figure, an allegorical (symbolic) representation of Independence, is adorned with Mexican accessories such as an Aztec feathered headdress; however, she also holds a Phrygian cap, a symbol of freedom usually associated with the French Revolution. She is flanked by the figures of Hidalgo (on the left) and Iturbide (on the right)—portrayed here as the fathers of Mexican independence. Hidalgo crowns Independence's head with laurels (a classical sign of victory), while Iturbide breaks the chains of enslavement. In terms of her ethnicity, Independence appears closer to the depiction of Iturbide than to Hidalgo, whose skin tone reflects Amerindian ancestry, even though he was a Creole (*criollo*). Hidalgo and Independence step on a figure who represents despotism, and who is being shooed away by the eagle, a symbolic reference to the Aztecs. Together, these symbols of Mexican independence articulate both a sense of pride in Aztec ancestry and an appreciation for European ideas of liberty. With their depictions of potently symbolic figures and themes, such paintings energized the struggles for Latin American independence and aided in the creation of national unity.

Additional resources:

Timeline of Mexico and Central America, 1800-1900, on The Heilbrunn Timeline of Art History

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4.2.3: Manuel Vilar, Tlahuicole

by DR. LAUREN KILROY-EWBANK and DR. STEVEN ZUCKER

Page ID
179787



Manuel Vilar, *Tlahuicole, the Tlaxcaltecan General, Fighting in the Gladiatorial Sacrifice*, 1851, plaster, 216 cm high (Museo Nacional de Arte, Mexico City); a conversation between Dr. Lauren Kilroy-Ewbank and Dr. Steven Zucker

Spanish-born sculptor Manuel Vilar created a plaster cast of *Tlahuicole, the Tlaxcaltecan General, Fighting in the Gladiatorial Sacrifice* in 1851 while working at the the Academy of San Carlos in Mexico City, the first art academy in the Americas. This sculpture was the first at the Academy to explicitly depict the pre-Hispanic past. Vilar used the Neoclassical style (which was based on Greco-Roman art) to portray a heroized warrior from Mexica and Tlaxcalan history.

Tlahuicole was a warrior who was captured by the Mexica (Aztecs) during a flowery war against Tlaxcala. He was forced to fight, but successfully defeated the many warriors tasked with battling him. He was pardoned and was then asked to join the Mexica army. Tlahuicole refused to fight for the Mexica, and instead accepted that he would die in ritual sacrifice.

At the time Vilar created this plaster cast other artists, authors, and historians (among others) were beginning to look to the Mexica past (and more broadly the pre-Hispanic past) in new ways to help to forge a Mexican identity in the mid-to-late 19th century. The subject of Vilar's idealized *Tlahuicole* was not necessarily intended to be an accurate depiction of past events, but was an appropriation of the Indigenous past to aid in shaping what was occurring in the 19th century. Vilar and other academic artists after him often looked to the historical Indigenous past rather than turn to contemporaneous Indigenous people and stories. Using the visual language of Neoclassicism was also a way to "classicize" the Indigenous past—what art historian James Oles notes was one way of "'civilizing the barbarian' (in the same way that such words as 'pyramid' and 'stela' classicized pre-Hispanic ruins)." [1] This became more common in the nineteenth century after 1860.

Vilar's sculpture was never cast in bronze as he had intended.

Notes:

[1] James Oles, *Art and Architecture in Mexico* (London: Thames and Hudson, 2013), p. 172

Additional resources:

Read about the Academy of San Carlos

Learn more about this sculpture on the Google Arts and Culture project

Ray Hernández-Durán, *The Academy of San Carlos and Mexican Art History: Politics, History, and Art in Nineteenth-Century Mexico* (London: Taylor & Francis Group, 2017)

This page titled 4.2.3: Manuel Vilar, Tlahuicole is shared under a CC BY-NC-SA 4.0 license and was authored, remixed, and/or curated by Dr. Lauren Kilroy-Ewbank and Dr. Steven Zucker, "Manuel Vilar, Tlahuicole," in Smarthistory, March 4, 2021, accessed November 12, 2022, https://smarthistory.org/manuel-vilar-tlahuicole/.

4.2.4: Félix Parra, Fray Bartolomé de las Casas

by **DR. LAUREN KILROY-EWBANK** and **DR. BETH HARRIS**

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179788



A conversation between Dr. Lauren Kilroy-Ewbank and Dr. Beth Harris in front of Félix Parra, Fray Bartolomé de las Casas, 1875, oil on canvas, 263 x 356.5 cm (Museo Nacional de Arte, Mexico City)

Additional resources:

Read about this painting on the website of the Museo Nacional del Arte in Mexico City (in Spanish)

Read about this painting on Google Arts & Culture

Read more about the **Academy of San Carlos** on Smarthistory

Ray Hernández-Duran, *The Academy of San Carlos and Mexican Art History: Politics, History, and Art in Nineteenth-Century Mexico* (New York: Routledge, 2017)

Oscar E. Vázquez, ed., *Academies and Schools of Art in Latin America* (New York: Routledge, 2020)

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SECTION OVERVIEW

4.2.5: José María Velasco

4.2.5.1: The Valley of Mexico from the Santa Isabel Mountain Range

4.2.5.2: The Candelabrum

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4.2.5.1: The Valley of Mexico from the Santa Isabel Mountain Range

by **DR. EMMANUEL ORTEGA**

Page ID
179790



José María Velasco, *The Valley of Mexico from the Santa Isabel Mountain Range (Valle de México desde el cerro de Santa Isabel)*,1875, oil on canvas, 137.5 x 226 cm (Museo Nacional de Arte, INBA, Mexico City)



Figure **4.2.5.1.1**: José María Velasco, *The Valley of Mexico from the Santa Isabel Mountain Range (Valle de México desde el cerro de Santa Isabel)*, 1875, oil on canvas, 137.5 x 226 cm (Museo Nacional de Arte, INBA, Mexico City, photo: Steven Zucker, CC BY-NC-SA 2.0)

Academy of San Carlos

Did you know that the first art school in the Americas was established in Mexico City in the late eighteenth century? Creole artists (of European descent born in the Spanish Americas) in preceding decades had failed to convince the Spanish king to create a

pedagogical artistic institution. Nevertheless, by the end of the eighteenth century, the Royal Academy of San Carlos (Real Academia de San Carlos) was established. It was modeled after the Art Academy of San Fernando in Madrid, and consequently, a new chapter of Mexican art history began.



Figure 4.2.5.1.2: Site of the Academy of San Carlos in Mexico City since 1791 (photo: Steven Zucker)

Pure landscape

This important school fostered Romantic and Neoclassical aesthetics through previously unexplored genres of painting. For example, beginning in the nineteenth century, students emerging from the new school at the Academy began to illustrate local vistas of the Valley of Mexico. The development of these images offered the perfect opportunity for artists to explore the Romantic qualities of "pure landscape," which in Mexico, through the teachings of the Italian professor Eugenio Landesio, emerged as a popular genre in the Academy. However, and as observed in Velasco's *The Valley of Mexico from the Hillside of Santa Isabel* (above), the valley represented much more than a mere opportunity to practice this newly established genre of painting. This imagery offered an opportunity to highlight symbols of patriotism valuable to a newly independent society.



Figure 4.2.5.1.3: Eugene Landesio, *The Valley of Mexico from the Hill in Tenayo*, 1870, oil on canvas, 150.5 x 213 cm (Museo Nacional de Arte, INBA, Mexico City, photo: DcoetzeeBot, public domain)

After the 1821 war of independence (from Spain), Mexico sought to establish its identity through artistic endeavors. The development of the practice of national landscape painting was part of the dictator López de Santa Anna's efforts to re-establish the art academy after decades of neglect following the formation of Mexico as an independent nation. The Italian artist Eugenio Landesio (who was a well-regarded artist in Mexico) was appointed as the academy's professor of perspective and landscape painting in 1855. His mentorship and his experience uniting ancient and contemporary Roman historical subjects in his canvasses forever changed the history of Mexican landscape painting.



Figure 4.2.5.1.4: The volcanic peaks Popocatepetl and Iztacchihuatl (detail), José María Velasco, *The Valley of Mexico from the Santa Isabel Mountain Range (Valle de México desde el cerro de Santa Isabel)*, 1875, oil on canvas, 137.5 x 226 cm (Museo Nacional de Arte, INBA, Mexico City, photo: Steven Zucker, CC BY-NC-SA 2.0)

Monumentality

While Eugenio Landesio and his contemporaries had created similar landscapes of the Valley, Velasco presented a monumentality and an open quality to his images that surpassed compositions such as *El Valle de Mexico desde el Cerro del Tenayo* (above) created by his Italian mentor only a few years earlier. Velasco's compositions united pre-Hispanic symbols and contemporary national sentiments. For example, the white peaks that predominate his vistas are the Popocatepetl and Iztacchihuatl volcanoes. For centuries the land's romantic topology has captured the imagination of Mexicans. Prior to the arrival of the Spanish to the Valley of Mexico in 1519, these two volcanoes were the main characters of a legendary ill-fated love between an **Aztec** princess (Iztacchihuatl, or "white woman") and a courageous warrior (Popocatepetl, or "smoking mountain").



Figure **4.2.5.1.5**: Basilica of Guadalupe (bottom left), edge of Lake Texcoco (middle ground) and Mexico City (detail), José María Velasco, *The Valley of Mexico from the Santa Isabel Mountain Range*, 1875, oil on canvas, 137.5 x 226 cm (Museo Nacional de Arte, INBA, Mexico City, photo: **Steven Zucker**, CC BY-NC-SA 2.0)

Towards the composition's background, the spectator can admire the receding waters of Lake Texcoco and the contours of Mexico City. The ancient Aztec capital of Tenochtitlan was founded in the middle of this lake in 1325. This was a familiar site for Velasco, given that the artist's home was located at the foot of the small hill shown in the middle of the canvas. This unassuming hill was also an important sacred colonial site where the **Virgin of Guadalupe** first appeared to the indigenous man Juan Diego in 1531. The artist is known to have painted in this location many times. This version of *The Valley of Mexico from the Hillside of Santa Isabel* is perhaps the most celebrated of a dozen or so images with the same subject done by the artist between 1875 and 1892. At one point, the brushstrokes that form the peaks of the snow-covered volcanoes, the rock formations and other details were done from memory, making it possible for the artist to change and manipulate the details of the landscape as he saw fit.



Figure **4.2.5.1.6**: Caspar David Friedrich, *The Riesengebirge Mountains*, 1835, oil on canvas, 73.5 x 102.5 cm (Alte Nationalgalerie, Berlin, photo: Wuselig, public domain)

German Romanticism

The *Valley of Mexico from the Hillside of Santa Isabel* can be viewed as a re-interpretation of the common late eighteenth-century German subject, "pastoral idylls," where a sense of poetic harmony and daily life were united. In the tradition of artists such as Casper David Friedrich (above) and Joseph Anton Koch, Velasco introduces his figures (below) not as mere staffage, or accessories enhancing the rest of the artwork, but as key components behind the composition's poetics. Similar to his German predecessors, Velasco explored the romantic relationship between human figures and the scenery they inhabit. Two indigenous individuals are presented in transit from the city to the country, reflecting a romantic, yet difficult socio-economic relationship between people and their ancestral land. The figures' indigenous garments intrinsically relate to the national iconography displayed throughout the image. In the words of the German poet Johann Christoph Friedrich von Schiller, the figures in a landscape must represent "a humanity reconciled with itself . . . nature purified, raised to its highest moral dignity…the ideal beauty applied to real life." [1] Velasco has produced an image where national pride, romantic poetry, and daily life blend to transform the Valley of Mexico into a Romantic masterpiece.



Figure **4.2.5.1.7**: Figures in foreground (detail), José María Velasco, *The Valley of Mexico from the Santa Isabel Mountain Range*, 1875, oil on canvas, 137.5 x 226 cm (Museo Nacional de Arte, INBA, Mexico City, photo: Steven Zucker, CC BY-NC-SA 2.0)

Overall, *The Valley of Mexico from the Hillside of Santa Isabel* represents an important period in the development of Mexico's national identity and an important chapter in the history of Mexican art. Velasco's landscapes became symbols of the nation as they represented Mexico in several World Fairs. The union of romantic European sensibilities and the historical allegories observed in his compositions won him important recognition in Chicago, Paris, and Philadelphia in the late nineteenth century.

Notes:

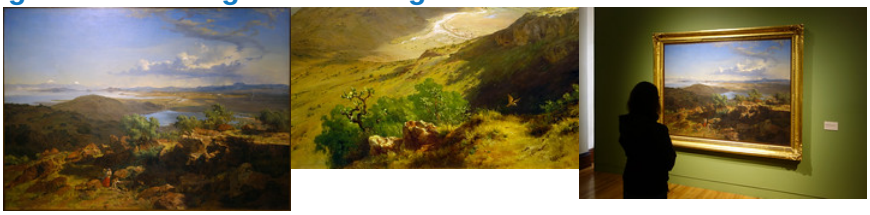
[1] Hilliard T Goldfarb, "Defining 'Naive and Sentimental' Landscape Schiller, Hackert, Koch, and the Romantic Experience," *The Bulletin of the Cleveland Museum of Art* , vol. 69, No. 9 (Nov., 1982), pp. 291.

Additional resources:

View this work up close at the Google Art Project

Territorio Ideal. José María Velasco: Perspectives on an Era (Museo Nacional de Arte)

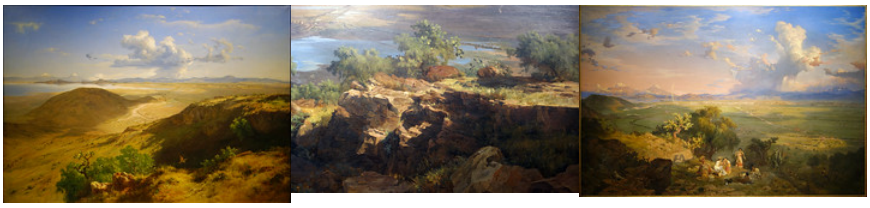
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This page titled 4.2.5.1: The Valley of Mexico from the Santa Isabel Mountain Range is shared under a CC BY-NC-SA 4.0 license and was authored, remixed, and/or curated by Dr. Emmanuel Ortega, "José María Velasco, The Valley of Mexico from the Santa Isabel Mountain Range," in Smarthistory, August 9, 2015, accessed November 12, 2022, https://smarthistory.org/velasco-the-valley-of-mexico/.

4.2.5.2: The Candelabrum

- An enormous cactus dots the landscape in this painting by the Mexican artist José María Velasco.

Page ID

179791



José María Velasco, The Candelabrum, 1887, oil on canvas, 61 x 45 cm (Museo Nacional de Arte, Mexico City); a conversation between Dr. Lauren Kilroy-Ewbank and Dr. Beth Harris

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Velasco was the most important landscape painter of 19th-century Mexico.

Important terms:

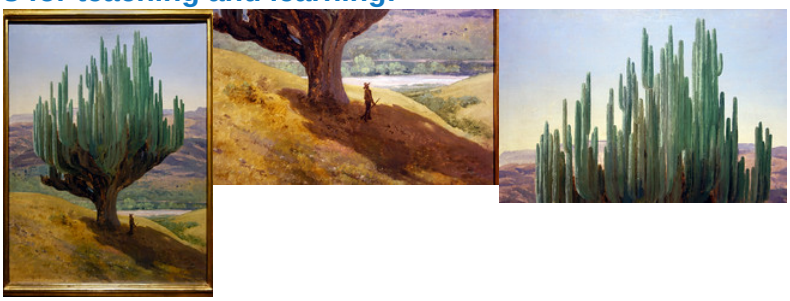
- lanscape painting
- national identity
- Mexico

Additional resources:

Learn more about 19th-century landscape painting in Latin America

Watch a video about Velasco's *The Valley of Mexico from the Santa Isabel Mountain Range*

SmartHistory images for teaching and learning:



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4.2.6: José Agustín Arrieta, La Sorpreza

by **DR. MEY-YEN MORIUCHI**

Page ID
179792



Figure 4.2.6.1: José Agustín Arrieta, *La Sorpreza*, 1850, oil on canvas, 69.5 x 93 cm (Museo Nacional de Historia, INAH, Mexico City)

In José Agustín Arrieta's ***costumbrista*** painting, *La Sorpreza* (*The Surprise*, 1850), viewers are invited to ponder the surprise(s) the painting holds. This fictional, theatrical composition, loosely based on reality, encourages multiple narratives. Nineteenth-century *costumbrista* paintings were concerned with representing customs, traditions, and costumes of everyday people and their lives.

In *La Sorpreza*, we see a lively commingling of different types of people of various racial and social classes and occupations. The figures are depicted in an outdoor, public marketplace outside of an establishment, a *pulquería* (a tavern that sells the alcoholic beverage *pulque*, made from fermented maguey sap) called La Sorpreza, which gives the painting its name.

Drawing on the *casta* painting tradition



Figure **4.2.6.2**: Francisco Clapera, Set of sixteen casta paintings (twelve shown in the photograph above, c. 1775, 51.1 x 39.6 cm (Denver Art Museum)

Nineteenth-century *costumbrista* painting borrows certain tropes from eighteenth-century casta painting. Casta paintings were a unique genre in colonial Mexico and Peru that represented racially mixed families in a set of 14 to 16 canvases. Each canvas depicted a father and mother of different races, and one to two of their children, and included a label that described the figures (for example, *De Espanol, e India, nace Mestiza* — From a Spaniard and Indian, a Mestiza is born — Mestiza refers to a child of Spanish and Amerindian parents).

As art historian Ilona Katzew demonstrates, casta paintings followed the Enlightenment trend of classifying and categorizing social and racial types, but also reaffirmed a social hierarchy in colonial Spanish America that privileged white Europeans.[1] In general, the more "white" a family was, the higher they were placed on the socio-racial hierarchical ladder. Oftentimes what distinguished racial types from one another was not solely skin color, but rather clothing, accessories, and setting, which alluded to one's occupation, wealth, and status. Since visual markers alone were insufficient to ensure proper classification, textual inscriptions provided necessary clarification as to the racial types represented.

Costumbrista paintings, like casta paintings, often portray social and racial popular types identifiable by occupation and family units, but instead of being separated into distinct canvases they are now united into a single composition. Both casta and *costumbrista* paintings also depict racialized social spaces, that is, settings where racial, social, and gender relationships were imagined and visualized. [2] These spaces serve to further locate the represented types in a hierarchical order.

Although in post-Independence Mexico the complex casta nomenclature was no longer legally valid (casta designations were banned in legal records in 1822), its classifications still resonated for individuals of mixed races who continued to exist and intermingle on a daily basis. Arrieta captured these ubiquitous interactions among Mexico's diverse populace within his *costumbrista* paintings.

Social and racial interactions

In *La Sorpreza*, racial mixes are no longer identifiable by inscriptions as in casta paintings, so *costumbrista* paintings like Arrieta's provide other clues to indicate the various social and racial types in the scene. In fact, perhaps Arrieta's "surprise" alludes to the unexpected racial mixtures present and the viewer's invitation to identify them. He seems to purposefully play with and entice the viewer with his ambiguous title.

The focal point of Arrieta's composition is the barefooted woman at the center who receives attention from both a small boy (her son?) who tugs at her dress and a man (a suitor? her husband?) who pulls her toward him. She is dressed simply in a white cotton dress; the blue *rebozo* (shawl) draped over her head draws attention to her face, which is shown in profile as she looks over her right shoulder. Her large, bare feet identify her as someone of the lower classes: perhaps a *mestiza*? Or *cambuja*? Or *loba*? [3]

It is possible that this painting displays a dispute between the man and the woman, as there appears to be a physical struggle between them. Another possibility is that of a social or racial dispute. The central grouping composed of a man, woman, and child, is akin to the family unit seen in casta painting.



Figure **4.2.6.3**: Detail, José Agustín Arrieta, *La Sorpreza*, 1850, oil on canvas, 69.5 x 93 cm (Museo Nacional de Historia, INAH, Mexico City)

The central female figure in the blue rebozo may be arguing with the higher-class woman in an elegant black dress and parasol (presumably a *criolla*, a Spaniard born in the Americas), who glides along the left-hand side of the composition. Notice the way in which the women's heads lean towards one another while their arms move in the opposite direction; even the curves of their bodies almost form parentheses around the action. As such, the mustached man is not the cause of the woman's distress, instead he is attempting to assuage the altercation between the two women.

What about the dogs?

The two small dogs that play in the left foreground close to the *criolla* offer a subtle clue as to the possible outcome of the heated discussion between the women in the scene. Here, presumptions about racial differences are displaced from human beings to animals: the black dog tackles the weaker white dog, reminding the viewer of the stereotype that African and Indian races were thought to be subject to uncontrollable streaks of hostility and passion.

This bias was visualized during the colonial era when casta paintings occasionally featured African women acting out aggressively. This violent streak believed to be inherent in African behavior is shown in the fourth panel of Andrés de Islas's 1774 casta series, *De español y negra, nace mulata* (*From Spaniard and Black, a Mulatta is Born*). Here the African mother is portrayed hitting her Spanish husband with a wooden cooking implement, while her mulata (progeny of a Spaniard and African) daughter (not unlike the small boy in Arrieta's painting), tugs on her mother's skirt begging her to stop.



Figure **4.2.6.4**: Andrés de Islas, *No. 4 De español y negra, nace mulata*, (*No. 4 From Spaniard and Black, a Mulatta is Born*, 1774, oil on canvas, 75 x 54 cm (Museo de América, Madrid)

Another possible interpretation is that the owner of both the rather small, delicate dogs is the *criolla*, and that the black dog that tackles the white dog symbolizes the *criolla* and *mestiza* respectively, as reinforced by the color of their dresses. The placement of the black dog on top of the white dog perhaps suggests the criolla as victor. Regardless of the outcome, Arrieta's imaginative composition invites multiple narratives, and in fact would have served as a conversation starter, displayed prominently in an elite family's home.

Many patrons of *costumbrista* paintings were also avid art collectors who purchased a wide variety of luxurious objects, from Spanish Golden Age paintings and Dutch genre prints to rare porcelain from China. Interspersed among these highly prized artworks would have hung *costumbrista* paintings like Arrieta's *La Sorpreza*. In addition to serving as entertainment, they would have highlighted the patron's wealth and upper-class status, far removed from the lower racially-mixed types they depicted.

Notes:

1. Ilona Katzew, *Casta Painting: Images of Race in Eighteenth-Century Mexico* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2004).
2. Mey-Yen Moriuchi, *Mexican Costumbrismo: Race, Society, and Identity in Nineteenth-Century Art* (University Park, PA: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2018).
3. Casta nomenclature varied and was often derogatory. Mestiza refers to a child of Spanish and Amerindian parents. *Cambuja* and *loba* both refer to dark animals, a horse and wolf respectively, and would have referenced progeny of Amerindians and Africans.

Additional resources:

Ilona Katzew, *Casta Painting: Images of Race in Eighteenth-Century Mexico* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2004).

Reckoning with Mestizaje (from VISTAS, Visual Culture in Spanish America)

Casta painting (from VISTAS, Visual Culture in Spanish America)

Defining Mestizaje and the Nature of History from *Unsettling Journeys*

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4.2.7: Felipe Santiago Gutiérrez, La despedida del joven indio

by **DR. MEY-YEN MORIUCHI**

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179793



Figure **4.2.7.1**: Felipe Santiago Gutiérrez, *La despedida del joven indio (The Young Indian's Farewell)*, 1876, oil on canvas, 82 x 92 cm (Private Collection, Mexico City)

Saying goodbye

Who are the figures gathered in this simple abode? What are they discussing so intently? Where do the doorways on either side of the central scene lead to?

These are just a few of the questions that this composition of everyday Mexican life invites. In *La despedida del joven indio (The Young Indian's Farewell)*, Felipe Santiago Gutiérrez, one of Mexico's most versatile and notable nineteenth-century painters, represents a coming of age scene — one with a political and national message. As implied by the title of the painting, a young Amerindian boy who approaches from the left has come to say goodbye to his family, presumably leaving his country life in search of education and a career in the city.

Depictions of Everyday Life

Felipe Santiago Gutiérrez's *La despedida* is an example of a *costumbrista* painting. **Costumbrismo**, a genre of art and literature in Spain and Latin America, sought to portray local customs and traditions from everyday life, and was popular in the nineteenth century. Gutiérrez was a well-traveled, academically trained artist, who wrote about art exhibitions in prominent journals and even wrote his own artistic treatise, one of the first of its kind by a Mexican artist. He actively produced history paintings and portraits in the prevailing neoclassical style of the **academy** (*El juramento de Bruto*, 1857), also producing the first female nude in Mexican art (***La cazadora de los Andes***, c. 1874). However, it was Costumbrismo that he championed, painting everyday subjects, and advocating for this genre in his many writings.



Figure 4.2.7.2: Detail, Felipe Santiago Gutiérrez, *La despedida del joven indio (The Young Indian's Farewell)*, 1876, oil on canvas, 82 x 92 cm (Private Collection, Mexico City)



Figure 4.2.7.3: Detail, Felipe Santiago Gutiérrez, *La despedida del joven indio* (*The Young Indian's Farewell*), 1876, oil on canvas, 82 x 92 cm (Private Collection, Mexico City)

In *La despedida del joven indio*, Gutiérrez presents the interior of a simple, peasant home. Centrally placed in the composition is a family, perhaps the mother, father and sister of the young Amerindian boy who comes to bid farewell. The boy is barefoot and holds his hat in his right hand while he speaks. His left hand gestures forward as he respectfully addresses his family.

The clean-cut figures are dressed in traditional clothing: *rebozos* (shawls) and long skirts for the women and a white shirt, wide-legged pants, and a *manto* (cloak) for the man. Strategically placed objects serve at once to decorate the living space, as well as reference the family's cultural roots. On the right-hand side, there is a large *calabaza* (pumpkin) and ears of corn; on the left side, along the wall, there is a table strewn with pottery and textiles. A basket hangs centrally, holding a tablecloth.

Doorways on either side of the family create perspective and add complexity to the interior space. Other family members or friends enter and exit. The doorways that suggest spaces beyond the main room recall seventeenth-century **Dutch genre paintings**, which

use similar compositional strategies to expand interior spaces as well create a bit of intrigue. Having been trained in the academy and exposed to Flemish and Dutch prints, Gutiérrez demonstrates his familiarity with European artistic traditions.

Art and National Identity

La despedida was commissioned by Felipe Sánchez Solís, an Amerindian of humble roots who became a prominent intellectual and political figure in the nineteenth century. Like the figure in the painting, Sánchez Solís left his small village for Mexico City in order to study literature and law, eventually becoming director of the Scientific and Literary Institute of Toluca. Gutiérrez's painting is therefore both personal and political. The painting refers to Sánchez Solís's own story as a young boy leaving his family in order to pursue his education and secure his place among Mexico's intellectual literary elite. This places value on Mexico's indigenous past while also suggesting an idealized path toward integrating the indigenous in service of the nation. Like Gutiérrez, Sánchez Solís was a patron of the arts and of the academy, and he believed in the importance of the arts in establishing a national identity.

Gutiérrez sought to create art that would change the perception and status of the artist in Mexico, and he wrote about the alliance between artistic culture and nationalistic discourse. Gutiérrez wanted the world—specifically Europe—to know Mexico's customs, cities, and natural beauty. He believed this would alter Europe's perception of Mexico as a barbarous, uncivilized nation.

In his treatise, *Tratado del Dibujo y la Pintura* (*Treatise of Drawing and Painting*, 1895), Gutiérrez praised the artist of genre paintings,

> ***The genre painter's scenes are temples, public plazas, the streets and the countryside. His paintings of a fruit vendor, a florist, a group of proud boys that ridicule a drunkard or a blind man who goes door to door, covered in rags, asking for sustenance are lively and poetic. When translated to canvas with the magic of his brush, they cause admiration among his contemporaries and he is glorified for posterity. Felipe Santiago Gutiérrez, Tratado del Dibujo y la Pintura, con un apéndice de los diversos carácteres de las escuelas antigua y moderna (Mexico City: Fondo regional para la cultura y las artes. Zona centro, 1895)***

Costumbrista paintings depicted genre scenes particular to Mexican life, aiding in the construction of a Mexican national identity. In *Costumbrista* paintings like *El mendigo* (*The Beggar*) and *Mujer indígena con cempasúchil* (*Indigenous Woman with Marigold*), Gutiérrez visualizes his written words. In *El mendigo*, Gutiérrez depicts a beggar with a majestic presence.



Figure **4.2.7.4**: Left: Felipe Santiago Gutiérrez, *El mendigo (The Beggar)*, c. 1891, oil on canvas, 86 x 65.5 cm (Museo Nacional de Colombia); right: *Mujer indígena con cempasúchil (Indigenous Woman with Marigold)*, 1876, oil on canvas, 68 x 56.5 cm (Los Angeles County Museum of Art).

Every wrinkle in the beggar's kind face is visible. His worn, striped *sarape* draped over his white cuffed shirt and blue blazer seem to refer to a more affluent past. In *Mujer indígena con cempasúchil*, Gutiérrez portrays an indigenous, pregnant mother wearing a *huipil* (a traditional, loose-fitting blouse) contemplating a marigold. The marigold, a flower the Aztecs associated with mortality, was believed to guide the spirits of the dead to the living, and is the traditional flower laid on graves and altars during *el Día de los Muertos* (Day of the Dead) celebrations. The expecting mother reflects on the fragility of life.

As an academic artist concerned with promoting classical aesthetics and elevating the status of the Mexican artist, Gutiérrez vocalized his conviction that the cultivation of the arts in Mexico and the recognition of the talent of Mexican artists would enable Mexico to achieve the status it deserved. Through his embrace of contemporary subjects and *Costumbrismo*, Gutiérrez revealed his desire for change and his interest in modernizing his nation, looking to Europe as a model. Gutiérrez's *costumbrista* works would find resonance in the art of twentieth-century Mexican modernists like Saturnino Herrán, **Diego Rivera**, Alfredo Ramos Martínez, **Frida Kahlo**, and many others, who sought to represent local customs and traditions as symbols of *Mexicanidad* in the wake of the Mexican Revolution.

Additional resources:

Costumbrismo on Smarthistory

Mey-Yen Moriuchi, "From 'Les types populaires' to 'Los tipos populares': Nineteenth-Century Mexican Costumbrismo," Nineteenth-Century Art Worldwide 12, no. 1 (Spring 2013)

This page titled 4.2.7: Felipe Santiago Gutiérrez, La despedida del joven indio is shared under a CC BY-NC-SA 4.0 license and was authored, remixed, and/or curated by Dr. Mey-Yen Moriuchi, "Coming of Age in Gutiérrez's Costumbrista painting, La despedida del joven indio (The Young Indian's Farewell)," in Smarthistory, September 22, 2019, accessed November 12, 2022, https://smarthistory.org/gutierrez-farewell/..

4.2.8: Retablo of La Mano Poderosa/The All Powerful Hand

by **DR. LAUREN KILROY-EWBANK** and **DR. EMMANUEL ORTEGA**

Page ID

179794



A conversation between Dr. Emmanuel Ortega and Dr. Lauren Kilroy-Ewbank about a *retablo* showing La Mano Poderosa, 19th century, paint on tin (New Mexico State University Art Museum, 9823)

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SECTION OVERVIEW

4.3: Caribbean in the 19th century

4.3.1: Francisco Oller y Cestero, The Wake

4.3.2: Richard Evans, Portraits of the Caribbean's first Black king and prince

4.3.3: Isaac Mendes Belisario, Sketches of Character

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4.3.1: Francisco Oller y Cestero, The Wake

by **DR. TAMARA DÍAZ CALCAÑO**

Page ID
179796



Figure **4.3.1.1**: Francisco Oller y Cestero, *The Wake*, 1893, oil on canvas, 269.24 x 411.47cm (Museum of History, Anthropology, and Art, University of Puerto Rico, Rio Piedras campus; photo: Tamara Díaz Calcaño, CC BY-NC-SA 2.0)

A monumental painting, at 8′10″ tall and 13’6″ wide (269.24 x 411.47cm), showcases a dynamic scene filled with figures in the interior of a humble, domestic structure, called a *bohío*. Its subject is a Puerto Rican rural tradition, the sad yet celebratory wake for a small child. The artist, Francisco Oller, filled it with details of the everyday life of rural folk, like their farming tools, furniture, and foodstuffs.

Oller’s *El velorio* (*The Wake*) was shown to the public for the first time during the 1893 Exposition of Puerto Rico in San Juan, an event marking the fourth centenary of the territory being under Spanish administration, and it included art, technology, and agricultural exhibitions. The educator Alejandro Infiesta wrote at the time that almost everybody who saw the painting exclaimed they knew someone just like one of the many figures in the composition. [1] But this painting is both a celebration and a condemnation of aspects of the lives of the rural population, specially the *jíbaros* (farmers and other members of the rural population), highlighting the complexities of the developing Puerto Rican identity in the 19th century.



Figure 4.3.1.2: Detail showing the body of the child on the table and a man who has come to pay his respects to the child. Francisco Oller y Cestero, *The Wake*, 1893, oil on canvas, 269.24 x 411.47cm (Museum of History, Anthropology, and Art, University of Puerto Rico, Rio Piedra campus)

Setting the scene

The main subject of this composition is at the center, the sole moment of quiet in an otherwise hectic scene. The pale body of a small child lies on a lace covered table with his hands arranged as in prayer, with the tabletop and the body adorned with flowers. This is his wake. Before the table stands an older Black man, a formerly enslaved person, in still contemplation. He carries a cane, and his clothes are ragged; he seems to have encountered the wake and stepped inside to pay his respects. [2] He is the only person looking at the deceased child. The rest of the composition is dominated by the family and community taking part in the event.



Figure **4.3.1.3**: Detail showing the right side of the painting, with a man reaching for a machete hanging from the wall behind the mother of the dead child. Francisco Oller y Cestero, *The Wake*, 1893, oil on canvas, 269.24 x 411.47cm (Museum of History, Anthropology, and Art, University of Puerto Rico, Rio Piedra campus)

On the right side of the painting, we find the mother of the child, wearing a white headband. She looks out toward the viewer, with a smile that doesn't quite reach her eyes while handing the priest a drink. The priest, accompanied by the sacristan, turns away to gaze not at the dead child but at the roasted pig that is being brought into the house. The pig is held aloft on a long stick by a young man, who lifts it toward the ceiling beams, almost above the child.



Figure 4.3.1.4:

Detail showing the musicians, the woman in the yellow dress, and the man with a machete under his arm. Francisco Oller y Cestero, *The Wake*, 1893, oil on canvas, 269.24 x 411.47cm (Museum of History, Anthropology, and Art, University of Puerto Rico, Rio Piedra campus)



Figure 4.3.1.5: Francisco Oller y Cestero, *The Wake*, 1893, oil on canvas, 269.24 x 411.47cm (Museum of History, Anthropology, and Art, University of Puerto Rico, Rio Piedra campus)

From one of the beams hangs a rope from which a man swings himself to sing along with the musicians toward the left side of the composition. His body brings our attention to a man who grips a machete under his arm and a woman in a yellow dress who attempts to calm him. His steely eyes lead us back to the other side of the room, to a man reaching for a machete hanging from the wall (on the right side of the composition). A fight seems imminent. Next to the couple, a group of musicians seem to inhabit their own world, singing and playing along with traditional Puerto Rican instruments.

On the far left of the painting, a couple is interrupted by a drunkard who spills a bottle over their heads. At their feet, three unfortunate children are having their lunch interrupted by a dog that crashed into them as it ran through the house. Their benches, plates, and *ditas* (bowls) full of rice have fallen to the ground. The offending dog has turned to regard its pursuers, a smaller dog and a young boy in mid stride pushing away the skirts of the woman in yellow.

Oller has painted an almost festive scene, one that may stray away from what many would consider a proper wake—but this one is a *baquiné*, a funerary tradition once common in rural Puerto Rico. A *baquiné*, or *velorio de angelito* ("little angel's wake"), was the funerary vigil for a child considered too young to have sinned and so their soul was expected to enter heaven. Similar practices also appear in different parts of the Spanish Americas and combined diverse cultural manifestations depending on the region.

The *baquiné* took from similar traditions in children's wakes practiced in central and southern Spain, which included dancing and eating and were done for children aged 7 and younger. [3] The African and Afro-descendant population in the Hispanic Caribbean adapted and incorporated their own songs, rhythms, and oral histories from similar West African funerary traditions they could not practice and/or lost through forced Catholic conversion under Spanish colonial rule. [4]

Models for the painting

Oller started work on this painting in 1891 while staying at the Hacienda Santa Bárbara in the northeastern town of Carolina, a property owned by the Elzaburu family. There, he developed oil studies for many of the characters, using the farm workers, and his friends and family as models. The older man at the center of the painting was modeled on a friend of Oller, known as San Pablo; while his granddaughter, Georgina Rossi, modeled for the woman in yellow. The brothers José and Pedro Elzaburu served as models for the priest and the sacristan, while their housekeeper did so for the dead child's mother. [5]

Interest in the countryside

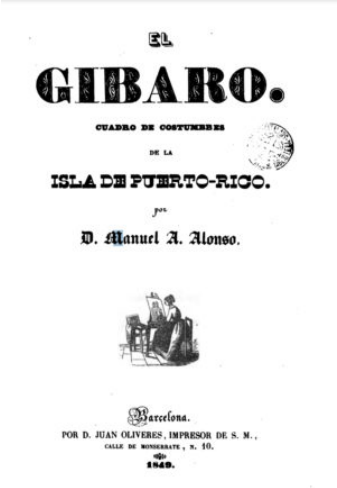

EL
GIBARO.
CUADRO DE COSTUMBRES
DE LA
ISLA DE PUERTO-RICO.
POR
D. Manuel A. Alonso.
Barcelona.
POR D. JUAN OLIVERES, IMPRESOR DE S. M.,
CALLE DE MONTSERRATE, N. 10.
1849.

Figure **4.3.1.6**: Manuel A. Alonso, *El gíbaro* (Don Juan Oliveres, 1849)

The painter spent a lot of his time traveling the Puerto Rican countryside after his return from Spain in 1883. He was drawn not only to the landscape but to the people who inhabited it. Puerto Rico's rural population and customs, especially the *jíbaro*'s, were on the minds of many local writers and thinkers of the time. Like in many new countries in the Western sphere, there was interest in the recognition and representation of a national identity. One of the most important examples of this in literature was *El gíbaro* by Manuel Alonso, published in 1849. The work consists of 21 scenes focused on rural customs, music, and fictionalized interactions between *jíbaros* that emphasize the way they spoke and behaved.

Alonso highlighted the mixed origins of some of the traditions, how they had sprung from the population's Spanish, Indigenous, and African ancestry. This miscegenation was an important part in the consideration of the *jíbaros* by local writers in the 19th century, who saw it as contributing to their physical features and even their moral character. Alonso carefully documented the *jíbaro*'s manners and customs, identifying in them what is distinct to the territory's identity and different from Spain. Yet there is also criticism toward many of these rural customs, which the author considered to be products of the population's ignorance and the allowances of the Catholic Church. Oller's *The Wake*, produced 44 years later, sprang from similar concerns and observations.

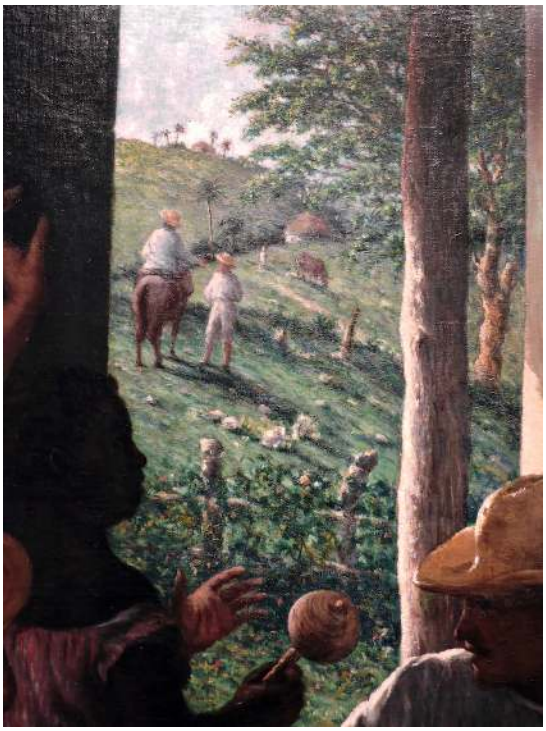


Figure **4.3.1.7**: Detail of the landscape, Francisco Oller y Cestero, *The Wake*, 1893, oil on canvas, 269.24 x 411.47cm (Museum of History, Anthropology, and Art, University of Puerto Rico, Rio Piedras campus; photo: Tamara Díaz Calcaño, CC BY-NC-SA 2.0)

The artist's influences

We are fortunate to have words from the artist himself about the painting, which he described as "the subject of my loves as an artist." [6] This statement encourages us to consider Oller's artistic education in the conception of this work. He was born and raised in Puerto Rico to a prominent San Juan family. As a young boy he studied under Spanish painter Juan Cletos Noa, and later went on to study for a year in the Academy of Fine Arts of San Fernando in Madrid in 1851. This was only the start of his travels between Puerto Rico and Europe.

The most formative period in Oller's education was his time in **Paris** from 1858 to 1865, when he frequented the Petite École and studied under Thomas Couture. The young artist became familiar with the works of **Realist** painter Gustave Courbet, likely when he opened his studio to students from 1861 to 1862. Oller would later identify himself as a student of Courbet and his influence is palpable in *The Wake*. He also befriended the Caribbean-born Camille Pissarro during the early days of **Impressionism**. He would return to France for a couple of years in 1873, rekindling friendships and engaging once again with this style, which is present in the large composition. The neighboring hills framed by the windows and doors of the *bohío* are bathed in light and captured in the swift, short brushstrokes that often characterizes the technique.



Figure 4.3.1.8: Gustave Courbet, *A Burial at Ornans*, begun late summer 1849, completed 1850, 124 x 260 inches, oil on canvas (Musée d'Orsay, Paris)



Figure 4.3.1.9: Gustave Courbet, *Dressing the Dead Girl*, c. 1855, oil on canvas (Smith College Museum of Art (SCMA), Northampton, MA, US)

Many art historians have noted the similarities between *The Wake* and Courbet's ***A Burial at Ornans*** and the lesser-known work *The Preparation of the Dead Girl*—paintings that a young Oller could have seen during his first Parisian stay. We can quickly identify parallels between *The Wake* and *A Burial at Ornans*, such as the large dimensions, the funerary subject, and the realism in the representation of the figures. They both capture the lives of everyday people, and this includes setting the scenes in their native landscape, and so their respective cultural and geographical context. Oller extends his attention further to the careful representation of the diverse Puerto Rican population, intermingling in a syncretic funeral tradition, as well as to their dress, food, and material culture inside the *bohío*.

Oller's last period in Spain should also be considered regarding *The Wake*, for it has been proposed he had plans for an ambitious composition such as this as early as the 1880s. [7] He lived in Madrid from 1877 to 1883, when *costumbrismo* was of great interest among painters who wanted to represent regional and rural traditions. Many Spanish painters turned their brushes toward their history and cultural expressions in the mid-to-late 19th century, moved by national and political interest and often through a romantic lens (such as in the work of Rafael Benjumea and Valeriano Domínguez Bécquer). Oller's encounter with Spanish ***costumbrismo*** could have furthered his interest in representing the rural images and sounds of his own native land.



Figure **4.3.1.10**: Francisco Oller, *The School of Teacher Rafael Cordero*, 1891 (Athenaeum of Puerto Rico Collection)

The artist's intentions



Figure **4.3.1.11**: Francisco Oller y Cestero, *The Wake*, 1893, oil on canvas, 269.24 x 411.47cm (Museum of History, Anthropology, and Art, University of Puerto Rico, Rio Piedra campus)

Oller also described the subject matter of *The Wake* as "an orgy of brutish appetites under the guise of gross superstition," effectively signaling his critical approach to the custom. [8] The older Black man at the center is the one figure expressing what was considered an acceptable attitude in the wake of a child. He is the moral example among the rest—and in sharp contrast to the Church, represented by the gluttonous priest. The representation of an older Black man in this role alludes to Oller's own abolitionist work and paintings like *The School of Teacher Rafael Cordero*.

Since the 1870s, Oller's work had occasionally addressed social and political issues like slavery and the colonial relationship of Puerto Rico with Spain, through drawings of the abuse suffered by enslaved people and portraits of local abolitionists, intellectuals, and politicians. *The Wake* not only brings together Oller's eclectic art education, but also his continuous interest in the social situation of his homeland. Oller is looking at the *jíbaro*, aware of the literary and national discourses of the time concerned with what made Puerto Rico different from Spain. It both highlights his belonging to and familiarity with its culturally distinct and racially diverse population, and his position as an educated and socially privileged man in a colonial society. He is taking part in the

conversation of what it means to be Puerto Rican and what that looks like without idealizing the figure of the *jíbaro* nor the influence of colonial institutions.

When shown at the Exposition of Puerto Rico in 1893, some of the negative reactions to *The Wake* focused primarily on the custom of the *baquiné* and how the *jíbaro* was represented. The author, Infiesta, praised Oller for the physical representation of the rural population and for wisely selecting his models and comparing the figures to portraits. [9] He points to Oller's familiarity with the rural population and time spent in the countryside. Yet Infiesta describes the wake as unnatural and claimed that the smiling woman could not be "the *jíbaro*'s mother." [10] His statement speaks to the apprehension toward *jíbaros* when they were not represented in an idealized manner, which was at odds with accepted expressions of Puerto Rican identity."



Figure **4.3.1.12**: Francisco Oller y Cestero, *The Wake*, 1893, oil on canvas, 269.24 x 411.47cm (Museum of History, Anthropology, and Art, University of Puerto Rico, Rio Piedra campus)

Notes:

[1] Infiesta, Alejandro. La Exposición de Puerto Rico (San Juan: Imp. del Boletín Mercantil, 1895), p. 102.

[2] Delgado Mercado, Osiris, *Francisco Oller y Cestero: Pintor de Puerto Rico* (San Juan: Centro de Estudios Superiores de Puerto Rico y el Caribe, 1983), p. 92.

[3] Bantulà Janot, Jaume, and Andrés Payà Rico. "La cultura lúdica en los rituales funerarios de Iberoamérica: los juegos de velorio," Stvdivm. Revista de Humanidades (Zaragoza: Prensas de la Universidad de Zaragoza, 2014): p. 170

[4] Bantulà Janot, Jaume, and Andrés Payà Rico. "La cultura lúdica en los rituales funerarios de Iberoamérica: los juegos de velorio," Stvdivm. Revista de Humanidades (Zaragoza: Prensas de la Universidad de Zaragoza, 2014): p. 183

[5] Vaquero, María (Ed.), *Francisco Oller y Cestero, 1833–1917* (San Juan: Museo de Historia, antropología y arte, Universidad de Puerto Rico, 1999), pp. 18–19

[6] Cited in Venegas, Haydee E. "Francisco Oller: perfil de un pintor puertorriqueño", Francisco Oller: Realista del impresionismo (Ed. Marimar Benítez) (Ponce: Museo de Arte de Ponce, 1983), p. 142. Original: "el objeto de mis amores de artista", translated by Tamara Díaz Calcaño.

[7] Delgado Mercado, Osiris, *Francisco Oller y Cestero: Pintor de Puerto Rico* (San Juan: Centro de Estudios Superiores de Puerto Rico y el Caribe, 1983), p. 89–90

[8] Cited in Delgado Mercado, Osiris, *Francisco Oller y Cestero: Pintor de Puerto Rico* (San Juan: Centro de Estudios Superiores de Puerto Rico y el Caribe, 1983), p. 90. Original: "una orgía de apetitos brutales bajo el velo de una superstición grosera", translated by Tamara Díaz Calcaño.

[9] Infiesta, Alejandro. *La Exposición de Puerto Rico* (San Juan: Imp. del Boletín Mercantil, 1895), p. 98

[10] Infiesta, Alejandro. *La Exposición de Puerto Rico* (San Juan: Imp. del Boletín Mercantil, 1895), p. 98

[11] Alonso, Manuel. *El gíbaro: cuadro de costumbres de la isla de Puerto Rico* (Barcelona: Juan Olivares, Impresor de S.M., 1849), 8. Original: "…he reunido aquellas escenas que juzgo más a propósito para dar una idea de las costumbres de nuestra Antilla, procurando ser exacto como narrador, indulgente o severo según las circunstancias, y teniendo siempre la mira de corregir las costumbres deleitando." Translated by Tamara Díaz Calcaño

Additional resources

Read about Oller and landscape painting in 19th-century Latin America

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Venegas, Haydee E. "Francisco Oller: perfil de un pintor puertorriqueño", *Francisco Oller: Realista del impresionismo* (Ed. Marimar Benítez) (Ponce: Museo de Arte de Ponce, 1983).

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4.3.2: Richard Evans, Portraits of the Caribbean's first Black king and prince

by DR. TAMARA DÍAZ CALCAÑO

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Figure 4.3.2.1: Richard Evans, *Henry Christophe, King of Haiti*, c. 1816, oil on canvas, 34¼" x 25½" (Alfred Nemours Collection of Haitian History, University of Puerto Rico, Río Piedras Campus)

In 1816, English painter Richard Evans sailed eastward toward the young Kingdom of Haiti, at the request of its ruler Henry Christophe. There, Evans became an art teacher and produced two of the most enduring images of post-revolutionary Haiti: portraits of the Caribbean's first Black king and prince.

The portraits

The king commissioned Evans to paint the only official portraits of himself and his heir, Jacques-Victor (shown below). Both are full length yet quite distinct, capturing in fine detail the individual personalities and their respective positions. Christophe appears as a gallant, middle-aged man with graying hair in an interior space. He is dressed in a dark green coat carrying the star of the Order of Saint-Henry, light breeches, and leather boots. His right hand holds his cane and bicorne (two-cornered) hat, and his left rests in the pocket of his coat giving him an almost casual air. To his immediate right sits a crown accompanied by a cascading red cloth that bears the crest of the Kingdom of Haiti. These are the only details that inform the viewer that he is a monarch, for the king is represented in military uniform. Behind him is an expansive opening that shows a landscape dominated by a sublime sky with a view of Cap-Henri (now, Cap Haïtien).



Figure **4.3.2.2**: Richard Evans, *Royal Prince Jacques-Victor-Henri Christophe*, c. 1816, oil on canvas, 34¼" x 25½" (Alfred Nemours Collection of Haitian History, University of Puerto Rico, Río Piedras Campus)

Jacques-Victor's portrait meanwhile sets the prince outdoors. He's dressed similarly to his father. He carries his glove and riding crop in his right hand as he leans confidently on a horse, whose small dimensions make the then 12-year-old boy seem huge in comparison. The background is defined by a moody sky, luscious vegetation, and a mountainous landscape visible between the legs of the horse. Banana leaves and palm trees indicate the tropical geography. In the lower left corner, there's an unidentified young Black man, who might be a page boy to Jacques-Victor. It has also been proposed that this figure may be a portrait of Christophe's illegitimate son, Prince Armande-Eugène. [1]



Figure **4.3.2.3**: Richard Evans, *Henry Christophe, King of Haiti* (detail), c. 1816, oil on canvas, 34¼" x 25½" (Alfred Nemours Collection of Haitian History, University of Puerto Rico, Río Piedras Campus; photo: Jennifer Solivan Robles)

The subjects

The king's representation as a military man should come as no surprise for it was how he made a name for himself during and after the Haitian Revolution. Christophe was born in Grenada in 1767 and arrived in Saint-Domingue as a teenager. By his early twenties he was conscripted into the colonial artillery, beginning his military career in the island. [2]

He rose to prominence during the revolution, joining the circle of revolutionary leader Toussaint Louverture and becoming one of his lieutenants. The revolution had an immense international impact, shocking European and colonial governments. One of its leading ambitions was the abolition of slavery and indeed, the pressures of the revolution were instrumental in the French Republic's decision to abolish slavery in all its territories in 1794. It ended in 1804 with the proclamation of a new republic renamed Haiti. By then Christophe had become an influential military leader, alongside Jean Jacques Dessaline and Alexandre Sabès Pétion. Political instability marked the first years of the nation, culminating in the assassination of Dessaline in 1806 and the division of the country between Pétion and Christophe, the former establishing a republic in the south, and the latter his kingdom in the north.

Christophe established an hereditary monarchy and declared himself King Henry I in 1811. A bit of an anglophile, he made plans to set Protestantism and English as the official religion and language of his kingdom and created strong bonds with British abolitionists. [3] These political moves did not stem solely from personal interest. He understood the importance of an international relationship with a European power after the establishment of his government and needed to secure support against the French. Christophe named Jacques-Victor as his heir, his oldest son with wife Marie-Louise Coidavid. The prince spent his teenage years being educated in his father's court.



Figure **4.3.2.4**: Left: Citadelle Laferrière, built by Christophe, 19th century, Haiti (photo: SPC Gibran Torres, United States Army); right: Sans-Souci Palace Haiti, built by Henri Christophe, 1810–1813, Haiti (photo: Iconem, CC BY-SA 4.0)

Christophe's rule was characterized by grand socioeconomic ambitions and he used a despotic hand to achieve them. He utilized his power over laborers to ensure the workforce necessary for his agricultural and architectural policies, forcing many back onto plantations and harsh working conditions. These policies were unpopular among Haitians, however the money generated helped the economy by providing for exports and funded the construction of the fortress Citadelle Laferrière and Christophe's lavish palace of Sans-Souci in Milot. [4] He also sought to provide social opportunity for his people through his educational reforms. Christophe, who was illiterate, was deeply committed to public education and its ability to transform Haitian society. He saw it as a tool to combat racial prejudice internationally, by allowing Haitians to reach their potential and showcase to a prejudiced world an enlightened Black nation. [5]

The artist and his commission

Christophe collaborated and consulted with his advisers (including English abolitionists William Wilberforce and Thomas Clarkson), on many of his policies to develop Haiti. Wilberforce was an important reference in the development and practice of the educational reforms, and he promoted the idea of recruiting British teachers and missionaries. [6] This is how Richard Evans arrived in the Caribbean—he was one of seven teachers sent by Wilberforce and Clarkson to work in Haiti's new schools and assist with Prince Jacques-Victor's education. [7]

History remembers Evans as a portraitist and copyist of Italian masterpieces. He worked in the studio of acclaimed painter Sir Thomas Lawrence and exhibited at the Royal Academy before crossing the Atlantic. He stayed in Haiti until 1818, but unfortunately most of his life and work there is undocumented. The only details known are a few references in letters exchanged between Christophe, Wilberforce, and Clarkson. The king himself confirmed the painter was getting settled in Sans Souci and described him as "the teacher of drawing and painting." [8]



Figure **4.3.2.5**: Richard Evans, *Royal Prince Jacques-Victor-Henri Christophe*, c. 1816, oil on canvas, 34¼" x 25½" (Alfred Nemours Collection of Haitian History, University of Puerto Rico, Río Piedras Campus; photo: Jennifer Solivan Robles)



Figure **4.3.2.6**: Sir Joshua Reynolds, *Colonel Tarleton*, 1782, oil on canvas, 236 x 145.5 cm (The National Gallery)

The king's commission showcases Evans' abilities as a portraitist. Christophe and Jacques-Victor's semblances are accomplished, the king is regal even in simple military dress and his preoccupied expression befits a man in his position. Meanwhile, his son's relaxed, fresh face and expressive eyes exude the boyish confidence of a teenager. The compositions reference contemporary English taste in portraiture and the work of painters like Thomas Lawrence, Joshua Reynolds, and William Beechey—especially their royal and military portraits, like Reynolds' 1782 portrait of Colonel Tarleton and Beechey's portrait of George III.



Figure **4.3.2.7**: José Gil de Castro, *Portrait of Bolívar in Bogotá*, 1830 (Museo Nacional de Arqueologia, Antropoligia, e Historia del Perú, Ministerio de Cultura del Perú)

Three sets of these portraits were made—one kept in the king's palace, another as gifts from Christophe to Wilberforce in England, and the third set was sent to Emperor Alexander I of Russia. [9] What were Christophe's intentions in having multiple sets made? To begin, Christophe desired to visualize his rule through a known visual language that borrowed from English taste—in further rejection of the French. It was not uncommon for newly independent American countries to use Europe as reference in visualizing their political power in the 19th century. While they rejected their colonial relationship, revolutionary leaders often turned to the political and visual strategies they knew, as can also be appreciated in José Gil de Castro's ***Portrait of Bolívar in Bogotá*** from 1830.

The two other sets functioned as tools for the support of Christophe's government and abolition. Wilberforce's set was a personal present; he and Christophe had established a warm friendship through their letters. This set would also allow Christophe to present his official image in England (the portrait was exhibited in London during the Royal Academy's exhibition of 1818). Clarkson helped establish communication between the Russian tsar and the Haitian king to garner further international and political support for both Haiti and for abolition. Wilberforce and Clarkson admired Christophe and were invested in the success of his government. The enslaved population played a key role in the revolution, igniting and leading the revolts since the start of it. This detail worried many heads of state in Europe and the U.S.—politically and economically influential slaveholders feared similar situations in their regions Wilberforce and Clarkson were aware of this, and they considered that a prosperous Black nation would confront racist views and add pressure to contemporary discussions on abolition. Both portraits countered the stereotypes of violent enslaved people that rose in the wake of the Haitian Revolution in anti-abolitionists circles. Wilberforce saw Christophe as "a Sovereign who is endeavoring to civilize and Christianize his people [. . .] Christophe is not himself a rebel." [10] Evan's painting seems to capture this vision of the king as well.

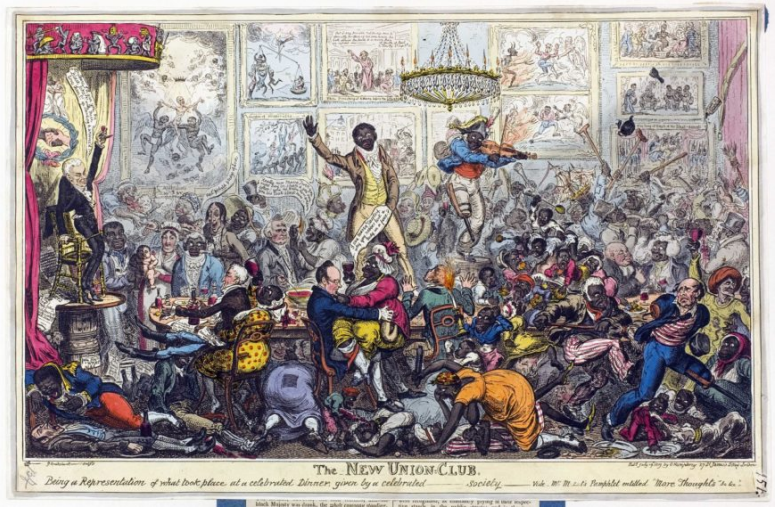


Figure **4.3.2.8**: Racist caricature in which Black figures are grotesquely represented as violent and unruly. George Cruikshank, *The New Union Club*, published July 19, 1819, hand-colored etching on paper, 28 x 46 cm (The Art Institute of Chicago)

Wilberforce and Clarkson understood the power of these images of Black kingship and nobility that contradicted the racist caricatures of the time. Christophe's portrait in the Royal Academy was in complete opposition to anti-abolitionist caricatures like *The new Union-Club* from 1819, where Black figures are grotesquely represented as violent and unruly. Wilberforce himself is caricatured in a child's chair presiding over the crowd, also composed of other abolitionists and even a member of King Henry's court, Prince Saunders.



Figure 4.3.2.9: Richard Evans, *Portraits of Henry Christophe, King of Haiti*, and *Royal Prince Jacques-Victor-Henri Christophe* (c. 1816, oil on canvas, 34¼" x 25½" (Alfred Nemours Collection of Haitian History, University of Puerto Rico, Río Piedras Campus)

The Kingdom of Haiti would end in 1820 when dissatisfaction among its people brought down Henry Christophe's rule. He committed suicide after not being able to control the revolts against him and Jacques-Victor was killed shortly after. The palace of Sans-Souci was looted and later abandoned. Haiti would be reunified as a republic under Jean-Pierre Boyer, a revolutionary leader who would remain president until 1843. Wilberforce despaired at his friend's end and Clarkson aided the king's wife and daughters when they were exiled to England. These portraits remain important images of post-revolutionary Haiti and Christophe's reign, encapsulating the complexities of his ambitions and the path he sought for his country on an international stage as the Americas' first Black nation.

Notes:

[1] Solivan Robles, "A Black King in the Caribbean," p. 836.

[2] Gauvin Alexander Bailey, *The Palace of Sans-Souci in Milot, Haiti* (Berlin: Deutscher Kunstverlag, 2017), p. 21.

[3] Humberto García Muñiz, et al. "La colección Alfred Nemours de historia haitiana, una fuente olvidada, en el bicentenario de la independencia de Haití, " *Caribbean Studies* 32, no. 2 (San Juan: Universidad de Puerto Rico, July–December 2004), p. 206.

[4] Jennifer Yvonne Conerly, "'Your Majesty's Friend': Foreign Alliances in the Reign of Henri Christophe," MA diss., (University of New Orleans, 2013), p. 18.

[5] Conerly, "'Your Majesty's Friend'," pp. 11–12.

[6] Conerly, "'Your Majesty's Friend'," pp. 12–13.

[7] Jennifer Solivan Robles, "A Black King in the Caribbean: William Wilberforce's Image of Henri Cristophe and his Court," *in Solving Social Issues through Multicultural Experiences: 20th Conference Monograph Series* (Scarborough: NAAAS & Affiliates, 2012), p. 826.

[8] Cited in Solivan Robles, “A Black King in the Caribbean,” p. 826.

[9] Solivan Robles, “A Black King in the Caribbean,” p. 823.

[10] Cited in Solivan Robles, “A Black King in the Caribbean,” p. 838.

Additional resources

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Jennifer Solivan Robles, “A Black King in the Caribbean: William Wilberforce’s Image of Henri Cristophe and his Court,” *in Solving Social Issues through Multicultural Experiences: 20th Conference Monograph Series* (Scarborough: NAAAS & Affiliates, 2012), pp. 820–845.

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4.3.3: Isaac Mendes Belisario, Sketches of Character

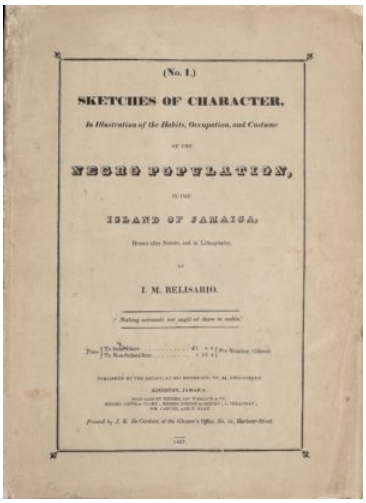
by **DR. TAMARA DÍAZ CALCAÑO**

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Figure **4.3.3.1**: Isaac Mendes Belisario, "Koo Koo, or Actor Boy" from *Sketches of Character, In Illustration of the Habits, Occupations, and Costume of the Negro Population in the Island of Jamaica*, 1837–38, hand-painted lithographic print (**Yale Center for British Art**)

Crowned by feathers and draped in color, a young Black man lifts his mask and smiles at the viewer. He wears an auburn wig over his own dark tresses as he shows off his outfit. This image is included in Isaac Mendes Belisario's *Sketches of Character, In Illustration of the Habits, Occupations, and Costume of the Negro Population in the Island of Jamaica*, published in Kingston, Jamaica between 1837 and 1838. This ambitious series (which appeared in three installments) focused on Jamaica's Black population, particularly their carnival traditions and occupations. It was produced during apprenticeship, the four-year period (1834–38) between the abolition of slavery and full emancipation, where enslaved people in Jamaica became laborers known as apprentices and engaged in the same work they did for their former enslavers. This transition could have inspired Belisario to record important aspects of Black life and cultural expression.


(No. I.)

SKETCHES OF CHARACTER,

In Illustration of the Habits, Occupation, and Costume

NEGRO POPULATION,

ISLAND OF JAMAICA,

I. M. BELISARIO.

Figure **4.3.3.2**: Isaac Mendes Belisario, cover, No. 1, Sketches of Character, In Illustration of the Habits, Occupations, and Costume of the Negro Population in the Island of Jamaica, 1837–38, hand-painted lithographic print (Yale Center for British Art)

In the three print installments of *Sketches of Character*, we find a total of twelve hand-painted, lithographic prints accompanied by text written by the artist. In the preface to the first publication, Belisario states his intentions to create a faithful representation of his subjects and their habits. He alludes to the possible future loss of these traditions due to the island's rapidly changing society. He also noted that he wished to avoid caricature. [1] While Belisario refrains from sharing his personal views on emancipation, he attempts to frame his subjects in a positive light. Belisario, a white Jewish man, seems aware of the prevalence of racial caricature at the time and its role in propagating prejudice and stereotypes, yet at times he draws on the racist visual and linguistic codes he appears to wish to escape.

Most of the prints that comprise *Sketches of Character are* focused on different carnival and masquerade customs that developed among the enslaved population. By the late 18th century, these had become part of the Christmas and New Year's public celebrations and were a staple of holiday events in Jamaica. In many places of the Americas, Christian carnivals and feasts became settings for syncretism. The local population, including Indigenous peoples and those of African ancestry, converged around carnival, creating or appropriating traditions, adding elements and significance of their own. Participants mostly made their own costumes, buying the materials themselves or with the assistance of sponsors, and organized themselves into character and event troupes for the parades. The first two installments in the series are almost exclusively dedicated to this subject, providing illustrations of the costumes; the order in which groups of characters, dancers, and musicians paraded; and the activities they engaged in.



Figure **4.3.3.3**: Isaac Mendes Belisario, “Jaw-Bone, or House John Canoe” (left) and “Koo Koo, or Actor Boy” (right) from *Sketches of Character, In Illustration of the Habits, Occupations, and Costume of the Negro Population in the Island of Jamaica*, 1837–38, hand-painted lithographic prints (Yale Center for British Art)

Two of the most striking figures are “Jaw-Bone, or House John Canoe”, and “Koo Koo, or Actor Boy,” two characters whose costumes combine visual and cultural aspects from both African and European traditions. John Canoe was part of the Jonkonnu masquerade, which has roots in West African religious practices from the Igbo, Yoruba, and Ga cultures, which still held religious significance through slavery and the 19th century. He wears a military jacket and sash, striped pants, and a long curly wig and is represented mid-dance, balancing an impressive headdress shaped like a colonial manor with a crown and palm trees. In the text Belisario points to Merry Andrew, a jester-type character from British theater tradition, as a possible reference.

Actor Boy was part of another celebration, where performers engaged in theatrical competitions reciting Shakespeare and also participated in costume competitions. Actor Boy wore extravagant clothes and combined European accessories, including long wigs and fans that look back to the 18th century, with elaborate headdresses and textiles drawn from Kongolese traditions. [2]

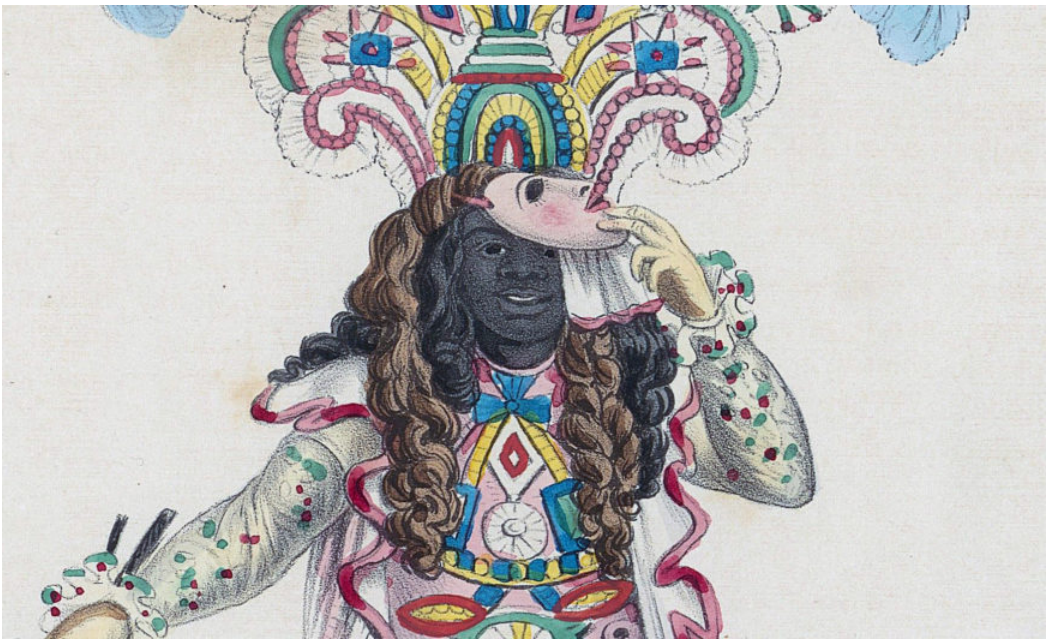


Figure **4.3.3.3**: Detail, Isaac Mendes Belisario, “Koo Koo, or Actor Boy” from *Sketches of Character, In Illustration of the Habits, Occupations, and Costume of the Negro Population in the Island of Jamaica*, 1837–38, hand-painted lithographic print (Yale Center for British Art)

Both John Canoe and Actor Boy wear whiteface masks. These could stem from Kongolese rituals, where white masks were used to indicate the presence of ancestral spirits through the characters. [3] The use of white masks and European accessories also allowed the performers to subvert the racial and cultural boundaries that defined British colonial society.

These appropriations speak to the freedom found in the context of carnival, which historically has been a moment where social norms and boundaries blur and are turned on their heads. The masquerades were both a method of relief and resistance for the Black population against a violent colonial system. Black participants could openly rejoice in their traditions while pushing back at a system that oppressed them, combining cultural references that allowed them to express themselves and protest their condition. [4] Dances and character troupes were often financed by white, free Black, and mixed people (both individuals and groups of people sponsoring troupes). [5] Carnival spoke to Jamaican society at large, with all sectors participating in one way or the other and the costumes and dances fascinated revelers and observers—including Belisario.



Figure **4.3.3.4**: Isaac Mendes Belisario, "Red Set Girls and Jack in the Green" from *Sketches of Character, In Illustration of the Habits, Occupations, and Costume of the Negro Population in the Island of Jamaica*, 1837–38, hand-painted lithographic print (Yale Center for British Art)

The intermingling of African and European costumes is present in another illustration entitled "Red Set Girls and Jack in the Green," which shows a group of five female figures who participated in dancing competitions with other Set Girls. Their style is modeled on European dress, here represented in a stylized manner by the artist. Their colorful ensembles are based on the fashionable silhouettes of the early 1830s, with puffy sleeves decorated with ribbons and topped with straw hats and pink feathers. They are accompanied by an impressive figure completely covered in palm fronds, named in the title, Jack in the Green is reminiscent of the Jack in the Green found in May Day celebrations in England (where a character covered in green foliage accompanied milkmaids and chimney sweepers in their parades). [7] The full body costume is also suggestive of those used for the figures of Egungun and Zangbeto, from Yoruba and Ogu festivals respectively.



Figure **4.3.3.5**: Isaac Mendes Belisario, "Water-Jar Sellers," "Chimney Sweeper," and "Milkwoman" from *Sketches of Character, In Illustration of the Habits, Occupations, and Costume of the Negro Population in the Island of Jamaica*, 1837–38, hand-painted lithographic print (Yale Center for British Art)



Figure 4.3.3.6: Isaac Mendes Belisario, “Lovey,” from *Sketches of Character, In Illustration of the Habits, Occupations, and Costume of the Negro Population in the Island of Jamaica*, 1837–38, hand-painted lithographic print (Yale Center for British Art)

The third (and final) installment is focused on what the artist describes as the “Cries of Kingston.” These five images show some of the occupations of the Black population, such as water-jar sellers, a chimney sweeper, and a milkwoman. These are represented as figural types in compositions not dissimilar to those found in the Cries of London publications, which seem to be Belisario’s main artistic reference.

The only portrait in the series depicts a man named Lovey. The 51-year-old apprentice, originally named Kangga and who was from Congo, was a well-known vendor and puppeteer. While Belisario presents Lovey sympathetically in his written description, the portrait veers into caricature. He portrays Lovey in an almost child-like body, with exaggerated facial features. Here and in other illustrations, like “Creole Negroes,” the artist stumbles in his objective. The pervasiveness and impact of visual and written stereotypical models from ethnological and folklore publications become apparent.



Figure 4.3.3.7: Left: Isaac Mendes Belisario, “Creole Negroes,” from *Sketches of Character, In Illustration of the Habits, Occupations, and Costume of the Negro Population in the Island of Jamaica*, 1837–38, hand-painted lithographic print (Yale Center for British Art); right: Richard Bridgens, *West India scenery: with illustrations of Negro character, the process of making sugar, &c. from sketches taken during a voyage to, and residence of seven years in, the island of Trinidad* (London: Robert Jennings & Co., 1836) (Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library)

The composition for “Creole Negroes” is similar to the ethnographic prints that appeared in Richard Bridgens’s *West Indian Scenery* (1836) which focused on Trinidad and plantation life. Bridgens espoused pro-slavery and racist views both through word and illustration, and used ethnographic language to describe the perceived inferiority of those of African ancestry.

By comparison, Belisario's *Sketches* often comes across as ambivalent about its subjects, and he is not explicitly pro- or anti-slavery in the text. At times he describes the figures as "primitive" and "savage," using the language of contemporaneous racist publications he is clearly familiar with. However, this contrasts with his interest in the traditions and people that inspired his publication—particularly the sections devoted to carnival. "Creole Negroes" and his portrait of Lovey are deeply racist, while many of the carnival illustrations seem more positive and genuine. *Sketches* often results in an ambiguous reading. His stated intentions may have been different from a work like Bridgens's, but Belisario does not fully reject some of these racist ideas.

Belisario worked on *Sketches* at a decisive moment in Jamaica, between the abolition of slavery in 1833 and the culmination of apprenticeship. [8] Its publication may reflect the optimism of many people toward the end of apprenticeship; a feeling not shared by all, especially anti-abolitionists, and plantation owners whose businesses depended on enslaved labor. Economic anxieties amongst this sector, racism, and legal measures to control and keep the newly freed population in slave-like labor were the cause of immense social and political tension between 1834 and 1838.

A life between Kingston and London

Born in Kingston, Jamaica in 1795 to a Sephardic Jewish family, Belisario spent much of his youth in London. He studied under English landscape painter Robert Hills between 1815 and 1818. Yet he worked primarily as a stockbroker, maintaining a side practice as a portraitist and exhibiting in the Royal Academy in 1831.

He moved back to Jamaica around 1832, where he dedicated himself to an artistic career. His return seems to have been motivated by health concerns and perhaps by the passing of the Jewish Emancipation Act by the Jamaican Assembly, which granted the Jewish population full civil liberties, six months after free people of color had achieved the same rights. [9] Belisario remained on the island for the next 15 years.



Figure **4.3.3.8**: Belisario, *Cocoa Walk Estate*, c. 1840 (National Gallery of Jamaica)

Belisario produced portraits and landscapes for members of Jamaica's upper class. His paintings for plantation owners pull from the English picturesque tradition that appealed to landowners in the colonies. His compositions for the Marquess of Sligo, like that of his Cocoa Walk Estate, are picturesque renderings of idyllic plantations. These images were far-removed from the harsh reality experienced by plantation laborers whose conditions had not significantly improved since abolition. These landscapes tend to be panoramic views of the planter's property, showcasing their dominion over the land and the figures that inhabit it. Black figures tend to be few and are represented at a distance and in the context of the planter's property.

Belisario's interest in the lives of the Black population and masquerade may speak to his experience as a Jewish man in British society. While considered white, Jews in Jamaica suffered social and legal marginalization since the time of the Spanish occupation. Discriminatory legislation had long limited their political and economic development. Until recently they couldn't participate in government, vote, or join the military. Jews and their businesses in Jamaica were also heavily taxed in comparison to other groups until the 1820s. While they could have servants and enslaved peoples, there were measures to control how many; this limited their involvement in the plantation economy, but they participated in the slavery auction system.

Belisario was likely descended from Conversos, and was therefore deeply aware of the ways he and his family had to negotiate their Jewishness in a Christian society. [10] These experiences could have attracted him to the Jamaican masquerades, as its very nature disrupted social boundaries. While his stance on slavery is unknown, the fact that this series exists and his commissions from the Marquess of Sligo and Chief Justice Joshua Rowe, who both had abolitionist sympathies, may point to the artist's anti-

slavery sentiments. [11] The ambivalence evident in *Sketches of Character* on the matter of emancipation may come from both an attempt to not alienate his white, Christian clientele and to advance himself and the Jewish community in Jamaica. [12]



Figure **4.3.3.9**: Detail showing Actor Boy in front of the shop owned by Miguel Q. Henriques, Isaac Mendes Belisario, "Koo Koo, or Actor Boy" from *Sketches of Character, In Illustration of the Habits, Occupations, and Costume of the Negro Population in the Island of Jamaica*, 1837–38, hand-painted lithographic prints (Yale Center for British Art)

Jewish businesses had been closely linked to Jonkonnu and the enslaved population for decades before abolition, providing costume supplies and other essentials. Since Jews observe Shabbat on Saturdays, they were able to open their stores on Sundays, which allowed those enslaved to patronize their establishments on their day off. [13] Belisario includes one of these shops in his illustration of the winning Actor Boy of 1836. Here, the parade stopped in King Street before the entrance of the store of Moses Q. Henriques, a Jewish merchant and friend of the artist, where many shopped for the textiles used for their costumes. [14] The syncretism and expression of Jamaican masquerades in the 19th century, as represented by Belisario, captures the complex interconnections of its diverse society.

Notes:

[1] The series seems to have been a personal project with twelve publications originally planned, but Belisario stopped after the third installment in 1838 due to his deteriorating health. Jackie Ranston, "Jonkonnu and Jew: The Art of Issac Mendes Belisario (1794–1894)," *The Jews in the Caribbean* (Oxford: The Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, 2014), p. 128.

[2] Tim Barringer, Gillian Forrester & Barbara Martinez Ruiz, *Art & emancipation in Jamaica* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007), p. 36.

[3] Tim Barringer, Gillian Forrester & Barbara Martinez Ruiz, *Art & emancipation in Jamaica* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007), p. 48.

[4] Sandra Richards, "Horned Ancestral Masks, Shakespearean Actor Boys, and Scotch-Inspired Set Girls: Social Relations in Nineteenth-Century Jamaican Jonkonnu," *The African Diaspora* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press,1999), p. 262.

[5] Sandra Richards, "Horned Ancestral Masks, Shakespearean Actor Boys, and Scotch-Inspired Set Girls: Social Relations in Nineteenth-Century Jamaican Jonkonnu," *The African Diaspora* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press,1999), p. 263.

[6] Judith Bettelheim cited in Joan M. Fayer and Joan F. McMurray, "The Carriacou Mas' as "Syncretic Artifact"," *The Journal of American Folklore* 112, no. 443 (1999): p. 63.

[7] Tim Barringer, Gillian Forrester & Barbara Martinez Ruiz, *Art & emancipation in Jamaica* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007), p. 34.

[8] In Jamaica, immediate emancipation was only given to children 6 years and younger. Full emancipation came in 1838.

[9] Tim Barringer, Gillian Forrester & Barbara Martinez Ruiz, *Art & emancipation in Jamaica* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007), p. 31.

[10] Jackie Ranston, "Jonkonnu and Jew: The Art of Issac Mendes Belisario (1794–1894)," *The Jews in the Caribbean* (Oxford: The Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, 2014), p. 127.

[11] Ibid., p. 127.

[12] Ibid., p. 123.

[13] Ibid., p. 122.

[14] Ibid., p. 122.

Additional resources

This work at the Yale Center for British Art.

Tim Barringer, Gillian Forrester, and Barbara Martinez Rui, *Art & Emancipation in Jamaica: Isaac Mendes Belisario and His Worlds* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007).

Nadia Ellis, "Jamaican Performance in the Age of Emancipation," *Victorian Jamaica* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2018), pp. 622–637.

Joan M. Fayer and Joan F. McMurray, "The Carriacou Mas' as "Syncretic Artifact"," *The Journal of American Folklore* 112, no. 443 (1999): pp. 58–73.

Isaac Mendes Belisario, *Sketches of Character, In Illustration of the Habits, Occupations, and Costume of the Negro Population in the Island of Jamaica* (Kingston: J.R. de Cordova, 1837).

Isaac Mendes Belisario, *Sketches of Character, In Illustration of the Habits, Occupations, and Costume of the Negro Population in the Island of Jamaica* (Kingston: J.R. de Cordova, 1838).

Jackie Raston, "Jonkonnu and Jew: The Art of Isaac Mendes Belisario (1794–1894)," *The Jews in the Caribbean* (Oxford: The Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, 2014), pp. 121–129.

Sandra Richards, "Horned Ancestral Masks, Shakespearean Actor Boys, and Scotch-Inspired Set Girls: Social Relations in Nineteenth-Century Jamaican Jonkonnu," *The African Diaspora: African Origins and New World Identities* (Bloominton: Indiana University Press,1999), pp. 254–274.

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4.4: Colombia in the 19th century Carmelo Fernández, The Strait of Furatena in the Minero River

by DR. VERÓNICA URIBE HANABERGH

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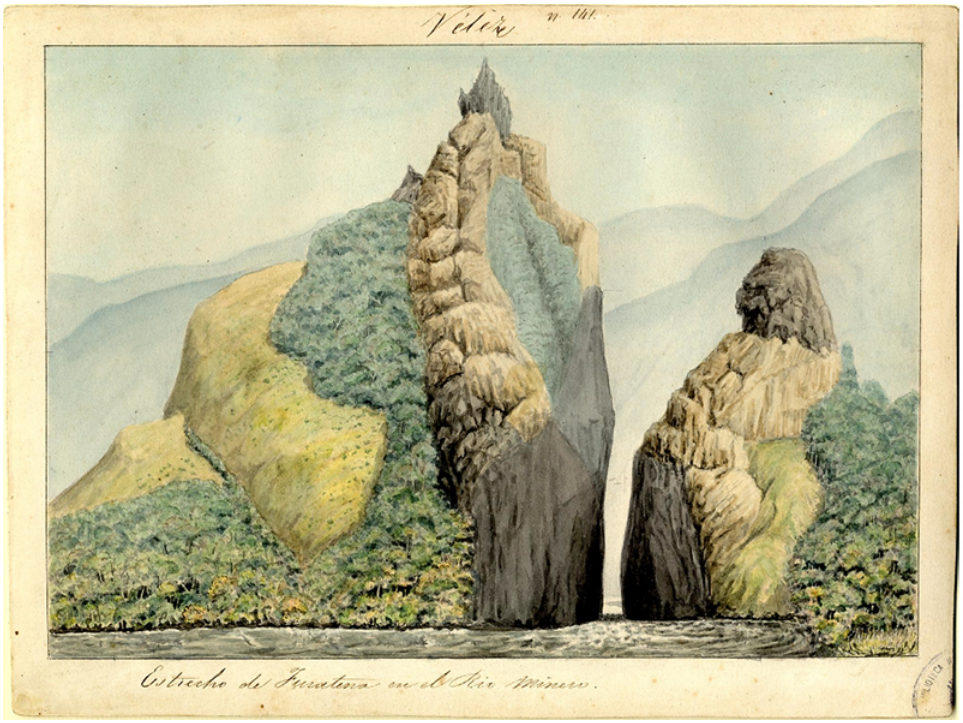


Figure 4.4.1: Carmelo Fernández, *The Strait of Furatena in the Minero River, Province of Vélez*, 1850-51, watercolor on paper (Colombian National Library)

Imagine floating down this river in a small rocking canoe that is being pulled by the current. How would you feel if you were about to pass through the narrow strait, not knowing if you would come out of the other end alive? Now, transport yourself to 1850, the moment when the Colombian government developed a project called the Colombian Chorographic Commission to survey the landscape of this newly formed nation (Colombia gained independence from Spain in 1819 under the leadership of Simón Bolívar, who died in 1830). The artists on the Commission portrayed natural features like this one through a Romantic lens that stemmed from European and North American traditions. These images in turn became important in the construction of Colombian national identity, even as the young nation was struggling with internal political stresses.

The Colombian Chorographic Commission

Scientists, writers, and artists were invited to join the Italian Colonel, geographer, and cartographer Agustin Codazzi, (who had previously worked on the *Atlas of Venezuela* in the 1830s) for this national geographic endeavor. The main goal of the project was to map the country, but it became much more than that. Nine years and three different artists later, the Chorographic Commission had produced both an *Atlas of Colombia* and many watercolor drawings that portrayed not only the physical landscape, but also social, economic, and agricultural aspects of the country, including its people, transportation, crops, and trades.

Two previous expeditions in Colombia had used art in the service of scientific documentation: the Botanical Expedition, directed by the Spanish doctor and botanist José Celestino Mutis, which lasted from 1763 to 1816; and Alexander von Humboldt's voyage through Colombian territory in 1801. The North American landscape artist Frederic Edwin Church's stay in Colombia in 1853 also coincided with the first year of the Commission. Through these ventures, images became the means to portray new discoveries in the largely unexplored territory of Colombia. Mutis's botanical drawings were a key part of the creation of a school of botanical studies. Humboldt, though not an artist himself, created drawings that were later made into prints that appealed to a public fascinated with travel, adventure, and the exotic, among them Church, whose painting *Tequendama Falls near Bogotá* echoes Humboldt's drawing of the same place.



Figure 4.4.2: Left: Alexander von Humboldt, *Tequendama Falls*, 1810, lithograph, from *Vues des cordillères* (Paris: F. Schoell, 1810); right: Frederic Edwin Church, *Tequendama Falls, near Bogotá*, 1854, oil on canvas, 153.5 x 122 cm (Cincinnati Art Museum)

The Colombian Chorographic Commission was a state enterprise, originally developed and financed by the liberal governments of Tomás Cipriano de Mosquera and José Hilario López. The term "chorographic" comes from Ptolemy's teachings, where "geographic" meant studying the entire world, and "chorographic" meant studying its smaller parts: basically, describing individual regions and their components. An 1839 law allowed the government of Colombia to hire engineers and geographers to chart the territory, but it took eleven years for this idea to be put into action due to political instability. A later law stated that a comprehensive description of the country, including its products and resources, should also be completed. Unfortunately, due to civil war, the Commission was cut short.

The Commission was composed of four parts: the mapping of the physical geography and the chorographic aspects of each province was led by Agustín Codazzi. There was also a literary aspect, entrusted to journalist Manuel Ancízar, who described the customs, people, and curiosities encountered by the expedition as entries in Bogotá's *Neogranadino* newspaper (these were later edited into the book *Pilgrimage of Alpha*). The project's graphic documentation was originally assigned to Carmelo Fernández, whose role was to create images of the landscapes, as well as images of people and genre scenes (this responsibility was later entrusted to Henry Price and then to Manuel María Paz). The botanical arm of the project was directed by Doctor José Geronimo Triana.



Figure **4.4.3**: Carmelo Fernández, *A Muleteer and a Weaver from Vélez*, 1850-51, watercolor on paper (Colombian National Library)

Carmelo Fernández

Carmelo Fernández, the first painter in charge of the visual portion of the project, was born in Venezuela, the nephew of Venezuela's President José Antonio Páez. A draftsman, painter, printer and engineer, Fernández was also in the army (where he met Simón Bolívar) and travelled extensively through Colombian territory during various independence military campaigns. He is best known for his portrait of Bolívar, which now decorates Colombian coins. Fernández arrived in Colombia in 1849 and signed a contract with the Commission in 1850. He is the author of the images that correspond to the Commission's first and second expeditions, of which only 29 watercolors remain and which are now at the National Library Archives in Bogotá. These include landscapes, natural phenomena, places and objects of historical and archeological value, and images of people and customs (above). Fernández travelled to the northeastern region of the country known today as the territories of Boyacá, Santander, and Northern Santander.



Figure **4.4.4**: Carmelo Fernández, Province of Vélez, *The Strait of Furatena in the Minero River*, 1850-51, watercolor on paper (Colombian National Library)

The Strait of Furatena in the Minero River

The Strait of Furatena in the Minero River exemplifies Fernández's watercolors. The image is presented with a border around it because the drawings were usually turned into lithographic prints and the name of the province depicted was almost always printed

on the top center of the border while a short title or description of the location was included at the bottom. Some illustrations of this type included measurements or other data that was recorded while on site.

The strait of Furatena was described by Manuel Ancízar in his book *Pilgrimage of Alpha.* He explained that to get there, the travelers of the Commission, including himself, Codazzi and Fernández, had to cut a path through the humid forest carrying pikes and machetes. He embellishes his description with measurements: for example, Fura (the peak shown on the left of Fernández's image) measures approximately 2000 feet from the river to its top. He also includes observations such as the poor vegetation, except for some shrubs, on the mountain slopes.

Fernández endows his image with a certain sense of the romantic, showing the immensity and strangeness of the mountain cut by the narrow river that runs through it. The greater part of the mountain on the left (Fura), nearly touches the top of the frame with its peak, a detail that makes the landscape compositionally striking as it fills the frame. Tena, the smaller peak flanking the strait, occupies the tight space at the bottom right hand corner, next to the river, and then rises up to open the space towards the middle ground which has been carefully painted through subtle atmospheric perspective so as to show the more distant mountains behind, highlighting Colombia's rocky terrain.

In addition to these topographical details, Fernández plays with tonal contrasts that guide the viewer's eye both downward and up, from the dark passage between the strait to the illuminated peaks at top. By dramatizing the narrow passage in the foreground and the dramatic slope above, Fernández emphasizes the unusual and the monumental aspects of the Colombian landscape. A combination of scientific reportage and romantic vistas, the Colombian Chorographic Commission is a key event in mid-nineteenth century Colombian geography, politics, and art history.

Additional resources:

Carmelo Fernández's *The Strait of Furatena in the Minero River, Province of Vélez* at the World Digital Library

Frederic Edwin Church's *Tequendama Falls, near Bogota* at the Cincinnati Art Museum

Carmelo Fernández's *A Muleteer and a Weaver from Velez* at the World Digital Library

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4.5: Photography Marc Ferrez, Slaves at a Coffee Yard in a Farm, Vale do Paraiba, Sao Paulo

by **DR. JUANITA SOLANO ROA**

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Figure **4.5.1**: Marc Ferrez, *Slaves at a Coffee Yard in a Farm, Vale do Paraiba, Sao Paulo*, 1882, platinum print, 40 x 30 cm (Instituto Moreira Salles, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil)

Did you know that Brazil was the last country to abolish slavery in the Americas? [1] In 1882, when photographer Marc Ferrez took his photograph *Slaves at a Coffee Yard in a Farm, Vale do Paraiba, Sao Paulo*, Brazil was divided between those advocating for the abolition of slavery and those who sought to maintain this inhumane and brutal system of production. Ferrez's photograph shows enslaved laborers in the Paraíba Valley coffee industry, yet his photograph does not denounce slavery. Rather, it conceals slavery's violence through visual strategies that help maintain racist social hierarchies.

A panoramic view of enslaved labor

Slaves at a Coffee Yard in a Farm, Vale do Paraiba, Sao Paulo is part of a larger series of photographs that Ferrez took between 1882 and 1885. The 65 images that form the series were commissioned by the Center of Agriculture and Commerce (*Centro da Lavoura e do Comércio*, or CLC) in 1881. The photographs privilege panoramic views that convey a sense of harmony and order. The photographer looks from afar and does not face the sitters directly. This distances the subjects of the picture from the viewer, conveying a sense of control over those who are depicted in the photograph.

In this photograph, a sense of order is implied by the geometries of the composition. Angular slopes of hills echo the diagonal lines of workers in the foreground. Enslaved men and women form a grid while they carry baskets or raking coffee beans in the coffee-drying yard.



Figure 4.5.2: Marc Ferrez, detail of *Slaves at a Coffee Yard in a Farm, Vale do Paraiba, Sao Paulo*, 1882, platinum print, 40 x 30 cm (Instituto Moreira Salles, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil)

In the lower left corner, Ferrez captured the overseer (in a black jacket), who directs the workers. They obey his orders. The entire composition appears perfectly constructed, with basket-carrying enslaved women facing the camera.

Some scholars have even suggested that it is a *mise-en-scène* (staged image) and point out that the enslaved workers' crisp, clean white clothing contrasts with the manual labor they are forced to do. [2] The clothing they wore for Ferrez's photograph perhaps was not their everyday work clothing, but their "Sunday's best." In the background, we see small children running as if playing and having fun. This type of scene was intended to give the sense of harmonious family life and helped minimize the perception that the enslaved workers were treated badly, even though their bare feet were still visible and they had to provide care for their families *while* at work (as seen in the woman holding a small child with her hands in the background).



Figure 4.5.3: Marc Ferrez, detail of *Slaves at a Coffee Yard in a Farm, Vale do Paraiba, Sao Paulo*, 1882, platinum print, 40 x 30 cm (Instituto Moreira Salles, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil)

In the middle-ground, Ferrez captures plantation architecture that fuses harmoniously with the mountain landscape in the background. This is no coincidence. Ferrez was recognized as a dedicated and skilled Brazilian landscape photographer (see examples below). The intentional incorporation of landscape into his photographs (including this one) conveys a sense of harmony between nature and a civilized society. In this sense, photography played a role in maintaining the slave-owners' power which was not only physically and symbolically conveyed, but also disseminated through visual aids such as this picture. Ferrez represents coffee plantations as a prevailing, orderly, and natural system of production. He furthers the point of view that enslaved labor was critical for Brazil's economic success. *Slaves at a Coffee Yard* highlights the tensions and contradictions between the brutal and inhumane slavery system and Brazil's economic development that was based on slave labor.

Slavery, coffee, and photography

Historians calculate that around 4 million Africans were kidnapped in their native countries and forcibly transported to Brazil beginning in the 16th century. [3] The magnitude of the slave trade in Brazil had no comparison in the Americas. [4] Brazil's state and economy were built upon the labor of millions of enslaved Africans and their descendants. At the time Ferrez took *Slaves at a Coffee Yard in a Farm, Vale do Paraiba, Sao Paulo,* strong abolitionist campaigns, international pressures, and the accounts of escaped enslaved workers challenged the repressive system of enslavement. And yet, in the 1880s, the Paraíba Valley had the highest concentration of enslaved people in Brazil. [5]

Simultaneously, the coffee industry expanded and consolidated the Empire of Brazil. Coffee became one of its main exports. This industry particularly grew in the 1840s, and the Paraíba Valley became one of the most important coffee plantation regions. The development of this industry not only promoted slave labor, but also depended on it.

Ferrez's photographs do not question the slavery system. Rather they present a complete absence of violence. The commissioning of these photographs by the CLC was a propagandistic effort aimed at increasing Brazil's coffee exports. The pictures were first shown at international Universal Exhibitions, then circulated in several formats, including postcards and magic lantern shows targeted to both local and international audiences. According to historian Mariana de Aguiar Ferreira Muaze, some of these images were shown at an exhibition in Beauvais, France, in 1885, but they also circulated as souvenir pictures for collectors and curious people. [6] Ultimately, the photographs helped the CLC promote the slaved-based coffee industry (pictured here as harmonious and violence-free labor) at a moment when slavery was being questioned extensively.



Figure **4.5.4**: Marc Ferrez, *Vista panorâmica da enseada de Botafogo, a partir do topo do Corcovado*, c. 1880–1900, 18 x 24 cm (Instituto Moreira Salles, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil)



Figure 4.5.5: Marc Ferrez, *Silvestre bridge on the railway to the Corcovado*, c. 1890, collotype, 29 x 23 cm Instituto Moreira Salles, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil)

The CLC's selection of Marc Ferrez as the photographer was intentional. Born in Brazil in 1843 to French parents, Ferrez became Brazil's most well-known photographer. He studied in Paris and returned to Brazil around 1863. Ferrez established himself as a successful urban landscape photographer and opened his own studio in 1865 in Rio de Janeiro. Emperor Dom Pedro II became a personal benefactor of Ferrez's photography. [7] After a fire destroyed his studio eight years later, Ferrez began photographing rural landscapes, including plantations, using a panoramic camera. He also joined several government projects, such as the expedition of the Brazilian Geological Commission, which photographed the railway's construction between 1880 and 1890. Ferrez documented the rapid development of urban spaces, the exuberance of Brazil's natural scenery and resources, and its rapid modernization, from a pro-government point of view.

Returning the gaze



Figure 4.5.6: Marc Ferrez, Slaves at a Coffee Yard in a Farm, Vale do Paraiba, Sao Paulo, 1882, platinum print, 40 x 30 cm (Instituto Moreira Salles, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil)

Ferrez intentionally concealed the brutal and inhumane conditions of slavery, and took advantage of panoramic views and full depth of field to create visually harmonious compositions devoid of social conflict. His photographs took advantage of the horizontal format and presented his subjects in sharp focus. However, the subjects Ferrez photographed found a way to resist the photographer's visual construction by defiantly gazing back at the camera. This daring act humanizes their tragic histories and dares us to consider their plights. In this sense, one could argue that although *Slaves at a Coffee Yard in a Farm, Vale do Paraiba, Sao Paulo* downplays the brutal treatment of enslaved peoples, it also acts as a testimony to both its reality and tragedy.

Notes:

[1] Brazil would not abolish slavery until May 13, 1888. It was the last country in the Western world to do so. The Brazilian Report, "Slavery in Brazil," Wilson Center (May 13, 2020). Accessed Sept. 16, 2021.

[2] Ynaê Santos Lopes, "Marc Ferrez: Território e Imagem," Instituto Moreilla Salles, Accessed October 4, 2021.

[3] Herbert Klein and Francisco Vidal Luna, *Slavery in Brazil* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010), p. 14.

[4] While slavery was introduced to the Spanish and Portuguese colonies in the Americas in the 16th century, this brutal institution was established in what would later become the U.S. approximately a century later. Brazil's slavery system was the most long-lasting in the Americas. In the 17th century, Northeastern Brazil became the principal destination of the slave trade, largely due to the sugar cane plantations and sugar production demanded by Europeans. Although there were more enslaved individuals in Mexico and Peru by the end of the 16th century, thereafter Brazil became the leading African slave importer in the New World, a position it would maintain for 250 years. For more information on comparative histories of slavery in the Americas see: Laird W. Bergad, *The Comparative Histories of Slavery in Brazil, Cuba, and the United States* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007).

[5] For more information: Rafael de Bivar Marquese, "African Diaspora, Slavery, and the Paraiba Valley Coffee Plantation Landscape: Nineteenth-Century Brazil," *Review* 31, no. 2 (2008): pp. 195–216. The concentration of enslaved persons in the Paraíba Valley was particularly striking when compared to other parts of the Americas. While Cuban coffee plantations had an average of 40 enslaved workers per estate, the numbers in the Paraíba Valley rose to 80 or 100, and many had even 200 or 400 enslaved people working in a single estate. See Marta Macedo, "Coffee on the Move: Technology, Labour and Race in the Making of a Transatlantic Plantation System," *Mobilities* 16, no. 2 (2021): pp. 262–272.

[6] Mariana de Aguiar Ferreira Muaze, "Violence Appeased: Slavery and Coffee Raising in the Photography of Marc Ferrez (1882–1885)," *Revista Brasileira de Historia* 37, no. 74 (January-April 2017), pp. 9–10.

[7] "**Marc Ferrez**," *The J. Paul Getty Museum*. Accessed Sept. 16, 2021.

Additional Resources:

Natalia Brizuela, *Fotografia e Império. Paisagens para um Brasil moderno* (São Paulo: Companhia das Letras / Instituto Moreira Salle, 2012).

Mariana de Aguiar Ferreira Muaze, "Violence Appeased: Slavery and Coffee Raising in the Photography of Marc Ferrez (1882-1885)," *Revista Brasileira de Historia* 37, no. 74 (January-April 2017): pp. 1–30.

Rafael de Bivar Marquese, "African Diaspora, Slavery, and the Paraiba Valley Coffee Plantation Landscape: Nineteenth-Century Brazil," *Review* 31, no. 2 (2008): pp. 195–216.

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