

The invention of a medieval present: Visual stagings in colonial Bolivia and Brazil

Astrid Windus

Universität Hamburg, Germany

Jens Baumgarten

Universidade Federal de São Paulo, Brazil

Abstract: The text analyzes in a comparative approach different time concepts in parts of colonial Latin America (today Brazil and Bolivia) and their functions in visual stagings and displays in religious art. It contributes to the important ongoing discussion of functions and structures of different representational systems. It explores possible reasons for the adaptation of European medieval traditions, and the inscription of certain kinds of periodization in the material and semantic productions of these colonial contact zones. In the Bolivian as well as in the Brazilian case, medieval anachronisms served as modes for making cultural differences intelligible and comprehensible for all historical actors.

Keywords: Colonial art history, time concepts, Franciscans, Bolivia, Brazil, 17th-18th centuries.

Resumen: Este texto analiza desde una perspectiva comparativa diferentes conceptos de 'tiempo' presentes en la época colonial en lo que hoy son Brasil y Bolivia, así como sus funciones en escenas y presentaciones visuales en el arte religioso. Por lo tanto contribuye a responder algunas de las preguntas más importantes acerca de las funciones y estructuras de los diferentes sistemas de representativos. Se analizan las posibles razones de la adaptación de las tradiciones medievales europeas, y de la manifestación de ciertos tipos de periodización en la producción material y semántica en estas zonas de contacto coloniales. En ambos casos, ciertos anacronismos medievales sirvieron como modos de convertir las diferencias culturales a expresiones inteligibles y comprensibles para todos los actores históricos.

Palabras clave: Historia de arte colonial, conceptos de tiempo, franciscanos, Bolivia, Brasil, siglos XVII-XVIII.

1. Introduction

Abstract concepts of time have always found concrete expressions in visual forms. Latin American colonial art and architecture, especially religious art, are no exception. Despite the significant differences between the cultural and natural settings of the different colonial contact zones, the art produced within this geographical area is labelled collectively as *Barroco Mestizo*. This term refers to the stylistic particularities of the European (baroque) models transferred to the New World on the one hand, and on the other hand to the cultural hybridization (*mestizaje*) of the American cultures as an effect of conquest and transculturation, leading to a distinct artistic expression.



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Originally conceptualized as an effort to acknowledge indigenous participation in the production of art, the term has proven to be problematic in many respects. The transfer of a European system of chronology and style to a non-European context created an idea of Latin American colonial art as a diffuse ‘mixture’ of European and indigenous forms and iconographies. ‘Mixture’ became the homogenizing category to unify the different articulations of colonial art, without paying much attention to the core issue of transcultural analysis: the specific mechanisms of combination and variation of certain elements in a specific local context.

Our article contributes to this field by discussing an important issue of transcultural visual history: the visual construction of time and temporality. It is based on paintings from two very different colonial contact zones, the Bolivian Highlands (*altiplano*) and the Brazilian Northeast, which articulate many references to medieval forms and iconographies, but also to medieval concepts of time and space. Our analysis shows that the combination of formal, stylistic and iconographic elements from both cultural backgrounds was by far a question of arbitrariness, or the product of unskilled artists who were not familiar with European techniques and symbolic systems. The practice of copying or the apparently ‘anachronistic’ visual superimposition of medieval, contemporaneous, pre-Hispanic or indigenous concepts occurred according to the local systems of production, representation and perception of religious meaning. Thus, the historical actors created new time-spaces which were adapted to the local conditions, even on a visual level.

Before going into details with our case studies, we will summarize one important approach from the Peruvian art historian Francisco Stastny (1993) to explain the phenomenon of “medieval symptoms in the ‘American baroque’”. Building on his general assumptions, we will develop our own arguments which aim to provide a more complex understanding of the underlying processes of transculturation. The results will be linked in the form of a conclusion and outlook of another theoretical approach which raises the question of anachronism in European Renaissance art from Alexander Nagel and Christopher S. Wood (2005; 2010). It offers new perspectives of interpretation which go beyond Stastny’s idea of a European stylistic grammar and which can ubiquitously serve as a universal model for further analysis of transcultural phenomena.

2. The re-use of medieval forms and styles

In an article about “medieval symptoms in the ‘American baroque’” (1993), the Peruvian art historian Francisco Stastny describes the clash of time concepts and realities in the colonial contact zone of the Americas. He states that Americans experienced a historical time that contrasted with the one reigning in Europe in the times of Bruno, Galileo, Newton, and Descartes. Because of colonial imposition, their artists confronted models which did not correspond to their reality. They had to search for a

language which correlated to their internal and social needs, using an inappropriate and sometimes unintelligible vocabulary. They accumulated those modalities which served their purposes of expression and they cleaved to them for centuries, reiterating or combining them against every formal logic and contradicting the grammars of the European styles (Stastny 1993: 25). According to Stastny, the new inventions not only contradicted contemporary developments in European Renaissance art and thought, but also differed in their formal and semantic dimensions from the European medieval model. He identifies three phenomena where these differences become visible (Stastny 1993: 9): firstly, the fact that topics from the Old Testament occupied different and more dominant spaces in the iconographic programs of the American churches than in Europe; secondly, the existence of a great number of doctrinal paintings with schematic compositions, whereas in Europe such doctrinal schemes are found mainly in books or prints; and thirdly, the frequent use of medieval iconographies which had already disappeared in European Renaissance art, e.g. eschatological themes like the apocalypse, Last Judgment, *Ars moriendi*, *Via veritas* or representations of the Trinity (Stastny 1993: 9).

Due to the lack of systematic research on the topic, explanations for this re-use of medieval concepts in Latin American colonial art are still vague. But there seem to be three main arguments. The first argument refers to the persistent predominance of scholasticism in Latin American thought until the second half of the 18th century. The formalism and schematic conception of scholastic texts with its basic claims for completeness, systematic arrangement and clarity, as well as deductive probative force (Panofsky 1989: 24), influenced the formal compositions of images, pictorial programs and church architecture. Also, the selection of motifs and iconographies was based on the same primary sources, like the 'Golden Legend', the Apocrypha and the Bible (especially the concordances between Old and New Testament) (Stastny 1993: 9).

The second argument points to the predominantly didactic function of the medieval religious image, postulated by Gregory the Great around 600 A.D., reiterated in the Tridentine decree on images and revived in the Americas by the members of the religious orders engaged in the conversion of the native population.¹ The persuasive capacity of images, to quote Felipe Pereda, was a well-established topic in scholastic thinking. Pictures stimulated the spirits of the observers more quickly and effectively than words. While the language of imitation was universal, both the oral and the written language required previous acculturation (Pereda 2007: 254). This function determined significantly the visual stagings² of religious concepts in the Americas: the selection of topics, their iconography and formal design.

1 See for example Mujica Pinilla (2008: 165) and Eco (1991: 32-33).

2 The term staging will be explained in the following on p. 69.

The third argument claims a compatibility of medieval and indigenous representational systems. It refers to the character of the medieval cult-image, which made the sacred person visible and emanated transcendental power (Belting 1990: 524; Angenendt 2009: 371). The personal relation to and veneration of cult images in the late Middle-Ages seemed to be very similar to the indigenous veneration of non-Christian deities via the so-called 'idols'. In both contexts, the sacred image was considered a 'real' representation of an idea, and not an object of art. Like Felipe Pereda has pointed out for the Spanish case between 1478 and 1500 (a period marked by the crown's efforts to control the religious practice of Jewish and Muslim converts), the serial (mass) production and the copying of images, sculptures and altar pieces were common procedures for artists on the Iberian Peninsula (Pereda 2007: 317). This remained true for most of the artists in the Latin American colonies. The idea of the self-determined renaissance artist as a creative individual was absent; instead, as in the European Middle Ages, the (native) American artists remained mostly in the status of artisans until the 19th century.

Building on these general assumptions about the relation between medieval and colonial Latin American religious art, we will now expand our frame of analysis to include some concrete examples from Bolivia and Brazil. The comparative look will enable us to improve our understanding of the complex processes of superimposition and entanglement of different systems of reference and representation by which medieval forms and styles are adapted to New World contexts.

3. Bolivia – the case of Carabuco

Carabuco is a town on the south-eastern shores of Lake Titicaca. In Carabuco, the medievalization of time and space was the product of a complex system of references which comprised different types of media. It included, among others, the pictorial program of the church, especially the series of four monumental paintings depicting the Four Last Things (Last Judgment, Hell, Purgatory and Glory, Figures 1, 2, 4, 5); the legend of a pre-Hispanic apostle created by catholic missionaries at the end of the 16th century; and the relic of the Holy Cross which, according to legend, was brought to Carabuco by this apostle, and made the place a sanctuary of supra-local importance.

The pictorial program of the monumental paintings made by José López de los Ríos in 1684 contains exactly what Francisco Stastny has identified as central motifs of medieval art in Latin America: Last Judgment, Hell, Purgatory, and Heaven or Glory, including representations of the Trinity, *Ars moriendi* and allegories of sins and virtues. These concepts are part of a Christian medieval model of time and space which separated the earthly sphere from the afterlife. Death, and this may have been one central point of concordance between the Andean and the Christian worlds, was omnipresent (Angenendt 2009: 661).

The textual base for the representations of the Four Last Things seemed to be, as was the case of similar images and prints of medieval Europe, St. Paul's apocryphal vision of the apocalypse, which was extremely popular from the early Middle Ages until the 12th century.

It narrates the separation of the soul from the body and its journey through the different spheres of the hereafter, and describes the destinies of the 'good souls' in heaven and the 'bad souls' in hell (Angenendt 2009: 695; López 1978: 180). This idea is directly linked to the Christian dichotomy of sin and virtue: to prevent one's soul from suffering in hell, the person has to live a virtuous life on earth and do penitence.

The *Inferno* of Carabuco (Figure 1) displays this spatiotemporal dynamic between earthly sphere and hereafter.³ On its upper register, it shows the conflict between sin and virtue, between good and evil forces, embedded in the local environment and represented by local characters. The central register displays the punishments for the sinners' souls in hell, with specific modes of torture for every mortal sin. But the visual inscription of the scholastic principles in the local topography occurs not only through the display of indigenous people practicing idolatry (upper register, center). The doctrinal message is also directly associated with the legend of the apostle and the holy cross, represented in the series of medallions which can be found on the lower register of all four paintings.

The apostle came to Lake Titicaca to convert the indigenous population to the Catholic faith.⁴ In the Catholic chronicles⁵ he is associated with two Catholic saints, St. Bartholomew and/or St. Thomas, but also with the Andean deity Tunupa. While the apostle disappeared on the lake after being combated by the devil and martyred by the natives, the cross he had brought remained buried at the shore of the lake for centuries and was 'discovered' at the end of the 16th century by a Spanish official. It was excavated and when it started to perform miracles, it was approved as a relic and placed in the church of the town, where it remains until today.

The depiction of the legend begins in 'Heaven' (*Gloria*, medallions 1-5, Figures 2, 2a), which is located on the left wall of the nave, beside an altar of the Sacred Family which separates the painting from the triumphal arc (Figure 3). It continues in the 'Purgatory' (Figures 4, 4a) on the right wall of the nave, just opposite 'Heaven' and

3 For a detailed description of the image, see Windus (2011: 96-107).

4 The most important narrations about the apostle Tunupa/Viracocha and the cross of Carabuco can be found in Ramos Gavilán (1976), and in Calancha (1639). The short version used in this paper goes back to Salles-Reese's 'master narrative' of the legend (1997: 137ff) and to Teresa Gisbert's summary (2004: 35).

5 Besides Gavilán and Calancha other sources of the legend are: Betanzos (2004); Cabredo (1609); Bertonio (1612); Ocaña (2010); Pachacuti Yamqui Salcamaygua (1993); Guaman Poma de Ayala (1980).



Figure 1. José López de los Ríos, *Infierno*. 1684, oil on canvas, Church of Carabuco, Bolivia. Courtesy of Carlos Rúa.



Figure 1a. Medallions 21-30 (*Infierno*).

to the right of an altar which displays a crucifixion scene, and in the 'Last Judgment' (Figures 5, 5a) which is placed to the left of 'Heaven', separated from it by an altar of the Virgin of Nativity. The story ends in 'Hell' (Figures 1, 1a), which is located opposite the former, on the right wall of the nave, near the entrance. Between 'Purgatory' and 'Hell' is another altar with a representation of Christ being removed from the cross.

The sequences of medallions on the left wall of the nave ('Heaven' and 'Last Judgment') are read from right to left, while on the other two paintings on the right wall of the nave, they are read from left to right. If the observer wants to 'read' the whole story, he or she has to zigzag through the nave, moving from the proximity to the altar, from the sphere of the sacred, in the direction to the entrance, the sphere of the profane (Figure 3). The first and the last thing he or she perceives when entering or leaving the church is the *Infierno* with its highly individualized doctrinal message on one hand, and the 'proofs' of God's agency on earth on the other hand. These are represented by the medallions 21 to 30 (Figure 1a), which show the miracles of the holy cross and the end of the legend.

The invention of local saints and the implementation of relics of cult are central elements of medieval religious practice. Hagiographies were part of the didactics of conversion used by missionaries in Europe as well as in the Americas (Bouysse-Cassagne 1997: 161). The Spanish *Flos Sanctorum*, a compendium of hagiographies based on Voragine's Golden Legend and written by Alfonso de Villegas in 1578, had a large circulation in Latin America. Its first part was the first book ever translated into the Aymara language by Ludovico Bertonio in 1612. As a consequence, the hagiographical categories influenced and partially determined the terms of the first dialogue between the Spanish and the indigenous people (Bouysse-Cassagne 1997: 161). The conquerors and missionaries were associated with the apostles because they preached the Christian faith in the New World. Hagiography and *Conquista* were connected indissolubly in the same enterprise to the point where the vicissitudes of the legends were mixed up to construct the figure of the American saint (Bouysse-Cassagne 1997: 159). Referring to the European Middle Ages, Thomas J. Heffernan states that

[...] the lives of saints were sacred stories designed to teach the faithful to imitate actions which the community had decided were paradigmatic. Christ's behavior in the Gospels was the single authenticating norm for all action. For actions [res] narrated in the lives of the saints to be binding for the community, they had to be an *Imitatio Christi* (Heffernan 1988: 5).

The *Imitatio Christi* was a medieval practice of religious self-assurance which was independent from the Church and the clerics (Ohlig 2001: 33ff). This could have been of special importance for the American context, where the presence of the Catholic Church as an institution was weak during most of the 16th century – especially in rural areas.



Figure 2. José López de los Ríos, *Glória*. 1684, oil on canvas, Church of Carabuco, Bolivia. Courtesy of Carlos Rúa.



Figure 2a. Medallions 1-5 (*Glória*).

Apart from these general aspects regarding the role of saints and relics for the conquest and conversion of the American people, the crucial function of the legend of Tunupa/San Bartholomew/Santo Tomás, of the relic of the holy cross and the visual representation of the legend in the monumental paintings in this special place was to synchronize the local history with the universal history of Christianity and, at the same time, to deconstruct the pre-Hispanic native American history (Estenssoro Fuchs 2003: 451).

The formal design and the function of the *Infierno* (Figure 1) corresponds, like the other monumental paintings, to medieval criteria of form and structure. The composition of all four pictures is symmetrical. Symmetry was, both for the medieval as for the Andean mind, an aesthetic and normative paradigm which organized social, natural and cosmic time and space as well as ideas and rhetoric.⁶ In the *Infierno*, which is divided into three registers, the central level, which displays the sinner's punishments in Hell, is obviously the most important one because of the size of the represented figures. The function of the painting is didactic, the message is explicit (Panofsky 1989: 27); there is almost no scope for 'wrong' interpretations in accordance with, as Umberto Eco (1991: 195) put it, the "scholastic fear of contradiction".

But what is particularly interesting about López de los Ríos' *Infierno* is that it uses the described medieval concepts and formalisms to stage simultaneity of different time lines: the human present (upper register), the eschatological future (central register), and a past which draws its historicity from the missionaries' chronicles (lower register). It displays the temporal frame in which human existence, according to Christian thought, takes place, and directly addresses the individual by adapting the normative and eschatological knowledge to the local context.

An examination of the other paintings from the series which relate the different 'chapters' of the narrative of the pre-Hispanic apostle to the main topics of each picture shows that they all contributed to the creation of a local Christian time line by the linkage of different (pre-Hispanic, indigenous or eschatological) 'spaces of time'.

In *Gloria* (Figure 2), the series begins with a combination of the two extremes of human existence: Heaven, which means the Christian God's kingdom and the place of eternal life and happiness on the one hand, and (in the medallions) the idolatric past in the reign of the devil on the other hand. While the reign of God represents the end of Christian time in the future, the arrival of the apostle as a synonym for Christ represents the beginning of the local church and the saint who founded it.⁷

6 Eco (1991: 63); see for example Bouysse-Cassagne (1987). As she points out, there were no homogeneous concepts of 'Andean' time and space in the Bolivian altiplano (Collao) of the 16th century, but two configurations: that of the Aymara and that of the Inca (Bouysse-Cassagne 1987: 259-260).

7 Angenendt (2009: 214). With regard to the importance of saints and martyrs in the foundation of local churches in the Middle Ages see Angenendt (2009: 226 ff).

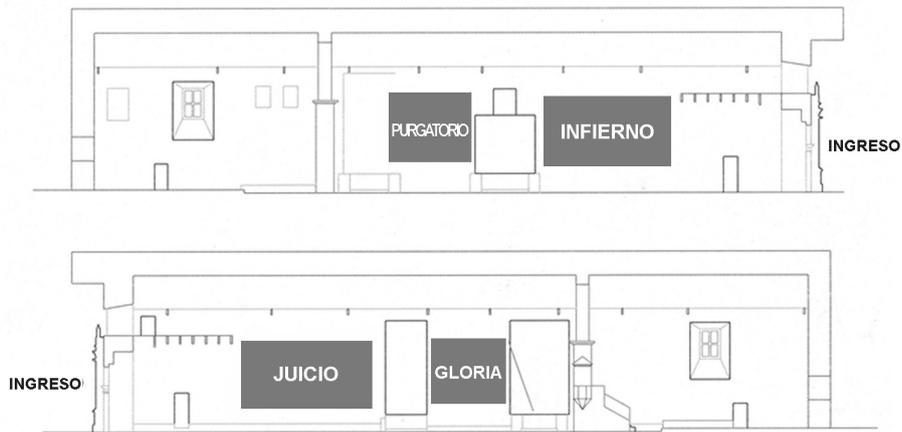


Figure 3. Positions of the paintings in the church of Carabuco (Viceministerio de Cultura 2005).

The lower right corner of the second picture of the series, *Purgatorio* (Figure 4), displays the purgatory, where people of different sex and origin purify their souls. Some of them are saved by a priest and guided into heaven in the presence of different local and supra-local saints.⁸

On the left side of the image a priest is shown who celebrates the ‘Holy Sacrifice of the Mass’ in front of an altar, accompanied by a kneeling acolyte and an angel swinging an incense burner.⁹ The visual contextualization of the mass with the purgatory goes back to a European pictorial tradition: the depiction the Office of the Dead in illuminated manuscripts and hour books from the late Middle Ages (15th century). According to Christine Göttler, this tradition is reproduced between 1470 and 1520 by indulgenced prints with representations of the mass of Saint Gregory and the souls in purgatory, which were broadly disseminated between 1470 and 1520. They “functioned as images of hope and promise evoking confidence that God would respond to prayers and deliver the soul from the power of hell” (Göttler 2010: 40), but “went out of fashion with the Reformation, mainly because of the idolatrous aspects of their use” (Göttler 2010: 34-35).

Nevertheless, some of these prints probably reached the Americas and served as a model for De los Ríos’ *Purgatory*.

The image makes a visual connection between the possibility of temporary suffering in purgatory instead of eternal damnation in hell through the practice of indulgence on

8 A more detailed description of the painting can be found in Viceministerio de Cultura et al. (2005).

9 A description and interpretation of this part of the painting can be found in Windus (in press).

the one hand, and that part of the Tunupa legend which deals with the martyrdom of the apostle, his abandonment in the reed boat, the appearance of the virgin who is going to save the saint and the failed intention of the native people to destroy the apostle's cross on the other hand. Once again, a time line is drawn from the local pre-Hispanic history (medallions) to the present (the celebration of mass) and the purgatory, which is located temporarily somewhere between the human present and the eschatological future of the Last Judgment. Christ's sacrifice, symbolically represented in the ritual of the Holy Mass, is connected to the sacrifice of the local Apostle, the souls of the natives who martyred him can be associated with the souls who are waiting for relief in the purgatorial fire and, of course, with the souls of the individual beholders who are meditating in front of the picture.

There is another distinction between the probable models for the image (the indulgenced prints of the Mass of St. Gregory) and the image itself. The prints were used by individuals in a rather private than liturgical way (Göttler 2010: 40). In contrast, it can be assumed that because of its monumental size, its prominent location within the church and the cultural context of the mostly indigenous town of Carabuco that the *Purgatory's* 'social agency' was of a rather collective character. Like the *Infierno*, it could easily be used by the priest during his sermons because he could see these two images quite well from the pulpit – which was not the case with the other two paintings.

The last painting of the series, the *Juicio Final* (Figure 5), combines an event of the eschatological future (the Last Judgment) with that part of the legend, which marks the transition between the pre-Hispanic past and local post-conquest history. The medallions tell the story of the failed attempts to destroy the cross, the decision to bury it at the shores of the lake, its rediscovery by Spanish church officials and the performance of the first miracles. The return of Christ on Judgment Day is correlated with the 'return' of Christianity to America by the manifestation of the Christian God in the Holy Cross of Carabuco.

Different time concepts show and allow distinctions in the collective world experiences of different cultural settings and their human actors (Mohn 2005: 1801). The legend of the pre-Hispanic apostle, the relic of the Holy Cross and the monumental paintings of the Four Last Things show that the conversion of the indigenous population went along with the construction of a Christian present. In Carabuco, this present ranged from the end of the 16th to the end of the 17th century. This creation of a new 'time space' occurred via the invention of new and the reconfiguration of old time lines which were suited to the local context. The topics treated in the representations of the different artifacts as well as their formal and stylistic design follow medieval models, but at the same time escape the standard European chronologies. Religious and historical meaning is constituted in this context through different systems of reference.



Figure 4. José López de los Ríos, *Purgatorio*. 1684, oil on canvas, Church of Carabuco, Bolivia. Courtesy of Carlos Rúa.



Figure 4a. Medallions 6-10 (*Purgatorio*).

4. Brazil – the case of João Pessoa, Paraíba

Another illustrative example for the superimposition of different systems of temporal reference is the cycle of Saint Francis' life in the Convent of Santo Antônio in João Pessoa, Paraíba, Brazil. It dates back to the 18th century, but it is, like the Bolivian case, also related to discourses of the 17th and 16th century. It is important to distinguish the missionary strategies of the Portuguese and their interaction with the indigenous people of the Tupi-Guarani at the Brazilian coast from the methods of Spanish conversion in the Andean Highland. But it has to be taken into account that specific cultural and religious traditions like the Franciscan spiritualism or millenarism spread all over the different colonial Empires and were articulated by local actors within specific local contexts.

The analysis of the Brazilian case focuses on the execution of several paintings, which, because of their particular style, have been classified as works whose authors lack the artistic capacity of their European colleagues. In contrast, we argue that the particularities of these representations are less the result of a supposed artistic inferiority of the painter, but rather a local *mise-en-scène* of different concepts of time and space.

The Convent of Santo Antônio was founded in 1589, but following its destruction by the Dutch, the Franciscans constructed a splendid new building in the second half of the 17th and early 18th centuries. The sculptures are part of the trapezium entrance area that ascends slightly to the main façade and whose walls are framed with an *Azulejo*¹⁰ cycle of Christ's passion. The decoration of the convent's churches of the first and the third order (or lay order) show a complex superimposing of various visual systems, which can be exemplified in two representations of St. Francis (Figures 6, 7).

The author of the paintings is unknown, but some stylistic similarities point to Joaquim de Rocha, who executed other ceiling paintings in the capital of Salvador de Bahia. In the center of the nave of the church of the first order, an illusionistic painting (Figure 6) was executed that follows the rules of the *quadratura*. In the main cartouche, we can find on the altar's side the Immaculate Conception together with the Trinity. Angels hold an inscription referring to the birth of Saint Francis and his role as 'alter Christ': "Stigmata Dii Jesu in corpore meo porto – I am carrying the wounds of Christ in my body" (Navarro Burity 1988: 79). The second inscription "The earth in which the religion continues is a holy earth" refers to the other side of the altar with Francis in the middle from whom rays of light illuminate the four continents represented by four Franciscan missionaries. On the right side, Anthony is represented as an allegory for Europe. On the opposite, one of the saint martyrs from Morocco stands for Africa, whereas in the bottom Francis Solano, together with an indigenous figure and one of the martyrs from Japan, represents America and Asia. While the missionaries from

¹⁰ *Azulejo*: Portuguese or Spanish tin-glazed ceramic tilework.



Figure 5. José López de los Ríos, *Juicio Final*. 1684, oil on canvas, Church of Carabuco, Bolivia. Courtesy of Carlos Rúa.



Figure 5a. Medallions 11-20 (*Juicio Final*).

Africa and America look down to the continents to be converted, as if they would like to observe and control their efforts, the allegories of Europe and Asia look towards the Virgin Mary.

The artist didn't follow the iconographic models of the four continents from Salvador. Instead, he transferred and syncretized a Jesuit tradition to represent Ignatius with divine rays reflecting from his heart and illuminating the whole, such as Pozzo depicted it in San Ignazio in Rome. Yet, not just the iconography is simplified. The illusionistic form of the central painting also seems to be much less developed than in the painted architecture that serves as a theatrical stage for the *mise-en-scène* of the Immaculate and Saint Francis. The perspective of the lateral parts with popes connecting the real space of the church with the illusionistic one is accurately painted comparable to the flat appearance in the central medallion.

The iconography of the third order church's representation of the life of St. Francis (Figure 7) follows, in general, the tradition of Italian, Flemish and Spanish models.¹¹ The isolation and dramatization of the scene occurs at the central point of the virtual space, in the episode of Francis and the fiery chariot, which refers to the Prophet Elijah's ascent into heaven. The incorrect association of Francis with Elijah doesn't happen by coincidence; Francis is alluding to an '*alter* Elijah' in this iconography. However, in contrast to European paintings of that motive, the solution presented in colonial Brazil is completely different in execution.

European compositions mostly include figures who witness Elijah's ascent. According to the Franciscan tradition, these witnesses are shown as Franciscan friars, for example in Philipp Galle's prints, that probably served as iconographic models for the New World. But the Brazilian work focuses only on Francis and excludes other figures. Instead, we can imagine the convent's friars as active spectators in the actual church and therefore witnesses of the event. The Tertiaries thus stand in for the 'original' friars, transferring the vision of the saint via time and space to the time and locality of its observers.

Francis' iconographic allusion of to be the '*alter* Elijah' can be explained as an application of medieval patterns. It is immediately evident in the ascension episode, which prefigures that of Christ and his transfiguration together with Moses. But to clarify its significance in the colonial Brazilian spatial context, we must treat Portuguese and Brazilian millenarism and its singular eschatological form.

Missionaries to Mexico defined themselves as new apostles and sought to found a millenarist kingdom to justify the conquest theologically (Rubial García 1996: 101-186). Although the situation in Portugal was completely different, it fits the Habsburg

11 Gutiérrez Haces, Ángeles & Bargellini (1997), especially pp. 51-88, about the Villalpando's execution in Guatemala pp. 388-390. See also Luján Muñoz (1986), especially pp. 114f., and Luján Muñoz (1981).



Figure 6. St. Francis, first half of the 18th century, ceiling fresco, Franciscan convent, Church of the First Order, João Pessoa (Paraíba), Brazil (Photo: Adilson Fernando Ferreira).

pattern. After the death of King Sebastian in the 1578 battle of El-Ksar el Kbir, during a crusade against the Islamic kingdoms of North Africa, not only was a significant part of the Portuguese elite killed or enslaved, but shortly afterwards Portugal lost its independence to Spain. A myth and associated movement, ‘Sebastianism’, fed hopes that the king would return to save Portugal, expel the Spanish and found a millenarist kingdom.¹² Until then, he was to live as a hidden king. Popular sympathy for ‘Sebastianism’ served as fertile ground for utopian thinking in Brazil, as well as for the leading Portuguese elite nationalist movement, which so justified the House of Bragança’s struggle for independence.

Preacher, orator and politician António Vieira, one of the most famous seventeenth-century Portuguese authors, not only wrote sermons relating Saint Sebastian to the Portuguese king, but also published treatises dealing with this topic, like *A história do futuro* (History of the Future), *Anteprimeiro livro da história do futuro* and *Clavis*

¹² Hermann (1998; 2000); Torres Megiani (2003; 2004).

prophetarum.¹³ Vieira systemized millenarism, relating missionary efforts to the *fado*, the destiny and duty of the Portuguese nation. In apocalyptic prophecies he identified John IV – who later ruled Portugal as Dom João – with the hidden king, in contrast to traditional ‘Sebastianism’. The sources of his millenarism are quite diverse: Jewish apocalypticism, ‘Sebastianism’, neo-Joachimite ideas, Portuguese nationalism and colonial experiences.¹⁴ According to Vieira, Portugal was the fifth Empire of Daniel’s prophecy and would be purified due to its selection by divine providence. In his sermons, especially on Saint Theresa and of *Sexagésima*, he compared Elijah’s rigor with that of Theresa and in the sixth book of *Clavis prophetarum*, he explained Elijah’s importance for the Last Judgment: “Elijah, when you come, everything will be restored” (Vieira 1655; 1982).

As early as the 1602 Council of Tarragona, where they solicited his canonization, Jesuits compared him to the fifth angel of Revelation, who had come to earth to fight Luther (Mujica Pinilla 1996: 166). The Jesuit order inherited the spirit of this interpretation from the Franciscans. But in the context of American empire and militant post-Tridentinism, Jesuit Lorenzo de Zamora accelerated their portrayal of historical developments with such themes.

In his 1611 *Monarchia mystica de la Yglesia*, Zamora referred to the traditional Franciscan distinction between two divine fires; the occult fire that doesn’t burn or hurt and which is carried by the saints in their solitude, and the sparkling fire that burns (Mujica Pinilla 1996: 171; Zamora 1612: 592-594). Vieira raised just this topic in his 1669 sermon on Ignatius, which emphasized his meaning in Portuguese history:

From the great patriarch and father of all patriarchs, Elijah, Saint Ignatius took his zealousness to God’s honor. Both had the sword of fire; but the fire of Elijah burned, the fire of Ignatius ignites; the fire of Elijah was consumed, the fire of Ignatius was fused. Like artificial rays both ascended directly to heaven, but Elijah’s ascent ended in thunder, that of Ignatius in tears (Vieira 1669, translation by Jens Baumgarten).

The iconology of the painting constructs a reference to a medieval discourse that was transferred and communicated by the Jesuits in the 16th and 7th centuries. The visual *mise-en-scène* stands for the medieval and contemporaneous ‘re-conquest’ of the Franciscan order.

For the debate about the political and aesthetic construction of a medieval ‘present’, it is important to remember the main figure in both ceiling paintings of the churches of the first and the third order. The interpretation of Francis in the illusionist ceiling frescoes has to be related to the rivalry between the different orders. While in the

13 Vieira (1982). He never finished the collection of prophecies. He prepared a publication but it remained a manuscript upon his death (Peloso 2005).

14 Phelan 1970: 118-120; Godoy 2005: 96-127; Braga dos Santos 2001. About the Jewish influence see Hermann 2005.



Figure 7. St. Francis, first half of the eighteenth century, ceiling fresco, Franciscan convent, Church of the Third Order, João Pessoa (Paraíba), Brazil (Photo: Adilson Fernando Ferreira).

painting of the first order Francis is understood as ‘*alter* Ignatius’, in the painting of the third order he becomes ‘*alter* Elijah’. The Franciscans used their own medieval traditions, which later were reused by the Jesuits. The visual representation alludes to the Jesuit iconography of St. Ignatius, and therefore relates theological discourse and visual representation.

The missionary context itself can be traced in the third order’s painting, in which Saint Francis is constructed by its allusion to Elijah, also as the ‘true prophet’. He plays a crucial role in the conversion of the indigenous people, who knew prophets as *caraiba* – a term which originally referred to the ‘spiritual guides’ and to non-Christian forms of sacrality of the Tupi-Guaraní (Chapelle Wojciehowski 2011: 118). Besides this visualization of missionary strategies, the image also propagated the veneration of images (Baumgarten 2008).

Another aspect of the medievalization of colonial Latin American art is the use of archaizing iconographies. Two examples from the Paraíba convent’s main church are the ceiling frescoes of the Virgin of Mercy (Sheltering-cloak Madonna, Figure 8) and the coffer painting with the iconography of Saint Anthony in the apse (Figure 9). These paintings were executed parallel to the illusionistic paintings of the ceilings and usually classified as of inferior quality, while ignoring their function within the trans-cultural dynamics of superimposition of different visual systems. Iconographies which provoked strong emotions – like those of the Virgin of Mercy – were painted in an archaizing style and fostered the staging of a medieval local tradition.

5. Conclusions: Anachronism as a model

Medieval iconographies and motifs continued to be applied in religious images during the colonial period in Latin America. At the same time, they co-existed with local versions of other European styles and became an important element of the so-called American baroque. In contrast to the supposedly linear history of European art, which draws a line from prehistoric traditions to antique, medieval, renaissance, mannerism and baroque art, Latin American art history is characterized by the simultaneity of styles and visual systems. At a first sight, this anachronism seems to be a distinct feature of Latin American art, for which we tried to give some explanations in our examples from Bolivia and Brazil. But a closer look at recent art historical research on European Renaissance painting reveals that local circumstances are not the only determinants to explain the inner logic of anachronistic stagings of time and that this is not only the case in non-European colonial contexts.



Figure 8. Virgin of Mercy, first half of the eighteenth century, ceiling fresco, Franciscan convent, Church of the First Order, João Pessoa (Paraíba), Brazil (Photo: Adilson Fernando Ferreira).

In an article that deals mainly with a Venetian Renaissance painting,¹⁵ Alexander Nagel and Christopher S. Wood have presented a new model of ‘anachronism’ proposing that all artifacts (this includes paintings as well as single elements of paintings)

[...] were understood in the premodern period to have a double historicity: one might know that they were fabricated in the present or in the recent past but at the same time value them and use them as if they were very old things (Nagel & Wood 2005: 405).¹⁶

According to this theory, the individual object is the product of a singular historical performance. Each repetition of the performance that subsequently follows, for instance in painting a copy, takes on alien features in relation to the original scene of creation (Nagel & Wood 2005: 404). This means that within one image, different temporalities can be staged and dramatized in a system of anachronistic quotes.

Nagel and Wood refuse to follow the predominant interpretation of this supposed ‘anachronism’ as a sign of naivety. They understand images and artifacts as signs or symbols of types. These types were associated with mythical origins and strengthen a structural and categorical continuity by means of a sequence of signs. Classes of artifacts thus become connected to one another via replaceable replicas, forming a diachronic chain of replicas¹⁷ which collapses temporal distance (Nagel & Wood 2005: 408). Nagel and Wood do not wish to distinguish strictly between medieval and Renaissance approaches (Nagel & Wood 2005: 412). They understand the origins of the modern artwork as arising from a dialectic relationship between a substitutive and an authorial principle. From this perspective, it is feasible to consider archaisms, aesthetic primitivism, typologies, quotations, forgeries and other temporal interventions as expressing a conflict between the performative and substitutive theory of origins. These are, so conclude Nagel & Wood, integrated into a dynamic historical model in which both theories are in continuous interaction.

Transferring Nagel’s and Wood’s model to Latin America obviously needs some further adjustments considering the transcultural dimensions of art production in colonial contexts, as well as the specific conditions of Christianization. But it offers a new theoretical approach to visual representational systems which disrupt linear conceptions of time and space. The importance attached to the copy, the practices of appropriation, and the model of substitution play a greater role than performative authorship. This corresponds to a very high degree with the situation in the American colonies. In this respect, just as much as the spatial, it is precisely the temporal distance

15 More specifically, with Vittore Carpaccio’s *Saint Anthony* (around 1503), see Nagel & Wood 2010.

16 See also Nagel & Wood 2010.

17 Here Nagel & Wood (2005: 405) draw on Richard Krautheimer’s theses on the iconography of medieval architecture (Krautheimer 1942).



Figure 9. Detail from the St. Anthony cycle, first half of the eighteenth century, ceiling fresco, Franciscan convent, main chancel, Church of the First Order, João Pessoa (Paraíba), Brazil (Photo: Adilson Fernando Ferreira).

that needs to be seen in terms of appropriation strategies within a substitution principle that considers neither temporal nor local difference as linearly connected.

To sum up: we can understand the imitations of European ‘Middle Ages’ in the examples from Carabuco and Paraíba as foreign, but also as stagings of the temporal and spatial foreign and not as authorial exoticisms. Furthermore, we have to rethink the dichotomous idea of a ‘chaotic’ American versus a ‘linear’ European historical time, as stated (among others) by Francisco Stasny. Instead, we should proof the idea of substitution as a transcultural principle of artistic performance both for European and non-European contexts.

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