



Until quite recently, histories of the conquest of the Americas focused almost entirely on the actions of the European conquerors and settlers. They treated the indigenous people as a silent backdrop to their Spanish and Portuguese protagonists, and paid scant attention to their cultures after the fall of the great pre-Hispanic civilizations. But these pre-Hispanic civilizations did not die. Although profoundly altered by European contact and rule, indigenous cultures persevered and evolved throughout the entire colonial period and beyond. Some aspects of these cultures even thrived through contact with the new lifestyles and beliefs. Social and economic structures, mythology, legend and language are only a few facets of indigenous culture that lasted through the era of Spanish and Portuguese domination. Going underground, many people even continued their pre-Hispanic religious practices in the guise of Christian ones or, more often, in a harmonious synthesis with the new faith. This phenomenon, dubbed by Anita Brenner in 1929 as 'idols behind altars', has meant that peoples such as the Nahuatl or Aymara have been able to worship in traditional ways even to the present day. In the outlying regions such as Paraguay, Chile and the southwestern United States, converted Amerindians stayed in contact with their unconverted brethren who roamed freely in the hinterlands and kept the indigenous world alive alongside the Euro-Christian one. Anyone who listens to the haunting strains of a Paraguayan folk melody in Guaraní or observes a Good Friday procession in rural Yucatán can have little doubt as to the resilience of the indigenous world.

This perseverance of ancient traditions took place primarily at the hands of the indigenous peoples themselves. But it was also encouraged by the Christian missionaries and colonial officials. Missionaries felt that they could enhance Christianity's appeal to Amerindians by adapting to their culture and the colonial administration found it convenient to use pre-Hispanic systems of taxation and labour rotation to govern their new subjects. More directly relevant for us is the continuation of

indigenous architecture, painting, sculpture, ceramics, textiles and featherwork, all of which transformed the arts of the colonies. Without this voice from another world, the art and architecture of Latin America would have been little more than a regional interpretation of European models. This chapter will look at the indigenous contribution to architectural sculpture, painting and the so-called 'minor arts'. I will return to this blending of European and Amerindian artistic forms in later chapters, especially Chapter 5, which will look at some pre-Hispanic architectural forms that were revived on the colonial missions.

Art historians and anthropologists are partly to blame for the scholarly silence about the indigenous contribution to colonial culture. They have tended to prefer studying 'pure' cultures, civilizations supposedly untouched by the complex changes wrought by contact with others. Therefore, although there is a longstanding tradition of scholarship on Aztec, Maya and Inca cultures – to name but three – comparatively little attention has been paid to the culture of these peoples in the colonial period. Nevertheless, the past two decades or so have witnessed a major reassessment of indigenous societies in the colonies, particularly by scholars such as James Lockhart and Frank Salomon who are returning to written documents from the sixteenth to nineteenth centuries in languages such as Nahuatl, Quechua, Aymara and Guaraní. These sources, usually legal documents about things like property ownership but also histories and mythologies, provide a tool for recapturing the lost voices of the non-European participants in colonial culture. Such is an early seventeenth-century manuscript from the Huarochirí province of Peru commissioned by Fr Francisco de Avila, in which the anonymous Andean author writes about the religion and mythology of the Incas in Quechua using Roman letters (32). This rich account revolves around the interaction between the goddess of the coastal valleys, Chaupi Ñamca, and the god of the Highlands, Paria Caca. The page depicted comes from the Chapter 12, 'How Paria Caca's children Undertook the conquest of All the Yuca People'.

The visual arts can serve the same function. Throughout colonial Latin America, Amerindians made a profound contribution to the arts, not just by building the buildings and carving the sculptures

y mayna runa curapat tucuy ni llan as Banuan  
 Jayae carcan clay mi na clay man Baya mug hica  
 ande say cot cam amua nis pa a Vallan yanca  
 y clapa runa Saucapas pata pipas clay llacatam  
 bo man yai cuna n porco llapi y na yelacurcan  
 paicuna Vra maata amue cunam aslla ayidato  
 paicunap puz non pa Simincaua qurapue carca  
 cay tanta puebo cospam natae tucuy y nantin  
 runa cuna pam pa pi nay cospa a hie nis cataguidn  
 na callaxir can cay curam caran. Bancos hukio  
 clay mantam na Bancup hica padept naripa  
 tam yanua cay clancup mitampis y quicaya nica  
 clay yan cap Suatiripi Sue sacchepi of y maet hie  
 pis canan clay saca nis comelic <sup>mantali</sup> yaco papa vma  
 nayate clay curadas coman pa y cona can clay y  
 nata ficuspacanan Suatira alli pucos mi canca  
 nispa nircancu / mana tam ya nampesi claquisa  
 cae clay si ande muedoy mi canca nispa nircanca

Capitulo 12 y manam cay  
 poria cacap Surincunatucuy  
 y unca clnada abita tra  
 Callaxir can

y nam vai cay clun campu capult pi zi mar comelic  
 cay paria cacap cluzin cunapalt hie can ~~comanda~~ Sibucta  
 y ~~na~~ narpa Villar comelic tac mi axi y manam hu  
 cay y nantin halla cuna y unca papa carcan clay  
 cunada Canan mi scay. Sue paico. Bancos rona  
 Suari ruma. Ut ed cluco tutay quize. Sasin mani pa  
 clachuy ro nis comelic cunacta zi moston y manam  
 paicuna pucic cot canes clay clay curacta cay  
 cuna nis comelic curas nalcupa pata tucuy hin

but also by assimilating their own styles, iconographies and beliefs into the framework of Renaissance and Baroque art and architecture in creative and original ways. In so doing they endowed colonial Latin American art with their own unique stamp of identity and forged links between their pre-Hispanic past and the indigenous present. This Amerindian artistic voice is most strongly felt in the former Aztec and Inca empires, areas with the most advanced traditions of architecture, sculpture and other arts at the time of the Conquest. We can try to reconstruct Amerindian attitudes and reactions to the colonial world by tracing these links to pre-Hispanic traditions, but we must also keep in mind that the indigenous world was not only a thing of the past. The colonial era gave birth to new indigenous forms – or new interpretations of ancient ones – that are just as genuinely Amerindian as the art traditions before 1492.

Especially in the first century after the Conquest, the period of the most feverish building activity in the colonies, almost all of the architecture and much of the painting and sculpture was executed by indigenous artists. Adapting with extraordinary speed and agility to foreign styles, indigenous artists and masons erected the very Christian churches and viceregal palaces that proclaimed the glory of an alien motherland. In the most highly settled regions the *mestizos* and Africans took their place as the centuries progressed and native populations dwindled and intermarried. In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries it was only on the outer missions and villages that indigenous people made up the majority of architects, sculptors and artists. Often these artistic and architectural projects were frankly exploitative, making use of unwilling labourers assigned through *encomiendas*. But sometimes, as in the case of the missions, building and decorating churches gave them a way of avoiding tribute and was a much more humanitarian alternative to back-breaking labour in the mines. Architectural and artistic activity on the missions also allowed them to construct their own living environment.

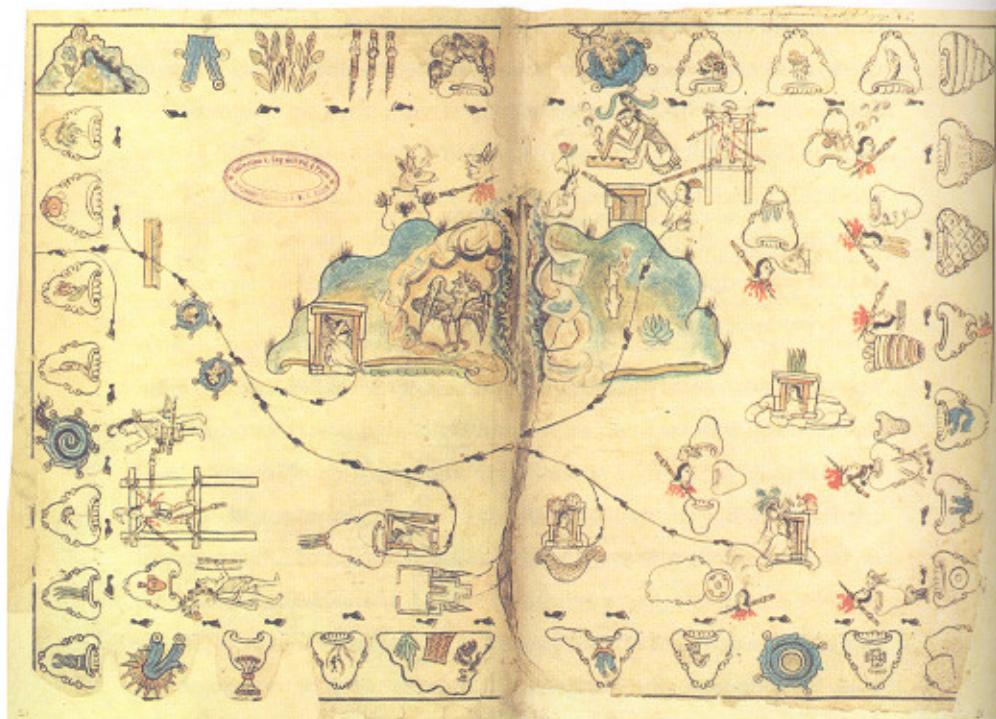
This sense of continuity and connectedness with the indigenous world is perhaps best seen in the artworks Amerindians commissioned for themselves, objects that attempted to counteract the harsh realities of

conquest with a statement of indigenous authority. One of the most characteristic of these artworks is the Inca portrait. In the viceroyalty of Peru two different kinds of Inca portrait appeared in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The first, playing to European expectations of conquest and succession, was a kind of multiple portrait showing the Inca emperors arranged in rows next to those of the colonial viceroys, so that when read from left to right the Inca dynasty proceeds seamlessly into the colonial period in a logical and peaceful succession. These portraits were inspired by an engraving by the Lima artist Alonso de la Cueva Ponce de León (c.1724–8) showing the complete Inca dynasty and Spanish kings, and its celebration of the legitimacy of the Spanish crown made it very popular in metropolitan centres such as Lima, Santiago and Potosí. Yet the Andean nobility commissioned another kind of Inca portrait series, which did not emphasize the inevitable march toward conquest and instead featured full-body portraits of pre-Hispanic Inca rulers and princesses (*nustas*) as well as their contemporary descendants, emphasizing the link between the living Andean nobility and their Inca ancestors.

An eighteenth-century painting from Cuzco, *Portrait of Don Marcos Chiguan Topa* (see 31), is a case in point. It features a contemporary Andean noble dressed for a festive procession in a combination of imperial Inca regalia, including the traditional headdress and the royal scarlet fringe on his forehead, as well as the kind of costume, chains of office and heraldic standards worn or carried by Spanish aristocracy. Ironically, this monumental kind of portraiture had its origins in European and *criollo* commissions. One was a series of Inca portraits commissioned by Viceroy Francisco de Toledo in 1572 for Philip II of Spain and another a cycle of Inca portraits sponsored by the Jesuits in 1644 in the Colegio de San Francisco de Borja, Cuzco, a college founded to educate the sons of Andean nobles in the old Inca capital. These pictures emphasized the link between the historical Inca past and the Christian present, but they also affirmed that there was an Inca present and that the Andean nobles of today deserved the same status as their predecessors.

This affirmation of the Inca heritage can also be seen in the writings of prominent sixteenth-century colonial Andeans such as Garcilaso

de la Vega and Felipe Guaman Poma de Ayala, who rewrote Inca history so that it fitted a Christian model. These historians used their combination of aristocratic Andean lineage and Spanish education to try to persuade the Spanish that Christianity and Andean religion were compatible, and stressed the legitimacy of their own pre-Hispanic noble roots. But in doing so, they also allowed people to conclude that the Andeans were the true heirs to colonial Peru, a more subversive view that culminated in an independence uprising by a descendant of the Incas called Tupac Amaru II in 1780–1. This event drove



the Spanish government to forbid painted portraits of Incas or the wearing of Inca regalia, both of which practices would resurface in the independence era. A similar manipulation of pre-Hispanic history took place in early colonial New Spain, with authors such as Fernando Alvarado Tezozomoc, a Nahuatl who claimed descent from Moctezuma II and wrote a history of Mexico called the *Cronica Mexicana* (c.1598), and the mestizo historian Fernando de Alva Ixtlilxochitl (see 14), a descendant of the lords of Texcoco.

Another attempt to legitimize pre-Hispanic status and identity can be found in the legal documents of colonial New Spain, many of which were illustrated. As we have seen, the Aztecs had a highly developed tradition of pictographic writing, merging painting and text into one (Aztec painters were called *tlacuiloque*, meaning both 'painters' and 'scribes'). Among the most common post-Conquest documents produced by *tlacuiloque*, especially between 1530 and 1630, were maps recording communal property holdings (in Spanish, *relaciones*, or 'accounts'). Many Nahua communities used these maps to restructure their official histories so that they corresponded with European notions of genealogy and validity. This reorganization was crucial, since such important issues as titles to goods and land, as well as social privilege and genealogical ties, were at stake. This sixteenth-century map (33) shows the foundation of Cuauhtinchan and is bound into the *Historia Tolteca-Chichimeca*. The map presents a narrative of land rights and legitimacy. It shows footprints representing people entering the region from the left, after which they are shown defeating the people who lived there before and founding the town itself in the centre of the map. Other footprints beat the bounds, walking between place glyph and place glyph to establish the community's claim to certain territorial limits. Although Inca portraits and Nahua maps represent a rewriting of the past and should not be taken as historical fact, they give us valuable insight into how indigenous people identified themselves in the face of colonial society and help us understand the survival of pre-Hispanic forms in the arts of the colonies. In fact, it is not quite correct to speak about 'survivals', since many of these indigenous images and symbols were consciously reinstated after the Conquest – sometimes many generations after – and they have more to do with the social and religious issues of the colonial era.

The myriad of indigenous cultures of colonial Latin America reacted to European art and architecture in comparably diverse ways. Some, when given the opportunity, rejected and resisted them outright. Others adapted to these imported forms and blended them with their own traditions. For the past fifty years or so, scholars have increasingly focused on the dynamics of artistic interchange between these groups of cultures, resulting in a sophisticated series of scientific labels and



categories. The field itself is often called 'acculturation theory', an anthropological method developed in the USA in the 1930s to look at what happens when two cultures coexist for long periods. Although the original theorists tended to look at the relationship as one of dominance and submission, more recently scholars, especially in Latin America, have increasingly emphasized the recipient culture's role in creating its own post-contact culture. In the visual arts these studies have looked at two phenomena: the persistence (or reappearance) of pre-Hispanic symbols and techniques in the colonial period, and the reaction of indigenous artists to European art and architecture, part of a greater emphasis on reception in contemporary art history.

The issue of indigenous traditions persisting or reappearing after the Conquest has brought out strong passions in the scholarly community. Until the last decade, most North American and European scholars tended to believe that surviving traditions were few and superficial, and that looking for them at all was, in the words of the late George Kubler, 'like a search for the fragments of a deep-lying shipwreck'. Other scholars, especially in Latin America where the survival of pre-Conquest traditions has always been more accepted than elsewhere, have created scientific categories of pre-Conquest motifs and styles in the colonial arts, and developed a vocabulary to deal with them. Recently US scholars have also joined the naming game, producing scientific labels for every degree of artistic convergence. It is not necessary to know all of these names, as many such definitions overlap in meaning and sometimes verge on the finicky, but it is useful to review a few commonly used terms before examining the art itself.

It is important to keep in mind that pre-Hispanic symbols and styles in colonial art appear almost exclusively in the earliest years of the Conquest, when the old traditions were the most alive, and later on mainly at the peripheral regions, areas beyond the colonial sphere of interest where indigenous culture remained strongest. Amerindian traditions rarely made any impact on the art and architecture of the metropolitan centres after the first fifty years or so. In certain later periods, such as the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries in the Andes, pre-Conquest symbols or motifs appear again, this time

as part of a conscious revival by a community making a political or social statement. However, most of the so-called 'indigenous' elements in the later colonial arts are in reality far removed from such roots. In many cases, buildings or paintings look different from European models only because they were made by people far away from Europe with little training in European ways and not because of borrowings from the Aztec or Inca world. Distinguishing between features of indigenous culture and the products of artistic inventiveness is difficult and we must always proceed with caution.

Two words that scholars frequently use to describe the cultural blendings of indigenous and European arts in the Americas are *mestizo* and *tequitqui*. *Mestizo* was first used by Ángel Guido in 1925 to describe a style of architectural decoration that proliferated in the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries in southern Highland Peru from Arequipa to La Paz and Potosí in Bolivia. Beginning in the late 1670s with the church of Santo Domingo in Arequipa, the *mestizo* style is characterized by profuse carved ornament, especially on the façades and around the doorways of churches and secular buildings. Typically, it uses dense patterning and has a flattened appearance, despite the depth of its carving, and it often incorporates native flora and fauna such as chirimoyas (a kind of fruit), cacao, pumas and monkeys, as well as the occasional Inca symbol such as the *ccantu* lily and a kind of masked head that resembles pre-Hispanic prototypes. Although artists copied European models such as maps and engravings when executing these decorated areas, they arranged them in ways that were quite alien to European style and resembled pre-Hispanic Andean arts.

An excellent example of *mestizo* style is the profusely embellished façade of the Jesuit church of Santiago in Arequipa (1698), which is overwhelmed with carved decoration so that the architectural units such as entablatures and pediments seem to dissolve into the richness of the scrolls, flowers and figures adorning them (34 and see 36). The anonymous artist has obtained some of the individual floral, faunal and geometrical patterns from European printed books, but instead of linking them together into a coherent whole as a European artist would have done, he has divided them into discrete units that he places next to



each other without allowing them to intersect. This mosaic-like grouping of decorative elements can best be seen in the section around the central window where the units of pattern are enclosed in individual squares. Although it does not resemble European prototypes, this segmental arrangement does recall the grid structure of motifs found in Inca textiles, especially the *uncu* (see 16). It resembles even more closely the distribution of carved motifs found in pre-Hispanic architecture, such as the Gate of the Sun (500–700 AD; 35) or more contemporary examples at Chanchan (fourteenth–fifteenth centuries) – themselves derived from textile patterns – which also share its flattened carving style. The decoration of the Santiago façade achieves unity not by connecting these disparate motifs, but through an overall, unifying flatness, which allows the eye to roam over its surfaces with little to hinder it. The sculptor has further enlivened the façade with figural elements, such as the fanciful Amerindian figures at the lower right and left who display emblems spelling out ‘Christ Our Lord’, or the roosters, hummingbirds and monster masks which dwell in the surrounding vegetation (36). In other *mestizo*-style façades artists

34  
Façade of the  
church of  
Santiago (La  
Compañía),  
Arequipa,  
Peru,  
1698

carved suns and moons, symbols extremely important to Andean religion that continued to resonate within colonial society.

In the generic sense of a blend of styles, the term 'mestizo' is sound enough. Where we run into problems is when people use the term – curiously, given its inherent meaning as an ethnic mixture – to refer to art done solely by pure blood Amerindians. Scholars such as Harold Wethey have tried to find proof of Amerindian craftsmanship, what he calls the 'expression of the naïveté of the Indian' in *mestizo* style. The sculptors of these Peruvian and Bolivian façades certainly included some 'pure' Amerindians, but they likely also included people of mixed blood and many of them lived in large cities (such as Potosí or Arequipa) with diverse populations and influences. More importantly, the blossoming of this style also took place a century or more after the Conquest, making it unlikely to be a continuation of Inca culture. Instead, it was more likely a conscious return to the indigenous past by a largely colonial society seeking a visual identity that could separate

35  
Gate of the  
Sun,  
Tiahuanaco,  
Bolivia,  
500–700 AD



it from that of Europe. As is the case anywhere else in the world, it is pointless to try to link style with race.

The same goes for another popular term used in Mexico: *tequitqui*, which comes from the Nahuatl word for 'vassal'. *Tequitqui* is used to refer more specifically to the Aztec symbols and motifs that persist in early colonial stone sculpture in New Spain, although the same symbols occur in wall and manuscript painting. It also refers to the style alone, which shares with *mestizo* style a flattened appearance, deep and bevelled



36  
Figural  
elements,  
façade of the  
church of  
Santiago (La  
Compañía),  
Arequipa,  
Peru,  
1698

carving, and a tendency to divide decorative elements into discrete units with spaces in between. As with *mestizo* style, *tequitqui* implies a racial connection, because it suggests that the artists were all full-blooded Nahua Indians, which was not always necessarily the case. But like *mestizo*, *tequitqui* is now used in the more generic sense of a hybrid style and has become a convenient label for art historians.

*Tequitqui* is best exemplified by the date stone of the Franciscan monastery at Tecamachalco (37), which displays the Aztec imperial

symbol of the eagle and includes both European dates in Arabic numerals and the Nahua date-glyphs 5-house (1589; on the left of the text) and 7-reed (1590; on the right of the text). It is *tequitqui* in its style, with its deep carving, rounded edges and flattened appearance, as well as in its use of pre-Hispanic symbols. Compare it with this wooden drum (*huehuetl*; 38), carved by Aztec sculptors around 1500, just twenty years before the Conquest. The two eagles are strikingly similar, with the same pose and almost identical handling of the feathers. Another example of *tequitqui* is the sixteenth-century battle scene painted on the borders of a mural at the mission church at Ixmiquilpan (39), showing Aztec knights in their cotton armour, war shields (*chimalli*) and feathers, leaping among Italian Renaissance

37  
Foundation  
date stone,  
mission  
church,  
Tecamachalco,  
Mexico,  
1589–90



38  
Upright drum  
(*huehuetl*),  
c. 1500.  
Wood.  
Museo de  
Arqueología  
e Historia del  
Estado de  
México,  
Toluca



39 Overleaf  
Battle of Aztec and  
Chichimec  
Warriors,  
1570s.  
Mural,  
San Miguel,  
Ixmiquilpan,  
Mexico

scroll patterns. Most intriguing is the use of tongue-like scrolls to suggest speech, a traditional symbol used in Aztec picture-writing (see 14). Unlike *mestizo* style in Peru, these works were made early enough for the artists to preserve a collective memory of pre-Hispanic traditions and can be considered genuine survivals of pre-Hispanic forms.

One of the finest examples of *tequitqui* as a style alone can be found at the church of Santiago (40) in Angahuan, Michoacán, in the western part of New Spain and further from the main colonial centres. Although there are no motifs or symbols here that can be traced to the arts of



either the Purépecha Indians who lived in this region or the neighbouring Aztecs (this area was never part of the Aztec Empire), the carving of this exuberant façade is unlike anything found in Europe and is unique to the area. The sculptor has copied from European printed books, probably Spanish or Flemish pattern books or the decorative borders from a bible or catechism, yet the way he treats the ornament is quite distinct, fundamentally altering the essence of the floral ornament in a way strikingly similar to that of the mestizo-style artists. Once more, the artist has separated the decorative elements into square blocks of pattern, set next to one another but never interrelating, like a mosaic. This treatment of the surface does

40  
Façade of  
Santiago,  
Angahuan,  
Michoacán,  
Mexico,  
16th century



41  
Stone of the Five  
Suns,  
1503.  
Stone;  
h. 55.9 cm,  
22 in.  
The Art  
Institute of  
Chicago

recall sculptural works such as the Aztec Stone of the Five Suns (c.1503), whose distribution of date glyphs is also mosaic-like, and its deep and bevelled carving relates to Aztec technique (41). In Aztec sculpture, convex sides cast deep shadows over the surface and give the designs a powerful linearity, an effect made by using stone tools and carving with splitting and abrasion rather than cutting.

The flattening of three-dimensional forms, which we have seen in mestizo and tequitqui carved decoration, is called planimetricism and is not unique to Mexico or Peru. In fact, planimetricism occurs all





over the Iberian empires. Look, for example, at the bold relief stucco ornament on the façade of the church of La Merced in Antigua, Guatemala, with its lush but flattened floral motifs (42, 43), or the equally compressed fruit garlands surrounding a doorway at the Jesuit reduction (or mission) church of San Ignacio Mini in Argentina (1727; 44). It even turns up in places completely unrelated to Latin America, such as Poland or Russia, where artists not used to Italianate forms tried to recreate Renaissance or Baroque churches in their own countries. This ubiquity has led some scholars to refer to planimetricism as a universal phenomenon, something that inevitably results when artists unfamiliar with Renaissance conventions of modelling and perspective copy Renaissance models. It has also been related to the artists' use of two-dimensional prints and drawings as their main sources. These statements are partly true. Yet the planimetric carving of two cultures only look alike at first glance and closer inspection will always reveal something unique to each. A specialist can tell the difference immediately between planimetric carving from Mexico or Peru, Brazil or Paraguay. Planimetricism is therefore both an artistic reaction to an unfamiliar art form, namely European pictorial realism with its effect of three dimensions, and a genuine reflection of culture.

More recently, scholars have devised terms to describe what happens to symbols from two cultures when they interact. Juxtaposition is

42–43  
Façade of  
church of  
La Merced,  
Antigua,  
Guatemala,  
before 1767

the rare case where a motif from one culture appears next to one from another without changing its original meaning. The two operate independently, the one meaning one thing to Culture A and the other meaning something else to Culture B. The Tecamachalco date stone is an example of juxtaposition. The Spanish would understand the Christian-era dates written in Arabic numerals but would not understand the Aztec date glyphs, which would resonate with the Nahua community, who would not necessarily be able to read the Arabic numerals. Neither motif would have much bearing on the other. 'Convergence' and 'syncretism' describe what happens when two different cultures make use of a single symbol, in the first case allowing it to maintain its dual meaning and in the second letting it fuse to create something new – although the symbol can also address each



44  
Anonymous  
Guarani  
sculptor,  
detail of a  
doorway,  
San Ignacio  
Mini,  
Argentina,  
1727

audience in a distinct way. An example of convergence would be the carving of a passionflower on the reduction church of San Ignacio Mini. The Jesuit missionaries would interpret it as a reference to Christ's Passion, while the Guaraní carvers would recognize it as a symbol of the trance-like hallucinogenic state that was a crucial feature of indigenous religion. A hypothetical example of syncretism would be an Amazonian statue of Christ the Saviour that is shown wearing the traditional garb of an indigenous healer. The indigenous audience would recognize it as Christ, but a Christ legitimized by his association with Amazonian religion, while the Portuguese missionaries would see it simply as an image of Christ carved by someone unfamiliar with European Baroque conventions. It is precisely these differences in meaning between convergence and syncretism (some have called them 'slippages') that allow artists from one culture to encode messages into a symbol that could remain undetected by the other. Some Peruvian and Mexican examples can serve to illustrate these phenomena further.

A celebrated example of juxtaposition can be found in the illustrations to the early seventeenth-century *Nueva Corónica* (see 22 and 102), the history of Peru addressed to the King of Spain, Philip III, by Guaman Poma de Ayala in an attempt to stop colonial abuses of the Andean people. Aside from its importance as a record of pre-Hispanic and colonial life, the *Nueva Corónica* is also a striking example of artistic hybridization. After hearing of the King's fondness for the visual arts, Guaman Poma generously illustrated the book with 398 pen-and-ink drawings that imitate the style and crosshatching of engravings. Guaman Poma may have been a professional painter or an illustrator of legal documents and good evidence has recently come to light that he studied drawing under the Mercedarian friar Martín de Murúa (fl. 1560–1616), who wrote his own illustrated history of Peru in 1590. While Guaman Poma used a variety of European (especially German) engravings and woodcuts as sources in many of his illustrations, he drew in a distinctively flatter style, with an emphasis on line, no shading and little perspective. Like early colonial Mexican manuscript painters, he showed less interest in realism than in symbolic meaning.



Guaman Poma's illustration of the Rich Imperial City of Potosí (see 22) demonstrates his characteristic juxtaposition of European and Andean features. Below we see a European-style aerial view of the city, with its plaza in the middle and the mountain above with its silver mine. Above, however, is a hybrid symbol in which the Inca emperor in his traditional *uncu* tunic is shown flanked by the lords of the four parts of the empire. They crown him with the coat of arms of Castille and León hoisted on two columns representing Gibraltar, Spain's gateway to the



46  
Anonymous  
Nahua  
muralists,  
*The Garden of Paradise*,  
mid-16th  
century.  
Mural,  
Augustinian  
mission  
church of  
San Salvador,  
Malinalco,  
Mexico

Americas. Thus, Guaman Poma boldly asserts the legitimacy of the Inca nobility over the Spanish colonial city.

New Spain's most celebrated creator of juxtaposed imagery was Juan Gerson, the painter of the Old Testament and Apocalypse vault at Tecamachalco (see Chapter 1). A noble of Tecamachalco, Gerson was recorded in the town annals, allowing us the rare pleasure of being able to identify a sixteenth-century artist in Latin America. Gerson

had the challenge of depicting some extremely arcane episodes from the Bible (the original engravings he copied were probably from a French Bible). He took up his challenge with aplomb, designing some of the most unusual and acculturative images in the history of colonial Mexican art, such as this depiction of Noah's Ark (45), with its ghost-like human forms and the ubiquitous blue background that defies European conventions of perspective. The juxtaposition comes into play when Gerson inserts occasional Nahua glyphs or other symbols into the scene, such as the glyph for water (a curving wave) that appears right in front of the ark in this painting. Gerson's painting juxtaposes two very different traditions of depicting a scene, the one having to do with meaning and the other with physical appearance. Yet, it is unlikely that a European looking at them at the time would recognize these Aztec features as anything more than bad painting. Incidentally, Gerson applied the paints to a surface of *papel de amate* (fig bark), an indigenous technique going back to pre-Hispanic times.

Examples of convergence and syncretism are harder to read than juxtaposition, because scholars need to know both traditions thoroughly before they can understand this kind of merging of form and meaning. Recent work on religious mural painting in early colonial New Spain has shown how deeply embedded the messages contributed by the two cultures can be. Mural paintings of paradise painted by Nahua Indians in the cloisters and stairwell of the Augustinian mission church of Malinalco (46) from the 1570s use floral and faunal imagery to fuse indigenous concepts about the afterlife with those of Renaissance Europe. On the whole, the mural displays more similarities than differences between the two traditions and could therefore be described as a case of syncretism. Water, which predominates in the paradise gardens, was an important symbol of the fertility of heaven in both cultures and the murals also include native and European plants that symbolized the afterworld for Nahuas and Europeans alike. The two cultures also related the afterlife both to mankind's beginning and end, although the Aztecs associated this concept with caves, a feature absent in the European tradition, and the Europeans used the symbol of the enclosed garden, meaningless to the Nahua. Other symbols in the Malinalco murals are examples of convergence. Such are the images

of monkeys in a cacao tree. For the European audience, monkeys have associations with evil and are used here to represent original sin. Yet monkeys and cacao trees have positive meanings for their Nahua audiences, for whom these items are valued products of tribute. Instead of discouraging indigenous viewers, this depiction of evil appears attractive to them. Similar examples of convergence and syncretism in murals can be found all over the Basin of Mexico.

Some indigenous people in the colonial world took advantage of convergence to worship images from their own religion in the guise of Christian ones. In early colonial Mexico and Peru many Amerindians actively resisted Christianity and continued to serve their traditional gods and oracles. Two of the most famous examples were the Nahua priest Martín Ocelotl (named after the ocelot cat), who openly challenged the new religion in the 1540s, and the Andean movement from the 1560s known as Taqui Onqoy (Dance of Disease), which aimed to reverse the changes wrought by the Spanish missionaries. But usually this preservation of old rites was secret or subtle enough not to anger the authorities, done in distant rural areas or in private homes. Indigenous communities would place images of pre-Hispanic deities inside Christian altars or statues of saints, or they would worship what appeared to be a Christian saint but that carried attributions relating to pre-Hispanic religion. The Jesuit missionary José de Acosta described this kind of religious syncretism in late sixteenth-century Peru: 'They adore Christ yet follow the cult of their gods; they fear God, yet do not fear him.' In the next century, Andeans kept stone figures of the Inca in their household shrines and received messages from him in their dreams. As late as the nineteenth century, priests in more secluded parts of Guatemala were still finding Christian altars hiding indigenous idols.

One alleged example of such convergence is the substitution of the Virgin Mary for the Andean earth mother goddess Pachamama, a matter of some controversy in scholarly literature. Some maintain that the indigenous and mestizo painters of colonial Cuzco and Potosí regularly painted images of the Virgin Mary as thinly veiled references to the Andean deity (see Chapter 4). Typical are vibrantly coloured

47  
Luis Niño,  
*Our Lady of the  
Victory of Moya*,  
c. 1735.  
Oil on canvas;  
149.9  
× 109.2 cm,  
59 × 43 in.  
Denver Art  
Museum



NRA S. LAVITORIA

DMA LAGA.





and intricately detailed paintings of the Madonna, often shown with a wide triangular gown, whose profile scholars have related to Pachamama's symbol of a mountain. This splendid *Our Lady of the Victory of Malaga* (47) by the Potosí painter Luis Niño (fl.1716–58) is typical of this kind of image. Her clothing is covered with a lavish, lace-like pattern of gold tooling, which also incorporates an image of the new moon below. When the viewer links this moon to the vertical lines above it, the resulting form takes on the profile of an Inca ceremonial knife (*tumi*) and a pin worn by Inca princesses, which some scholars believe was an intentional reference to pre-Hispanic royalty. The artist has further enhanced her holy character by scattering petals and blossoms at her feet, which scholars have related to Andean ritual offerings.

Many of these connections are very suggestive and painters were probably conscious of some of these pre-Hispanic references. We should treat with caution, however, the notion that the mountain-like profile of her dress is proof that she is not the Madonna but the earth mother Pachamama. Madonnas with the same shape of dress were common throughout Europe at the time, and they appear on the prints and paintings that these artists used as models. Nevertheless, there is one kind of Madonna that has been quite literally merged with the image of a mountain. The evocative Potosí Madonna (48) combines a depiction of the Cerro Rico in Potosí (see 23) with the face of the Virgin Mary to produce a hybrid figure that unites the Madonna as protector of miners with the Andean notion of a hill being the embodiment of a deity. Although Spanish civic and ecclesiastical authorities look on from below, an Inca dressed in royal garb can be seen on the hill itself, receiving the homage of his people working in the mines.

These Cuzco and Potosí Madonnas are less an example of convergence and more one of syncretism, in which the Andean artists and their patrons united the Christian figure of the Virgin with elements of indigenous religion, fusing the two traditions into one. It is neither Pachamama *per se* nor the Virgin Mary in her European guise, but a new, Andean Madonna. A European audience would not understand most of the Andean references, such as the symbols relating to Inca

lineage, but neither did these Virgins represent a revolution against Christianity. Like Nahua sculptors in Mexico, the Andeans brought the two cultures together in a way that allowed them to hold on to their own identity while surviving within colonial society.

Styles and iconographies were not the only indigenous legacies to colonial art. Many traditional media and techniques of making art were continued or revived in the colonial era, some of them profoundly meaningful – even in a religious sense – to their Amerindian audience. One of the most splendid of these media is the art of Andean textile making. The sixteenth-century viceroy Francisco de Toledo had been so impressed by the textiles he found in Peru that he sent some to the King of Spain as ‘the summed record of their intelligence’. Toledo was concerned about preserving this ancient tradition and he ensured that weavers were regularly reported in local censuses. Andean weavers, still women, did preserve the textile traditions after the Conquest, continuing to manufacture cloth in the old way for tribute and for their domestic needs, even in the face of new weaving technologies, materials, and standards imported by Spain.

One of the most enduring types of traditional Andean garments to thrive after the Conquest was the *lliclla*, a rectangular woman’s tunic. A fine example of such is an interlocked tapestry from the sixteenth or early seventeenth century, depicting siren figures, flowers and animals in the wide bands on either side of the centre (49). *Lliclla* are usually constructed of two identical panels joined in the middle, with areas of patterns divided by stripes. They blend European motifs, such as floral and faunal ornament, as well as human figures, with traditional Andean geometric patterns. Throughout the colonial era the essential Inca structure of these garments remained intact, meaning that they were potentially subversive, due to their link to a social hierarchy and religion that had been outlawed by the Spanish. They were so laden with pre-Hispanic symbolism that the colonial government routinely prohibited *lliclla* garments up until the end of the eighteenth century, fearing that they would help foment rebellion. The powerful associations the *lliclla* had with position and rank helped these women maintain their identity behind the backs of the Spanish rulers throughout the colonial period.

49  
*Lliclla*,  
16th–early  
17th century  
Cotton and  
wool;  
95.5  
× 127.5 cm,  
37' × 50' in.  
Museum of  
Fine Arts,  
Boston



Another important indigenous survival in Peru is the *kero* cup, the focus of recent scholarship. Traditionally produced in pairs, *keros* were used to drink *chicha* (maize beer) in ritual drinking ceremonies in pre-Hispanic Andean societies and had religious and political associations. Before the Spanish arrival, the wooden beaker-shaped *keros* were primarily adorned with incised geometrical symbols. After the Conquest, however, as seen in an example from the late seventeenth to early eighteenth centuries (50), *keros* were inlaid with resin depicting figural and other representational ornament, including portraits of Incas as in



the upper register of this cup where the Inca wears an *uncu* with a chessboard pattern. *Keros* preserved their ritual significance in the colonial era, a role that is reflected in their depiction of pre-Hispanic ceremonies and scenes, as well as motifs such as the rainbow, a symbol of Inca royal authority. In the colonial period, rainbows acquired a far more subversive meaning, relating to the renewal of the Inca regime and overthrow of the colonial government, a process known as *pachacuti*. Like traditional textiles, the *kero* cups could therefore seem perfectly

innocuous to a European viewer but communicate important non-Christian, and even anti-Christian, messages to their Andean audience.

One indigenous Peruvian technique was adopted by colonial authorities because it saved lives. Churches built in Lima in the seventeenth century used an Andean technique for vaulting with *quincha* (mud and rushes) to prevent earthquake damage. Using this lightweight material, similar to that used in medieval England where it is referred to as 'wattle-and-daub', they constructed false barrel vaults for their churches that would be less prone to collapsing and less likely to kill their congregations during earthquakes than brick or stone vaults. *Quincha* roofing, used for the first time on a large scale in the grand monastic church of San Francisco in Lima (1657–74; see 167), proved to be a valuable lesson learned during the terrible earthquakes of 1687 and 1746 and set the standard for church building in Lima for the rest of the colonial period.

In New Spain many Amerindian media and techniques prospered in the colonial era. One example is religious sculpture produced with a combination of corn pith and glue made from ground-up orchid bulbs that was prevalent in Michoacán. These statues were modelled (like clay) instead of carved, a flexible technique that allowed them great realism and expressiveness. First, artists would form a skeleton of corn leaves tied together with the fibres of the agave cactus and cotton cloth, using turkey feathers for the fingers and toes. Then the paste was applied over this armature and modelled by the artist, before it was allowed to harden. Finally a layer of gesso was applied on top and the statue was painted. Typical of this technique is this sixteenth-century crucifix from Morelia (51), an extremely lifelike image whose palpable feeling of pain and visceral gore are enhanced by the expressiveness of the medium. These lightweight images of Christ and the saints were eminently suitable for use in processions and therefore served a very practical purpose, but the medium also had religious significance for the Purépecha Indians who made them. Corn was a staple food and the Mesoamericans worshipped corn deities such as the Aztec gods *Centeotl* (Corn-Ear Deity) and *Xilonen* (Young Corn-Ear Doll). *Xilonen* was a female deity called the 'Hairy One' because of the

appearance of corn tassels, and Ceteotl was a male deity who had formerly also been female. The Purépecha had made images of deities such as these from dough formed of grain or seeds, much like the corn pith paste used in Christian statues. Missionaries recognized the material's excellence and encouraged its development despite its associations with the forbidden religion. Vasco de Quiroga, Bishop of Michoacán, even hired a Purépecha religious leader to lead a workshop in corn-pith statuary. Most of the statues that survive today were made there while Quiroga was bishop between 1538 and 1565.

Another remarkable adaptation of indigenous media is the Aztec art of featherwork, one of the greatest of the pre-Hispanic arts. Featherwork was a highly skilled, painstaking and expensive process. It was so prized by the Aztecs that royal houses maintained special aviaries of exotic birds to supply feathers for these artworks, a feature of palace architecture that archaeologists have recently found in a palace belonging to the predecessors of today's New Mexican Pueblo Indians. Nahuatl featherworkers, called *amanteca* after the Tenochtitlán neighbourhood of Amantla (now part of Mexico City) where most of them lived, worked together in groups on a single piece. Workers knotted feathers on to a base of small wooden strips or glued them one by one on to a sheet of paper made of cotton and paste and attached to a bark backing. The glue was made from orchid bulbs. They attached the feathers in a mosaic so that they overlapped like roof tiles to produce patterns. Using an infinite number of tiny feathers, beginning with plain ones and finishing off with more brilliant colours, they produced an effect of great richness and subtlety. Each worker finished his own segment of the mosaic and afterwards they were all sewn together to form a whole, like a quilt, after which the surface was burnished (rubbed until shiny), to give it a unified appearance. In the mid-sixteenth century the Franciscan missionary Fr Bernardino de Sahagún recorded the intricate process for posterity in his treatise on the Aztec world illustrated by Nahuatl artists (see 116). The Aztecs used featherwork for a wide range of prestige items, including capes, head crests, fans and cords for their nobles, coats of arms and banners, and tapestries and canopies to hang in their palaces. Similar featherwork traditions existed elsewhere in the pre-Hispanic world, for instance among the pre-Inca peoples of Peru.

After the fall of Tenochtitlán in 1521, the aviaries and *amanteca* were briefly shut down, but only a few years later the Franciscans hired the same workers in their own feather workshops to produce Christian liturgical vestments as well as pictures. On the one hand the friars wanted to preserve a tradition that impressed the Europeans with its sophistication. Their hopes were justified, as the great European families like the Medici and Habsburgs snatched them up as soon as they were made and most of the finest examples are now in places like the Pitti Palace in Florence or the Kunsthistorisches Museum in Vienna.



51  
Crucifix,  
16th century.  
Polychrome  
pasta de caña.  
Museo de Arte  
Colonial,  
Morelia

Even the Chinese emperor Wan Li (r.1573–1619) was suitably pleased with four Nahua feather paintings he received as gifts from Franciscan missionaries, apparently preferring this delicate art to the crude oil paintings most Westerners brought to China. On the other hand, the friars wanted to harness this native tradition in the service of Christian propaganda and benefit from the prestige enjoyed by such featherwork in the pre-Hispanic era.





The new feather paintings, extremely detailed copies of Flemish engravings in brilliant colours, had the breathtaking beauty and delicacy of their pre-Hispanic predecessors. The earliest are the most intricate, especially those predating the middle of the seventeenth century. They were made as banners and were attached to a cotton cloth and backed with fine palm or rush mats tied together with twine or similar material. Some of the smaller feather paintings were pasted on to a hard backing, such as wood, leather or copper. The earliest dated feather painting is also one of the most magnificent. The *Miraculous Mass of St Gregory* (52), dated 1539 and commissioned



52  
The Miraculous  
Mass of St  
Gregory,  
1539.  
Feather on  
wood;  
68 × 56 cm,  
26 $\frac{1}{2}$  × 22 in.  
Musée des  
Jacobins,  
Auch

53  
Israhel van  
Meckenem,  
Mass of  
St Gregory,  
c.1490–5.  
Engraving;  
46.3  
× 29.5 cm,  
18 $\frac{1}{2}$  × 11 $\frac{1}{2}$  in

from the feather artisans of the Franciscan college of San José de Belén de los Naturales in Mexico City, reproduces in brilliant colours and striking detail the lines of a fifteenth-century German engraving (53) by Israhel van Meckenem (1440–1503) that was also copied in black and white in the mission church of Tepeapulco. The *Miraculous Mass of St Gregory* panel is associated with the Nahua noble Diego de Alvarado Huanitzin, the first colonial governor of Tenochtitlán, who commissioned it as a gift for Pope Paul III (r.1534–49). This noble patronage fitted into Aztec tradition, where featherworking was an élite craft.

Although they carefully emulated the German style of the engraving, the *amantea* brought their black-and-white models to life with brilliant colours and a textural richness never equalled in oil painting.

Unusually for the arts of early colonial New Spain, a few feather paintings are even signed by the master featherworkers, such as the Purépecha artist Juan Baptista Cuiris of Tiripetio, Michoacán, who made two of the finest examples to survive today. This rare honour attests to the unusually high status artists like Cuiris enjoyed in colonial society. Nevertheless, unlike the Peruvian *lliclla*, which helped Andean women preserve the memory of their past and reinforce their present, these Nahua feather paintings did not serve anyone but the friars and their European collector patrons. Other than a few flowers that look vaguely Aztec in style, these feather paintings do not incorporate Nahua glyphs or symbols in the same way that early colonial mural paintings or architectural ornament do. In the end, the tradition was sustained not by Nahua artisans or their descendants but by *criollo* nuns, who preserved the art of featherworking into the nineteenth century.

One final example of an indigenous technique that flourished in early colonial Mexico was also enhanced by influences from Asian art. The famed lacquer workshops of Michoacán and Guerrero, which still flourish today, made exquisite lacquered wooden trays and other objects throughout the colonial period. In pre-Hispanic times, artisans in these regions made lacquered gourds, which in Michoacán were an élite product. Beginning in the second half of the sixteenth century, missionary friars encouraged these lacquer traditions and founded new lacquer workshops. Following a pre-Hispanic technique, the lacquer workers applied a layer of oil, limy powders and colours on to the polished surface of a gourd, as well as on to wood (which was not used in pre-Hispanic times) and then the surface would be burnished to a shine. Some of the oils were made from the cochineal insect or seeds. The colours included mineral, animal or vegetable pigments and the limy powder was made from grinding soils and stones. Sometimes designs would be carved through the paint into the original wood with a sharp stylus, and then these patterns would be painted in different colours and

54

Batol,  
17th century.  
Inlaid lacquer  
wood;  
diam. 125 cm  
49% in.  
Museo de  
América,  
Madrid

the whole burnished again and given a unified surface. Others, not true lacquers, would have a thick layer of slip over the vessel, on to which artists would then paint the patterns directly.

The earliest workshops were in Uruapan and nearby Peribán, where artists copied patterns and motifs from Renaissance printed books and engravings, favouring an Italianate pattern of plants and human figures called a 'grotesque'. The main product was a flat tray of wood called a *batea* that was destined for the households of the wealthy, where they were esteemed as decorative accents. This early *batea* (54), made in the



seventeenth century in Peribán, focuses on a double eagle and mitre motif, indicating the patronage of a member of the Spanish royal family who held a position in the Church. The concentric circles surrounding this motif are filled with patterns, including floral bands (some of which resemble pre-Hispanic glyphs), deer and Europeans on horseback. Artisans also produced a plethora of smaller items like trunks, boxes for paper and writing desks. Guerrero vessels are the most brightly coloured, painted in green and red against an orange background.



55  
Manuel de la  
Cerde,  
Japanned  
writing desk,  
c.1760.  
Lacquered and  
painted wood;  
h.155 cm,  
61 in.  
The Hispanic  
Society of  
America,  
New York

Beginning in the eighteenth century, in the wake of an increasing vogue for Asian-inspired patterns, lacquer workers began to copy a kind of lacquer that was native to Japan which they called *maque* (after the Japanese word for the technique, *maki-e*). The Michoacán pieces (from Pátzcuaro and Uruapan), which ranged from *bateas* to larger pieces of furniture, most closely resemble Asian models. Set against a black background, patterns included gold filigree work inspired by Japanese models, Japanese temples and landscapes, as well as European-inspired ornament and figures, all of which appear on an eighteenth-century writing desk (55) from Pátzcuaro, by the lacquer master Manuel de la Cerda. Many of them also included scenes of pre-Hispanic life, as remembered or reconstructed by these extraordinarily creative painters, a combination of Asian and indigenous imagery that was typical of colonial New Spain and will be discussed at greater length in Chapter 7. These fascinating combinations of two kindred worlds – the Amerindian and that of Asia – were an ingenious alternative to the dominant culture of Europe.