

THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO

MOPA MOPA IMAGES IN THE COLONIAL NORTHERN ANDES

A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO
THE FACULTY IN THE DIVISION OF THE HUMANITIES
IN CANDIDACY FOR THE DEGREE OF
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

DEPARTMENT OF ART HISTORY

BY

CATALINA OSPINA JIMENEZ

CHICAGO, ILLINOIS

AUGUST 2021

Table of Contents

List of Figures	v
Abstract	xii
Acknowledgements	xiii
Introduction	1
Chapter 1. Stretchy, glossy and “disgusting”: mopa mopa practice and orality in Colonial Andean Culture	15
Shooting the Habsburg emblem	15
The material	17
Early accounts	20
Regional practices relying on the mechanics of the mouth	25
Preparing fermented beverages with the mouth	28
Coca leaf consumption	31
Healing practices	36
The mouth in the discourse	38
A deity’s mouth	42
Nibbling of stone	45
Knowing with the mouth	46
Coda	50
Chapter 2. “The finest brushes:” Converting Native Techniques into Pintura	52
Introduction	52
The cut vs. the brush stroke	55
The term “ <i>pintura</i> ” in the colonial period	57
Pacheco’s image theory	59

Mopa mopa images vs. Pacheco’s definition of <i>pintura</i>	62
Hierarchy of the arts in Pacheco	64
<i>Imagen, pintura, and knowing</i>	66
The institution of <i>pintura</i>	75
<i>Pintura</i> as epistemic framework	75
Technical consequences	79
Conclusion.....	80
 Chapter 3. Mopa Mopa, Colonial Paths, and the Territorial Imagination	 83
At the crossroads: the north to south path	85
The challenge of the journey through the Northern Andes	90
Dogs as Spanish allies.....	95
On monkeys and colonial mimicry	99
Mopa mopa vs. other ways of imagining territory	103
Across the Amazon piedmont	105
The trail that connected Pasto to the Amazon	107
The unruly Amazon	110
Rafael Ferrer and the first Jesuit glimpse of the Amazon	113
Conclusion.....	120
 Chapter 4. Cosmopolitanism at “the discretion of the Indians themselves.....	 121
Introduction	121
A Singular Mine.....	124
Pasto towards the end of the 16 th century and into the 17 th century.....	128
“Diferentes hechuras y colores y lindeza” circa 1650	134
Intersections	141
“Different styles with fine and beautiful figures:” mopa mopa production in the 18 th century	143
Context of international trade into South America	145
Trade from Acapulco	147

Other sources of Asian and European goods	150
Chintz on mopa mopa	153
Other considerations on British trade	156
The back door: international trade through the Amazon basin.....	158
Conclusion	162
Epilogue	164
Bibliography	168

List of Figures

(Note: Due to copyright limitations images have been excluded from this version of the dissertation.)

0.1. Mopa mopa coffer's front, ca. 1650 (15 x 22.5 x 11.5 cm). Private collection, France.

0.2. Étienne-Joseph Daudet, *Nouveaux Livre d'ornemens Propre pour Peintre Graveur Orphevres et autres*. Lyon, 1689.

0.3. Detail. Mopa mopa coffer's front right side, ca. 1650 (15 x 22.5 x 11.5 cm). Private collection, France.

0.4. Map. Pasto region.

1.1. Mopa mopa tabletop cabinet side, ca. 1710. Casa de la Presidencia, Bogotá.

1.2. Line drawing of the Mopa mopa table top cabinet side in the previous figure, by Chloe Pelletier.

1.3. The “bubble” at the base of the two grown leaves is resin protecting leaves at very early growth stage. Photo: Catalina Ospina.

1.4. Stages of leaf growth in which the resin is collected. Photo: Catalina Ospina.

1.5. Resin block. Photo: Catalina Ospina

1.6. Cleaned stretched resin. Photo: Catalina Ospina

1.7. Mopa mopa casket, late 17th-early 18th century (21 x 29 x 13cm). Private collection, London.

1.8. Detail from the back of a mopa mopa chest, ca. 1650. Hispanic Society of America, New York City.

- 1.9. The Obando brothers stretching pigmented mopa mopa. Photo: Catalina Ospina.
- 1.10. Coquero figure. Pasto-Carchi, 750-1550. Ceramic, 30 cm. Museo Casa el Alabado, Quito.
- 2.1. Mopa mopa coffer, ca. 1650 (15 x 22.5 x 11.5 cm). Private collection, France (France coffer).
- 2.2. Las Meninas, Diego Velasquez, 1656. Museo del Prado, Madrid.
- 2.3. Mopa mopa gourd, Northern Andes, ca. 1650. Hispanic Society of New York, New York City.
- 2.4. Comparison. Left: Mopa mopa gourd, Northern Andes, ca. 1650. Hispanic Society of New York, New York City. Right: Mopa coffer, ca. 1650 (15 x 22.5 x 11.5 cm). Private collection, France (France coffer).
- 2.5. Comparison. Left: Detail from Las Meninas, Diego Velasquez, 1656. Museo del Prado, Madrid; Right: Mopa coffer, ca. 1650. Private collection, France (France coffer).
- 2.6. Hybrid creature (dragon-human) on right side of the France coffer's front. Private collection, France.
- 2.7. Comparison of Heliconia flower, common in Mocoa, with a flower on a mopa mopa coffer. Left: Heliconia, photograph by Catalina Ospina. Right: Detail from mopa mopa coffer. Northern Andes, ca. 1650. Hispanic Society of New York, New York City.
- 2.8. Detail from the center of the lid on mopa mopa coffer showing a Picador, ca. 1650. Blanton Museum, Austin.
- 2.9. Detail from the center of the lid on the France coffer showing a lady caressing unicorn, ca. 1650. Private collection, France.
- 2.10. Detail from mopa mopa coffer showing a Picador's outfit under raking light, ca. 1650. Blanton Museum, Austin.

2.11. France coffer's side. Mopa coffer, ca. 1650 (15 x 22.5 x 11.5 cm). Private collection, France.

2.12. Miniature Feather Dress, 12th–13th century, Ica culture. Peru, Ica Valley (22.2 x 21.3 cm). MET Museum, New York City.

2.13. Feathered Panel, A.D. 600–900, Wari Culture. Peru, (69.9 x 212.1 x 8.3 cm). MET Museum, New York City.

3.1. Mopa mopa chest, ca. 1650. Blanton Museum, Austin (22 x 10 x 15.5cm).

3.2. Map. North-South Path Across the Northern Andes.

3.3. Inside of mopa mopa chest, ca. 1750. Museo de America, Madrid. The clear layer of resin applied to the inside has chipped.

3.4. Detail from mopa mopa chest, ca. 1700. Denver Museum of Art, Denver. Note the variety of metallic and translucent greens.

3.5. Mopa mopa tabletop cabinet side, c. 1700. Casa de la Cultura, Quito (37 x 22 cm).

3.6. Inside of the lid from a mopa mopa tabletop cabinet, c. 1700. Casa de la Cultura, Quito (37 x 32 cm).

3.7. De l'usage du café, du thé, et du chocolat. Engraving, Lyon, 1685. John Carter Brown Library.

3.8. Detail from inside of a table-top cabinet lid, ca. 1700. Private collection, Spain.

3.9. Monkey on flower stalk. Inside lid detail from mopa mopa tabletop cabinet, ca. 1700. Museo Mosquera, Popayan.

3.10. Pair of monkeys holding daggers. Outside of the lid detail. Mopa mopa tabletop cabinet, ca. 1700. Casa de la Cultura, Quito.

- 3.11. Mopa mopa tabletop cabinet, inside of the lid., ca. 1700. Private collection, London (37 x 32 cm).
- 3.12. *In the marshes of Lake La Cocha*. Engraving, probably made by Edouard Ryenn ca. 1877, from a sketch by Edouard André. Appeared in Edouard André, “America equinoccial,” 1884.
- 3.13. Mopa mopa gourd, ca. 1650. Hispanic Society, New York (14 x 12cm). The whole background is metallic green.
- 3.14. *Indias de Mocoa en el alto de la Cruz*. Engraving, probably made by Edouard Ryenn ca. 1877, from a sketch by Edouard André. Appeared in Edouard André, “America equinoccial,” 1884.
- 3.15. Front of mopa mopa chest, ca. 1725. Museo Civico Medievale, Bologna (42 x 19cm).
- 3.16. Detail from mopa mopa chest, ca. 1725. Museo Civico Medievale, Bologna.
- 3.17. Back of mopa mopa chest, ca. 1725. Museo Civico Medievale, Bologna (42 x 19 cm).
- 3.18. Amazonian lance at the top of the shelf, exhibited at Museo Civico Medievale along with the mopa mopa chest.
- 3.19. Inside of lid. Mopa mopa chest, ca. 1700. Private collection, Bogotá.
- 3.20. El Gran Río Marañon o Amazonas com la Misión de la Compañía de Jesus geográficamente delineado por el P. Samuel Fritz misionero continuo de este Río. Quito, 1707. Metal engraving by Juan de Narváes (32 x 42 cm).
- 3.21. Comparison of the leaf-less trees on the two mopa mopa objects associated with the Jesuits and Fritz’s map of the Amazon.
- 4.1. Mopa coffer, ca. 1650. Blanton Museum, Austin.
- 4.2. Comparison. Right: Dragon detail from mopa mopa coffer, ca. 1650. Blanton Museum, Austin. Left: Detail from Armagillus of Brittany illumination. Prayer roll, England, Yorkshire, ca. 1500. MS G.39, fol. 3r vellum, ill.; 5864 x 185 mm. Morgan Library, New York.

4.3. Comparison. Right: Dragon detail from mopa mopa coffer, ca. 1650. Blanton Museum, Austin. Left: Comparison of mopa dragon with sierpe from Guaman Poma, 1615 (Guaman Poma 1980, 694 [708]).

4.4. Mopa Batea, ca. 1725. Museo de America, Madrid.

4.5. Mopa coffer, ca. 1650. Private collection, London.

4.6. Mopa coffer, ca. 1650. Hispanic Society of New York, New York.

4.7. Note eye outline. Detail, mopa coffer, ca. 1650. Private collection, London

4.8. Nanban lacquer coffer, 16th / 17th century, Sotheby's.

4.9. Capricorn: the figure of a sea-goat. Firmamentum sobiescianum, by Johannes Hevelius, 1690.

4.10. Phaenomena. Italy, Naples, 1469. MS M.389 fol. 51r Constellation: Capricornus -- Hybrid goat with fish tail, inscribed with red dots representing the stars that form the constellation. Morgan Library, New York.

4.11. Von dem Gang des Himels und Sternen Germany, Rhineland, second half of the 15th century, MS M.384. Fol. 013r, Capricornus. Morgan Library, New York.

4.12. Detail of mopa coffer. Colección particular. Museo de Bellas Artes de Asturias (Oviedo, España). Fotografía de Marcos Morilla.

4.13. Front mopa coffer, ca. 1650. Private collection, London.

4.14. Romanesque white-vine initial with a biting bird, on a fragment of Bede's Homiliae in Evangelium, in Latin. Italy, Tuscany, c.1150. Sotheby's.

4.15. Probe from a silver wedding box with silver sewing etui, probably Dutch, first half of the 17th century. Sotheby's.

- 4.16. Dutch silver marriage caskets, 17th century (8 x10 x 8 cm). Sothebys.
- 4.17. Pasto-Carchi ceramic bowl with deer, 700-1500 AC. Private collection.
- 4.18. Comparison. Left: Mopa coffer, ca. 1650. Private collection, Spain. Top right: Petra Negra tabletop, Rome, second half of the 17th century. Museo de Artes Decorativas, Madrid. Bottom right: Mopa mopa coffer, ca. 1650. Hispanic Society of New York.
- 4.19. Detail: Mopa mopa coffer, ca. 1650. Hispanic Society of New York.
- 4.20. The Infanta Isabella Clara Eugenia (1566-1633), Archduchess of Austria c.1598-1600, Frans Pourbus the Younger (attributed). Royal Collection Trust, London.
- 4.21. Alonso Sanchez Coello, Infanta Isabella Clara Eugenia of Spain and her younger sister Infanta Catalina Micaela of Spain, ca. 1571, del Prado, Madrid.
- 4.22. María Luisa de Toledo with her indigenous companion, ca. 1670. Rodríguez Beltrán, Antonio. Museo del Prado, Madrid.
- 4.23. Mopa mopa coffer's front, ca. 1650. Hispanic Society of New York, New York.
- 4.24. Mopa mopa coffer's top, ca. 1650. Hispanic Society of New York, New York.
- 4.25. Charles I, Daniel Mytens, 1631. National Portrait Gallery History of the Kings and Queens of England, London.
- 4.26. Detail of head with foliage coming out. Mopa mopa detail, ca. 1650. Hispanic Society of New York.
- 4.27. Mopa mopa tabletop cabinet inside lid. Presidential Apartments, Bogota.
- 4.28. Nanban tray, 18th century. Museo de Arte Antica, Lisbon.
- 4.29. Mopa mopa coffer, ca. 1725. Museo Civico Medievale, Bologna.

- 4.30. Mopa mopa escritorio, 18th c. Museo Santa Clara, Bogotá.
- 4.31. Mopa mopa chest inside of lid, 1709. Museo Franciscano, Quito.
- 4.32. Comparison. Detail from mopa mopa chest inside of lid, 1709. Museo Franciscano, Quito. Details from chintz, 18th c. Victoria and Albert Museum, London.
- 4.33. Comparison. Leaves on mopa mopa lid and leaves on different 18th c. chintz.
- 4.34. Note the spotted areas of this palampore. Coromandel Coast. ca. 1710-1725 (made). Painted and dyed cotton (chintz). Victoria and Albert Museum, London.
- 4.35. Mopa mopa chest outside of lid, 1709. Museo Franciscano, Quito.
- 4.36. Comparison. Left: Mopa mopa tabletop cabinet, ca., 1650. Private collection, London. Right: British purse, (early 17th c.) MET, New York.
- 4.37. Inside lid of mopa escritorio, ca. 1683. Hispanic Society of New York, New York.
- 4.38. Left: Indo-Portuguese inlaid work, first half of the 18th c. Right: Casket, Ebony with rosewood base, inlaid with ivory, Vishakhapatnam, 1720-1730. Victoria and Albert Museum, London.
- 4.39. Comparison. Left: Bargeño Cabinet, Spain, late 16th- early 17th century. Private collection, London. Right: Inside rim of mopa mopa gourd, ca. 1650, Hispanic Society of New York.
- 4.40 - 4.43. Mopa mopa tabletop cabinet (escritorio), ca. 1725. Museo Nacional de Ecuador, Quito.

Abstract

During the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, Indigenous Andeans meticulously decorated wooden objects using a unique plant resin known as barniz de Pasto or mopa mopa. Focusing on these objects, the dissertation identifies and subverts the epistemic asymmetries at play when we analyze Indigenous production in colonial contexts. I explore these asymmetries through two main axes of inquiry. The first revolves around the mopa mopa technique and how it was conceptualized by natives and Europeans. My analysis of the process for making images with mopa resin, which included chewing to clean it and mix in pigments, allows me to show how cultural understandings of the body alter the meaning of artistic processes. Even though this is not painting in a technical sense, colonial authors often referred to mopa images as *pinturas* (paintings). Investigating the mismatch between the technique and its colonial descriptor, I argue that native media pushed the boundaries of European artistic concepts and unravel the epistemic underpinning of the word *pintura* in the colonial Hispanic context. The second axis of inquiry deals with the geographical trajectories involved in making these objects. On a local level, I show how the bodily experience of those trajectories is intimately related to the configuration of the northern Andes as a colonial territory. On a global level, I situate the production of these objects in the transatlantic and transpacific webs of early modern trade, highlighting indigenous agency in the enterprise of producing objects for the Spanish and Creole markets and foregrounding little-studied trade routes through the Amazon and up the Andes.

Acknowledgments

I relied on many people to bring this project to fruition. I am thankful to my committee, Claudia Brittenham, Cécile Fromont, Niall Atkinson, and Tom Cummins, who cheered me on from the beginning and patiently read many rough drafts. Cécile's keen insight helped me push past the boundaries of my ideas time and again. Claudia expertly guided me through writing and research blockages, helping me overcome the emotional toll of embarking on such a long-term project. Niall encouraged my interests in alternative methodologies and cultivated a community of early modern scholars and friends crucial to advancing my work. Tom's support and belief in the project were the bedrock of this work. I also want to acknowledge Christine Mehring, my M.A. advisor, who helped me transition into what was at the time a very foreign academic environment; she spurred this project with her early encouragement. Finally, I am thankful to Rebecca Zorach for her generosity inside and outside the classroom.

Researching mopa mopa colonial production required multiple trips to artisanal workshops, museums, archives, and private collections throughout the Americas and Europe. I thank the University of Chicago Department of Art History and the Division for multiple travel and research grants. Early in the research process, I benefited from the support of two CLAS-Tinker grants, a Denver Museum of Art Mayer Research Grant, and a Chris and George Benter Fellowship at the Huntington Library. In addition, I am grateful to the Thoma Foundation for the Marilyn Thoma Pre-doctoral Fellowship in Spanish Colonial Art, which allowed me to conduct research in Seville, Popayán, and Pasto and dedicate time for writing through 2019 - 2020. I also thank the Council for Library and Information Resources for a Mellon Fellowship for Dissertation Research in Original Sources, which further sustained this research. Many thanks to

the University of Chicago Humanities Division for a William Rainey Harper Dissertation Completion Fellowship for supporting a year of writing.

I also owed a debt of gratitude to all the gallery, archive, museum, and church staff that facilitated access to research materials. I would not have been able to undertake this research without their generosity and, sometimes, immense flexibility. In particular, I want to thank Monica Katz for her largesse. During my research, I encountered many people who generously shared their time and insights. The Obando brothers opened their mopa mopa workshop to me and shared their stories and knowledge about working with the resin. Manuel Mueces, Jesus Iles, and Jesus Cerón shared their expertise on collecting mopa mopa, its history, and the environment where the resin grows. Jesus Iles Jr. introduced me to everyone in Mocoa who worked with the resin. I will never forget riding in the back of his motorcycle all around the town. Lastly, I want to give special thanks to Jesus Ceron, who guided me up the Amazon-Andes piedmont trails while sharing his wealth of knowledge about those forests. He also showed me where mopa mopa trees grow and the nuances of collecting the resin. It was one of the most fruitful research experiences I had. My gratitude extends to Solecito Torres for joining me on that adventure and to Ludy Vanessa Pinchao Ceron, Jesus's granddaughter, for guiding us back to Mocoa.

My colleagues and friends from Chicago, Hanne Graversen, Anatole Upart, Chris Zapella, and Luke Fidler, have all supported this work with intelligent comments and kindness. Carly Boxer and Brian Leahy read drafts and celebrated victories with me. Noah Chafets has been a friend and the most patient and brilliant copyeditor; I am fortunate for his generosity. Chloe Pelletier has taken care of me all these years; it is hard to imagine reaching this point without her.

Finally, none of the research and writing for this project would have happened without the love of my family. My parents, Mariel and Alberto, and my sister, Adriana, and her spouse, Ignacio, sustained me in every manner they could. Santiago, my partner of all projects, unconditionally supported me throughout, working by my side to bring this dissertation to fruition. Ganesh and Lupe, with their spark and tenderness, kept me on the right track.

Introduction

On the front of a small, lavishly decorated coffer, there is a feline-like head at bottom-center (fig. 0.1). The head tilts up, its mouth wide open. Exuberant plants erupt from this oral cavity, dispersing in an intricate arrangement of flora, fauna, and wondrous creatures, as if this creative imagery sprouted from the feline's mouth. The entangled arrangement of forms faintly evokes seventeenth European ornamental patterns like those from Etienne-Joseph Daudet's *New Book of Ornaments* (fig. 0.2). Yet, none of the disembodied heads in Daudet's is nearly as productive as the oral aperture we are concerned with.

Following the plants' curvature from the feline's mouth to the right, we find a half dragon, half bird, whose carefully scaled body contorts like a snake. A pair of legs and pair of wings suffice for this multifarious creature (fig. 0.3). This meticulously composed figure is only about two by two inches. Its execution is precise, millimetric. While its size and some stylistic elements evoke European late medieval illuminations, the image was made by Indigenous Andean artists ca. 1650. It was not made in Europe, nor in Lima nor Mexico City, the cosmopolitan capitals of the Spanish empire in the Americas, but most probably in Pasto, a small town in the periphery of the empire (modern-day Pasto, Colombia) (fig. 0.4).

The dragon-bird creature is but a detail of the image program that decorates a small wooden coffer. Most exceptional of all, this composition was not painted or drawn on the surface of the coffer; it was built from colored cutouts of a unique plant resin known as mopa mopa or barniz de Pasto, which—like the plants that emerge from the feline's mouth at the base of the coffer's front—was processed in and emerged from the artists' mouth. During the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, Indigenous Andeans from the Pasto region in the southwest highlands of modern-day Colombia, created complex images to decorate luxury objects of domestic use,

such as trays, gourds, and coffers. These enthralling objects were sought after throughout the Americas as well as in Europe. However, outside of their context of production their history was lost and, as I conducted research for this dissertation many remained misidentified and most have never appeared in publication.

Background of mopa mopa

Mopa mopa objects from the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries bear a strong imprint of their production context and its aftermath. On the one hand, they display the marks of colonial global exchanges that characterized the early modern world, as their image repertoire combines pre-Hispanic, European, and Asian motifs and techniques. As such, they exemplify a level of global interconnectivity without precedent before the early modern period. On the other hand, when we try to zoom in on their production and circulation specifics, the repercussions that the colonial expansionist socio-economic system brought onto the groups it subjugated and onto our epistemic resources become evident. This is apparent in the kind of information that has survived about colonial mopa mopa production because that information has been deeply determined by western values and not by those of their makers.

Take, for example, “mopa mopa,” the term used still today to denote the plant resin. In the *Diccionario geográfico-histórico de las Indias Occidentales ó América*, published between 1786-1789 in Madrid, Antonio de Alcedo relates that in the Pasto Province’s forests grows a tree that produces a resin, with which [the Indians] make all kinds of beautiful and permanent varnishes.” *There*, de Alcedo tells us, “the resin is called Mopa-mopa.”¹ Mopa mopa is a term still widely used in the city of Pasto, where the tradition of working with the resin survives. It is also the word used in Mocoa, the town where resin collectors live. Yet, today, we do not know in

¹ See footnote 6.

which language the term originated nor if it has meaning beyond indexing the resin. It's tempting to consider such loss an unhappy consequence of the passage of time. But in this instance, that is probably not the case. In all likelihood, this loss is a result of the ways in which colonialism affects our epistemic resources.

The term does not seem to have any Spanish precedent. It does not appear in any early modern Spanish dictionaries. Moreover, if it came from Spanish, one would expect other colonial authors to use it as well. However, "mopa mopa" does not appear in any other colonial accounts of mopa mopa practice beyond de Alcedo's. His is the only colonial account I have found that mentions the term "mopa mopa." Notably, he implies that the term is local as he clarifies "there, they called it Mopa-mopa." However, if the term is local, we have very limited resources to consult in order to determine its origin. There are two reasons for this. First, most of the Indigenous languages in what is today the southwest of Colombia disappeared in the nineteenth century. It is no secret that the pressures of colonialism on Indigenous groups to assimilate has resulted in many cases in the loss of their histories and languages. Second, no grammar or dictionary of any of these languages recorded during the colonial period has surfaced, and in all probability none or few were recorded.

Unlike the information from colonial dictionaries and rich ethnographies available for central Mexico or the central Andes, where the Aztec and Inka empires had their seats, for the northern Andes, what roughly corresponds to modern-day northern Ecuador and Colombia, information is cursory. Missionaries and colonial officials did not show the same level of interest in trying to understand the Indigenous societies located in this area as they did in Mesoamerica and central Peru. With the exception of the Muisca—a large society, although not at the scale of the Aztec or the Inka, who inhabited modern-day central Colombia—Indigenous groups in the

northern Andes were numerous, small, and semi-independent socio-political entities that spoke different languages.

Missionaries who worked in the northern Andes, de facto ethnographers in the colonial period, often complained of the difficulty of working in an area where so many languages were spoken. Moreover, the region did not have lingua franca, as did the territories the Inkas previously colonized. Thus, language barriers might have held up these colonial actors from learning more about Indigenous groups in the area. However, there was also a generalized sentiment that these groups were not worth the effort. Unlike the great Aztec and Inka empires, which were understood as complex societies and had monumental architecture, most Indigenous groups in the northern Andes were seen as poor and underdeveloped.² As such, in the process of indoctrination and Hispanization they were treated as *tabula rasa*, whereas with complex groups, at least initially, it was considered essential to understand and record Indigenous culture in order to adapt indoctrination tactics.³

Having few or no written records is a problem faced by many scholars who work in the pre-modern world.⁴ My point is not merely to signal the methodological challenges this situation poses to those of us who study the northern Andes in the pre-modern and early modern periods. The point here is to highlight the degree to which western colonial values have affected our

² Pedro de Cieza de León, *Obras completas*, vol. 1 (Madrid: Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas, Instituto “Gonzalo Fernández de Oviedo,” 1984 [1554]), 48.

³ Carlos Espinosa, “Poder pastoral, acomodo y territorialidad en las cartas anuales jesuitas de Quito,” *Procesos*, no. 38 (2013): 9–31.

⁴ For a discussion on the methodological problems of doing art history without textual sources in the pre-Hispanic Andes see: Joanne Pillsbury, “Reading Art without Writing: Interpreting Chimú Architectural Sculpture,” *Studies in the History of Art* 74 (2009): 72–89; Lisa Trever, ed., *El arte antes de la historia: para una historia del arte andino antiguo*, Primera edición., Colección Estudios Andinos (Lima, Perú: Pontificia Universidad Católica del Perú, Fondo Editorial, 2020).

epistemic resources. I want us to bear in mind that the meaning of the term mopa mopa and the language it came from was not just lost in the vagaries of time; it was erased by the colonial project.⁵

The impossibility of determining the origin of the term mopa mopa is but one example of the problems we face when trying to understand Indigenous artistic production in colonial contexts. As is common with colonial Indigenous artistic or intellectual production, their makers are almost never acknowledged in colonial records. Disowning Indigenous people as intellectual producers is, of course, a common strategy to maintain colonial hegemony, apparent in all the early modern accounts on mopa mopa practice I have consulted. These accounts, even the most detailed, show interest in the material, the technique, or the objects themselves, but *never* on the makers. The most they say about mopa mopa artists is that they are “Indians.”⁶ The implicit assumption is that any cultural or identity distinctions beyond “Indian” were utterly irrelevant,

⁵ Throughout the colonial period colonial authors did not have a stable term for referring to mopa mopa resin or to the technique. As a gesture acknowledging all the Indigenous histories and languages that have been lost to the logic of colonialism, which necessarily belittles those it oppresses, through this dissertation I will speak of mopa mopa practice. I will not use the Hispanic term “barniz de Pasto,” which is also commonly used to refer to this practice. This choice might be historically more accurate, because, as will be discussed on the chapter two, the expression “barniz de Pasto” appears for the first time in the late eighteenth century.

⁶ For instance, let us see Alcedo’s account on mopa mopa in full: “en sus bosques hay unos árboles que destilan una resina que *allí* llaman Mopa-mopa, con la cual hacen toda especie de barnices tan hermosos y permanentes, que ni el agua hirviendo los ablanda, ni los disuelven los ácidos: el método que tienen para aplicarlo es poniendo en la boca una parte de la resina, y desleída humedecen el pincel en ella, despues de lo qual cogen el color que quieren aplicar, y los van poniendo en la pieza, donde se seca, y queda firme, vivo y lustroso, imitando el maque de la China, y con la particular propiedad de que no vuelve a disolverse otra vez, ni a percibir humedad aunque se le aplica la saliva. Las piezas que labran y barnizan de este modo los *Indios* se llevan á Quito y demas Poblaciones del Reyno, donde se usan mucho y tienen grande estimacion.” My italics. de Alcedo, *Diccionario geográfico-histórico de las Indias Occidentales ó América*, 4:112–13.

even obtrusive to the homogenizing goals of the colonial project. Thus, in these accounts mopa mopa artists are rendered indiscernible, besides a mere “other.”

Epistemic Asymmetries

In general, when trying to understand Indigenous artistic and intellectual production from the colonial Americas, we confront two main problems. First, western values have deeply determined the kinds of artifacts that survive, as well as the information recorded about them. Second, in most cases, there is almost no documentation of how Indigenous agents conceptualized their own artistic production. At stake is not just information scarcity but what I call an epistemic asymmetry: the unacknowledged dominance of one epistemic frame over another. Epistemic asymmetries hinder our collective interpretative resources. Because mopa mopa objects do not sit comfortably within current art historical categories and were made in the periphery of both pre-Hispanic and colonial empires, they provide a vantage point from where to analyze epistemic asymmetries. Thus, by focusing on mopa mopa production from the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, this dissertation seeks to develop our sensibility to detect those asymmetries and develops new frameworks for subverting them. This work is critical to 1) assess the ways in which colonial structures affect our epistemic resources and 2) advocate for understanding marginalized groups’ artistic production and intellectual histories.

The limited existing studies of mopa mopa images center on identifying the cultural origin of their motifs as either European, Asian, or pre-Columbian—merely pointing to a modification of local iconographic repertoires that attests to the Spanish monarchy’s global reach.⁷ This focus on visual motifs not only reproduces a western emphasis on the visual but also

⁷ Mitchell A. Coddling, “The Decorative Arts in Latin America, 1492-1820,” in *The Arts in Latin America, 1492-1820*, ed. Suzanne L. Stratton (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006); Mitchell Coddling, “The Lacquer Arts of Latin America,” in *Made in the Americas: The*

neglects the embodied *process* of making mopa mopa images. Mopa mopa artists chewed resin in order to clean it and mix in pigments, before stretching it, cutting it, and applying it to wooden objects in elaborate compositions. I explore epistemic asymmetries in relation to mopa mopa production through two main axes of inquiry. The first revolves around mopa mopa technique and how it was conceptualized by natives and Europeans (chapters one and two). The second axis of inquiry deals with the geographical trajectories involved in making these objects (chapters three and four).

Technique and Nomenclature

Chapter one situates the technique within other Andean bodily and ritual practices to elucidate how the mouth functioned as a locus of knowledge gathering and cultural production in the Andes. I argue that in the Andes the mouth's various functional and communicative mechanics were considered a site of cultural production, not just a site of consumption, directly tied to the primacy of oral discourse in Andean societies, which were non-textual before the arrival of the Spanish. In this light, transferring Asian and European motifs to mopa mopa images by chewing resin is not merely copying or echoing new symbolic material. Through the action of the mouth, mopa mopa artists were embedding foreign motifs within an Andean way of experiencing and understanding the world.

New World Discovers Asia (Boston: Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, 2015), 75–90; María del Pilar López Pérez, “Oriente en el Nuevo Reino de Granada. Influencias y presencias en los objetos artísticos. El caso del arte del barniz de Pasto,” *Jornadas Internacionales de arte, historia y cultura colonial*, Asia en América, no. VI (2012): 86–117; María de Pilar López Pérez, “Quito, entre lo prehispánico y lo colonial: el arte del barniz de Pasto,” in *Arte quiteño más allá de Quito*, ed. Alfonso Ortíz Crespo, vol. 27 (Quito: FONSA, 2010); Monica Katz, “Colonial Spanish American Lacquered Objects in the Collection at the Hispanic Society of America,” in *Wooden Artifacts Group Postprints 2016 AIC* (Washington, D.C.: The American Institute for Conservation of Historic & Artistic Works, 2016), 37–47.

My analysis demonstrates that if we only focus on the visual aspect of mopa mopa images, we perpetuate an epistemic asymmetry. To address this, I propose that inquiring into the use of the mouth in mopa mopa practice is an opportunity to interrogate the cultural constitution of artistic process, as well as an occasion to explore Indigenous orientations of the body and how artistic production is framed in relation to such notions. This new framework allows us to grasp the epistemic function and import these images had in Andean culture. Moreover, this study exemplifies how cultural modes of conceptualizing the body can alter the meaning of aesthetic practices and the production of knowledge associated with them, thus expanding art history's methodologies.

The chewing aspect of mopa mopa as a colonial technique expands traditional modes of thinking about the body's role in artistic processes. Yet, when we consider how mopa mopa images are constituted—by stretching resin into thin sheets, cutting bi-dimensional forms from them, and then arranging such silhouettes into flat compositions—it is evident that these images also confound modern western artistic categories such as “lacquer work,” “collage” and “inlaid work.” Interestingly, colonial authors referred to mopa mopa images under the capacious umbrella of the term *pintura* (painting), underplaying the distinctive aspects of the technique and thus embedding the objects within a European artistic epistemology.

Probing the capacity of the term *pintura*, a basic art historical category, chapter two explores its use in the early modern Spanish Empire and the implications of applying it to Indigenous images. Through the analysis of three crucial texts, a dictionary by Sebastián de Covarrubias, and the treatises on painting by Felipe de Guevara and Francisco Pacheco, I argue that the notion of painting in the Hispanic world was ample, but it was tied to a specific materiality that worked in tandem with a particular epistemic function. I show that *pintura*

operated not only as an artistic medium, but also as an institution rooted in western Catholic understandings of the role that images played in knowing the world.

The chapter demonstrates that calling Indigenous images, like *mopa mopa*, *pintura* was not a neutral act of translation. It implied embedding Indigenous images within a particular western epistemic frame that, at the very least, could preclude the transmission of meanings from Indigenous epistemes. More specifically, including Native images within the category of *pintura* forced them to respond to 1) an epistemic function that was articulated in terms of naturalistic representation and 2) the possibilities afforded by what we would identify as the medium of painting (paint, brush, flat surface, line). Furthermore, this chapter helps us excavate the epistemic framework that underpins painting's importance in western culture, a necessary step to dwell on the consequences that such a framework has had on histories of non-western art.

Geography and Global Exchanges

Technique and nomenclature are key aspects of the context in which *mopa mopa* images were produced and understood. The combination of local, European, and Asian aesthetic repertoires that these images present—paradigmatic of early modern global exchanges—is also crucial to their context of production. Yet, because they were made in the periphery of the Spanish empire and not in any of its cosmopolitan centers, these objects prompt us to examine closer the geography and geopolitics of the Spanish South American colonies. The city of San Juan de Pasto, founded in 1537, has been the main center of *mopa mopa* production since the seventeenth century. Located in a highland Andean valley, the city was the administrative seat of a larger region referred in colonial documents as the district or province of Pasto (fig. 0.4). The district of Pasto consisted of the Andean highlands and adjacent lowlands in the southwest of modern-day Colombia. It roughly corresponded to Colombia's contemporary state of Nariño, the

north of modern-day Ecuador (Carchi state), and the Amazon-Andes piedmont (in the Colombian state of Putumayo). According to colonial sources at the arrival of the Spanish, the area was inhabited by several Indigenous groups: the Pastos, Quillancingas, Abades, Mocoas, and Andakis.⁸

While the region was right at the northern frontier of the Inka empire, only a few of Pastos' chiefdoms in the region's south had fallen under Inka control before the arrival of the Spanish.⁹ Within the Spanish colonial organization, Pasto district's stance was also liminal. Administratively, the district was under the purview of the larger Province of Popayán.

⁸ The proto-ethnographic information about the groups that inhabited the Pasto district is sparse especially for the groups that inhabited the Amazon-Andes piedmont, who were referred in general terms like "Indios de montaña" (mountain Indians). A few sources mention a group named the Mocoas, but in archival records one finds much more often information about the Andaki who apparently inhabit the same area that Mocoas (the modern-day city of Mocoa). It is, therefore, unclear whether the Mocoas and the Andaki were in fact distinct groups. The name difference might be an issue of the language spoken by the Native informants who were consulted. A similar problem happens with the Quillancinga. The term "quillancinga," a Quechua word that means moon-nose and might have referred to half-moon shaped nose ornaments, could have been the term Spanish colonizers adopted to refer to the Camëntsá group, who today inhabit the Sibundoy valley, east of the city of Pasto. Another group that inhabits the region today are the Ingas, who speak a Quechuan dialect. However, they are not mentioned in any of the early colonial sources describing the region. It is not clear when they arrived in the area, whether during the Spanish invasion or before or during the late Inka incursions into the Northern Andes. "Inga" was a common spelling of Inka in colonial records, given that some Quechua speakers produce a consonant sound between "k" and "g," often spelled with "q" or "g." I have found several mentions of Inga Natives on early colonial notarial records from Pasto. For discussions of the Quillancinga, Inga, Camëntsá, and Andaki see: Sergio Elías Ortíz, "The Native Tribes and Languages of Southwestern Colombia," in *Handbook of South American Indians*, ed. Julian H. Steward, vol. 2 (New York: Cooper Square Publishers, 1963), 911; María Clemencia Ramírez de Jara, *Frontera fluida entre Andes, piedemonte y selva: el caso del valle de Sibundoy, siglos XVI-XVIII*, 1a ed., Colección Cuadernos de historia colonial (Santafé de Bogotá: Instituto Colombiano de Cultura Hispánica, 1996), 39; Colleen Alena O'Brien, "Grammatical Description of Kamsá, a Language Isolate of Colombia" (The University of Hawai'i at Mānoa, 2018), 11, <http://ling.hawaii.edu/wp-content/uploads/ColleenOBrienFinal.pdf>; Juan Friede, *Los andakí, 1538-1947; historia de la aculturación de una tribu selvática* (México: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1953).

⁹ Joanne Rappaport, "Cultura material a lo largo de la frontera septentrional inca: los pastos y sus testamentos," *Revista de Antropología y Arqueología*, 6, no. 2 (1990): 11–25.

Popayán's province for the most part responded to the Audiencia de Santa Fé, which had its seat in the city of Santa Fé (today Bogotá, Colombia) and oversaw the region known as the Nuevo Reino de Granada or New Granada. However, for legal matters, the Popayán Province was divided between two Audiencias: the northern part of the province was under the Audiencia de Santa Fé; and the southern part of the province, where the Pasto district was located, was under the Audiencia de Quito. The Audiencia de Quito was seated in San Francisco de Quito (today Quito, Ecuador) and oversaw the Reino de Quito. Up until 1717, all the Spanish holdings in South America were under the jurisdiction of the Viceroyalty of Peru, whose capital was Lima. However, in 1717, as part of Bourbon reforms, the Viceroyalty of New Granada was created, and both the territories under the Audiencia de Quito and the Audiencia de Santa Fé, fell under the new viceroyalty's jurisdiction. In spite of the new arrangement, in terms of the colonial administration organization, the Pasto district was always in between Popayán and Quito.

Therefore, to arrive at Pasto through colonial sources it is essential to consider both chronicles and histories of New Granada and Quito, as well archives that are now located in Colombia and Ecuador. One of my first impressions from consulting these chronicles was the authors' insistence on the rugged and difficult character of the terrain in New Granada and the Pasto area. In these sources from three and four hundred years ago, Pasto is always described as very hard to access. I had the same impression while traveling from Bogotá to Pasto by car during my first research trip, five years ago. The winding roads traced upon the Andean cordillera become thinner and lonelier the closer one gets to Pasto. From the perspective of coming from the north, the way many colonial officials arrived at Pasto, the city appears isolated.

Considering the way Pasto was described in colonial chronicles and my own experience of arriving to Pasto by car prompted two important questions. First, how did Pasto become the

production center of such cosmopolitan objects? Second, how did foreign motifs arrive there? After all, Pasto was clearly not a high traffic port like Cartagena, nor even a main capital like Santa Fé. Taking cue from the way colonial authors described the physical impressions and hardships of overcoming the New Granada terrain and from my own journey to Pasto, I explore the global connections involved in the production and circulation of mopa mopa objects, acutely aware that none of these exchanges happened in a void.

In chapter three, I focus on two trajectories that were crucial for mopa mopa production: the trajectory from Cartagena to Lima and the trajectory from the Amazon to Pasto. The study of these trajectories allows me to articulate some of the circumstances that made Pasto the center of mopa mopa production. Moreover, examining how these journeys were described and conceptualized in colonial documents, I argue that the physical experience of these journeys and the ways they were understood is an important part of early modern exchanges' historical context, even though we tend to consider early modern circulation processes somewhat abstractly, in terms of routes on maps or inventory lists.¹⁰ In contrast, I show that these journeys were more than a pragmatic necessity; they served to structure meaning and were deeply intertwined with the ideological spatialization of the colonial Northern Andes.

Chapter four continues exploring how Pasto became the center of mopa mopa production. Examining a robust corpus of mopa mopa objects and substantial archival material, I reconstruct

¹⁰ For instance, even the most recent and thorough essay collections on the topic of early modern global exchange in the Americas and its impact on aesthetic developments, only one article discusses the implications of the global trade on local trade networks. Dennis Carr et al., *Made in the Americas: The New World Discovers Asia*, First edition. (Boston, Mass.: MFA Publications, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, 2015); Tatiana Seijas, "Inns, Mules, and Hardtack for the Voyage: The Local Economy of the Manila Galleon in Mexico," *Colonial Latin American Review* 25, no. 1 (January 2, 2016): 56–76, <https://doi.org/10.1080/10609164.2016.1180787>.

the kind of objects mopa mopa artists might have had available. On the one hand, I showcase Indigenous creativity in the advent of multiple and diverse aesthetic repertoires. On the other, I uncover other commercial routes involved in mopa mopa production and circulation. This chapter traces the origin of foreign influences on mopa mopa objects to the illicit trade that flourished in New Granada via traditional Indigenous trade routes that seldomly figure in studies of early modern trade. However, these routes connected the Pacific coast and the Amazon with the Andes' highlands. The importance of these trade routes is rarely recognized because of another epistemic asymmetry: under the logic of the colonial administration these trails were minor and considered almost impassable. Because colonial narratives downplayed their importance, Pasto appears in these accounts as an isolated highland area. Yet, these routes connected Pasto to the world, giving mopa mopa artists access to foreign aesthetic repertoires. Furthermore, the analysis of these trade routes lays bare how the transmission of foreign motifs and the development of “worldly” aesthetics was part and parcel of an economy fueled by slavery and sustained by oppression.¹¹

In sum, using various methodological approaches, each chapter takes on a different aspect of the context in which mopa mopa objects were created: technique, nomenclature, local trajectories, and the arrival of foreign motifs to Pasto. In each case, I show how epistemic asymmetries have hindered our grasp of these objects and, more broadly, the consequences those

¹¹ This interpretation builds on the notion of entanglement as a key term to understand the consequences of colonialism and global exchanges in the Americas that has been developed in different ways by historians Marcy Norton, Jorge Cañizares Esguerra and Benjamin Breen, but mainly, it builds on literary scholar Simon Gikandi's notion of entanglement. Marcy Norton, “Subaltern Technologies and Early Modernity in the Atlantic World,” *Colonial Latin American Review* 26, no. 1 (March 2017): 18–38; Jorge Cañizares-Esguerra and Benjamin Breen, “Hybrid Atlantics: Future Directions for the History of the Atlantic World,” *History Compass* 11, no. 8 (August 2013): 597–609; Simon Gikandi, *Slavery and the Culture of Taste* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2011), 54.

asymmetries present for understanding Indigenous artistic and intellectual histories. In the conclusion, I outline the larger stakes of the project in light of future avenues of research. Overall, the dissertation closes the distance between the material lives of colonial mopa mopa artifacts and their context of production. In doing so, it opens new modes of inquiry that would help art historians, historians, and anthropologists identify and subvert the epistemic consequences of the colonial projects through the study of material culture.

Stretchy, glossy, and “disgusting”: mopa mopa practice and orality in Colonial Andean Culture¹

Shooting the Habsburg emblem

In a badly deteriorated mopa mopa image made by Indigenous Andeans ca. 1710 (in modern-day Pasto, Colombia), it is still possible to discern two men in full-on Spanish garb—sporting doublets, breeches, and hats adorned with feathers—holding firearms (figs. 1.1-1.2). They aim their guns at a Habsburg-crowned double-headed eagle, the Spanish monarchy’s emblem. Considering that the image was made by Natives subjected to colonial power and that the composition implies violence against a symbol of the crown, it can be tempting to interpret the image as a sign of Indigenous resistance to colonial rule. Such an impulse, however, can result in a limited understanding of colonial artistic production and of the complex and varied dynamics of adaptation, appropriation, and resistance that Natives deployed under colonial rule.

A subtler, and no less fascinating interpretation of this image emerges if one asks: What would happen if the two men were to shoot? The Habsburg emblem, and by implication the Spanish monarchy’s power, would shatter. Interestingly, in such a scenario these men—who clearly represent colonizers—would themselves vanish along with the Spanish monarchy. The image sets up the possibility of undoing the whole colonial project with its own tools of oppression: colonial officials, firearms, and the propagandistic power of figurative art. If the empire were annihilated so would be its iconography—the Hapsburg emblem flanked by two armed colonists—and its mode of representation, given that two-dimensional Andean art from

¹ Alexander von Humboldt, “Tagebücher der Amerikanischen Reise VIIa/b” 1801, 190. Nachl. Alexander von Humboldt (Tagebücher), VIIa/b. Staatsbibliothek, Berlin.

the Pasto area was traditionally highly abstract. Therefore, if the two men were to fire their guns, the whole representational apparatus of the colonizer would be undone, leaving the viewer with only formless material. The image itself sets up the possibility of unraveling a series of conditional propositions that lead us to inquire about its materiality beyond the constraints of an iconography that responds primarily to European and Creole taste.

This chapter follows the image's provocation and counters the conventional focus on visual motifs that has informed the few recent studies on mopa mopa objects. This scholarship has centered on identifying the cultural origin of their visual motifs as either European, Asian, or pre-conquest, thus merely pointing to a modification of local iconographic repertoires that attests to the Spanish monarchy's global reach.² This focus on visual motifs has completely neglected what is at stake in the *process* of making mopa mopa images, which included chewing the resin to clean it and mix in pigments. It has, therefore, been blind to the genuinely extraordinary symbolic importance of the material and aesthetic qualities that define the historical specificity of mopa mopa objects. This chapter analyzes the techniques for producing mopa mopa images and situates them amidst other Andean practices relying on the productive power of the mouth, as well as within discursive allusions to the mouth in colonial descriptions of Andean culture. I argue that, in the Andes, the mouth's various functional and communicative mechanics were considered a site of cultural production, not just a site of consumption, directly tied to the primacy of oral discourse in Andean societies, which were non-textual before the arrival of the

² Michael Coddington, "The Laquer Arts of Latin America," in *Made in the Americas: The New World Discovers Asia* (Boston, Mass.: MFA Publications, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, 2015); Yayoi Kawamura Kawamura, "Encuentro multicultural en el arte de barniz de Pasto o la laca del Virreinato del Perú," *Historia y Sociedad* 35 (July 2018): 87–112; Maria del Pilar López Pérez, "Quito, entre lo prehispánico y lo colonial: el arte del barniz de Pasto," in *Arte quiteño más allá de Quito*, ed. Alfonso Ortíz Crespo, vol. 27 (Quito: FONSA, 2010).

Spanish. In this light, transferring Asian and European motifs to mopa mopa images by chewing resin is not merely copying or interpreting new symbolic material. Through the action of the mouth, mopa mopa artists were embedding foreign motifs within an Andean way of experiencing and understanding the world.

The material

Long before the arrival of the Spanish, Native northern Andeans knew where to find and how to manipulate mopa mopa resin.³ This resin comes from the mopa mopa tree (*Eliagia pastoensis*), a plant that stills grows in the forest of the Amazon-Andes piedmont and has never been domesticated.⁴ Unlike most plant resins, it does not exude from the plant's trunk; rather, it is a secretion that the tree produces to protect the plant's leaf buds from insects (figs. 1.3-1.4). The resin needs to be harvested at an early stage of leaf growth, otherwise the leaves absorb it. As harvesters collect the buds and put them in a container, the buds lump together and form a

³ The only pre-Columbian archeological record of mopa mopa that has been found so far is the Pasto area. However, a late sixteenth-century document mentions the resin being worked in Timaná, which indicates that the Natives of that region also knew the material before the arrival of the Spanish. In Timaná, at least two groups lived in or close to the Spanish town, the Timaná and the Andaki. G. Descobar, "Memorial que da Fray Geronimo Descobar predicador de la orden de San Agustin al real consejo de Yndias de lo que toca a la provincia de Popayan (1582)," in *Relaciones y visitas a los Andes, S XVI*, ed. Hector Tovar Pinzón, vol. 1, Colección de historia de la Biblioteca Nacional (Santafé de Bogotá, Colombia: Colcultura : Instituto Colombiano de Cultura Hispánica, 1993), 387–427, 405; Maria V. Uribe and R. Lleras, "Excavaciones en los cementerios Protopasto y Miraflores, Nariño," *Revista colombiana de antropología XXIV* (March 1982): 335–80.

⁴ In the last two decades, mopa mopa collectors began 'treating' areas of the Andes piedmont forests where the plant grows naturally to achieve a larger mopa mopa yield. That is, they trim some of the adjacent plants so that the mopa mopa trees get more sunlight, which makes them grow faster. They also devised a method for artificially growing more plants from stem cuttings. Personal conversations with Jesus Ceron and Manuel Mueces, mopa mopa collectors, and with Alejandro Toro, forest engineer from Coopamazonia, Mocoa, February 2019.

hard block (fig. 1.5). The resin travels in such blocks from Mocoa, where collectors have traditionally lived, to Pasto where artisans to this day work with it.

The resin softens when heated and solidifies upon cooling. In its soft state, the material is quite elastic—one of its key features. A ball of resin of about an inch in diameter can be stretched into a uniform thin sheet of approximately 25 x 25 inches. An eighteenth-century commentator noted that “this fine resin is subtler than the thinnest Chinese paper.”⁵ Cleaned of any impurities and uncolored, the resin is glossy, translucent, and flexible, not unlike an organ tissue membrane (fig. 1.6). Its appearance was also aptly compared to onionskin and wet paper in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.⁶ Mopa mopa resin is impermeable to water, retains its flexibility for centuries, and adheres to a variety of surfaces when heated. Though mostly used on wood, it can also adhere to metal, paper,⁷ cardboard, and even plastic.⁸ When mixed with pigment, the stretched resin becomes a color field, as if liquid paint had found a self-sustained form in two dimensions.

⁵ “Se masca el meollo de la fruta, que es glutinoso, y cuándo está en proporcionada consistencia, se mezclan separadamente todos los colores claros, oscuros, medias sombras y medias aguas, y se extienden en hojas grandes, mucho mas sutiles que el papel mas delgado de la China.” Juan de Velasco, *Historia del reino de Quito en la America Meridional*, vol. 1 (Quito: Impr. del Gobierno, 1842 [1789]), 38-39. (All translations are by the author unless stated otherwise.)

⁶ Miguel de Santistevan, *Mil leguas por América: de Lima a Caracas 1740-1741: diario de Don Miguel de Santisteban*, Colección Bibliográfica (Bogotá, Colombia). Santafé de Bogotá: Banco de la República, 1992, 125; Humboldt, “Tagebücher der Amerikanischen Reise VIIa/b: Rio de la Magdalena – Bogota – Zuindice – Popayan – Quito (Antisana, Pichincha) Pasto Volcan,” 1801, 189, Nachl. Alexander von Humboldt (Tagebücher), VIIa/b, Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin, <http://resolver.staatsbibliothek-berlin.de/SBB0001527A00000000>.

⁷ There are at least two colonial objects that show a paper layer between the wood and the mopa mopa layer. Nobody has made a technical analysis of this.

⁸ Personal conversation with Jose Maria and Alvaro Obando, *barniz de Pasto* artisans. Pasto, August 2015.

During the colonial period, Native northern Andeans created intricate compositions to decorate wooden objects, such as tabletop cabinets, coffers, and gourds, by cutting the stretched, colored resin into various shapes—sometimes layering it over silver or gold leaf to achieve metallic effects (fig. 1.7). These objects, which combine pre-Hispanic, European, and even Asian motifs, were intended for the Spanish and Creole market. Careful attention to their details reveals the incredible skill and inventiveness in these images.

For example, on the back of a wooden chest, over a much-darkened background that was originally a bright metallic color full of foliage and birds one can discern a unicorn—of about 2 x 2 inches—surrounded by birds and foliage (fig. 1.8).⁹ A brown resin cutout forms the body's silhouette, which is detailed and shaded by adhering hair-thin strips of black resin that might easily be confused with the marks of a fine brush or a pen. Half of the mane is organized in rigid spikes; the other half sits in deliberate swirls. More hair-thin strips texture the body, which is also punctuated by triangles that, like the background, once shimmered with metallic luster. In this Native Andean rendition, the mythical figure is all the more fantastic. The unicorn's mouth delineated in reddish-brown is opened showing a fierce set of teeth, all canines.

Equally intriguing as the images and the material itself is the colonial technique through which Native artists prepared the resin to make into thin sheets, which is very similar to how artisans still work it today. Nowadays, the first step consists in cleaning the resin from plant residue. Artisans take pieces from blocks of collected resin and put them in boiling water. When the resin is soft, they take it out of the water and pound it with a hammer or pass it through a hand mill before putting it back in boiling water, causing the crushed plant residue to separate

⁹ The metallic color of the background and of many details on the unicorn is now dark because the silver applied under the colored resin, to achieve a metallic color, oxidized.

from the resin. Artisans repeat this process several times, until the resin is completely clean of impurities. While it is still soft, they mix in pigments by hand and then stretch the resin (fig. 1.9). There is, however, a fundamental difference between today's technique and colonial practice. In the colonial period, instead of using a grinding tool to clean the resin, Natives chewed it. They also chewed mopa mopa to mix in pigments. Unsurprisingly, both material and the oral technique in processing it piqued the interest of several well-known travelers, including Alexander von Humboldt.

Early accounts

The earliest description of the technique I have found appears in an October 23, 1652 letter written from Santa Fe that was included in the Jesuit annual letters to be sent to the Rector of the order. In the letter, Father Gabriel de Melgar states,

this varnish is heated and becomes relatively soft, in which state it receives any color indelibly chewed in the mouth. It is then extended and applied over gold, silver or tinted in any color available; it is worked in extremely delicate cuts and fine drawings that can be appreciated in the many works that every day are produced. Since recently, the paintings are being made over a layer of dark varnish in order to highlight the figures of the most delicate brushes.¹⁰

In another description, Mario Cicala, an Italian Jesuit who traveled through Pasto in 1743 on his way from Messina to Quito, also mentions that color is chewed into the material: "The

¹⁰ "este barniz se calienta y ablandado en moderación recibe cualquier color indeleblemente masticado en la boca y después se extiende y sobrepuesto a oro, plata o entrañado en cualquier color se dispone y labra en cortes tan delicados y dibujos de tanto primor como se admiran en las muchísimas obras que cada día van saliendo hasta haberse de poco acá introducido el sembrarse las pinturas con el mismo barniz oscuro para que afecten lo relevado de los mas delicados pinceles." *Cartas Anuas Jesuitas, Santa fe. 23 octubre 1652. Gabriel de Melgar in P. Rubio, ed. Cartas Anuas de La Compañía de Jesús En La Audiencia de Quito de 1587 a 1660. Quito: Compañía de Jesús, 2008, 160.*

artisans cook these bunch of fruit and then they *chew* it with the mouth, if the artisan wants...a blue varnish, he chews at the same time the varnish and a blue powder and he does the same with any color wanted.”¹¹

Another rather detailed description was recorded by Alexander von Humboldt. During his voyage to New Granada, Humboldt had been either actively searching for or being presented with information on mopa mopa for some time before arriving in the city of Pasto, the most lauded production center of mopa mopa objects. Already in Popayán—on his way to Pasto—the governor had shown Humboldt a branch of the mopa mopa tree.¹² In December 1801, when he finally reached Pasto, he carefully observed and recorded the process of working with the mopa mopa resin. Humboldt confirms what earlier descriptions from the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries had already stated about the process for working with the resin, including that pigments were added by chewing.

Cicala’s and Humboldt’s descriptions are the most comprehensive accounts of the technique. Both detail the application of resin over wood and list the pigments used. Humboldt adds chewing duration and the amount of resin being chewed at a time. He also presents a diagram to explain how the resin was stretched. However, the most significant way that Humboldt’s account differs from other colonial descriptions is that he expresses contempt both for the technique and for the objects themselves. Cicala, for instance, affirms that *barniz de Pasto* is

¹¹ “Los artesanos cocinan estos racimos de frutos y después los mastican con la boca, luego fiel artifice quiere por ejemplo un barniz de color azul, entonces mastica al mismo tiempo con el barniz polvos azules y así ocurre con el que color que fuere...” Mario Cicala, *Descripción histórico-topográfica de la Provincia de Quito de la Compañía de Jesús*, trans. J. G. Bravo, vols. 2, Biblioteca Ecuatoriana “Aurelio Espinosa Pólit.” Quito: Instituto Geográfico Militar, 2004 [1771], 2:514.

¹² Humboldt. “Tagebücher der Amerikanischen Reise VIIa/b” 1801, 188. Nachl. Alexander von Humboldt (Tagebücher), VIIa/b. Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin.

“the most beautiful and colorful, the most elegant, fine, and delicate of all that I have seen in my life.”¹³ Humbolt’s disdain of mopa mopa objects and the technique contrast with previous descriptions and it is also distinct in that he details the role of the mouth:

The workers sit around a pot of stone with burning coal. If one wants to obtain varnish without color, which rarely occurs, one chews in the mouth for 12-14 minutes the little ball of 1 inch in diameter that has been exposed to the action of hot water. If one wants to stretch the skin (membrane) without chewing, it will turn out uneven, they showed me that there are grains left. The saliva also acts on it chemically. The chewing augments the ductility and the evenness of the membrane (*tela*). The chewed mass, that has been tossed again into hot water, is stretched with two hands into a tape form... To give it colors, for example, red, one takes powdered Urucu (Bixa Orellana mixed with rubber milk), stretches the varnish softened in water (but not chewed) into a little membrane and puts in it the powder by folding the membrane in the shape of a cone. Then one puts it back in hot water, then begins to chew the cone just until the saliva takes on the color one desires. The chewed and colored mass is put back again in hot water, and it is stretched to make colored membranes in the manner already described. It is with these membranes, that resemble wet paper, that you wrap plates, heating the hands to press them [onto the wood]... licking it with the tongue...with saliva always playing a big role in this disgusting varnish.... The misfortune of this fabrication is the poor shape of the wood vases made with Indian knife and *taste*, [as well as] the bad designs...¹⁴

¹³ "el más hermoso y vistoso, el más elegante, gentil y delicado de todos los que he visto en mi vida." Cicala, *Descripción histórico-topográfica de la Provincia de Quito de la Compañía de Jesús*, 2:514.

¹⁴ The original, written in French by Humboldt, reads as follows: “Les ouvriers sont assis autour d’un pot de pierre avec du charbon ardent. Veut-on ce qui arrive rarement donner un vernis sans mélange de couleur, alors on mache dans la bouche pendant 12-14 minutes la petite boule de 1 pouce de diamètre que a été exposé à l’action de l’eau chaude. Si on veut étendre la peau (membrane) sans mastication elle deviant inégale, on m’a montré qu’il y a tant des grains. La salive y agit aussi chimiquement. La mastication augmente la ductilité et l’égalité de la membrane (tela). La pelote mastiquée et rejetée dans de l’eau chaude l’étend entre les deux mains en forme de ruban... Pour lui donner des couleurs p. e. le rouge on prend l’ Urucu (Bixa Orellana mêlé du lait de Caoutchouc) en poudre, étend le vernis ramolli dans l’eau mais non mastiqué dans une petite membrane et y jette la poudre en repliant la tela en forme de cornet (embudo). On le replonge dans l’eau chaude, puis commence à mastiquer ce cornet jusqu’à ce que la salive a pris la couleur que l’on desire. La masse mastiquée et colorée par la se rejette dans l’eau chaude et s’étend après dans des membranes colorées de la manière décrite. C’est de

The passage is remarkable for the details it offers, but also for the way it entangles technique, aesthetic judgment, and cultural bias. Ultimately, it is the active role of the mouth in the image-making process that he finds disgusting and that serves as grounds to disqualify Native aesthetic judgment. Humboldt was a man steeped in the Enlightenment's aesthetic ideology, which was premised on the belief that art had the capacity to raise the body from its material condition. Given that such aesthetic ideology was predicated on the separation of the self and the body, it is therefore not surprising that he was repulsed by the mopa mopa practice.¹⁵ His description and final assessment are quite important for the discussion that follows because they illustrate one of the larger points I am trying to make: that cultural understandings of body practices alter the meaning of aesthetic practices.

During the trip through Spanish America Humboldt wrote his diary in French. In light of his repeated references to chewing and saliva, one cannot help but wonder if Humboldt consciously chose the French word “goût”—which has the same double meaning as “taste” in English—to denote both aesthetic judgment and gustatory taste, as these objects were literally made with the mouth. Humboldt's word choice is not only suggestive but, as I will demonstrate, analytically useful. It brings together two aspects of the mopa mopa practice whose meaningful

ces membranes qui ressemblent à du papier mouille que l'on enveloppe les plats, rechauffant les mains pour les presser, etendre... y lechant de la langue... con la salive joue toujours un grand role dans ce vernis degoutant... La malheur du cette fabrication est la mauvaise forme des vases de bois faite au couteau et gout indiens, les mauvais dessins...” Translated by C. Pelletier. Humboldt, “Tagebücher der Amerikanischen Reise VIIa/b” 1801, 189-190. Nachl. Alexander von Humboldt (Tagebücher), VIIa/b. Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin.

¹⁵ Paul De Man, *Aesthetic Ideology* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996), 70–90; Terry Eagleton, *The Ideology of the Aesthetic* (Cambridge, MA, USA: Basil Blackwell, 1990), 7–8; Simon Gikandi, *Slavery and the Culture of Taste* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2011), 67.

relationship has never been investigated: the significance of the use of the mouth in Pan-Andean Native culture and its relation to aesthetic production.

Humboldt, unlike most of the colonial and contemporary authors who describe the mopa mopa technique, does not treat the use of the mouth as incidental.¹⁶ On the contrary, for him chewing is crucial: “If you want to stretch the skin (membrane) without chewing it will turn out uneven, they showed me that there are grains left. The saliva also acts on it chemically. The chewing augments the ductility and the evenness of the membrane (*tela*).” But ultimately, for him, the mouth is used because of the chemical reaction that he thought saliva caused in the resin. Toward the end of his description, he restates that importance: “saliva always plays a big role in this disgusting varnish.” However, it is unlikely that a chemical reaction from saliva actually played an important role in the preparation of the resin.¹⁷ The fact that contemporary artisans do not chew the resin at any point indicates this. What we know for sure is that the role of the mouth in the colonial practice consisted in the grinding action of chewing to remove plant residue and in the mixing of pigments into the resin by chewing. But surely there were other modes of grinding available in both pre-Hispanic and colonial times. For instance, mopa mopa artisans working today grind the resin with a hand-mill and knead in color by hand instead of

¹⁶ Colonial period description of the technique can be found in: Santistevan, *Mil leguas por América: de Lima a Caracas 1740-1741*, Santafé de Bogotá: Banco de la República, 1992, 124-125; Antonio Ulloa, *Relacion historica del viage a la America Meridional hecho de orden de S. Mag. para medir algunos grados de meridiano terrestre, y venir por ellos en conocimiento de la verdadera figura, y magnitud de la tierra, con otras varias observaciones astronomicas, y phisicas*. Madrid: Por A. Marin, 1748, 45.

¹⁷ It is possible that the chemical reaction of saliva with both the resin and pigments, although not strictly necessary, produced a result desired by colonial mopa mopa artists. It is also possible that chewing was just a preferred way to mix in pigments. In order to determine whether saliva had a particular effect on the pigmented resin, a replication of the colonial technique and chemical analyses would be necessary.

chewing. Why, then, did colonial artisans who had access to tools such as stone mills choose instead to use their mouths? As art historians Carolyn Dean and Heather Lechtman have noted, process itself was a meaningful aspect of artistic production of the central Andes, an insight that signals that the use of the mouth in mopa mopa should not be overlooked.¹⁸ As we will see, the use of the mouth is an opportunity to interrogate the cultural constitution of artistic process, as well as an occasion to explore Native orientations of the body and how artistic production is framed in relation to such notions.

Regional practices relying on the mechanics of the mouth

In the colonial period, the so-called district of Pasto consisted of the Andean highlands and adjacent lowlands in the southwest of modern-day Colombia. It roughly corresponded to Colombia's contemporary state of Nariño and the Amazon-Andes piedmont in the state of Putumayo. The region was inhabited by chiefdoms of three Indigenous groups: the Pastos, the Quillancingas,¹⁹ and the Abades. The city of San Juan de Pasto, founded by the Spanish,

¹⁸ Carolyn Dean, *A Culture of Stone: Inka Perspectives on Rock* (Duke University Press, 2010), 78-81; H. Lechtman, "Andean Value Systems and the Development of Prehistoric Metallurgy," *Technology and Culture*, no. 1 (1984): 30-33.

¹⁹ The groups that today identify as Quillancinga lost their language. However, various scholars agree that the Camëntsá (or Kamsá) who today inhabit the Sibundoy valley, east of the city of Pasto, are descendants of the Quillancingas and that Camëntsá language is related to the language once spoken by the Quillancingas. What has led scholars to think this is the way in which chronicler Cieza de Leon enumerated the Pasto and Quillancinga settlements and the geographical location of the Sibundoy Valley. Also, colonial official Tomas López in his 1558 *visita* listed Sibundoy settlements as Quillancinga. The term "Quillancinga," a Quechua word that literally translated means moon-nose and might have referred to half-moon shaped nose ornaments, could have been the term Spanish colonizers adopted to refer to the Camëntsá group. It was very common for the Spanish to use and propagate Quechua terms across their South American territories. See: Sergio Elías Ortíz, "The Native Tribes and Languages of Southwestern Colombia," in *Handbook of South American Indians*, ed. Julian H. Steward and U.S. Dept. of State as a project of the Interdepartmental Committee on Scientific and Cultural Cooperation, vol. 2 (New York: Cooper Square Publishers, 1963), 911; María Clemencia Ramírez de Jara,

functioned as its administrative center and became the most lauded center of mopa mopa production.

There is little information describing Indigenous culture and practices from the Pasto area recorded during the colonial period.²⁰ However, the use of the mouth to process the resin in the mopa mopa technique is not an isolated phenomenon. The mouth was used in other practices present in the region and its vicinity, as well as in practices that appear across the Andean highlands and the Amazon lowlands. The Pasto region, unlike the central Andes where a high wall of mountains isolates the highlands from the Amazon, is one of the places where the highlands and the Amazon lowlands interconnect. Several scholars have shown how exchanges with the Pacific coast and the Amazon are crucial to understand the region during the pre-Hispanic and colonial periods.²¹ In fact, mopa mopa objects' production is a testament to the

Frontera fluida entre Andes, piedemonte y selva: el caso del valle de Sibundoy, siglos XVI-XVIII, 1a ed., Colección Cuadernos de historia colonial (Santafé de Bogotá: Instituto Colombiano de Cultura Hispánica, 1996), 39; Colleen Alena O'Brien, "Grammatical Description of Kamsá, a Language Isolate of Colombia" (The University of Hawai'i at Mānoa, 2018), 11, <http://ling.hawaii.edu/wp-content/uploads/ColleenOBrienFinal.pdf>.

²⁰ Unlike the colonial proto-ethnographies that exists for the Inka, descriptions of the Pasto regional practices are cursory. The other source of period information available for the Pasto region consists of tribute and legal documents, which seldomly describes Native cultural practices.

²¹ Wendell C. Bennet, "The Archeology of Colombia," in *Handbook of South American Indians*, ed. Julian H. Steward and U.S. Dept. of State as a project of the Interdepartmental Committee on Scientific and Cultural Cooperation, vol. 2 (New York: Cooper Square Publishers, 1963), 824; Frank Salomon, "A North Andean Status Trader Complex under Inka Rule," *Ethnohistory* 34, no. 1 (1987): 63–77, <https://doi.org/10.2307/482266>; María Victoria Uribe, "Los Pasto y etnias relacionadas: arqueología y etnohistoria," in *Area septentrional andina norte: arqueología y etnohistoria* (Otavalo, Quito: Instituto Otavaleño de Antropología. Ediciones del Banco Central del Ecuador, 1995), 367–68; Ramírez de Jara, *Frontera fluida entre Andes, piedemonte y selva: el caso del valle de Sibundoy, siglos XVI-XVIII*, 67, 104–126; Alejandro Bernal Vélez, "La circulación de productos entre los Pastos en el siglo XVI," *Revista Colombiana de Antropología*, no. N. 2 (2000): 125–52.

Amazon-Andes connection in the Pasto region.²² Moreover, in the endeavor to situate the colonial mopa mopa practice, it is also important to consider central Andean highland cultures. As anthropologist Joanne Rappaport aptly notes, although the Pasto region has important differences, it also has significant commonalities with the central Andes.²³

Two traditions that were central to multiple groups throughout the Andean highlands and the Amazon lowlands were the consumption of coca leaves and of *chicha*, an alcoholic beverage—typically made from corn in the highlands and from yuca in the lowlands.²⁴ These activities were of paramount importance in social, ritual, and daily life.²⁵ In both practices, the mouth is essential, and not only for ingestion. *Chicha* and coca were perhaps the most important social lubricants for groups across the Andes and its lowlands. In the central Andes, *chicha* was used to establish social contracts in lavish feasts; it was offered to the *huacas*—Andean sacred

²² Catalina Ospina. *Imagining territory* M.S.

²³ Joanne Rappaport, *Cumbe Reborn: An Andean Ethnography of History* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994), 7–8.

²⁴ *Chicha* is a word of Taino origin that became a generic term used by the Spanish to denote fermented beverages by Native peoples in the Americas. Sophie D. Coe, *America's First Cuisines* (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 1994), 202; Justin Jennings, “La Chichera y El Patron: Chicha and the Energetics of Feasting in the Prehistoric Andes,” in *Foundations of Power in the Prehispanic Andes*, ed. K. J. Vaughn, vol. no. 14, Archeological Papers of the American Anthropological Association (Arlington, Va: American Anthropological Association, 2005), 242.

²⁵ For a discussion of Inka coca use in the colonial period see: Remedios de la Peña Begué, “El uso de la coca entre los Incas,” *Revista española de antropología americana* 7, no. 1 (1972): 277–306.

things and numinous beings²⁶—and also fed to the dead.²⁷ In the Amazon lowlands there is also evidence that *chicha* played an important place in socio-ritual activities.²⁸ Chroniclers of the northern Andes mention the pervasive consumption of these two items.²⁹ Concerning Pasto specifically, Spanish chronicler Cieza de Leon reports *chicha* consumption in the area.³⁰ As for coca chewing, archeological records from the region confirm its importance.³¹

Preparing fermented beverages with the mouth

There are two modes of fermenting corn to prepare *chicha* in the Andes; both appear to have been used since pre-Columbian times. The first consisted in letting the corn germinate, and the other in adding, via saliva, amylase, the enzyme that breaks down starches into sugar.³²

²⁶ Huaca “is a Quechua and Aymara term that refers to a range of Andeans numinous beings including local deities, shrines, statuary, and sacred features in landscapes.” Lisa Trever, “Idols, Mountains, and Metaphysics in Guaman Poma’s Pictures of Huacas,” *RES: Anthropology and Aesthetics*, no. 59/60 (April 1, 2011): 40. Huacas, however, are complex entities that defy Western categories and are therefore quite difficult to define. On this, see Tamara Bray, *The Archeology of Wak’as: Explorations of the Sacred in the Pre-Columbian Andes* (Boulder: University Press of Colorado, 2015).

²⁷ Brenda J. Bowser 1957, *Drink, Power, and Society in the Andes* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida); Marcela Campuzano Cifuentes 1964, *La chicha, una bebida fermentada a través de la historia* (Bogotá: Instituto Colombiano de Antropología, 1994); Inter-American Indian Institute, *La Coca -- tradición, rito, identidad* (México: Instituto Indigenista Interamericano, 1989).

²⁸ Juan Magnin, *Breve descripción de la Provincia de Quito y de sus Misiones de Sucumbios y de Maynas, 1740* (Quito: Sociedad Ecuatoriana de Investigaciones Historicas y Geograficas, 1989), 44.

²⁹ Lucas Fernández de Piedrahita, *Noticia historial de las conquistas del Nuevo Reino de Granada*, vol. 2, 2 vols., Ximénez de Quesada. Ediciones; (Bogotá: Editorial Kelly, 1973 [1688]); Serra, *Maravillas de la naturaleza*, 1956 [1780]; Pedro de Cieza de León, *La crónica del Perú* (Madrid: Calpe, 1922 [1553]), 112.

³⁰ Cieza de León, *La crónica del Perú* (Madrid: Calpe, 1922 [1553]), 112.

³¹ Uribe, “Los Pasto y etnias relacionadas: arqueología y etnohistoria,” 374–76; Timothy Plowman, “The Ethnobotany of Coca (*Erythroxylum* Spp., *Erythroxylaceae*),” *Advances in Economic Botany* 1 (1984): 74–76.

³² Jennings, “La chichera y el patron: Chicha and the Energetics of Feasting in the Prehistoric Andes,” in *Foundations of Power in the Prehispanic Andes*, ed. Kevin J Vaughn, vol.

Botanists Hugh Cutler and Martin Cardenas described the method as it was still practiced in the central Andes in 1947:

The maize grains are usually ground by hand, often with a half-moon stone rocker on a flat stone. The flour is then mixed with saliva. On some of the larger haciendas, it is still the custom to have women and children gather in groups to do this. The flour is moistened very slightly with water, rolled into a ball of convenient size and popped into the mouth. It is thoroughly worked with the tongue until well mixed with saliva, after which it is pressed against the roof of the mouth to form a single mass...and then removed with the fingers.... The salivated morsels are dried in the sun and stacked for storage....³³

In the Amazon lowlands, were fermented beverages were typically made of yuca, saliva was also used as a fermentation agent. Juan Magnin, a Swiss Jesuit missionary living, from 1737 to circa 1746, in Maynas and Sucumbios (an area on the Amazon piedmont that neighbors Pasto to the southeast), described the process:

Massato and *chaburassa* are made from yuca; from plantain they make *plataniza*; from corn they make other drinks. They also prepare innumerable drinks from other roots, fruits, and plants. There is almost nothing edible from which they do not make their *chichas*. All their *chichas* have to be chewed, because that way they are better. They do not chew everything, only a small part, that acts like yeast. They mix the chewed part with the rest and purify the mixture over a fire. It is the chewed part that seasons and perfects the beverage.³⁴

no. 14, Archeological Papers of the American Anthropological Association (Arlington, Va: American Anthropological Association, 2005), 244.

³³ As quoted in Ibid.

³⁴ “De la yuca nacen el Massato y chaburassa; de plátanos plataniza; y de Mayz otras bebidas; fuera de las innumerables que sacan de otras raíces, frutas y plantas q. casi no ay cosa de comer de donde no saquen sus chichas; aviendo de ser todas mascadas, q. así salen mejores; no que todo se masque; sino solo un acorta cantidad que viene a ser como levadura, que rebuelta con la demas y purificada con el fuego, la sazona y perfecciona.” Magnin, *Breve descripción de la Provincia de Quito y de sus Misiones de Sucumbios y de Maynas, 1740*, 55.

Fray Juan de Santa Gertrudis Serra, a Franciscan missionary in the area of Pasto and the Amazon-Andes Piedmont from 1756 to 1767, describes two modes of preparing corn *chicha*, one of them involving chewing.

Here [in Honda], and from here throughout Peru, they make from corn a drink called *chicha*: they take the corn and soak it for 24 hours, and then divide it in two ways. One is to cook it whole... and let it mature for 6 or 8 days; after it has fermented they take it out and grind on a stone rubbing with another hand, and this dough with the same broth they boil again, and then in troughs, they rub it with both hands and squeeze it. They strain the broth taking out the husk and bottle it.... The other mode is the same artifice, just that instead of grinding it, they chew it, and called it chewed *chicha*, and say the best is chewed by women.³⁵

Magnin's and Serra's accounts present two key facts relevant for a discussion of mopa mopa production. First, they confirm that fermented beverages produced by chewing were prevalent in the vicinity of Pasto, both in the Amazon piedmont and in the highlands.³⁶ Second, they state that chewed *chicha*, the kind that was processed in the mouth, was preferred. Although Serra seems to have gotten some preparation details wrong,³⁷ he is explicit on the fact that there

³⁵ “Aquí, y de aquí para arriba en todo el Perú, fabrican de maíz una bebida que se llama *chicha* de esta suerte: Toman el maíz y lo ponen a remojar 24 horas, y de ahí lo dividen de dos modos. El uno es cocerlo así entero y después lo trastornan con su caldo en artesas, y lo ponen a madurar seis o ocho días; después que ya se fermento lo sacan lo muelen en una piedra refregando con otra de mano, y esta masa con el mismo caldo lo vuelven a hervir, y después en arenas lo refriegan con las manos, y le hacen largar toda la sustancia. Cuelan después el caldo, quitan en bagazo y lo embotijan...El otro modo es el mismo artificio, sólo que en vez de molerlo no lo muelen, sino que lo mascan, y a esta llaman *chicha* mascada, y dicen que la mejor es la mascada por mujeres.” Serra, *Maravillas de la naturaleza*, 1956 [1780], 1:84.

³⁶ Contemporary Camëntśá say that *chicha* is a fundamental element of their social activities. They also used to chew corn to produce *chicha* in the past, although it is impossible to trace the practice back to pre-conquest times. Juan B. Jacanamijoy, *Diccionario Bilingüe: Camëntśá: Español, Español: Camëntśá*, 2018, 53,127, <https://www.sil.org/resources/archives/73123>.

³⁷ Though his description might reflect regional differences in *chicha* preparation, it is possible that he does not have a clear understanding of how *chicha* was actually prepared. It is

were two processes for making *chicha*, and that chewing was favored. Magnin's description implies that fermenting by chewing is preferred. He states that it is not necessary to chew, but it makes the product better. The production of fermented beverages relates to mopa mopa production in that two techniques were available to makers (in the case of mopa mopa, grinding and kneading vs. chewing), but one was preferred: the technique that relied on the mouth.

Coca leaf consumption

Coca leaf consumption is still very important in daily activity and ritual across the Andean highlands and for Amazonian groups.³⁸ Coca consumed in the highlands is usually grown in the warmer eastern slopes of the Andes towards the Amazon forest. In this tradition, coca leaves are chewed dried and whole. Similar to the process of salivating corn described by Cutler and Cardenas, chewing coca in the Andean highlands consists in working leaves and lime with the tongue into a ball that is placed between the gums and the inner cheek. The alkaloids and nutrients in it dissolve in the saliva and are slowly ingested. After a few hours, the leaves are depleted and spat out.

A different variety of coca, with a much lower alkaloid content, is grown in Northwestern Amazonia, mainly by Tukanoan and Witotoan-speaking groups. In this region, they toast and finely grind coca leaves and combine them with lime from ashes from *yarumo* (*Cecropia peltata*) or *uva de monte* (*Pourouma*) leaves, which provide the lime to help release the alkaloid.³⁹ This

highly unlikely that chewing was used to grind the corn because it would have been highly impractical to produce the large quantities of corn beer that were consumed. Much likely the process was the one Magnin described.

³⁸ Plowman, "The Ethnobotany of Coca (*Erythroxylum* Spp., Erythroxylaceae)," *Advances in Economic Botany* 1 (1984): 62–111.

³⁹ For a description of contemporary coca use in the Amazon see: Stephen Hugh-Jones, "'Food' and 'Drugs' in Northwest Amazonia," in *Tropical Forests, People and Food*:

mixture is known as *mambe*.⁴⁰ Indigenous people put a certain amount in their cheek working it with the tongue and leave it there. *Mambe* slowly dissolves with saliva, but because the mixture is finely ground there is no residue to spit out. Frequently, people also consume coca with tobacco, either smoked, snuffed, or ingested in *ambil*, a thick, black sticky paste made of tobacco leaves and vegetable salts. A small amount of *ambil* is placed in the teeth and is slowly ingested.⁴¹

In the Andean highland as well as in the Amazon, consuming coca is still deemed necessary for labor, particularly communal work. In both regions, it is important in shamanic activity, and gifting or exchanging coca leaves was and still is used to establish social contracts. In fact, putting coca in the mouth was in some cases what sealed the contract.⁴² For instance, describing what he deems to be the equivalent of baptismal ceremony among the Pebas (today known as the Yaguas), a Northwestern Amazonian group, Magnin states: “the godmother takes ground coca leaves with her fingers and puts it in the mouth of her goddaughter. She then

Biocultural Interactions and Applications to Development, ed. Helene Pagezy Claude Marcel Hladik Olga F. Linares, Annette Hladik and Unesco, Man and the Biosphere Series (Paris : Carnforth, UK ; Pearl River, N.Y.: UNESCO; Parthenon Pub. Group, 1993), 533–48.

⁴⁰ *Mambe* can also refer just to the alkaline substance with which coca leaves are mixed. The earliest mention of this mode of consuming coca appears in: Magnin, *Breve descripción de la Provincia de Quito y de sus Misiones de Sucumbios y de Maynas, 1740*, 36.

⁴¹ Anthropologist Nestor Uscategui mentions all the Native groups in modern-day Colombia. Interestingly, he notes that the Kofan group, who live in the Amazon-Andes piedmont just north of the Quijos territories, use *ambil*. Nestor Uscategui, “The Present Distribution of Narcotics and Stimulants Amongst the Indian Tribes of Colombia,” *Botanical Museum Leaflets, Harvard University* 18, no. 6 (1959): 273–304. Personally, I saw *ambil* for the first time used by the Miraña from the Amazon.

⁴² Gerardo Reichel-Dolmatoff, *Los Kogi: Una Tribu de La Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta, Colombia*, 2a edición, vol. 1 (Bogotá: Procultura, 1985), 87–90; Plowman, “The Ethnobotany of Coca (*Erythroxylum* Spp., *Erythroxylaceae*),” 103; Hugh-Jones, “‘Food’ and ‘Drugs’ in Northwest Amazonia,” 541; Laurent Fontaine, “El *mambe* frente al dinero entre los Yucuna del Amazonas,” *Revista Colombiana de antropología* 39 (2003): 178–87.

proceeds to do the same with the child's mother; after the mother, she does the same to each person invited. They end the celebration drinking traditional alcoholic beverages and dancing."⁴³

According to Magnin's description, what is characteristic and decisive in establishing the "baptismal" contract is the act of and order in which ground-coca leaves are placed on each of the participants' mouths.⁴⁴

There is also colonial documentation of ritual use of coca in Baeza, a town located to the southeast of Pasto, in Amazon foothills of modern-day Ecuador. In 1577, describing the customs of the Quijos, Natives of the area, colonial official Diego Hortegon says:

[after battle] the leaders use to sat and eat an herb called coca, they continue to use it (it is like zumaque) and after they stuff the mouth with coca leaves, they bite once or twice a bun which is like a stone made of ashes and other herbs. After that, they put in their mouths a mixture of honey from bees and ground tobacco, black as ink, which they bring in a small, cylindrical container. They repeat [this process] many times.

Hortegon proceeds to tie chewing coca to divination, "they are great sorcerers and believe in superstitions. Usually, they chew coca and take it out of the mouth. In the coca quid, they look

⁴³ "Los pebas, en el que estilan, entre otras ceremonias, coxe la Madrina con los dedos un poco de coca molida y se la pone en la boca de la ahijada y pasa a hacer lo mismo con su Madre de la criatura; de ay uno por uno, a los demás combidados, acabándose esas funciones con lo ordinario de bebidas y danzas." Magnin, *Breve descripción de la Provincia de Quito y de sus Misiones de Sucumbios y de Maynas*, 1740, 36.

⁴⁴ Similar practices have been documented by contemporary ethnographers for the central Andes. In the most important part of the marriage ceremony, the groom's parents offer the bride's parents three coca leaves. If the bride's parents received them and put them on their tongues, everyone would celebrate. This is a decisive exchange in establishing the marriage contract. Inter-American Indian Institute, *La Coca -- tradición, rito, identidad*, 337.

for the small twigs that stick out and for its color, seeing in these particularities all kinds of things they want to know.”⁴⁵

The process that Hortegon describes is fascinating for several reasons. First, it details coca chewing use for divination, a practice still in use by groups from the central Andes and by the Paez or Nasa, who live just north of Pasto.⁴⁶ Second, it shows how the act of processing the leaves in the mouth and then taking them out is productive and significant. Colonial Jesuit priest José de Acosta, reports something that also indicates the value of the leaves already processed in the mouth. Acosta says that in the central Andes the depleted leaves were not spat out and discarded, but rather placed back in the landscape as offerings to the soil.⁴⁷ Hortegon’s

⁴⁵ “y algunos de los hombres principales comian en estas borracheras las piernas y brazos asados o cocidos los vencedores y luego se sentaban a comer a comer una yerba llamada coca que la continuan usan della que es como zumaque y despues que hinchén la boca esta hoja muerden uno o dos bocados de un bollo como una piedra hecho de cenizas y otras confecciones de yerbas y tras aquello trahen un canuto con un betun de tabaco molido y miel de avexas negro como tinta y metenlo en la boca con aquel betun por munchas vezes son grandes hechizeros y agoreros y de hurdinario en esta coca mascandola y bolbiendola a sacar de la boca myran en los palillos que se levantan en las colores que se hazen y dizen que por alli ben todo genero de lo que quyerén saber.” Diego Hortegón, in *La Gobernación de Los Quijos, 1559-1621*, ed. C. Landázuri, Monumenta Amazónica 1 (Iquitos: MARKA, Instituto de Historia y Antropología Andina, 1989), 260–61.

⁴⁶ One way Inka shamans used coca for divination was to chew coca leaves and spit the juice into their palms. In this practice the productive power of the mouth is evident. See: Richard T. Martin, “The Role of Coca in the History, Religion, and Medicine of South American Indians,” *Economic Botany* 24, no. 4 (1970): 426. For discussions of contemporary use of coca for divination by central Andean groups and by the Paez see: Plowman, “The Ethnobotany of Coca (*Erythroxylum* Spp., Erythroxylaceae),” 105; Henman, *Mama Coca*, 199–203. It is interesting to note that in the south of the Cauca department, which is adjacent to the Pasto region, they add lime to the coca quid in by bite biting into a lime lump, just as Hortegon described for the Quijos. Plowman, “The Ethnobotany of Coca (*Erythroxylum* Spp., Erythroxylaceae),” 96.

⁴⁷ José de Acosta, *Historia natural y moral de las indias: en que se tratan de las cosas notables del cielo, elementos, metales, plantas, y animales de ellas, y los ritos, y ceremonias, leyes y gobierno de los indios*, 2. ed. revisada. (México: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1962 [1589]), 222. Respect for the consumed coca quid has also been reported for modern-day Paez or Nasa. Henman, *Mama Coca*, 149.

description is also remarkable because the process he describes seems to be a hybrid of traditional highland coca consumption and Amazonian coca consumption. The thick, black substance that Hortegon describes as honey blended with tobacco is *ambíl*. This appears to be an excellent example of how the piedmont, to which Pasto had easy access, was a juncture for Andean and Amazonian practices.⁴⁸

Although no colonial record detailing how coca was consumed in the Pasto region has surfaced,⁴⁹ we do know that the Pastos owned coca fields in Quijos region.⁵⁰ Moreover, the significance of coca chewing in the area is evident in the fact that was a common subject of representation. Numerous pre-conquest figurines, called *coqueros* (figures that represent coca chewers), emphasize the coca cud in the cheek. *Coqueros* appear throughout the Andes, an in particularly large numbers in the Pasto area.⁵¹ Looking more closely at these figures, the importance of the mouth is evident. Take, for instance, this full-body ceramic figure that sits on a stool (fig. 1.10). His eyelids closed, he sports a shawl-like garment and a loincloth. His left lip corner gives way to a salient protuberance on the left cheek: he is chewing coca, an activity underscored by the stillness of his posture and the size of the coca ball in his cheek.

The fact that people chewing coca were common subjects of representation in Andes clearly attests to the cultural importance of chewing coca, an importance that is also corroborated

⁴⁸ Scholars believe that consuming tobacco with coca is a practice characteristic from the lowlands. For a discussion of this topic see: Henman, *Mama Coca*, 72–73.

⁴⁹ From what Hortegon observed for the Quijos, it is possible that in the Pasto region coca could have been consumed using *ambíl*, as it was consumed by the Quijos.

⁵⁰ Antonio Borja, “Relación en suma de la doctrina e beneficio de Pimampiro,” in *Relaciones geográficas de Indias. Perú*, vol. 3, 4 v. (Madrid: Tip. de M. G. Hernández, 1897 [1541]), 134.

⁵¹ Uribe, “Los Pasto y etnias relacionadas: arqueología y etnohistoria,” 375–76.

in the multiple colonial writings that mention the practice.⁵² Unlike colonial documents, these pre-Hispanic representations also highlight the mouth itself, as they rely primarily on it to represent the practice of coca chewing. To convey the practice, artists could have resorted to portraying the figures with other elements related to coca chewing, such as coca leaves or *poporos*, lime containers.⁵³ Yet, in most instances, the practice is conveyed just by a protuberance inside one of the figure's cheeks. The oral cavity in many of these figures is the main focus of attention, sometimes appearing as a capacious space, almost half the size of the whole face (fig. 1.10). The prominent role of the mouth in coca consumption and *chicha* preparation, activities of much cultural importance in the Andes, suggest that the use of the mouth in the mopa mopa practice is anything but incidental. There are, however, additional uses of the mouth that further situate the colonial mopa mopa technique: healing practices of the Pasto-Andes nexus.

Healing practices

In these practices, the mechanics of the mouth play an integral part in the healer's ability to cure. Describing general cultural characteristics of the piedmont and the Amazon, Magnin explains that "there are a few true sorcerers, though many aspire to gain recognition, because the esteem in which they held their sorcerers is indescribable. They *bewitch* blowing or using herbs, and they cure the ill blowing, singing, or sucking, because usually they are also medicine men."⁵⁴

⁵² *Coqueros* from the lowlands have also been found, but not as many as in Andean regions. However, this might be because there has not been much archeology done in the region.

⁵³ *Poporos* themselves attest to the importance of practice, not only because they exist but because many present depictions of coca chewers. Furthermore, some *poporos* are quite elaborate.

⁵⁴ "Hechizeros y Supersticiones: Estos, son pocos los verdaderos; los que quieren serlo, para grangear estimaciones, son muchos; q. es indecible el respeto, q. les tienen: por el soplo o

More than two centuries later, in 1965, anthropologist Sergio Elías Ortiz recounted the customs of modern Pasto and Quillacinga. He described the very same practice with more detail than Magnin: “The shaman puts a little of each substance in his mouth, chews it, and then sucks the patient's head, temples, breast, back, stomach, coccyx, hands, and feet. He then blows out part of the contents of his mouth on the most affected part, while pronouncing unintelligible words, which the Indians say are prayers.”⁵⁵

The similarity between these two descriptions is remarkable. The evidence available so far does not prove that colonial Pastos shared medicinal practices with piedmont or Amazonian groups in the colonial period or before, though several area scholars believe that was case.⁵⁶ To this day highland shamans train in the Amazon. In any case, what is also remarkable from these two descriptions is how in the highly regarded cultural position of the shaman, the mechanics of the mouth come to fore with special force as a method for the shaman to exert his expertise and act upon the world: he blows, chews, sings, sucks.

con hierbas hechizan y por el soplo, con canciones o chupando, curan a los enfermos, q. de ordinario son assimismo Medicos.” Magnin, *Breve descripción de la Provincia de Quito y de sus Misiones de Sucumbios y de Maynas*, 1740, 32.

⁵⁵ Similar practices have been reported for the Paez and Guambianos or Moguez, who live north of Pasto in the Dept. Cauca, and for the Inga. Henman, *Mama Coca*, 207–15; Sergio Elías Ortiz, “The Modern Quillacinga, Pasto, and Coaiquer,” in *Handbook of South American Indians*, ed. Julian H. Steward and U.S. Dept. of State as a project of the Interdepartmental Committee on Scientific and Cultural Cooperation, vol. 2 (New York: Cooper Square Publishers, 1963), 967; Gregorio Hernández de Alba, “The Highland Tribes of Southern Colombia,” in *Handbook of South American Indians*, ed. Julian H. Steward and U.S. Dept. of State as a project of the Interdepartmental Committee on Scientific and Cultural Cooperation, vol. 4 (New York: Cooper Square Publishers, 1963), 944,955; Stephen H. Levinsohn, *The Inga Language* (The Hague: Mouton, 1976), 108,115.

⁵⁶ Uribe, “Los Pasto y etnias relacionadas: arqueología y etnohistoria,” 375; Ramírez de Jara, *Frontera fluida entre Andes, piedemonte y selva: el caso del valle de Sibundoy, siglos XVI-XVIII*, 91; Augusto J. Gómez, “Bienes, Rutas e Intercambios (siglos XV-XIX). Las relaciones de intercambio entre las tierras bajas de la Amazonia y las tierras altas de los Andes,” *Revista de Antropología y Arqueología* IX, no. 1–2 (1996): 69.

The processes involved in *chicha* preparation, coca consumption (and its representation), healing practices, and mopa mopa work suggest that in the Andes-Amazon cultural nexus the mouth was not just an organ for ingestion; it was also a site of the material and social production of culture, both in the literal sense of transforming and in the symbolic sense of processing materials. This is an essential focal point for anyone trying to understand a culture in which oral discourse performed most of the functions that can be performed by the written word.⁵⁷ Native South Americans did not develop writing as we know it. In the Andes, language—like mopa mopa, coca, *chicha*, and medicine—was processed *in* and emerged *from* the mouth. These practices suggest an understanding of the mouth as a maker of culture in its own right, not just as an instrument of the mind or a consumer of food.

The mouth in discourse

Several Native Andean languages in the vicinity of Pasto and beyond seem to indicate the mouth's important cultural bearing. The original language spoken by the Pastos was lost in the

⁵⁷ The evidence available makes it really hard to know how oral discourse functioned in the pre-conquest and colonial periods in the Pasto region. However, today, orality is of tremendous importance in Pasto culture. Oral history is a way to maintain and reclaim Indigenous identity. For a thorough discussion of the importance of orality for modern Pasto see: Rappaport, *Cumbe Reborn*; Oscar Andrés López Cortés, "Narrativas académicas historia oral en el pueblo de los Pastos," *Antipoda revista de antropología y arqueología*, no. 25 (2016): 77–98. It is also important to note the relationship between orality and practices involving the mouth's mechanics is evident in the description of healing practices. It is also worth mentioning that, today, in the Northwest Amazon a *mambear*—coca leaf powder consumption—is closely associated with orality. Used in social and ritual interaction, *mambe* acts as a facilitator of speech and communication. In the men's circle, for instance, both consuming and distributing *mambe* enhances the ability to tell stories and to communicate with their fellow men and with their ancestors. R. Dolmatoff also reported that for the Kogi, a group from Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta, coca consumption is related to an enhancing of oratory prowess. Hugh-Jones, "'Food' and 'Drugs' in Northwest Amazonia," 533–48; Laurent Fontaine, "El mambe frente al dinero entre los Yucuna del Amazonas," 178–87; Reichel-Dolmatoff, *Los Kogi: Una Tribu de La Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta, Colombia*, 1:77–78.

nineteenth century and no colonial dictionary has appeared to this day. But Camëntsá, the language spoken in east of the Sibundoy valley, a highland valley to the west of Pasto, has a robust vocabulary that describes specific activities performed with the mouth, including a particular word that is used to denote the chewing of corn to produce *chicha*, *jabmuajojoyán*.⁵⁸ Interestingly, in Camëntsá culture, preparing *chicha* used to be associated with oral discourse, although it is impossible to know how far that association goes.⁵⁹ Another language spoken in the vicinity of Pasto since colonial times is Inga, the northernmost Quechuan language known in South America.⁶⁰ It is spoken by Natives who live at the west end of the Sibundoy valley. Other Inga groups live further down towards the Amazon basin in Mocoa, and on the Rivers Mandur

⁵⁸ The Camëntsá no longer chew corn to produce *chicha*, but that is what word used to mean. Jacanamijoy Juajibioy, *Diccionario Bilingüe, Camëntsá: Español; Español: Camëntsá* (SIL International, Sibundoy, 2018), 97, 127. It also interesting to note that the Camëntsá, today, do not chew coca.

⁵⁹ Explaining the importance of the hearth in Camëntsá culture linguist Colleen Alena O'Brien mentions the connection between making *chicha* and telling stories: "An important concept in Kamsá is *shinÿak* 'hearth', the large fire kept in the traditional house or outdoor kitchen. Many Kamsás see this word as being connected to the words in 'fire' and *shinÿe* 'sun', and thus see the three concepts as related. More pragmatically, the *shinÿak* is used to make *chicha*, which needs to be cooked in a cauldron over a large fire, meaning it cannot be made on a modern stove. In the past, people would make meals on the fire and sit around the *shinÿak*, telling stories." O'Brien, "Grammatical Description of Kamsá, a Language Isolate of Colombia," 11.

⁶⁰ It is unclear when did these Quechua speakers arrived to the area or under which circumstances. María Clemencia Ramírez de Jara posits that were in the area before the European conquest. María Clemencia Ramírez de Jara, "Territorialidad y Dualidad en una Zona de Frontera del Piedemonte Oriental: El Caso del Valle de Sibundoy," in *Frontera y poblamiento: estudios de historia y antropología de Colombia y Ecuador*, [online] (Lima: Institut français d'études andines, 1996), 55, <http://books.openedition.org/ifea/2501>. There is also a 17th-century document which states that Quechua was spoken in Barbacoas on the Pacific coast west of Pasto. In a discussion of this evidence, Marta Clemencia Herrera, notes that research in linguistics suggests that around the 8th century A.D. Quechua-speaking groups moved northwards, well before the Inca invasion in the fifteenth century. This would suggest that Quechua variants were spoken in Ecuador and possibly in Colombia at the arrival of Europeans. Marta Clemencia Herrera Ángel, *El conquistador conquistado: Awás, Cuayquer y Sindaguas en el Pacífico colombiano, siglos XVI-XVIII* (Bogotá: Universidad de los Andes, 2006), 36.

and Caquetá. In Inga lexicons recorded recently, the word for mouth is *simi*. The same word used in Quechua. There is no colonial dictionary of Inga, but it might have not differed much from Quechua, since these groups seemed to have arrived at the Andes-Amazon piedmont early in the colonial period. We do have the colonial glossing of the Quechua word *simi*, which points to the heavy cultural weight that the mouth had in the Andes. Recorded in the sixteenth century by Quechua lexicographer and Jesuit missionary Diego Gonzales Holguin, *simi* is defined as “mouth, language, commandment, law, mouthful, news, the word and its answer.”⁶¹

The region to the north of Pasto is inhabited by the Nasa or Paez group, who speak Nasa Yuwe. *Yuwe*, in a modern-day lexicon, is glossed as mouth, language, greeting, news, and message.⁶² The Muisca, who lived further north, used the term *quhyca* for mouth. It also means aperture for entrance or exit, signaling the consuming *and* productive aspects of the mouth. *Quhyca* also indicates the connection between the mouth and speech, since *hyca* means both to speak and voice or speech.⁶³ These terms seem to reflect the roles the mouth has played in the Andes and helps us understand how Andeans configured the body as a semantic field,⁶⁴ bringing us closer to discerning the cultural framework in which the chewing aspect of the mopa mopa practice took place.

⁶¹ Diego G. Holguin, *Arte y vocabulario en la lengua general del Peru, llamada Quichua, y en la lengua española* (Seville: En casa de Clemente Hidalgo, 1603), 326.

⁶² *Nasa yuwe Talking Dictionary*, 2012. <http://www.talkingdictionary.org/paez>

⁶³ Miguel A. Quesada Pacheco, *El Vocabulario Mosco de 1612 (Transcripción Manuscrito 2923 Biblioteca Palacio Real de Madrid)*, vol. X, En Estudios de Lingüística Chibcha. Programa de Investigación Del Departamento de Lingüística de La Universidad de Costa Rica (San José, Costa Rica: Universidad de Costa Rica, 1991), http://muisca.cubun.org/Manuscrito_2923_BPRM; D. F. Gómez Aldana, “Diccionario Muysca-Español,” March 29, 2019, muisca.cubun.org/Categoría:Diccionario.

⁶⁴ Marcel Mauss, “Techniques of the Body,” trans. Ben Brewster, *Journal de Psychologie Normal et Pathologique* Année XXXII (1935): 271–93.

In order to capture more thoroughly such a cultural framework, it would be ideal to study if and how in the Pasto region underscored the mouth through discourse.⁶⁵ However, we only have few and cursory mentions of Pasto Indigenous culture and practices from the colonial period. The closest we get to a record of Pasto Native oral discourse is in legal documents—testaments and court records. Although it is possible to discern aspects of traditional Indigenous customs in these documents, they offer limited information of Native values and practices because they were crafted for very specific purposes within Spanish institutions, and therefore conform to Western values in content and format.

There are, nevertheless, two remarkable discursive instances from the central Andes in which we can discern much about the importance of mouth. One is from the Huarochiri manuscript, the only surviving document of its kind, unique in its detailed description of traditional Andean beliefs. The other is the Quechua notion of stone nibbling, studied by art historian Carolyn Dean. The Pasto region was the northernmost frontier of the Inka empire and only a few southern Pasto chiefdoms were under Inka rule for about a decade before the Spanish arrived.⁶⁶ Therefore, the direct relationship between the Pasto highlands and Inka culture is tenuous. However, there are significant similarities between Andean cultures. In fact, there are good reasons to think that the mouth also had special cultural value in the central Andes, indicating that this an important phenomenon to consider when thinking about the Andean region. As mentioned before, in the central Andes coca chewing and *chicha* production by

⁶⁵ Oral discourse is still highly important for Northern Native Andeans, such as the contemporary Pastos and Camëntsás. However, it is impossible to ascertain that the same was in the case in colonial times or before. Very few records of Native oral history from the period survive, but there are none for the Northern Andes.

⁶⁶ Rappaport, *Cumbe Reborn*, 32.

mastication were prominent cultural activities pre-conquest and during the colonial period. Furthermore, social historian Constance Classen, in her pioneering analysis on Inka understandings of the body, remarks that speech itself has immense creative and productive power in Inka cosmology.⁶⁷ Reflecting on how the mouth was framed in the central Andes gives us clues as to how Andean cultures configured the body as a semantic field.

A deity's mouth

In a passage in the Huarochirí manuscript—a Quechua-language early seventeenth-century source produced in the Huarochirí Province in the central Andes that was part of the Inka empire, unique in its detailed description of traditional Andean beliefs—a crying man was carrying his child, thorny oyster shells, coca, and balls of *ticti* (sacrificial food made of chewed *chicha*). The offerings were intended for the antagonist deity Huallao. In the text, Paria Caca—the principal deity in the Huarochirí manuscript—says to the man, “don’t take your little one there. Carry him back to your village. Give me that thorny oyster shell of yours, your *coca*, and your *ticti*.” Paria Caca and the man continued the exchange, as Paria Caca explains to the man that he should not fear Huallao, given Paria Caca’s might. “And while Paria Caca was speaking, his breath came out of his mouth like bluish smoke. When the man saw this, he got scared and handed over everything he’d brought. [Paria Caca] ate the thorny oyster shell, making it crunch with a ‘Cap, cap’ sound, as well as the other offerings.”⁶⁸

⁶⁷ Constance Classen, *Inka Cosmology and the Human Body* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1993), 36.

⁶⁸ Frank Salomon, Jorge Urioste, and Francisco de Avila, *The Huarochirí Manuscript a Testament of Ancient and Colonial Andean Religion* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1991), 67-68, 116.

In this passage, coca and *chicha* are brought as offerings on the same level of importance as thorny oyster shells (*Spondulus princeps*), a highly valuable import from the Pacific coast of modern-day Ecuador. This underscores the cultural importance of coca and *chicha*, products for which the mouth plays a key role in their production, consumption, and social activation. Yet the passage is truly remarkable for the way it highlights the mouth itself. Paria Caca's mouth produces not only audible but visible speech: the air that constitutes each utterance is blue smoke. It is ultimately this sight that compels the man to give Paria Caca the precious offerings, which are not quietly ingested. Paria Caca is a loud, chomping deity. Both the valuable oyster shells and the deity's mouth are singled out by the "Cap, cap" sound produced as he crunches them. The deity's mouth is to be recognized as a powerful, yet poetic organ.

This anecdote is not an isolated occurrence in the Huarochirí manuscript. Paria Caca's mouth and ability to speak are framed similarly at another crucial moment in the manuscript's narrative. Chapter 23 describes an assembly of all the *huacas* in the Inka empire, summoned by the Inka king Tupay Ynga Yupanqui. The assembly was a crucial politico-religious event, in which, symbolically, local deities negotiated the status of their polities at the higher echelon of Inka governance. Moreover, the meeting illustrates the nature of the reciprocity between the Inka sovereign and the empire's subjected polities that maintained the cohesion of the vast Inka empire. Rather than imposing their deities and religious beliefs on the polities the Inka conquered, they adopted and helped maintain the cult of local *huacas*. In return, each polity provided the Inka with labor force and goods, according to their means.

The importance of the meeting is emphasized by stating that *all* the *huacas* from the Tawantinsuyo (or Inka empire) attended the assembly. Paria Caca sent Maca Uisa, one of his five personas. At the meeting, the Inka king addressed the *huacas*: "I served you with my gold

and my silver...being at your service as I am, won't you come to my aid now that I'm losing [in war] so many thousands of my people?" The *huacas* sat mute. The Inka, impressing upon them the "terms" of their exchange relationship, retorted: "Why should I serve you and adorn you with my gold, with my silver, with my baskets full of my food and drinks, with my llamas and everything else I have?...If you do refuse [to help me], you'll burn immediately!" All the other *huacas* remained silent, but Maca Uisa spoke up, promising to subdue the Inka king's enemy. "While Maca Uisa spoke, a greenish-blue color blew from his mouth like smoke."⁶⁹ Again, but now framed by the silence of all the numinous beings of the Tawantinsuyu and in the presence of the Inka king himself, Paria Caca's speech and his mouth are highlighted in color. In such a high-stakes moment, when pronouncing the words upon which hinged Paria Caca's status within the Inka empire, and therefore Huarochiri province's privileges, the deity's organ of speech is again underlined. Subtly, the mouth emerges as the epicenter of power.

Maca Uisa's commitment afforded him the privilege of journeying on a special litter, "made for the travels of an Inka in person." His subsequent demonstration of strength in vanquishing the enemy of the Inka granted him even more deference from the Inka king. The narrative emphasizes how Huarochiri's deity earned material benefits and symbolic status, gains that benefited the province's political standing within the empire. The Inka ruler gave Maca Uisa fifty of his retainers and was willing to offer anything Maca Uisa asked for. In fact, according to the manuscript, Huarochiri's deity is in such a favorable position that he could *demand* things from the Inka king. Rejecting the food of the Inka, the Huarochiri deity commanded: "I am not in the habit of eating stuff like this. Bring me some thorny oyster shells! [As soon as the Inka

⁶⁹ Salomon, Urioste, and Avila, *The Huarochiri Manuscript*, 114–15.

supplied them]...Maca Uisa ate them all at once making them crunch with a ‘Cap, cap’ sound.”⁷⁰
Closing his performance of power, Maca Uisa’s mouth comes resounding to the fore.

Nibbling of Stone

The mouth as a site of cultural production in the Andes appears yet again in discourse regarding Inka masonry, though this time metaphorically. In her thorough study of Inka perspectives on stone, Carolyn Dean explains that the Inka differentiated between building with ordinary stone, *pircani* in Quechua, and working with finely joined masonry, called *canincakuchini*—derived from the verb *canini*, meaning to bite or nibble. Dean explains that “nibbling” vividly describes the process of creating Inka finely joined masonry. Pounding the stone to be dressed with a harder rock, initial strokes would take “large bites,” while the final shape was achieved by “persistently nibbling away at the block.” The process was arduous and time-consuming. Each block was “nibbled” on-site until it fit precisely with all adjacent blocks. The stone’s precise and bespoke fit was not only an aesthetic choice but one rooted in structural necessity, as this kind of Inka masonry did not use mortar.

Dean suggests that the concept of nibbling does not merely describes the *process* of making Inka finely joined masonry—“the persistent working of individual blocks”⁷¹—but also, and more importantly, it emphasizes process itself. The unadorned appearance of Inka walls also foregrounds their making-process and, by implication, the intense labor necessary to work the stones and erect such strong structures.⁷² The importance of artistic process in the Andes is noted in Heather Lechtman’s study of Inka metal and textile work, where she shows that details of the

⁷⁰ Salomon, Urioste, and Avila, 116.

⁷¹ Dean, *A Culture of Stone*, 77.

⁷² Dean, 113.

objects' structure index their own history of production.⁷³ Therefore, as Dean notes, “nibbling” captures an important Inka value by underscoring process, but it does more than that. Used in the context of architectural building, “nibbling” signals the role of the mouth as a tool—one that knows materials—and indexes the mouth as a site of cultural production.

Knowing with the mouth

Within the context of this broad range of discursive methods and orally oriented practices, it becomes clear that the chewing aspect in the production of mopa mopa images was hardly incidental. The mopa mopa technique was rooted in pan-Andean traditions that cultivated the mouth as a tool and considered the mouth an important site of cultural production. This is further indicated by the fact that the chewing of the resin—in the colonial period, and surely before the arrival of the Spanish—does not come primarily from a practical necessity but from a cultural one. As I mentioned before, chewing was not absolutely essential to work the resin. Just as *chicha* could be made without chewing, artisans working with the resin today show that it not necessary to chew the resin at any point.

In light of this, I propose that the reason to process the resin with the mouth arose from a conception of the mouth as a culturally meaningful threshold where the body and the individual, not to mention the community, interacted with the world. In connection to this, it is worth mentioning that chewing the resin is not easy, as any unaccustomed jaw tires out rather quickly. Such a particular mode of engaging with the material, therefore, responds to a specifically Andean sensory order, one that anthropologist Katherine Geurts defines as the “pattern of

⁷³ Heather Lechtman, “Andean Value Systems and the Development of Prehistoric Metallurgy,” *Technology and Culture*, no. 1 (1984): 30–33.

relative importance and differential elaboration of the various senses, through which [humans] learn to perceive and to experience the world.”⁷⁴ According to this sensory order, a culture develops certain abilities. In the Andean case, the mouth as a sensing and working element would have been particularly sensitive, with powerful jaw muscles, and might have had even healthier teeth.⁷⁵ Coca mastication, for instance, is a complex and subtle art that evidences the development of the mouth as an active organ. According to anthropologist Anthony Henman, for optimal and timely alkaloid release *coqueros* learn to control salivation and maintain certain level of mouth humidity by controlling air flow in the mouth.⁷⁶

Another example comes from José Maria Obando, the oldest artisan working with the resin today, whose family has been working the resin for generations. He tells a story about his grandfather who also chewed the resin. Long after his grandfather’s death, the family had to move his remains from the church crypt to the cemetery. Obando recalls vividly that, even then, his ancestor’s teeth were in great shape and ascribes this to the fact that he chewed mopa mopa resin when alive.⁷⁷ Although we do not know yet how orally oriented practices affected Andean pre-Hispanic and colonial bodies, this anecdote serves to ground the profound effect of bodily practices and embodied knowledge.

It is also worth inquiring into what the cultivation of the mouth as a receptor of knowledge entails. The mouth has the ability to gather a variety of sensory information and to act

⁷⁴ Kathryn L. Geurts, *Culture and the Senses: Bodily Ways of Knowing in an African Community*, Ethnographic Studies in Subjectivity (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), 5.

⁷⁵ Inka chronicler Jesuit Bernabe Cobo claims that coca was good for maintaining healthy teeth. Bernabé Cobo, *Historia Del Nuevo Mundo* (Sevilla, 1890 [1653]), 476.

⁷⁶ Henman, *Mama Coca*, 148.

⁷⁷ Personal conversation with José Maria Obando, Pasto, Summer 2015.

upon matter in different ways. It is the center of the gustatory apparatus. It responds to mechanical and thermal impressions. It also has the potential to grind and to chemically change matter via saliva enzymes. Describing Native Andean divination practices that rely in chewing coca, ethnobotanist Timothy Plowman notes how Natives derive knowledge from the leaves, but particularly from masticating them: “Indians who chew coca are intensely aware of the signs latent in the leaves they chew: in their form and color, in the taste and form of the chewed quid, or in the saliva which issues from it.”⁷⁸ Similarly, chewing mopa mopa, Native Andeans must have developed the sensibility to detect the ideal resin texture and the best temperatures to add color and stretch it by using the mouth’s thermal and tactile capabilities. Taste surely played a role too, perhaps helping in determining when the resin was at its best. When adding colors, taste conceivably helped determine the quality of pigments, the amount necessary to achieve a particular hue, and the point at which the resin had totally absorbed the color. It is possible too that saliva enzymes acted upon pigments, as Humboldt believed. What is undeniable is that mopa mopa artists, as coca chewers, *chicha* makers, and shamans knew materials with their mouths and acted upon the world with their mouths.

Based on her study of the sensory orientation of the Anlo-Ewe community in West Africa, Katherine Geurts argues that sensing, which she defines as bodily ways of gathering information, “is profoundly involved with a society’s epistemology, the development of its cultural identity, and its forms of being-in-the-world.”⁷⁹ In the Andean case, the sensing experience created through chewing, tasting, and other perceptual modes afforded by the mouth was then reproduced as a form of cultural tradition. This is evidenced in practices such as

⁷⁸ Plowman, “The Ethnobotany of Coca (*Erythroxylum* Spp., Erythroxylaceae),” 105.

⁷⁹ Geurts, *Culture and the Senses*, 1.

preparing chewed *chicha*, chewing coca, or healing by chewing, spitting, and blowing, as well as in the high esteem in which they held these actions, i.e. not just as functional activities but as ones that had transcending meaning and prestige. Andeans also inscribed this sensory orientation discursively. Passages of the Huarochiri manuscript underscore the mouth itself as well as what comes out of it, while the notion of “nibbling” stone specifically marks the mouth as an important site of production. All of this, coupled with the importance of orality in a culture with no written discourse, indicates that the use of the mouth was deeply embedded in an Andean epistemology, in their way of being-in and experiencing the world.

In the area of mopa mopa production, such sensory orientation is directed toward an aesthetic material expression. Therefore, in using their mouths as an integral part of the physical act to produce mopa mopa images, Native artists embedded them in Andean epistemology. This alters what it means to produce versions of European or Asian motifs in them. Mopa mopa images responded to a European aesthetic and were made for the Spanish and Creole market. But by creating them in the form that they did, Native Andeans framed these images within a cultural matrix proper to their own ways of relating with the world.

Spanish colonization entailed radical and interdependent social, religious, and aesthetic changes in the Andes. What makes the study of mopa mopa especially rewarding is that it lets us reimagine “the nature of historical consciousness under colonial domination.”⁸⁰ Beyond the integration of motifs belonging to various traditions, in this practice we can observe how Indigenous artists—from mouth to hands—were exploring a new aesthetic and representational regime in their own terms.

⁸⁰ Rappaport, *Cumbe Reborn*, 19.

Coda

The image that opens this chapter holds in tension multiple interpretations. Having located mopa mopa practice within Andean epistemology, I will offer another reading of the image. No Spanish king set foot on the colonies. The crown as a visible entity only existed on colonial territory in image form, via portraits, but mostly via emblems.⁸¹ Take for example the inauguration of a new king. In these events, celebrated in many towns across the colonial territories including the city of Pasto, a banner with the king's arms would stand-in for the absent monarch. The banner would be placed on a tableau, located in the middle of the central plaza. The town's people celebrated playing drums, trumpets, shawms and shooting harquebuses.⁸²

In line with these descriptions, the image in question appears to be alluding to this kind of celebration of the crown. And yet, the image's lack of pictorial depth conspicuously denies the possibility of having the guns point in any other direction than that of the double-headed eagle. However, if the violence implied at the crown's emblem were just a technical "problem," it could have been easily resolved by flipping the shooters one hundred and eighty degrees in opposite directions, but the "problem" was not resolved. As a result, the image is ambiguous.

Moreover, from a Native perspective, a depiction of colonists shooting at the Habsburg emblem might, in fact, be a direct allusion of colonial reality. In such reality, the crown was never visible other than as an image. Furthermore, colonists were indeed constantly acting against the crown, undermining its interests and ignoring its mandates. Colonists seriously

⁸¹ Joanne Rappaport and Tom Cummins, *Beyond the Lettered City: Indigenous Literacies in the Andes*, Narrating Native Histories (Durham N.C.: Duke University Press, 2012), 213–17.

⁸² José Rafael Sañudo, *Apuntes Sobre La Historia de Pasto*, vol. 2 (Pasto, Colombia: Imprenta la Nariñesa, 1939), 1, 26; Federico González Suárez, *Historia General de La República Del Ecuador*, vol. 3 (Alicante: Biblioteca Cervantes Virtual, 2004), 356.

evaded the *quinto real*, the tax they had to pay the crown, participated in contraband, failed to comply with the indoctrination of Natives in the Catholic faith, and abused their power over Indigenous labor.⁸³ Operating within those fractures of the colonial project, Indigenous people were able to fight through legal recourse to regain some of their lost autonomy. Natives often appeared in front of judges denouncing the abuses of colonists against them, citing also faults against the crown. Although the image's mode of representation and theme betray a European origin, as much as mopa mopa practice, this image makes *sense* from the complex Indigenous experience of colonial rule.

⁸³ For discussions on colonial contraband see: Sebastian Gómez González, “‘El Espíritu de Contrabando Que Reina Por Estas Partes’. Comerciantes Portugueses, Misioneros y Comercio Ilícito En el piedemonte Andino-Amazónico, 1730-1790,” *Tempo* 23, no. 3 (December 2017): 547–66; Jorge Palacios Preciado, *Trata de Negros Por Cartagena de Indias* (Tunja: Universidad Pedagógica y Tecnológica de Colombia, 1973).

“The finest brushes:” Converting Native Techniques into Pintura

Introduction

In 1652, Jesuit Gabriel de Melgar wrote to the order’s Rector about the “odd natural things of the Mocoa Province,” a region that roughly corresponds to the area around the modern-day city of Mocoa in the Colombian Andes-Amazon foothills. For most of the colonial period the Mocoa Province was under the jurisdiction of Pasto. The oddities to which Melgar was alluding to include mopa mopa resin and the techniques for working with it. As a twenty first-century reader, I am not struck by the “oddities” he mentions, but rather by his use of language. In his report on mopa mopa images and their technical characteristics, he uses the terms “cutting,” “drawing,” and “painting” almost interchangeably:

This varnish is heated and softened in moderation receives any color indelibly chewed in the mouth. It is then stretched and overlaid on gold or silver. Colored stretched sheets are arranged and worked in delicate cuts and fine drawings that can be admired in the many pieces that come out every day. Recently, the *paintings* are being produced over a dark layer of this same varnish to heighten the marks of the most delicate *brushes*.¹

As described in Chapter 1, mopa mopa images are made by arranging resin cutouts on a surface. Mopa mopa artists created complex compositions by cutting figures’ silhouettes, outlining and detailing them with hair-thin resin strips, and sometimes decorating them with small geometric shapes (fig. 2.1). Indeed, Melgar relates that the stretched resin was worked by

¹ “este barniz se calienta y ablandado en moderación recibe cualquier color indeleblemente masticado en la boca y después se extiende y sobrepuesto a oro, plata o entrañado en cualquier color se dispone y labra en cortes tan delicados y dibujos de tanto primor como se admiran en las muchísimas obras que cada día van saliendo hasta haberse de poco acá introducido el sembrarse las *pinturas* con el mismo barniz oscuro para que afecten lo relevado de los mas delicados pinceles.” Francisco Piñas Rubio, ed., *Cartas Annuas de la compañía de Jesús en la Audiencia de Quito de 1587 a 1660* (Quito: Compañía de Jesús, 2008), 160. My emphasis.

making and arranging very delicate cuts. Yet he also equates cuts with fine drawings without pause; for him, arranged cutouts are drawings. Furthermore, he refers to mopa mopa images as paintings and to mopa mopa artists' fine cuts as delicate brush strokes.

Rather than being careless, Melgar seems to be grappling with the challenge of characterizing media for which he did not have specific terminology. He was not alone. Colonial commentators on mopa mopa images used western terminology in curious ways to account for mopa mopa technique, often resorting to terms associated with painting, which technically do not correspond with mopa mopa practice. For instance, Jesuit Juan de Velasco, after describing the preparation of the resin and stating that the figures were made by cutting stretched resin in multiple forms, resorts to “painting” to refer to the act of composing an image with mopa mopa resin: “they *paint* what they want over things made of wood, or gourds, or metals.”² Italian Jesuit Mario Cicala refers to mopa mopa artists as “*painters* and artisans of the said varnish” and to the stretched colored resin as paint: “once the thin *paint* from the varnish is made like paper or even thinner than paper, they extend it” over an object to decorate it.³ Certainly, no one in Europe would have been stretching paint. On the one hand, these accounts lead us to explore how mopa mopa images relate to techniques that we easily associate with painting. On the other hand, these

² “se pinta lo que se quiere sobre cosas ya hechas de madera, o de calabasos, o de metales.” Juan de Velasco, *Historia del Reino de Quito en la America meridional*, vol. 1 (Quito: Impr. del Gobierno, 1842 [1789]), 36.

³ “así lo llevan a Pasto para venderlo a los pintores y artesanos de tal barniz... una vez hecha la *pintura* delgada como de el papel y mas delgada... la *pintura* se pega.” Mario Cicala, *Descripción histórico-fisca de la Provincia de Quito de la compañía de Jesús*, trans. Julián G. Bravo, vol. 2, Biblioteca Ecuatoriana “Aurelio Espinosa Pólit.” (Quito: Instituto Geográfico Militar, 2004 [1771]), 514.

accounts prompt us to investigate period notions of painting and to reflect on what is at stake when colonial commentators force western terminology onto native techniques.⁴

In this chapter, I explore the notion of *pintura* in the early modern Spanish Empire by looking into the definitions put forth in three crucial texts: Sebastián de Covarrubias's 1611 dictionary, which gives general insight into how the term *pintura* functioned, and two treatises on painting: one by Felipe de Guevara, written ca. 1535, and the other by Francisco Pacheco, published in 1649. Through the analysis of these sources, I argue that the notion of painting in the Hispanic world was ample and general, but it was tied to a specific materiality and was rooted in a particular epistemic function. I show that *pintura* operated not only as an artistic medium, but also as an institution rooted in western Catholic understandings of the role that images played in knowing the world. I also analyze the consequences of imposing such institutional structures upon Indigenous image-making techniques. Calling an object *pintura* was not a neutral act of translation; it implied embedding that object within a particular epistemic frame. While such an act made the named object accessible and knowable for a western audience, it also potentially precluded the transmission of meanings from Indigenous epistemes. Moreover, the effort to make the object accessible to western audiences by using certain translations also risked obscuring information for the very audiences it intended to serve. For mopa mopa images this effort certainly obscured the distinctive aspects of the technique and put into sharp relief the western aesthetic values used to judge it.

⁴ It is also important to note that there was no stable term for the resin or for the objects decorated with the resin either. They resorted to calling it "barniz" and, eventually, as Velasco explains, *barniz de Pasto*. The lack of stable terminology might be the reason why it is so hard to find these objects in notarial records. The few instances in which the objects seemed to be referred to in archival records is as "*atril de Pasto*" or "*baul de Pasto*." Velasco, *Historia del reino de Quito en la America Meridional*, 1:36.

The cut vs. the brush stroke

Colonial descriptions of mopa mopa images as “*pinturas*” demand that we judge them against other images traditionally considered to be paintings. But how, in fact, does a mopa mopa surface compare to a *pintura*? To start let us first find a contemporary image that was, and still is, uncontroversially considered to be a painting. Heeding Melgar’s judgement, from 1652, let’s pick one of the “finest brushes” of the time. Let us compare, then, a mopa mopa image with Diego Velazquez’ 1656 *Las Meninas*, not only a painting but a painting about painting (fig. 2.2). Looking at these objects side by side seems odd. Striking as they both are, a comparison between them rings strident but, as I will show, is ultimately rewarding.

Setting the Velasquez against a mopa mopa image is in a sense unfair. This is not merely because we are about to compare objects that belong to two different currently observed artistic categories nor because, according to those categories, a mopa mopa object would be considered “decorative” and, therefore, of less intellectual and aesthetic value than a painting. The lack of justice in the comparison comes from the fact that *Las Meninas* is an intensely cared for painting. Its cultural importance has never been questioned; therefore, it has been cleaned several times to maintain its estimated original visual power. In line with the hierarchies of the art world, the mopa mopa coffer has survived the passage of time pretty much on its own. As a result, it is hard to gage how the coffer looked in its prime. Its background once shone a metallic shade of green and many of the images’ details have darkened (fig. 2.3 & 2.4).

The most glaring differences between these images are on the order of scale and support. The Velasquez’ is a 320.5 x 281.5 cm oil on canvas, while the mopa mopa image program rests on a wooden chest, whose front is about 13 x 22.5 cm. Immediately notable as well is the difference in surface texture and effects: for all the painted lighting tricks, *Las Meninas* looks

dull against the mopa mopa coffer. While Velasquez strived to imitate the reflection of light, mopa mopa images were designed to actually reflect light. Mopa mopa artists exalted the reflective quality of the material by applying silver underneath colored resin. With regards to perspective, the oil painting's illusion of spatial depth is striking; by contrast, on the mopa mopa image nothing recedes, every element is in the foreground.

In order to assess other pictorial qualities of these images, let us now compare the mopa mopa coffer's front with a similarly sized detail from the Velasquez' foreground (fig. 2.5). I chose a section of the painting's foreground because these areas of painted canvases with perspectival depth tend to be more detailed and defined; therefore, more comparable with the highly worked mopa mopa surface. At first glance, the contrast between the two surfaces renders the oil painting markedly fuzzy, impressionistic. In contrast, the mopa mopa image appears vibrant and intensely defined, even though its current state is much less colorful than what it once was.

On the oil painting, color blending is the primary way to transition from one section to another, lines are used sparsely, and usually change in intensity. These are possibilities afforded by the conveyance of brush and liquid paint. In contrast, mopa mopa images are dominated by clearly defined colored sections and are heavily outlined. The non-liquidity of mopa mopa as an image making material becomes obvious through this comparison. The comparison also brings to the fore the possibilities the brush offers vs. those the knife affords. With a brush, a simple hand gesture that leaves a mark on a surface is easily perceived as line. That is not the case in mopa mopa practice. The marks of the "finest brushes," the most delicate "lines" are in fact elongated rectangles. Each of those strips is a product of four cuts, four "line" gestures.

Unlike painting or pen-on-paper, mopa mopa technique does not permit the abstract concept of line to be taken for granted. That is, the negligible width of shapes that can be taken for lines is hard to overlook because achieving such width is quite laborious. Furthermore, in contrast to most painting, all the “line” work on mopa mopa images is after the fact. There is no under drawing and all heavy outlining and the myriad of thin strips used for detailing compositions were the last elements to be applied. Mopa mopa strips seem to be a forceful reflection on the conceptual nature of the line, reminding us that the line is an intellectual device. The mopa mopa image insists on the silhouette as its basic component, in a sense prefiguring modernist collage.

Thinking about mopa mopa images in relation to objects that has been traditionally understood as a painting draws out some of the distinctive characteristics of mopa mopa image-making and highlights how unlike painting this technique is. But the fact that these images were referred to as paintings in the period should press us to investigate the notion of painting as it was defined and as it functioned in the early modern Hispanic world.

The term “*pintura*” in the colonial period

“To paint [pintar] is to imitate natural or artificial things with various colors on a flat surface.” This is the entry for *pintar* (to paint) in Sebastián de Covarrubias’s 1611 dictionary. He also adds “painter, master of the art of painting. Painting, that which is painted.”⁵ According to these definitions, what characterizes the act of painting and, therefore, a painting, is a colored representation on a plane. Color and a flat surface are the distinctive features of a painting, but

⁵ “Pintar es imitar con varios colores en plano a las cosas naturales o artificiales.” Sebastián de Covarrubias Orozco, *Tesoro de la lengua castellana, o española*, vol. 2 (Madrid: Melchor Sanchez, 1674), f. 143 r., <http://archive.org/details/tesorodelalengua00covauoft>.

not the technique by which the image is produced.⁶ As stated by this source, the period's concept of painting seems closer to our current notion of a color image. From this perspective, it is not so strange that mopa mopa images were called *pinturas* during the colonial period. After all, they are colored images on bidimensional surfaces.

This notion of *pintura* is ample and general, in the sense that it referred only to color images on a flat surface. Other period definitions from dictionaries point us in the same direction.⁷ However, the idea of painting was at the same time closely associated with a narrow conception of *pintura*, tightly bound to what we now conceive as the medium of painting, that is, the materials and processes for making images on flat surfaces—usually wood or canvas—using brushes and paint (a mixture of pigment and a fluid binder substance).⁸ This is evident, for

⁶ Color seems to be intimately related to the period's notion of "painting." Covarrubias defined color in close relation to painting: "Color, es el objeto propio de la vista, el color negro, y el blanco son los extremos de las colores.... Una de las colores son naturales otras artificiales, y algunas compuestas mezclando unas con otras, de donde resulta una tercera color; y saber hacer esto es uno de los primores que se requieren en la *pintura*." Sebastián de Covarrubias Orozco, *Tesoro de la lengua castellana, o española*, vol. 1 (Madrid: Melchor Sanchez, 1674), fol. 154 r, <http://archive.org/details/tesorodelalengua00covauoft>.

⁷ "Pintura: Nebrija 1492, *cosmographia, pintura del mundo; encaustica*, por cosa de tal *pintura* (pintor de fuego); *hemeresios*, por *pintura* de un día; *maeandrum*, por *pintura* de lazos; *monochroma*, por *pintura* de un color; *pictura*, por la *pintura*; *pigmentarius*, por una cosa de *pintura*; *uiriculum*, *pintura* de cuero. Nebrija 1495, *Pintura de hombres, antropographia; pintura de un color, monochroma; homographia; pintura en escorche, cataglyphon; pintura de lazos morisca, meandrun; pintura de esta manera [con huego], encaustum*. Pomey, 1705, habla de *pinturas* en diferentes medios y tipos: *pintura* al aceite, *pintura* de remojo, *pintura* en miniatura (miniatura), *pintura* de una sola color, *pintura llana*, v. arte, cuadro. Palomino, 1715, "*pintura* [...], imagen o imitación de lo visible; delineado en superficie plana; no solo en cuanto a la forma sino en cuanto al color y demás accidentes...*pintura* al oleo, ...*pintura* al fresco...*pintura* al temple." Lidio Nieto Jiménez and Manuel Alvar Ezquerra, *Nuevo tesoro lexicográfico del español (s. XIV-1726)*, vol. 8 (Madrid: Arco Libros, 2007), 7713.

⁸ If we are talking about paint in the early modern period, we are almost always taking about some version of tempera (egg based), fresco (pigment in water and plaster), and oil paint (linseed based). See Cennino Cennini, *Cennino Cennini's Il Libro Dell'arte: A New English Translation and Commentary with Italian Transcription*, trans. Lara Broecke (London:

instance, when one looks at Covarrubias's definition of *pincel* (brush). He states that a brush is the instrument the painter uses to settle the colors, which, he specifies, are made from the hair of animals such as martens.⁹ This definition implies that there was a distinct way of relating to instruments and materials in the creation of a painting, even if the definition of painting appears to be more general than that. In sum, the notion of painting was ample, but also specific: the category of painting covered a wide variety of images, nevertheless it was narrowly anchored within specific technical constraints.

This apparent tension is vividly at play in Melgar's account when he states that "the *paintings* are being produced over a dark layer of this same varnish to heighten the marks of the most delicate *brushes*." The concept of *pintura* might have been ample enough to admit images made in various techniques, but restrictive enough that Melgar was compelled to equate mopa mopa artists' delicate and precise resin cuts with the kind of marks made by fine brushes.

Pacheco's image theory

Definitions and reflections on the notion of *pintura* were not only available in dictionaries, but also in monographs on painting. Not long after Covarrubias published his lexicon, Velázquez' teacher, Francisco Pacheco, published his own treatise on painting in 1649, *Arte de la Pintura*. His definition of painting builds on the work of fifteenth- and sixteenth-century Tuscan art theorists like Alberti, Lomazzo, and Vasari. It is also much more restrictive

Archetype Publications Ltd, 2015); Covarrubias Orozco, *Tesoro de la lengua castellana, o española*, 1674, vol. 2, fol. 92 v.

⁹ "Pincel: la plumilla con que el pintor asienta las colores, del nombre Latino pennicilus, diminutiuo de pennissis. la cola del animal de do tomo el nombre: porque los pincelas se hazen de los pelos estremos de las colillas de los hardas, fuinas, y martas, y de otros animales . Los pinceles gruessos que llaman brochones por ser grofferos, y redondos se hazen de cerdas de javali. Pincelada, el golpe que se con el pincel." Covarrubias Orozco, vol. 2, fol. 143 r.

than Covarrubias: “painting is the art that imitates the effects of nature, other arts, and imagination with lines and colors. The lines must be proportioned, and the colors similar to the properties of the things it imitates, so that, according to the rules of perspectival light it represents the things’ volume and movement.”¹⁰

Two aspects of this definition stand out. First, Pacheco is mute on any material aspects of painting. Lines and colors, regardless of their materiality, appear to be the means of painting. In fact, if we stick strictly to the definition, Pacheco’s paintings could be mental images; they could even be any kind of object that imitates according to the rules he lays out. This rather abstract definition of painting might be partly an instrumental move to claim the superiority of painting against all arts that he elaborates throughout the treatise. Despite the definition’s lack of commitment to any sort of materiality, just like Covarrubias, Pacheco had a very fixed and particular idea of the material means of painting and the way in which a painter would engage with those materials. His detailed description of an allegory of painting based on Cesare Ripa’s is telling in this regard. Painting would be represented by “a gorgeous matron... her neck adorned with chain made of the purest gold, from which pends a mask that has written on its forehead: IMITATION. She would have the brush in her right hand: and in the other a color palette...[at her feet] she would have various painting instruments; and among them a vial of linseed oil (an

¹⁰ “Dije pues que la *pintura* era arte que imitaba con líneas y colores los efectos de naturaleza, del arte y de la imaginacion, pero hase de entender que las líneas han de ser proporcionadas, y los colores semejantes á la propiedad de las cosas que imita , de manera, que siguiendo la luz perspectiva no sólo represente en el llano la groseza y el relieve suyo, mas tambien el movimiento.” Francisco Pacheco, *Arte de la pintura ...*, 2d ed., vol. 1 (Madrid, 1866 [1649]), 14.

admirable invention), a ruler and compass, an anatomy figurine, and an equilateral square, with the perspectival veil or grid, as the most important instrument.”¹¹

Moreover, he explicitly states that materials of painting are “paper, canvas, wood panel, and colors.”¹² And in several passages, he highlights the crucial role of the brush in this art.¹³ In fact, he ends the treatise with a verse of his authorship that insist on the brush’s crucial role in the conception of painting: “And because the instrument of such great works is the brush, to which all the power of the painter's ingenuity is usually attributed, I finish with this enigma that I wrote about it.”¹⁴ In sum, although Pacheco’s definition of painting might initially appear quite ample in terms of painting’s materiality, his vision of painting’s materials and ways of engaging with them is quite narrow.

A second aspect stands out from Pacheco’s definition. Contrary to the seeming indeterminacy of painting’s materiality, Pacheco is very specific, almost normative, in his characterization of lines and color. His specificity on the nature of line and color motivates two questions relevant for this discussion. One, how does or does not a mopa mopa image fit this definition? Two, how do we square Pacheco’s specificity with Covarrubias’ amplitude?

¹¹ “una matrona bellissima con cabellos negros ensortijados...adorne su cuello una cadena de purísimo oro, de la cual penda una hermosa mascara que tenga escrito en su frente: IMITACION. Tendrá en la mano derecha el pincel : y en la otra un tablon de colores...[a los pies] A los cuales se pondrán varios instrumentos de la *pintura*; y entre ellos una redoma de oleo de linaza (invención admirable), una regla y compas, una figurita de anatomía, y un cuadro equilatero, con la red o cuadrícula, como importantísimo instrumento.” Pacheco, 1:81.

¹² “y la materia es distinta, porque la de la escultura será madera, barro, cera ó mármol; y la de la *pintura* papel, lienzo, tabla y colores.” Pacheco, 1:71.

¹³ Pacheco, 1:13,170.

¹⁴ “Y porque el instrumento de tan grandes obras es el pincel, á quien se atribuye de ordinario todo el poder del ingenio del pintor, acabo con este enigma que yo le hice.” Pacheco, 1:405.

Mopa mopa images vs. Pacheco's definition of *pintura*

Pacheco states that painting imitates with lines and colors. However, for him lines are a distinctive characteristic of painting, more so than color.¹⁵ Such lines, as previously discussed, are conceived as the gesture of the pen or brush that constitute the underdrawing, a stage in the painting process that precedes the application of color. There is no evidence that mopa mopa artists used underdrawings or followed stencils in making their compositions.¹⁶ But most importantly, in mopa mopa practice, color is never applied after a drawing has been made or over some premade form. In fact, form and color happen at the same time in mopa mopa image-making. The division that Pacheco belabors between drawing and coloring as two separate but constitutive parts of painting just does not hold for mopa mopa practice.

Pacheco's conception of the function of color in painting is also very different from the way in which color operates in mopa mopa images. For Pacheco the importance of color lies in that it is indispensable to perfectly imitate nature.¹⁷ This means that color is important as a representational tool, an aspect that allows painting to reproduce how objects in the world are perceived. However, his emphasis on the importance of color lies in that it allows the painter to model volume and to imitate the effects of light and shadow.¹⁸

¹⁵ "Y digo (no como dijo Lomazo) que el dibujo, que son las líneas proporcionadas, era materia sustancial de la *pintura*: antes lo llamo forma sustancial. Y por esto adviertan los de esta profesion que cuando sean excelentes y milagrosos en colorir, si no tienen dibujo no tienen la forma de la *pintura*, y consiguiente mente son privados de la parte sustancial de ella." Pacheco, 1:18.

¹⁶ The objects that have been analyzed have not revealed underdrawings. Artists working the resin today do not use underdrawings.

¹⁷ Pacheco, *Arte de la pintura*, 1:83.

¹⁸ Pacheco, 1:393.

Color use in mopa mopa is definitely not concerned with modeling or reproducing effects of light, and while we find some compositions displaying red jaguars or green monkeys and elephants, others used color representationally in striking ways. For instance, on two coffers that might have come as a pair, certain representational details stand out. While the deteriorated color patterns of the multiple fantastical creatures, such as centaurs, dragons, and snail-men, are hard to judge without technical analysis (fig. 2.6), it is possible to assert that the colors of the fauna and flora that populate these surfaces often correspond to actual animals and flora that could be found in the region and, therefore, “imitate nature” (fig. 2.7).

Color plays a more central representational role on the lids’ center, where each coffer displays a human figure. One presents a man dressed in metallic green in pursuit of a bull, a *picador* (fig. 2.8). The other flaunts a lady dressed in metallic red caressing a unicorn (fig. 2.9). Under raking light, there is a captivating quality to the glossy outfits (fig. 2.10). However, color-wise, the use of white for figures’ faces and hands is all the more salient both visually and representationally. There is a clear emphasis on the whiteness of their skin achieved through contrast against the background and the surrounding colors. Furthermore, of all the other figures in each coffer, either human or with humanlike attributes (fig. 2.11), only the woman and the man have white skin (figs. 2.8 & 2.9). Perhaps this color feature was specific to the coffers’ commission, or perhaps they are types. At any rate, color seems to be actively used representationally. Despite instances of using color to imitate “effects of nature,” mopa mopa artists would not have been considered to have mastered the art of coloring in Pacheco’s sense because they did not use color to model volume. In mopa mopa practice, artists excelled at exploiting the compositional power of color, but its imitative potential was mined only occasionally.

The manipulation of line and color for representational purposes, the essential aspects of painting according to Pacheco, is simply not suited to describe or think about mopa mopa images. While it is easier to conceptualize mopa mopa images in relation to Covarrubias' definition of painting, it is much harder to understand how they would fall under the definition elaborated by Pacheco. How do we then square the discrepancy between these definitions?

Hierarchy of the arts in Pacheco

The amplitude of Covarrubias' definition and his usage of the term *pintura* throughout the dictionary most likely captures how the term was commonly used. Covarrubias' general lexicon suggests that beyond specialist circles, *pintura* mobilized the medium of painting, that is, brush marks on a bidimensional surface, as a substrate to understand and refer to images well beyond those that were technically paintings. Pacheco, as a specialist in the art of painting, provides a much narrower definition. However, the capaciousness of *pintura* is not lost in his discussion, but rather it is enlisted in a program to claim the supremacy of painting as medium for image making.

Pacheco's image theory, ultimately, is a response to the paragone, a debate that originated in the Italian Renaissance over whether painting or sculpture was the superior art form. Resourcefully, Pacheco invokes the capaciousness of *pintura* to argue that painting is greater than sculpture and the most noble of the arts. He claimed that an entire book could be written about all the things (arts) "under the jurisdiction" of painting, and that he could not imagine how a similar feat could be done for sculpture. The variety of art practices that Pacheco claims under the jurisdiction of *pintura* are noteworthy. As one would expect, he mentions fresco, oil painting, and manuscript illumination. One is somewhat surprised by his inclusion of map-making,

estofado decoration, printmaking, glass painting, and, even, metal carving. Harder to anticipate is his inclusion of enamel, stone mosaic, textile weaving, embroidering, and *paños de corte*.¹⁹

The list's breadth appears astounding for the modern reader, yet, as we shall see, it is in line with the use of *pintura* in Covarrubias and Guevara. What is new in Pacheco is the use of the term "jurisdiction." By stating that all the diverse art practices on the list are under the jurisdiction of painting, Pacheco articulates the capaciousness of the term *pintura* in a patently hierarchical way. Thus, *pintura* here is not only a general term that serves to refer to a variety of images but also a superior medium under which multiple art practices are to be understood and, in fact, judged. Covarrubias defines jurisdiction as "the power to judge, *iurisdicendi potestas*" or as "the territory over which power, or power to judge, extends."²⁰ One wonders to what extent the Spanish monarchy's claim to jurisdiction over vast territories in the Americas informed Pacheco's use of term in the context of defining an artistic practice. After all, Pacheco himself had strong ties to the monarchy and lived in Seville, home of the *Casa de Contratación de Indias*, one of the crown's most important agencies for administering the colonies.

That *pintura* has a jurisdiction means that the notion of *pintura* defined by Pacheco is *the* premier medium for image-making, but it also means that *pintura* has some kind of power over other arts. I posit that such power resides in the fact that all of the arts that fall under painting's claimed jurisdiction are measured up against painting's set definition. To dwell on what being under the jurisdiction of *pintura* may entail, we first need to consider a crucial aspect of the early modern Hispanic conception of painting, that is, its role as an epistemic tool.

¹⁹ Pacheco, 1:44.

²⁰ "la potestad de juzgar, iurisdicendi potestas, tambien se entiende por el territorio, y termino hasta donde se extiende el poder de la tas potestad, o justicia." Covarrubias Orozco, *Tesoro de la lengua castellana, o española*, 1674, vol. 2, fol. 71 r.

Imagen, pintura, and knowing

Looking closely at period terms used to refer to images (such as “*pintura*” and “*imagen*”) suggests that the notion of *pintura* indeed mobilized semantically almost any kind of image. It also becomes apparent that images, and *pinturas* in particular, performed a key role in knowing the world. Covarrubias’s dictionary is especially helpful for grasping how these terms functioned and how the role of images was articulated in this period. His definition of *imagen* provides rich insight on the term’s contemporary use. After mentioning the Greek and Latin etymology of the word, he hints at how the term was articulated according to Catholic doctrine: “commonly among the Catholic faithful, we call Images the figures that represent Christ our Lord, his blessed Mother and Virgin-Holy Mary-, his Apostles, other Saints, and the Mysteries of our Faith, as far as they can be imitated and represented to refresh our memory in them.”²¹ The lexicographer establishes here a special link between religious representations and the term *imagen*, a relationship that, as I will justify below, was based on the key role attributed to images in the processes of thought and knowledge.²² This close relationship between the term *imagen* and religious representations probably obeys to the doctrinal reforms adopted by the Catholic

²¹ Throughout the dictionary, every time Covarrubias refers to a religious image, he does so as “*Imagen*”, only a few times he specifies the image’s support, saying for instance “*Imagen pintada*” or “*Imagen estampada*.” It was indeed common to refer to sacred images as *imagenes*. This close relationship between the term *imagen* and religious representations might be part of the reason why the term *pintura* was applied to such great varieties of images in the period.

²² It is important to note that the expression “*refrescar la memoria en ellas*” conveys more than just to help the process of remembrance. It also denotes the notion of thinking in them or with them. Covarrubias Orozco, *Tesoro de la lengua castellana, o española*, 1674, vol. 2, fol. 75 r.; Regarding the processes of remembrance, Mary Carruthers articulates how the classic and medieval traditions understood images as crucial to the processes of thought and memory. It is from these traditions that early-modern Hispanic ideas about the subject came from. Mary J. Carruthers, *The Book of Memory: A Study of Memory in Medieval Culture*, Second edition., vol. 70, Cambridge Studies in Medieval Literature (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 67–76.

church in the Council of Trent, and might be part of the reason why the term *pintura* was applied to such great variety of images in the period.

Covarrubias goes on to write about the role of images for the illiterate, arguing that “for...those who do not know letters the images serve as a book,”²³ establishing an important equivalence between image and text in terms of accessing knowledge. This correspondence is evident as well in the definition of “description”, glossed as: “description, a narration written or delineated, such as the description of a province or a map.”²⁴ (Here the line, that important construct in western notions of image making, glides smoothly from writing to image.) The equivalence between image and text portrays images as crucial to accessing and acquiring knowledge. Thus, the lexicographer outlines a notion of *imagen* that is intimately tied to performing an epistemic function and to a specific epistemic framework. It is critical to recognize this epistemic function as we examine how Europeans wrote about native-made images, which did not necessarily function under the same epistemic frame.

Covarrubias’s definition of *pensar*, “to think,” helps us trace the relationship between image and thought further. The entry reads: “to think is to imagine...to see something in one’s

²³ “Imagen, Latine imago, á nomine Graeco igma, atos, imago, similitudo...Los Griegos llaman a las imagenes icones, iconos, imago,...Comunmente entre fieles Catolicos llamamos Imagenes las figuras que nos representan a Christo nuestro Señor, a su benditissima Madre, y Virgen Santa Maria, a sus Apostoles,y a los demás Santos, y los Misterios de nuestra Fe, en cuanto pueden ser imitados, y representados, para que refesquemos en ellos la memoria, y q la gente ruda que no sabe letras les sirven de libro, como al que las sabe la historia , y de aqui viene, que los libros que tienen figuras, que significan lo q contienen cada uno, y cada capítulo.” Covarrubias Orozco, *Tesoro de la lengua castellana, o española*, 1674, vol. 2, fol. 75 r.

²⁴ “Descripcion, la tal narracion, o escrita, o delineada, como la descripcion de vna provincia, o mapa.” Covarrubias Orozco, *Tesoro de la lengua castellana, o española*, 1674, vol. 1, fol. 208 v. [I suspect that when Covarrubias and multiple authors after him use the notion of painting as a synonym textual description, e.g. “como lo pinta Plutarco,” they do it in the spirit of this equivalence between image and text.]

memory.”²⁵ Here he is not just talking about the process of remembrance, but of the act of thinking in general. This context suggests that “to see something in one’s memory” implies that one thinks by mental visualizations. Therefore, when he described how images functioned for Catholics, the expression, “to refresh our memory in them,” conveys more than just the idea that images help the process of recollection. When one is “refreshing one’s memory in an image,” one is thinking. Covarrubias appears to espouse a very tight relationship between images and the processes of thought.

The relationship between images, thinking, and knowing percolates in Covarrubias’s definition of “simple,” meaning simpleton or ignorant. “Simple sometimes means half-witted, such a person is like an innocent child or a clean wood panel where there is no painting, because their imagination and other senses are undeveloped [or impaired] and they do not think things with reason or understanding.”²⁶ As we can see in this definition, an underdeveloped or impaired imagination meant a deficiency in the ability to think and understand properly. Furthermore, it does not seem incidental that he refers to an unpainted wooden panel as a metaphor for simplicity.²⁷ Given that images were considered crucial for aiding the processes of thinking and knowing (perhaps they were conceived as the very form of thought), alluding to a clean panel in this definition underscores the necessity for images to develop the “imagination and intellectual abilities.” In fact, the right kind of images were crucial to develop the right kind of imagination

²⁵ Covarrubias Orozco, *Tesoro de la lengua castellana, o española*, 1674, vol. 2, fol. 138 r.

²⁶ “Simple algunas veces significa mentecato, porque es como el niño, o la tabla rasa, donde no hay ninguna *pintura* por tener lesa la fantasía y los demás sentidos y no discurrir en las cosas con razón ni entendimiento.” Covarrubias Orozco, vol. 2, fol. 176 v.

²⁷ In the definition it is clear that Covarrubias is specifically referring to a clean wooden panel devoid of an image, indeed a painting, and not to the general concept of *tabula rasa*.

and intellectual abilities. This is a common trope in colonial sources that discuss the role of European images in process of colonization and acculturation of Indigenous groups in the Spanish Americas.²⁸ For instance, Felipe de Guevara in his treatise on painting, written circa 1535, asserted that Mesoamerican “unpolished imitative imagination” was a result of constantly seeing the things they themselves created.²⁹ According to Guevara imitative mental images are part and parcel of both thinking and painting. For him there are two modes of imitation: one, when with the mind and the hand we imitate what we want, this is the art of painting; the other is just the ability to create mental images.³⁰

The idea that to think is to imagine is reinstated in Covarrubias’ entry for *imaginación* (imagination). He enriches the definition with an anecdote that is revealing of the power images held in the period. In particular, the anecdote illustrates the crucial role images were understood to play in exciting the imagination and thought processes. Citing Saint Augustine as the source, the lexicographer relates that “a white woman conceiving from a white man came to give birth to a black because at the time of conception she had her imagination and sight in the figure of a black, who was painted on a wall cloth, and, therefore, the baby looked like the painted

²⁸ For an interesting example of how missionaries saw images as crucial for Indigenous acculturation and conversion see: Andrés Pérez de Ribas, *Triunfos de nuestra santa fe entre gentes las mas barbaras y fieras del nuevo orbe*, vols. 2, 3. (Mexico: Layac, 1944 [1645]).

²⁹ “Es de notar la extraña devoción que los dichos Indios á todo género de Pintura tienen; y creo cierto que si la imitativa imaginaria, no tan pulida, que el hábito de la continua vista de sus cosas les acarrea, no lo impidiese, que se adelantarían en esta arte con facilidad y aprovechamiento grande.” Felipe de Guevara, *Comentarios de la pintura* (Madrid: Hijos de Ibarra y compañía, 1788 [ca. 1535]), 235.

³⁰ “pero es de saber que hay dos maneras de imitación: la una es quando con el entendimiento y la mano imitamos lo que queremos, y esta es el arte de pintar, Y la que llamamos Pintura. La otra es de solo el entendimiento, quando solo el entendimiento imita alguna cosa, aunque el hombre no sea Pintor, que pueda efectuar y representar con las manos lo que imagina.” Guevara, 10.

creature.”³¹ Here, the act of looking at a painting and holding the image in one’s mind has radical creative powers.

The notion of *imagen* that is put forth by Covarrubias is also general enough to encompass physical images regardless of their materiality. In fact, the definition of *imagen* shows little interest in images’ material support. However, in both the definition of *imagen* and of *imaginación*, when Covarrubias elaborates on the relationship between images and thinking, the images he alludes to are specifically paintings.³² These two cases are not isolated instances. More often than not, when the lexicographer talks about graphic representations, he defaults to *pinturas*. Rarely, if ever, does the lexicographer allude to any other type of image, such as a print or a sculpture. The 1615 dictionary reveals that the term *pintura* functioned in the general way, similar to our use of the term image or representation, yet, as in Pacheco’s usage, it also held a relation to the specific materiality of painting.³³

³¹ “Lo qual también prueba San Agustin lib. 2. Civitate Dei, diciendo: que vna muger blanca concibiendo de hombre blanco, vino a parir un negro, porque al tiempo de el concebir tenia la imaginacion y vista en la figura de un negro que en un paño de pared estava pintada, y que la criatura le parecia propiamente.” Covarrubias Orozco, *Tesoro de la lengua castellana, o española*, 1674, vol. 2, fol. 75 v.

³² The number of times that the word painting or its derivatives appear in the dictionary compared to the number of times that the word image appears might be indicative of the important function the notion of painting had in the period (pintura and its derivatives appear 74 times; imagen and its derivatives appear 31 times).

³³ On multiple entries Covarrubias explains the meaning of different representations. The following definitions all have iconographic descriptions: *fama, asno, Bacco, bandera, uva, trabajo, sacerdote, prudencia, Pan, memorioso, iano, gallo esqueleto, esperanza, escorpión, elefante, cisne, cuerno, can, camello, cadena, cabra, buitres, and delfín*. In all these definitions, he always refers to painting or paintings. He never uses the terms *representacion* or *imagen*. Only in the definitions *esperanza* and *cuerno* does he refer both to paintings and sculptures. What this seems to indicate is that the notion of painting functioned as the notion of representation. Thus, the notion *pintura* was much more general than the medium of painting.

Moreover, in line with the exposition of *imagenes* as crucial to accessing knowledge, multiple entries refer to *pinturas* to illustrate and demonstrate facts in his definitions. For instance, in the definition of diadem, Covarrubias explains how in paintings and altarpieces diadems are used to differentiate saints from non-saints. To characterize yet another type of diadem, he invokes a specific iconography, “there is another type of diadem with which Our Lady returning from Egypt is painted.”³⁴ Paintings are actually essential in more than just a few of his definitions. In the definition of *hinchar*, to swell or puff, demonstrates the importance of *pinturas* to convey meaning in the dictionary. Covarrubias affirms “puffing out your cheeks, holding air in inside your mouth, in the way that the figures of the winds are painted.”³⁵ Examples like this show how images, and in particular paintings, are invoked as sources of information and in fact, in some cases, they are the information itself.³⁶ They do the work of defining.

The definition of *pintura* put forth by Felipe de Guevara in his treatise on painting, written circa 1535, illuminates why and how images, *pinturas* in particular, functioned as sources

³⁴ “Diadema, ...En las figuras de los santos para diferenciarlos en los retablos, y *pinturas*, de los que no lo son, les ponen sobre la cabeza encaxada por la mitad della una forma de luna llena que comúnmente llamamos Diadema... Tambien pienso que vino a ser la Diadema ornamento de la cabeza de algunas mugeres, como lo fue la mitra: y a ello tiran los cercos redondos, y cubiertos, con que pintan las egipcias, y a Nuestra Señora cuando bolvio de Egipto, muerto Herodes, la pintan con este genero de Diadema.” Covarrubias Orozco, *Tesoro de la lengua castellana, o española*, 1674, vol. 1, fol. 214 v.

³⁵ “Hinchar, esta corrompido de inflar, porque la fl, se convirtio en ch. ...Hinchar los carrillos, quando se detien el ayre en la boca , en la forma que pintan las figuras de los vientos.” Covarrubias Orozco, *Tesoro de la lengua castellana, o española*, 1674, vol. 2, fol. 55 v.

³⁶ A similar case appears in the entry for unkempt hair, *greñas*: “it is typical of the paintings of some old sorceresses who have loose hair.” Covarrubias Orozco, vol. 2, fol. 40 v.

of knowledge.³⁷ Guevara launches his discussion defining painting as fully dependent on factual truths. He explicitly states that for something to be a painting it needs to correspond to a factual truth. Moreover, this condition hinges on naturalistic representation:

If truth is something (I speak of the human and visible truth) then painting is also something: because painting is an image of that which is or can be, such as men, buildings, plants, and other things whose forms...are taken as models to paint their likeness. The art [of painting] mixes different colors... [and not] only for the grace and delight of sight but in order to imitate the things that are, such as man, dog, horse, and the other things that are seen and met every hour, created in great diversity by nature.³⁸

Guevara is adamant about defining painting as an art form that only depicts those things that he will consider factual or potential truths. Accordingly, he states that painting should only be responsive to imitating nature or that which can be. His definition is normative and limitative. It establishes a restrictive set of conditions necessary for something to be painting. After the passage just quoted, he affirms that “painting is only an imitation, that is, if painting does not imitate and mixes colors randomly without consideration... it would be considered laughable.”³⁹ Consistent with his view, at various points of the treatise Guevara condemns and dismisses grotesques on the grounds that they do not depict factual truths:

³⁷ Felipe de Guevara wrote his *Comentarios de la pintura* circa 1535. The text shows that he was knowledgeable of Philip the II's art collection. However, the text was not printed until 1788.

³⁸ “Si la verdad es algo (hablo de la verdad humana y visible) la Pintura también es algo: porque la Pintura es imagen de aquello que es o que puede ser, como de hombres, edificios, plantas, y de otras cosas de cuyas formas y ciertos fines de cuerpos se toman exemplos pintando sus semejanzas, cuya arte pretende mezclar entre si diferentes colores...[y no] por solo la gracia y deleyte de la vista sino á fin de imitarlas cosas que son, como es hombre, el perro, el caballo, y las otras cosas que se ven, y se topan cada hora, criadas muy diversas por la naturaleza.” Guevara, *Comentarios de la pintura*, 9.

³⁹ “De manera, que la Pintura es solamente una imitación; porque si esto no hace la Pintura y mezclase colores acaso y sin consideración [vendría] á ser tenida por una cosa de risa...” Guevara, 9.

The grotesque is a genre of painting, which despite consisting of lines and colors, strictly speaking it cannot be called painting; as stated in the beginning, Painting is imitation of some natural thing that is or that can be. Contrary to this, grotesques have a great diversity of monsters and impossibilities.⁴⁰

The implication of Guevara's position is clear: if an image is not an imitation of something that exist or can be, if it is does not represent a factual truth: it is not *pintura*, regardless of its materiality.⁴¹

Guevara's stringent position (neither Covarrubias nor Pacheco condemn grotesques) illuminates why images were so readily considered sources of knowledge. Further definitions from Covarrubias illuminate how images were actively invoked as sources of factual information about the past, on a similar rank as texts. For example, in the definition of *beca* we find all the elements we have been discussing: *pinturas* were considered a key epistemic resource, just as texts, and the notion of painting functioned in a capacious way, like our contemporary use of image. A *beca* was a dress ornament (similar to a stole) for people of high social stature. According to Covarrubias, it was not in use at the time but in old devotional wooden panels one would find "the image of Saint Sebastian wearing a *beca*" and "in old tapestries" the same was seen. He then asserts the validity of these statements by invoking the notion that images functioned as evidence, just like text: these images "do not stop having their authority; they

⁴⁰ "El Grotresco un género de Pintura, el qual aunque conste de lineas y colores, á rigor no se puede llamar Pintura; la Pintura es imitación como en el principio, habemos dicho, de algunna cosa natural que es, ó que puede ser: y poreal contrario el Grotresco consta de cosas que no son, ni pueden ser, en sí contiene tantas diversidades de monstruos é imposibilidades." Guevara, 67.

⁴¹ Guevara only allows for grotesques in depictions of hell: "puede ser regla universal, que qualquiera pintura, firmada de Bosco en que hubiese monstruosidad o cosa que pase los limites de la naturaleza, que es adulterada y fingida, si no es como digo, que la Pintura contenga en si infierno ó materia de él." Guevara, 43.

retain it, as texts do, because these same paintings are called histories and the books that have figures we say are historicized.”⁴²

This circular argument, posed also in the definition of *imagen*, at a minimum confirms both the amplitude of the notion *pintura* and the role images performed as epistemic tools. Pacheco was well aware of this role that images had. He was not shy about using it in his argument about the superiority of painting over other arts.⁴³ What all of this entails is that being under the jurisdiction of *pintura* meant to be judged not only on the formal features ascribed to the definition of painting; it also potentially meant to be judged in terms of being perceived as able to communicate “true” information, not unlike a written source. Moreover, such “truthfulness” was based on adhering to naturalistic representation. Clearly, *pintura* was more than an artistic medium. *Pintura*’s confines exceeded certain material constraints, and yet these

⁴² “*Beca*, es cierto ornamento de una chia de seda o paño, que colgava del cuello hasta cerca de los pies, y desta usaban los Clerigos...que ya no se usan...La Beca fue ornamento de los nobles: y en algunas tablas antiguas de devoción hallamos la imagen de San Sebastian con una beca puesta, la resca en la cabeza, y la chia por los ombros y en tapizarias antiguas se ve lo mismo, que no dexan de tener su autoridad, como la tienen las letras; pues estas mismas *pinturas* tienen nombre de historias, y los libros que tienen figuras decimos estar historiados. Fue también la beca insignia de doctores, y así pintan los retablos antiguos...” Covarrubias Orozco, *Tesoro de la lengua castellana, o española*, 1674, vol. 1, fol. 89 r.; Another interesting instance that speaks to the use of images as historical evidence occurs in the definition of *cegar*. Here we find the author discussing and trying to reconcile the discrepancies between the texts that talked about Saint Lucia’s life and her *pinturas*. “Vale perder la vista, ó quitarla a otro. En España ay muchos exemplos así entre Christianos como entre Arabes...A muchos han cegado, debaxo de nombre de castigo...Entre las *pinturas* santas de los retablos esta recibida la de Santa Lucia, con un plato en las manos y en el sus ojos; y los que han escrito su vida, y martirio no hazen mención de que se los hubiesen sacado...” Covarrubias Orozco, vol. 1, fol. 265 v.

⁴³ It is unlikely that Pacheco knew of Guevara’s text since the latter’s manuscript was only published in 1788. Yet they espoused similar understandings of the role of painting as an epistemic tool. Moreover, Guevara like Pacheco considered a great variety of artistic practices to be under the category of painting. Guevara included in his treatise: tapestries, manuscript illumination, dyed fabrics, stone mosaic, chiseled marble, pictographic writing, and inlaid wood.

confines were nevertheless tightly bound to a specific understanding of imitating nature, and ultimately to specific technique to create such imitations.

The institution of *pintura*

Literary theorist Éric Méchoulan established a conceptual distinction between “media” and “medium” that is useful to understand how the notion of *pintura* functioned in the early modern Spanish world. For him “media” refers “to a specific medium that has been institutionalized.” He argues that any aesthetic production functions in recourse of two supports: on top, socially recognized institutions that grant the work legitimacy, that is “media,” and below, technically-worked materials, which determine the work’s efficacy.⁴⁴ One may question that the generality of this distinction applies to *any* aesthetic production or its hierarchical nature. However, I do think it is useful to characterize the notion of *pintura* as it operated in the early-modern Spanish empire. *Pintura* was articulated dialectically between, on the one hand, socially sanctioned conceptions of the nature, function, and the value of images and, on the other, a specific set of materials and techniques. More than a just a medium, *pintura* operated as an institution itself. In the case of *pintura*, the dialectic was between an understanding of images as sources of knowledge based on naturalistic representation and a mode of creating such images based on the effects of the brush or pen on a flat surface. Recognizing this is crucial to analyze the stakes of subsuming native techniques—*mopa mopa*, featherworks, and *quero* production—under such a rubric.

***Pintura* as epistemic framework**

⁴⁴ Eric Méchoulan, “Intermediality: An Introduction to the Arts of Transmission,” trans. Angela Carr, *SubStance* 44, no. 3 (2015): 3,4.

Given the epistemic role that paintings had in this period, we must ask when or which Indigenous images fell into the category of *pintura*. Was it only when it was believed that these images were somehow representational and that such representation depicted some factual truth? What I am considering is whether images that were regarded as abstract or as depicting imagined creatures (or nonsense) would not fall squarely into the category of painting. Attending to this consideration could be crucial to understand colonial writing about images, but also, and more importantly, to grasp the degree to which particular epistemological frameworks underpin what we consider to be mere artistic mediums.

The way in which Guevara discusses Indigenous images is revealing in this regard. Toward the end of his treatise on painting, in the section on hieroglyphs, Guevara mentions Indigenous images for the first time. Hieroglyphs for him squarely belong to the category of painting and thus he includes Mexica pictograms: “everything that the said Indians want to tell us about their elders, they show it to us in painting [pictograms], and among themselves they declare their concepts through the same painting.”⁴⁵ Given the strong correlation that Guevara espouses between painting and the representation of factual truth, it is no surprise that he readily considers Mexica pictographic writing as painting.⁴⁶

⁴⁵ “Sea que por antigua tradición les venga de los Egipcios, lo qual podria haber sido, hora sea que los naturales de estas dos naciones concurriesen en unas mismas imaginaciones. Así todo lo que dichos Indios nos quieren significar de sus mayores, nos lo muestran en pintura, y ellos entre ellos declaran sus conceptos por medio de la misma Pintura. Queriendo un Cazique mandar á alguna tierra de sus subditos le acudan con quatrocientos hombres de guerra, pintan un hombre con las armas en la mano, el un pie adelante para caminar, y encima de la cabeza de este hombre ponen un círculo dentro del qual ponen quatro puntos que significan quatrocientos ; y así tienen figuradas en pintura las Jornadas que los vasallos de vuestra V.M. y ellos hicieron en la conquista de México y otras partes.” Guevara, *Comentarios de la pintura*, 235.

⁴⁶ The value of these “paintings” (Mesoamerican pictographic documents) as sources of information was such that they were often use as evidence in court cases during the colonial period. Tom Cummins, “The Madonna and the Horse: Becoming Colonial in New Spain and

A couple lines after giving examples (some mistaken) on how these pictograms work, Guevara states that Mesoamericans have a notable devotion to all sorts of painting. In fact, he believes Mesoamericans have great potential for the art of painting. However, their unpolished ability to produce naturalistic images, a result of constantly seeing the things they themselves create, hinders the realization of their potential.⁴⁷ One of the issues that transpires from Guevara's remarks on Mexica images is that pictographic writing, in its capacity to convey factual information, is better at being *pintura* than any another image with a poor naturalistic rendering.

After this discussion, almost as an addendum to the discussion of hieroglyphs, he—halfheartedly—mentions Mexican featherworks as belonging to the category of painting: “It is fair to concede that they have brought to painting something new and rare, such as the painting with bird feathers, varying clothes, skin tones, and the like, with a diversity of colored feathers that nature creates over there, and that they with their industry choose, divide, separate, and mix.”⁴⁸ His text leads one to wonder whether he would count featherworks as painting if he could not distinguish in them attempts to represent naturalistically human skin tones and clothing. If he refuses to include the “monsters and impossibilities” of grotesques in the category of painting, it is highly likely that he would consider many Indigenous representations similarly.

Peru,” ed. Tom Cummins and Emily Good Umberger, *Phoebus: A Journal of Art History*, Native Artists and Patrons in Colonial Latin America, VII (1995): 59–60.

⁴⁷ “Es de notar la extraña devoción que los dichos Indios á todo género de Pintura tienen; y creo cierto que si la imitativa imaginaria, no tan pulida, que el hábito de la continua vista de sus cosas les acarrea, no lo impidiese, que se adelantarían en esta arte con facilidad y aprovechamiento grande.” Guevara, *Comentarios de la pintura*, 235.

⁴⁸ “Justo es también concederles haber traído á la Pintura algo de nuevo y raro, como es la pintura de las plumas de aves, variando ropas, encarnaciones y cosas semejantes, con diversidad de colores de plumas que por allá cria la naturaleza, y ellos con su industria escogen, dividen, apartan y mezclan.” Guevara, 237.

And what about an abstract image, like some Andean featherwork that is completely abstract? Would that be considered a painting (figs. 2.12 & 2.13)? After all, in the two Indigenous types of images that Guevara mentions he recognizes that they convey information about the world by means of naturalistic representation. At the very least, we should be attentive as to what counts as painting when it comes to Indigenous images in colonial writings.

Considering all the observations I have made so far about the use and meaning of *pintura*, allows us to rethink the subtlety in colonial terminology for *queros* (*q'iru*, singular; *q'irukuna*, plural). *Queros*, ritual Andean wooden vessels, experienced a remarkable transformation with the advent of colonization. From having completely abstract designs carved in low relief and no added color before Spanish arrival, they shifted to highly representational and colored designs in the colonial period.⁴⁹ The expression used to refer to colonial *queros* in period sources is *queros pintados* (painted *queros*). Yet, from a contemporary technical perspective, just like *mopa mopa* objects and featherworks, they were not painted. Instead, the figures were carved in wood in low relief and then filled in with a mixture of dyes or pigments and a type of the *mopa mopa* resin.⁵⁰ We do not yet know how exactly the color was applied, with which tool, or if the color was in a liquid or semiliquid state. We are certain that the image did not come about just by the artist deepening a brush in paint and leaving marks on the wood surface. However, given the way in which *pintura* was used in the early-modern Hispanic world, “painted *queros*” is highly apt.

⁴⁹ Tom Cummins, *Toasts with the Inca: Andean Abstraction and Colonial Images on Quero Vessels*, History, Languages, and Cultures of the Spanish and Portuguese Worlds (The University of Michigan Press, 2002), 118–39.

⁵⁰ Richard Newman, Emily Kaplan, and Michele Derrick, “Mopa Mopa: Scientific Analysis and History of an Unusual South American Resin Used by the Inka and Artisans in Pasto, Colombia,” *Journal of the American Institute for Conservation* 54, no. 3 (August 2015): 123–48, <https://doi.org/10.1179/1945233015Y.0000000005>.

More than meaning just *queros* with added color or paint, it is highly likely that they were considered “painted” because they were representational and conveyed things that Spaniards would recognize as factual truths, a sharp contrast with their highly abstract pre-Hispanic counterparts. In a sense, painted, as a characterization, was the antonym of abstract.

In sum, *pintura* was much more than a medium. It was an institution that doubly bound Indigenous images. First, it forced Indigenous images to respond to an epistemic function that was articulated in terms of naturalistic representation. Second, the institution of *pintura* forced Indigenous images to respond to what we would identify as the medium of painting (paint, brush, flat surface, line).

Technical consequences

By calling images made with native techniques *pinturas* colonial authors were elevating these images and tacitly cultivating a public for them.⁵¹ This was a moment in western history when painting was being settled as one of the most prestigious of art categories (if not the most), partly because of its purported superior technical accomplishment (which was a measure of the ability to produce naturalistic images, thus potentially “truer”). I do not think it is a coincidence that for the most part authors who referred to *mopa mopa* images as *pinturas* also praised them. This is apparent in Melgar’s description where the precision of a resin cut, and its application, is equated to the delicacy of the “finest brushes.” However, by the end of the eighteenth century they ceased to be called *pinturas* and become referred as *barniz* (varnish). It is clear from both Covarrubias and Guevara that *barniz*, in terms of image making, was only valuable as a

⁵¹ Carolyn Dean, “The Trouble with (The Term) Art,” *Art Journal* 65, no. 2 (July 1, 2006): 27, <https://doi.org/10.2307/20068464>.

protective and enhancing layer for painting, never for its pictorial qualities.⁵² Therefore, denoting mopa mopa objects as *barniz* dissociated them from the institution of painting and thus lowered them in the western artistic “ranks.”

Yet, even if couching mopa mopa images as paintings elevated them, simultaneously, it questioned the autonomy and force of native techniques and materials, while also excluding any meaning these images might have had in native thought. On the one hand, as Méchoulan explains, undermining a medium’s authority “redirects the ways a work can be activated within a society.”⁵³ On the other, by calling them *pinturas* they subordinated the technique to the familiar notion of painting, eliding the distinct ways in which a material becomes an image and, therefore, obscuring the technical accomplishment of Indigenous artists. In typical colonial fashion, the values, ingenuity, and ability of native Americans are veiled or outright obscured.

Conclusion

The notion of painting in the Hispanic world was ample and general, but it was structured around two pillars: one material and the other epistemic. Materially, the naturalistic possibilities afforded by creating images over a flat surface with a brush, like modeling to reproduce mimetic volume, organized much of the thinking about painting (this kind of image was after all the “best” kind of painting). Epistemically, painting was conceived under the notion that images

⁵² “Una cosa no pudo nadie jamas imitar, que fué un barniz que Plinio llama Atramento, con el cual barnizaba las pinturas acabadas tan, delgadamente, que a repercusión de él quitaba de lexos la claridad de las colores, y guardaba a la Pintura de polvo y suciedad...” Guevara p. 39; “Barniz, del nombre Latino vernix vernicis, sandaraca.cae. es una especie de goma, semejante al almaziga, que mana del enebro dicha grasa, y della,y del azeyce de linaza, o de olivo se haze el compuesto,que vulgarmente llamamos barniz, con que se da lustre a toda pintura , y se barniza el hierro al fuego...” Covarrubias Orozco, *Tesoro de la lengua castellana, o española*, 1674, vol. 1, fol. 85 r.

⁵³ Méchoulan, “Intermediality,” 5.

were crucial sources of information. Such epistemic function was underpinned by a faithful imitation of nature.

As art historian Peter Parshall has outlined, throughout the early modern period in Europe (and its colonies) the problem of imitation of nature and its “contingent and perplexing relation to the problem of artistic invention” was an enlivened discussion.⁵⁴ However, it seems that in the Hispanic world the tendency was to adhere to the mandate of imitating nature and “statements of fact.”⁵⁵ We have seen how adamant Guevara was in this regard. A century later, Pacheco, although much more open to artistic invention, insists that imitation of nature is the principal aim of painting.⁵⁶ Moreover, his rules for depicting imagined things or fantastical creatures tie these firmly to realistic representation. That is, anything—real or imagined—was to be depicted as tridimensional and proportioned.⁵⁷

Recognizing painting as an institution with jurisdiction allows us to understand that absorbing Indigenous images into that category is not an innocuous terminological problem. In

⁵⁴ It is almost as if in the Hispanic early-modern world *pinturas* functioned similarly as “*imago contrafacta*” (image as statement of fact) a category of image used in Northern Europe. Peter Parshall, “*Imago Contrafacta: Images and Facts in the Northern Renaissance*,” *Art History* 16, no. 4 (December 1993): 554–55.

⁵⁵ “Statements of fact” is a terminology that Parshall uses. I take it to mean factual truths. Parshall, “*Imago Contrafacta*.”

⁵⁶ “De naturaleza, como se verá en todo este capítulo y en muchas partes de estos libros, porque ella es el principal ejemplar objetivo de la pintura, representando la figura en el llano.” Pacheco, *Arte de la pintura*, 1:14.

⁵⁷ “Dije, pues, que pintura era arte que imitaba con líneas y colores los efectos de naturaleza, del arte y de la imaginacion, pero hase de entender que las líneas han de ser proporcionadas, y los colores semejantes á la propiedad de las cosas que imita, de manera, que siguiendo la luz perspectiva, no sólo represente en el llano la grosseza y el relieve suyo, mas tambien el movimiento; y muestre á nuestros ojos los afectos y pasiones del ánimo. La corpulencia y relieve de las cosas manifiestas, no exceptuando alguna, sea natural ó artificial, ni de la imaginación...” Pacheco, 1:14.

naming Indigenous practices *pintura*, colonial authors recreated these practices in the image of the colonizer, rejecting and erasing the modes in which such practices might have been activated and meaningful in Indigenous cultures. Furthermore, because these practices were not technically painting nor did they originally emerge from the epistemic prescriptions of *pintura*, in the act of appropriation, colonizers also set them up for failure.⁵⁸ In sum, identifying the particular epistemic framework that underpins painting's importance in western culture is a crucial aspect of understanding the consequences that such framework has for non-western visual expressions.

⁵⁸ Carolyn Dean has identified a similar problem in characterizing as "art" objects from cultures that do not necessarily have such a category. Dean, "The Trouble with (The Term) Art," 26.

Mopa Mopa, Colonial Paths, and Territorial Imagination

Jesuit Lucas Fernández de Piedrahita, a seventeenth-century chronicler of the Northern Andes, invokes the geography of the territory by alluding to a rectangular container. “New Granada is like a box guarded on all sides by powerful natural forces.”¹ Fernández transforms the rivers, jungles, and the three branches of the Andean cordillera that run through the area into the structural elements of a chest-like container, one difficult to access. In order to enter this territory, Fernández continues, “there are only three or four roads, remote from one another, full of narrow passes and many dangers, which one must trudge by necessity.”² The box Fernández conjures is not unlike a mopa mopa coffer: an object in which geometry, locking system, impermeable cover, and sometimes even iconography guard an interior space. On the front of a mid-seventeenth-century example, two fierce, winged dragons face in opposite directions, as if securing the sides (fig. 3.1). The lock flap, which permits access to the coffer, is itself a dragon face made of silver. The trio recalls the “the powerful natural forces” Fernández mentions guarding New Granada.

However, the relationship between mopa mopa objects and traversing the Northern Andes’ terrain is far more than allegorical. Emblematic of the early-modern global circulation processes that enabled the merging of Asian, pre-Hispanic, and European traditions in the

¹ “Al fin es el Nuevo Reyno de Granada a la manera de una caja guarnecida por todas partes de asperezas tan fuertes por naturaleza, que para entrar en él, solo se hallan tres, ó quatro caminos remotisimos los unos de los otros, y de tantas angosturas, y riesgos en diferentes partes, por donde necesariamente se ha de pasar...” Lucas Fernández de Piedrahita, *Historia general de las conquistas del Nuevo Reyno de Granada* (Amberes: Juan Baptista Verdussen, 1688), 25. (All the translations in this ms. are by the author.)

² Ibid.

production of material culture, mopa mopa objects are inseparable from the trajectories that engendered them. Contemporary art historical analyses of these processes tend to treat the journeys by which people and things moved in a rather abstract fashion.³ Much like maps of trade routes, these accounts offer little information on the specific circumstances by which objects moved or about how contemporaries might have understood the paths they took. These analyses, therefore, obscure the strong and particular “desire for mobility”⁴ at the heart of the colonial enterprise. Furthermore, they fail to explain how this mobility shaped the conceptualization of colonial territories and manifested in material culture, beyond the dissemination of iconographic motifs and artistic techniques.

Mopa mopa objects, along with their shiny and translucent images, can be properly understood only in relation to the geographical itineraries within which they emerged—trajectories that the objects themselves reinstated at a symbolic level. The multiple iterations of these journeys, their directionality, and their symbolic meanings shaped the production and experience of these colonial images and defined colonial topographies. As such, mopa mopa images present an alternate way to understand the historical specificity of geography beyond text and maps. Intimately related to travel and moving in space, these objects raise awareness of the physical body that traveled through these territories and of the earthbound quality of that

³ The dynamic shift in art history towards “mobility” studies has allowed us to understand multiple dimensions of the processes involved in the movement of objects, formal languages, materials, concepts, and actors in numerous and enriching ways. This is an exciting area of research that continues to grow. Yet, the specifics of how objects moved and how those routes were experienced remain a gap in the literature.

⁴ Heidi Scott’s insightful discussion of the colonial landscape is predicated on a close analysis of mobility through the colonial territory as the structuring theme of most colonial writings. Heidi V. Scott, *Contested Territory: Mapping Peru in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries* (Notre Dame, Ind: University of Notre Dame Press, 2009), 38.

experience, revealing how both the journey and the territory were imagined as mutually constituting elements.

At the crossroads: the north to south path

Two paths orthogonal to each other are fundamental to understanding mopa mopa objects. The paths meet in the town of Pasto, the node from which most of these objects emerged. The first path—which I will discuss in this section—runs across the north-south axis of the Andes, from Cartagena all the way to Lima. The second path was used to source the resin from the Amazonian piedmont to the highlands. It runs from Mocoa, located in the Amazon foothills, up to Pasto.

The historiography of the Spanish colonies has analyzed the process of constructing colonial space in various ways, but it has rarely considered movement through the territory as a relevant analytic category.⁵ A key to establishing and sustaining the Spanish colonial enterprise was to institute systematic modes of marching across the territory. The colonial project was based on people moving across the land, in order to colonize, evangelize, count, buy, sell, and investigate—all activities that transformed the newly discovered territories into colonies. However, these trajectories have tended to be considered only as an instrumental necessity, not as a way of structuring meaning.⁶

⁵ Notable exceptions to this trend are the works of Barbara Mundy and Heidi V. Scott. See Barbara E. Mundy, *The Mapping of New Spain: Indigenous Cartography and the Maps of the Relaciones Geográficas* (Chicago; London: The University of Chicago Press, 2000), Heidi V. Scott, *Contested Territory: Mapping Peru in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries* (Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 2009).

⁶ For a informative narrative of routes used from the seventeenth to the nineteenth century in what today is Colombia see: Mariano Useche Losada, ed., *Caminos reales de Colombia* (Bogotá: Fondo FEN Colombia, 1995).

Beyond their practical purposes, colonial paths became a mode of conceptualizing the territory. Running from Cartagena to Lima, the capital of the Viceroyalty of Peru, one of the paths relevant to this study covered the inland of the northern part of Spanish South America, what today corresponds to Colombia and Ecuador. The area was part of the Viceroyalty of Peru until 1717, when it became a separate viceroyalty named New Granada. This path, the northern section of the great *Camino Real*, constitutes an eminently colonial way of trekking over the territory, even if some of its trails overlapped with traditional Indigenous routes. Though there is archeological and historical evidence of exchange and travel across the South American region before the arrival of the Spaniards, this particular and systematic way of traversing it was a colonial phenomenon that responded to the Spaniards' interests, modes of transportation, and climate preferences. This north to south path was deeply intertwined with the material and ideological spatialization of the colonial world. It connected Cartagena—a necessary stop for all ships traveling back and forth between the west coast of the “old world” and Spanish South America—to the northern inland administrative capitals, Santa Fé, Popayán, and Quito, eventually reaching Lima (fig. 3.2). The path went from Cartagena up the Magdalena River, a hot, humid journey to Honda. From Honda, it climbed up the steep eastern cordillera to Santa Fé (modern-day Bogotá), a high-altitude town that Spaniards enjoyed for its temperate weather. If a visit to Santa Fé could be avoided, the path south would continue from Honda to Neiva, after which the ascent to the central cordillera began via La Plata, crossing through the Paramo of Guanacas at 3,626 meters above sea level, or further south via Timaná.⁷ Either choice sent

⁷ Timaná is one of the towns where *mopa mopa* objects were produced. It is mentioned in the primary sources much less frequently than Pasto. Moreover, the sources emphasize that the objects from Pasto are the best. That there was a production in Timaná is not surprising because

travelers on a strenuous route almost impossible to travel during the rainy season, which led to Popayán, then to Pasto, and Quito. The course of the path reflects, on the one hand, the need to move along areas close to important pre-Hispanic settlements, and on the other, a weather preference that was not necessarily Indigenous.

La Plata, Popayán, Pasto, and Quito, the main stops along the route (Popayán and Quito also being administrative centers), are all located at relatively high altitudes. The choice of these sites was related to the European belief that temperate areas were more conducive to civility.⁸ When possible, Spaniards tried to avoid low-altitude humid areas, even when it entailed long and difficult hikes up the mountains.⁹ Pasto, which became the main production center of mopa mopa objects, was one of these stopping places. A high-altitude location with temperate climate that was difficult to access, Pasto is nestled within a particularly intricate section of the Andes.

of its closeness to the Amazon piedmont. What is interesting about this fact is that the Indigenous group mentioned in this area is the Andaki, and they also had settlements further south in Putumayo, the area from which the resin was brought to Pasto. This suggests that the resin was known and used by the different Indigenous groups that inhabited the Andes-Amazon piedmont.

⁸ In the 1573 *Ordenanzas de descubrimientos, nueva población y pacificación de las Indias* promulgated by King Philip II, it is stated that whenever possible towns in the Indies should be founded on areas of temperate weather and moderate altitude. See “Ordenanzas sobre descubrimiento nuevo y población” (1573), in *Colección de Documentos Inéditos, Relativos al descubrimiento... de las antiguas posesiones españolas de América y Oceanía, sacados de los archivos del reino, y muy especialmente del de Indias.*, compiled by Luis Torres de Mendoza, vol. 8 (Madrid: Imprenta Frias y Compañía, 1867), p. 498-501.

⁹ This kind of settlement pattern marginalized the development of low-altitude areas. This was the case particularly in the low-altitude areas around Pasto, such as the Pacific coast, the Patía valley, Putumayo, and Caquetá. The consequences of that marginalization reverberate until today. The lack of development and presence of the state made them ideal for the proliferation of armed groups involved in illicit drug trafficking. See María Victoria Uribe, “Caminos de los Andes del sur: Los caminos del sur del Cauca y de Nariño,” in *Caminos reales de Colombia*, ed. Mariano Useche Losada (Bogotá: Fondo FEN Colombia, 1995), 64.

Because of its topographical complexity it is called *el nudo de los Pastos* (the Pastos' knot).¹⁰ It never became a particularly large colonial settlement or a major administrative center. In spite of this, it was an important corridor for travelers on the north-south axis of the colonial territories from early on. In 1582, in the *Memorial de la Provincia de Popayán*, Fray Geronimo Escobar notes that “although [Pasto] only has twenty eight *vezinos* (Spanish or hispanicized permanent residents)..., with [the itinerant population of] merchants, soldiers, and other people, there are usually two hundred Spanish men and sometimes even two hundred and fifty.”¹¹

One way in which mopa mopa artists, even in a nook of the Andes, must have gained access to motifs and techniques from Europe and Asia was through the constant movement of travelers, clergy, merchants, soldiers, and crown officials who passed through Pasto.¹² In fact, some of the colonial authors who mention the production of mopa mopa objects and observed the technique were passing through Pasto on their way to other locales.¹³ Furthermore, these

¹⁰ The area's topography has been an obstacle to the design and construction of roads that connect Pasto with the Pacific coast and the Amazon. Topography has also been an obstacle to the design of efficient roads from Pasto to Popayán and Quito. Ibid. 61.

¹¹ “Este pueblo de Pasto...aunque no tiene si no veynte y ocho vezinos...con mercaderes y soldados y otras gentes es pueblo donde hay de ordinario dozientos hombres españoles y muchas veces dozientos cinquenta.” Geronimo Descobar, “Memorial que da Fray Geronimo Descobar predicador de la orden de Sant Agustin al Real Consejo de Yndias de lo que toca a la provincia de Popayan” (1582), in *Relaciones y visitas a los Andes, S XVI*, ed. Hermes Tovar Pinzón, vol. 1, Colección de historia de la Biblioteca Nacional (Bogotá: Colcultura: Instituto Colombiano de Cultura Hispánica, 1993), 387–427.

¹² Sañudo, a nineteenth-century historian of Pasto, repeatedly mentions important visitors that came by the city on their way to Quito, Santa Fe, or Cartagena throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. José Rafael Sañudo, *Apuntes Sobre La Historia de Pasto*, vol. 2, 3 vols. (Pasto, Colombia: Imprenta la Nariñesa, 1939).

¹³ Miguel de Santisteban, *Mil Leguas Por América: De Lima a Caracas 1740-1741: Diario de Don Miguel de Santisteban*, Colección Bibliográfica (Bogotá: Banco de la República, 1992), 124–25; Juan de Santa Gertrudis Serra, *Maravillas de la naturaleza*, vol. 2 (Bogotá: Empresa Nacional de Publicaciones, 1956), 76–77; Antonio de Juan Ulloa, *Relacion historica*

objects were made for export and specifically for travel. Describing the industry of mopa mopa objects in Pasto, Don Dionisio de Alsedo y Herrera, ex-governor of the *Reino de Quito* writes: “they make adornments, household items..., and utensils for traveling, that being of rare quality, are as estimable as if made of silver.”¹⁴ Indeed, a significant number of them were taken out of Pasto all the way to Spain.¹⁵ These objects and their images are therefore intimately related to this trajectory. Even their basic physical qualities betray this relation. At a practical level, mopa mopa objects were made to be easily transported. They are relatively small—cups, trays, boxes, or tabletop cabinets. These last two types are the largest. On average, boxes and tabletop cabinets are 25 x 38 x 28 cm. And their design seems to respond to a concern with weight. The tabletop cabinets, which have many wood parts inside, never exceed a certain size, about 39 x 56 x 25 cm. Anything larger than that tends to be empty inside.

Another feature made these objects apt for traveling in humid and rainy climates: they are waterproof. In most of the objects that have survived, the mopa mopa resin was used not only to decorate the objects but also as a layer to protect the wood. A thin layer of uncolored resin was

del viage a la America Meridional (Madrid: Por A. Marin, 1748), 45; Alexander von Humboldt, “Tagebücher der Amerikanischen Reise VIIa/b: Rio de la Magdalena – Bogota – Zuindice – Popayan – Quito (Antisana, Pichincha) Pasto Volcan, p. 190 Zolima p 164,” 1801, 188, Nachl. Alexander von Humboldt (Tagebücher), VIIa/b, Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin, <http://resolver.staatsbibliothek-berlin.de/SBB0001527A00000000>.

¹⁴ “Y de este genero hacen adornos, menages, muebles y utensilios para el servicio de las casas, de las haciendas y de los viajes en los caminos, que a no ser tan comunes, fueran tan estimables como de plata...” Dionisio de Alsedo, “Plano geográfico e hidrográfico del distrito de la Real Audiencia de Quito y descripciones de las provincias”(1766) in *Relaciones histórico-geográficas de la Audiencia de Quito: s. XVI-XIX*, ed. Pilar Ponce Leiva, vol. 2 (Quito: Marka, Instituto de Historia y Antropología Andina, 1994), 429.

¹⁵ A large number of the objects that have survived are found in Spain. It is also worth noting that a significant fraction of the cost of *mopa mopa* objects must have been to bring them out of Pasto to large ports, like Cartagena. Until the nineteenth century, it was cheaper to move things from Cartagena to Europe than to move them inside the Northern Andes.

applied over most of the wood surfaces, even over those that were not meant to be decorated (fig. 3.3). Travelers certainly would have experienced long stretches of humid weather and, depending on the season, considerable rain on their way through the Northern Andes. Being waterproof was also a valuable feature for objects made to journey overseas. Yet, only when we consider at a symbolic level the relationships of mopa mopa objects to the trails involved in their production and circulation can we fully understand how objects and paths mutually defined each other. Together, they helped create what in the early eighteenth century became the Viceroyalty of New Granada.

The challenge of the journey through the Northern Andes

Pasto was not the only difficult place to access in the Northern Andes. Trekking this region was through and through a rough journey. The complaint “of physical suffering through exposure to inhospitable and perilous environments”¹⁶ is a common rhetorical motif in writings of colonial Latin America that was deployed to portray conquistadors, administrative officials, and missionaries as dedicated servants of the crown. However, the chronicles and legal documents that describe the Northern Andes insist on the harsh conditions of travel, citing searing temperatures, humidity, and punishing climbs, dense forests, and bad trails. Explaining how the gold trade and transport worked in the colonial period, geographer Robert C. West asserts that “the incredibly rough terrain of the Northern Andes gave New Granada the reputation of having the worst trails in all the Spanish Indies. Typical is this statement by a sixteenth-century official traveling to Popayán: ‘It is believed that not in the entire world are there worse

¹⁶ Scott, *Contested Territory*, 192, note 46.

roads that in this province...’¹⁷ Heidi Scott’s analysis of the descriptions of the first Spanish expeditions to the Pacific coast of modern-day Colombia and Ecuador also brings to the fore the distinctive character of the Northern Andes landscape: “Unlike the open expanses of Spain’s central plate or...the plain of New Spain...this world of equatorial forests was *ciego*—literally translated, blind—for it could not be visually surveyed or kept at a distance, but had to be negotiated step by step as it physically engulfed those who ventured into it.” However, once the conquistadors proceed further south, to the area near Quito, Scott explains “the pace, the breadth of vision, and the geographical scope undergo a remarkable transformation: suddenly and without explanation, the struggle for survival is transformed into rapid and relentless conquest.”¹⁸ Another issue that helps to conceptualize the Northern Andes as a difficult terrain was precisely the dense tropical forest on the Pacific coast that Scott mentions. Unlike the Central Andes, where the highlands are accessible from the coast (a circumstance that led Spaniards to move the administrative capital to the coast), in the Northern Andes a mountain range covered in tropical forest, the *Serranía del Baudó*, acts as a natural barrier separating the highlands from the Pacific.

The lack of easy access to the Pacific—and therefore, the difficulty of connecting the Northern Andes via maritime travel with the rest of the Spanish holdings in South America—coupled with the challenge of the terrain affected the everyday dealings of the colonial enterprise and occupied a large part of how the Northern Andes were conceived. Fernández de Piedrahita’s

¹⁷ West further explains that “not only steep slopes but slippery red clay, a product of deep lateritic weathering, often made trails impassable during the rains.” Robert C. West, *Colonial Placer Mining in Colombia* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1952), 126.

¹⁸ Scott, *Contested Territory*, 24, 27.

opening simile—in which New Granada’s terrain is conceived as a box, almost impenetrable, guarded by natural barriers that needed to be surmounted every step of the way—illustrates this point. The chronicle, first published in 1688, is particularly valuable for this study because Fernández summarizes and cites almost everything that was written about New Granada up until the moment when he is writing. Descriptions of journeys within the Northern Andean inland often appear in his text. He also offers one of the earliest mentions of the production of mopa mopa objects. His work narrates the history of the conquest of the north of South America, which had taken place a century before. Both he and other seventeenth-century writers of the Northern Andes wove their present conditions into narratives of the past. In fact, their own experience in the area serves to corroborate or disprove facts from the sixteenth-century sources they consult, especially on the nature of the terrain. The historical facts that these works aim to present are critical to understanding mopa mopa images and the nature of traversing the region, but equally important is that they “generate a field of historical experience.”¹⁹ Reflecting on sixteenth-century conquest journeys, they convey what it meant to march through this area in the second half of the seventeenth century.

Fernández's description of New Granada first mentions the many dangers and difficulties of traversing this territory,²⁰ but he subsequently sets up a contrast, which he elaborates over and over in his numerous pages. This contrast captures how journeying the Northern Andes was experienced and imagined:

¹⁹ Niall Atkinson, *The Noisy Renaissance: Sound, Architecture, and Florentine Urban Life* (University Park: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2016), 152.

²⁰ The emphasis on traversing the territory is quite stunning; it is the first thing Piedrahita mentions in his opening description of New Granada. It as if moving through that territory is the predominant way of thinking about New Granada.

To the West there are mountains and inaccessible forests followed by a good deal of space. And to the North, more than two hundred leagues of mountains, which terminate in the oceanic coast. In sum, New Granada is like a box guarded on all sides by powerful natural forces, such that to enter it, there are only three or four roads, remote from one another, full of narrow passes and many dangers, which one must traverse by necessity.... So delectable is this place, the New Kingdom, that one can hardly imagine any sensual pleasure not to be found in the graciousness of its lands.²¹

One of Fernández's contemporary commentators notes that the glory of the conquest of New Granada lay not in conquering vast empires, but in the difficulty of the terrain, in conquering a territory that was beautiful, delectable, difficult, and dangerous.²² These authors and their audiences in the mid-seventeenth century participated themselves in the glory of the conquest by traversing that beautiful yet challenging country. Many of these authors, along with their readers, were still involved in "pacifying" and missionizing peoples in lands adjacent to the main towns and routes in the seventeenth century. Both colonizers and colonized (in this case, patrons and artists, respectively) must have understood at some level that each iteration of the journey was a colonizing act, vital for the survival of the colonial project.²³ Mopa mopa images reflect precisely this field of historical experience, not simply, as is usually implied, the

²¹ "Al Occidente tiene montes, y bosques inaccesibles, y continuados por mucho espacio y al Septentrion, mas de docientas leguas de montaña, que rematan en la costa del mar Oceano. Al fin es el Nueuo Reyno de Granada a la manera de una caja guarnecida por todas partes de asperezas tan fuertes por naturaleza, que para entrar en él, solo se hallan tres, ó quatro caminos remotisimos los unos de los otros, y de tantas angosturas, y riesgos en diferentes partes, por donde necesariamente se ha de pasar... Tan delytoso sitio es este del Nueuo Reyno, que apenas fe imaginara deleyte a los sentidos, que falte en la amenidad de sus Países." Fernández de Piedrahíta, Lucas, *Historia general de las conquistas del Nueuo Reyno de Granada* (Amberes: Juan Baptista Verdussen, 1688), 25.

²² Diego de Figueroa in *ibid.*, 2.

²³ Heidi V. Scott's analysis of colonial geography illuminates the ways in which "emergent colonial landscapes were molded through ongoing often mundane labor and practices...unsettling the notion of the conquest as a dramatic and exceptional moment." Scott, *Contested Territory*, 19.

cosmopolitan taste of Spaniards passing through Pasto or the cultural “mixing” so characteristic of colonial cultures. Mopa mopa objects circulated because of these travelers and their repetition of this journey; but it is also highly likely that these travelers commissioned mopa mopa works, taking them back to Europe as a token of the journey itself. This is probably why so many of these objects survive in Spain.

Like the terrain they traveled through, described as having dense and diverse vegetation crowned with beautifully colored birds, the shiny seductive surfaces of mopa mopa objects are full of exuberant plant life.²⁴ A large number of them are also rich in gold touches and translucent metallic colors, particularly greens and blues (fig. 3.4).²⁵ In this regard, they fulfill their function as attractive decorative objects. However, these colors also echoed the gold and emerald riches of the land, as well as the delectable beauty so often described by Fernández, features that attracted travelers and officials to trek through this daunting territory. On closer inspection, however, mopa mopa images turn out to be not so benign. They recall the ambivalence of traversing the Northern Andes, evoking both beauty *and* danger.

²⁴ Describing the journey from Santa Fe to Cartagena the Jesuit Gonzalo de Lira states in the Annual Letter of 1608-1609: “el rio por muchas partes, cria arboledas tan espesas que de ninguna manera se puede caminar por tierra. La diversidad de arboles es mucha...En estas selvas tan cerradas hay gran cantidad de tigres, de puercos monteses y venados. Los arboles están todos poblados de micos y monos...Es tan grande la muchedumbre de pájaros que andan estas arboledas particularmente papagayos y algunos de muy hermosos colores...” In José del Rey Fajardo, Alberto Gutiérrez, and Archivo Histórico Javeriano Juan Manuel Pacheco, S.J, eds., *Cartas Anuas de La Provincia Del Nuevo Reino de Granada: Años 1604 a 1621*, Primera edición, Colección Archivo Histórico Javeriano (Bogotá, D.C: Archivo Histórico Javeriano Juan Manuel Pacheco, S.J, 2015), 232.

²⁵ The exception to the heavy use of translucent green and blue is a “type” of *mopa mopa* object that has a black background and matte color decoration on top.

Dogs as Spanish allies

On the side of a seventeenth-century mopa mopa tabletop cabinet, a background of tendrils and exuberant vegetation floods the picture plane (fig. 3.5). Seen in its prime, the image would have appeared busier with sharply delineated shapes and glittering color, much like its interior, which has been better preserved (fig. 3.6). On the left side of the image, an Indigenous person in profile looks to the right side of the picture plane. Dressed in only an elaborate loincloth, he sports a matching feather headdress and a lance. On the other side, a man in European garb points a musket in the general direction of the Indian. A tree stands between them at dead center. Birds fly about. A small mammal is nestled at the base of the tree trunk. The image is most animated around the three large mammals: two black dogs and a jaguar. The dogs pounce in the direction of the jaguar and the Indian. The jaguar is contorted, perhaps weighing the danger coming at him from both sides. The scene is not evidently confrontational, as these men do not take particularly aggressive stances. One might see it as an Indigenous reworking of a European hunting scene.

Yet, in light of descriptions of the north-south journey, this seemingly generic image takes on a more specific valence. Fernández characterizes a conquistador's journey to get to Santa Fé, at the center of New Granada, as almost impossible: "[He] walked for more than a hundred leagues to reach the New Kingdom, a feat that seems impossible, considering the dangers of difficult passages, Indian warriors, men and ferocious animals, which are such, that there is no memory capable of recounting them."²⁶ Note that he uses the present tense, "which

²⁶ "camino mas de cien leguas hafta llegar al Nuevo Reyno: cofa que parece impoffible. confiderados los peligros de malos passos, Indios de guerra, hombres, y animales ferozes, que

are such (*que son tales*).” The journey is still described as severe in eighteenth century texts. “*Indios de guerra*” (or war Indians) appear constantly in colonial narratives.²⁷ Confrontations with Natives were of course a common theme in the histories and chronicles of the mid-seventeenth century. While those confrontations epitomized the conquest, they were still taking place throughout the seventeenth century in some areas, particularly around Pasto (in the Patía valley right before climbing to Pasto, in Barbacoas to the west, and in Mocoa to the east).

Playing into the trope of the Native savage, it was a European convention to describe and depict Native warriors as being nearly naked and wearing feather headdresses.²⁸ Indeed, this is the case in the scene described above. If this is an Indian warrior, the man with the musket in the scene acquires a confrontational tone, which is exacerbated when we take the dogs into account. Hunting dogs became common in the Americas with the arrival of Europeans.²⁹ Along with firearms and horses, dogs were one of the key weapons in the wars against Native groups, ripping apart Indigenous warriors during battle. According to colonial narratives, they were

son tales, que no ay memoria capaz de referirlos.” Fernández de Piedrahíta, *Historia general*, 295.

²⁷ It is important to clarify that as Anishinaabe writer Gerald Vizenor notes the word “Indian” is a “colonial enactment” that “has no referent in tribal languages or cultures.” I retain the word Indian when it appears in a colonial document and to highlight a colonial perspective.

²⁸ Rebecca P. Brien, “The Image of the ‘Indian’ in Early Modern Europe and Colonial Mexico,” in *Visions of Empire: Picturing the Conquest in Colonial Mexico* (Coral Gables, FL: University of Miami: Jay Kislak Foundation, 2003), 30.

²⁹ Spanish colonial writings and archeological material confirm that there were dogs in Mesoamerica, the Caribbean, and the Andes at the time of Spanish arrival. It is unclear to what extent these American dog breeds were used for hunting (the only evidence of dogs use in hunting contexts appears in depictions Moche vessels). One early colonial source mentions that dogs were one of the trade items that Natives from the lowlands got in the highlands. It is unclear if this tradition is colonial or if it started in the colonial period.²⁹ Antonio Borja, “Relación en suma de la doctrina e beneficio de Pimampiro” (1541), in *Relaciones geográficas de Indias. Perú*, vol. 3, 4 v. (Madrid: Tip. de M. G. Hernández, 1897), 134.

particularly useful in rugged and densely forested terrain where horses were of little use.³⁰

Fernandez Piedrahita and Pedro Simón—the major chroniclers of New Granada—report numerous times that dogs were much more useful than horses. In fact, in many cases horses were a hindrance since they were unable to navigate the rough terrain.³¹ Despite this, dogs have rarely been part of secondary narratives about the Spanish conquest, and it is perhaps because of this that dogs in mopa mopa images have escaped scholarly attention. Dogs are one of the most common mammals to appear in mopa mopa images, and they are almost always pouncing. Horses, in spite of being a paradigmatic weapon in the Spanish conquest of the Americas, are rare.³²

Considering New Granada's conquest descriptions, the dogs in the scene seem neither incidental nor surprising. The jaguar or large feline, a ubiquitous motif in mopa mopa images and the paradigm of Native "fierce animals" mentioned in Fernández's passage, also contributes to the sense of danger in the image. The "war Indian" and the jaguar directly evoke what were considered to be the "impossibilities" or great difficulties of traversing the Northern Andes, and the dogs and the firearms evoke Spanish methods of tackling them.

The depiction of the "war Indian," however, deserves more attention, as it complicates the narrative and the stakes of the image. As previously mentioned, the figure plays into the

³⁰ Ricardo Piqueras Céspedes, "Los perros de la guerra o el 'canibalismo canino' en la conquista," *Boletín americanista*, no. 56 (2006): 189–202, 189, 191.

³¹ A typical statement in Fernandez Piedrahita about the use of dog in the conquest wars is: "Debiose todo el buen exito desta conquista a los perros de que usaban los Españoles, a quienes los Muzos preferían a las armas de fuego, y caballos; y a la verdad, como se suelen atacar las batallas, son de grande conveniencia en las guerras de Indias."

Fernández de Piedrahíta, *Historia general*, 552.

³² I have studied about 80 objects. I have found horses only on two objects, but several unicorns.

European stereotype of Indigenous peoples from the Americas, which were often portrayed in European images wearing feather headdress, bare chest, and even a feather skirt, an item of clothing that is considered to be fictional (fig. 3.7).³³ However, small details like the bands around the arms and legs, the long hair, and pattern of the skirt, belie simple stereotyping. The depiction is potentially accurate: feather headdresses from the Cofanes, for instance, are not that different from the one evoked here; colonial descriptions of some Native groups from the lowlands mention long hair; and the lance was also a typical weapon used by lowland Natives. It is quite possible that this image is as accurate as the image of the Spaniard in the same work. Still, one is forced to question under what terms Indigenous artists would have decided to use a Native depiction that so easily plays into such European stereotypes when they could have chosen another kind of Native dress. Natives who lived in the Andean highlands dressed in mantas (a rough cotton fabric) covering the whole trunk.³⁴

The choice might reflect pre-Hispanic Andean traditions of “otherness” that have been documented for Inka culture. The Inka considered lowland groups, particularly Amazonian tribes, to be less cultured than highland groups. Even if something similar is at play in this case, any pre-Hispanic notion of “otherness” was fundamentally altered under the Spanish colonial regime, which established a new social hierarchy based on racial distinctions. Within the new order, Europeans were at the top, followed by Natives, with Africans and their descendants at

³³ Images of feather skirts in representations of Mesoamerican Natives are considered to be fictional. I doubt this is true for Natives from the Amazon.

³⁴ Joanne Rappaport, “Carchi Province (Ecuador) and the Department of Nariño (Colombia),” in *Costume and History in Highland Ecuador*, ed. Ann Pollard Rowe and Lynn Meisch (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2011), 119–29. Pre-Hispanic ceramics also depict persons dressed with mantas shrouding most of the body.

the bottom. This mopa mopa image, as others similar in style, speaks to the new social order and how it was perceived. At the same time, the image subtly claims a “ground” of equality. The artist has used the same reserved-ground skin color for both European and Indigenous figures. This is constant in all similar styled mopa mopa images that depict both Europeans and Natives (figs. 3.5 and 3.16).

In contrast, in the only image that I have found so far on mopa mopa depicting a black subject, the black page and his white counterparts do not share a reserved-ground for skin color (fig. 3.8). These objects were made for European and creole purchasers and must represent things in a way that is intelligible and attractive to them. But to do this, Indigenous artists had to engage in practices of interpretation and translation that reflect reality from their perspective. These processes are rarely entirely seamless.

On monkeys and colonial mimicry

Monkeys are another recurrent motif in mopa mopa images (figs. 9-11). It has been argued that this motif derives from Native tradition because images of monkeys are prevalent in the pre-Hispanic art of the region.³⁵ While that is surely the case, they were also a happily accepted token of exoticism for European audiences. I argue that monkeys were also related to the difficulties of traversing the Northern Andes. Moreover, their depiction on mopa mopa images elaborates on the broader dangers of the colonial project.

³⁵ Mitchell A. Coddington, “The Decorative Arts in Latin America, 1492-1820,” in *The Arts in Latin America, 1492-1820*, ed. Suzanne L. Stratton, 1st ed. (New Haven, Conn: Yale University Press, 2006).

Food supply was a common problem in “New World” conquest journeys, and it is one of the themes that appear most frequently in texts about the Northern Andes. Native settlements in some areas were distant from one another, and the challenges of the routes made journeys rather lengthy. Provisions were always scarce. Horses – precious possessions for colonizers – could end up as food. Conquest chronicles report curious feats to acquire food, high losses due to hunger, and deaths caused by poisonous plants. Monkeys, interestingly, appear in these reports as great allies. Travelers would follow their lead when it came to determining which foods were safe to eat.³⁶ Mentions of monkeys aiding colonial officials who navigated the Northern Andes continue until the eighteenth century. During that period, missionaries were able to cover large segments of land without bringing many provisions, learning from monkeys which fruits were edible and where they grew.³⁷ Mopa mopa images not only depict monkeys but often show them near fruit. These monkeys’ representations are a reminder of the real difficulties and dangers associated with traversing the Northern Andes.

Monkeys also wittily recall what critical theorist Homi K. Bhabha articulates as colonial mimicry and its menace.³⁸ Bhabha argues that mimicry is essential to the colonizing enterprise. Colonial mimicry, one of the driving desires of colonialism, is the aim to transform the colonized into subjects similar to the colonizer, but emphatically not the same.³⁹ By such transformation, colonial subjects become “recognizable” for the colonizer. In the Spanish case, that meant that

³⁶ Fernández de Piedrahíta, *Historia general*, 373.

³⁷ Joseph Gumilla, *El Orinoco ilustrado, y defendido, historia natural, civil, y geographica de este gran rio, y de sus caudalosas vertientes*, vol. 1 (Madrid: M. Fernández, 1745), 296.

³⁸ Homi K. Bhabha, “Of Mimicry and Man: The Ambivalence of Colonial Discourse,” *October* 28, no. Discipleship: A Special Issue on Psychoanalysis (Spring 1984): 125-33.

³⁹ Bhabha, 126.

subjects needed to be converted to Catholicism and “civilized”—that is, brought into conformity with Spanish cultural norms. Yet, crucial to sustaining the colonial project, the transformed, “recognizable” object of colonization could never be the same as the colonizer. That is what Bhabha calls mimicry (I want you to be like me, but not quite like me), and that is the key to perpetuating the power imbalance that justifies the colonial endeavor. But as Bhabha notes, the ambivalence of colonial mimicry is a double-edged sword, for sustaining the difference of colonial subjects is a menace for the colonizer, who is constantly being observed and continuously at “risk” of being transformed by the colonized.⁴⁰ The seemingly benign idea of missionaries imitating monkeys to survive the hardships of the territory takes a menacing turn in light of colonial mimicry. Colonial writings rarely state that Europeans learned anything from Natives. The very fact that missionaries indicated that they learned from monkeys and not from Natives offers a glimpse into the danger colonizers felt about being changed by colonization.

As if picking up on that threat, monkey images on mopa mopa objects evoke the ambivalence of colonial mimicry with poignant irony. On several tabletop cabinets, monkeys hang from vines from which fruit grows. The silhouette of their bodies is reminiscent of pre-Hispanic monkey depictions from the Pasto area. Their faces, however, set them apart from their pre-Hispanic counterparts; their facial features resemble human faces as they look out of the picture plane toward the viewer (fig. 3.9). In what seems to be a gesture to the European naturalistic treatment of images, the monkeys’ portrayals end up “mimicking” humans. The demands of European naturalism have colonized the pre-Hispanic monkey depiction. But the result is not a “closer to nature” rendition. The mopa mopa “humanized” monkey is the very

⁴⁰ Bhabha, 129.

residue of the act of mimicry, a disturbing remnant for the colonizer—who himself has imitated monkeys. This monkey depiction has the potential to remind him that, within the ambivalent logic of colonial mimicry, he—as an agent of the colonial project—could be “turned” into a primate.

On the exterior of another tabletop cabinet lid, monkey depictions more directly seem to menace the colonial project (fig. 3.10). On the center of the lid’s upper register appears a double-headed eagle—a symbol of the Spanish crown—flanked by two monkeys with mischievous expressions. Each of these monkeys holds a dagger that is already piercing the eagle’s tail. The monkeys are clearly mimicking humans holding weapons. The dagger, an iron weapon, is a nod to European blades. Using the very tools that Spanish used to conquer the Americas, the monkeys appear to mischievously poke at a symbol of the Spanish monarchy.

Circling back to missionaries learning from monkeys which fruits were edible, another mopa mopa image, perhaps humorously, develops even more poignantly the notion of colonial mimicking and its menace (fig. 3.11). Dominating the composition, dead center, on the inside of yet another tabletop cabinet appears a dark green monkey surrounded by fauna and lush flora. Rendered in profile, as if seated on a branch, the monkey holds a fruit in his hand. The visual parallel of the fruit hanging from a vine with the fruit already on the monkey’s hand evokes the gesture of an arm that reaches out to the vines in front, delicately grabs a fruit, and twist as it retracts.

The monkey’s mouth is open, ready to eat. The treatment of the face, again human-like, gives way to a hat that tops its head. The hat is a clear marker of hispanization. The monkey has profoundly changed with colonization, more so because the hat, instead of being worn, seems to

be part of his body. What is really striking about this image is that in light of colonial mimicry it is unclear for whom this monkey stands: is it for the colonizer or the colonized? Is it standing for a Native mimicking Spaniards and their ways of dress? Or is it standing for a colonizer that mimics monkeys to learn which fruits are edible? The impossibility of ascertaining in one way or the other is the brilliance of the image. The image captures beautifully the disturbing effects of colonial mimicry and its menace.

Mopa mopa vs. other ways of imaging territory

All the recurrent motifs mentioned above typically occur in a dense array of what is usually referred to as “exotic flora.” On the image discussed at the beginning of this chapter—where the Indian and Spaniard appear—the confrontational elements singled out cannot be isolated from the visual context in which they were immersed: exuberant, overlarge flowers and a dense tendril array in gold and metallic greens (fig. 3.5). On the one hand, some of the plants depicted are Native.⁴¹ This is a direct reference to the Northern Andean territory. On the other, the highly aestheticized plant array evokes the delectable beauty of the land and the allure of the journey. On the whole, the scene alludes to the beauty and danger that was associated with the paths across the region. Fernández asserts that as Native warriors wore showy feathers on gold crowns on the battlefield, they “flaunted beauty even in their ferocity.”⁴² That sentence captures succinctly the ambivalence that the author develops throughout his work, an ambivalence that did not escape Native mopa mopa artists.

⁴¹ Coddington, “The Laquer Arts of Latin America,” 79. I have also identified Native plants on various *mopa mopa* objects.

⁴² “ostentaban hermosura en la misma fiereza...” Fernández de Piedrahíta, *Historia General*, 295.

A notable feature in the display of this ambivalence is that the dense vegetation that populates most of the wood surface is no background. There is no sense of illusionistic spatial depth. This effect is achieved by the oversized flowers and the use of translucent colors and gilded accents, particularly in the foliage. In spite of their patterned shapes, the use of color brings what normally would be “background vegetation” to the foreground, that is, to the same visual register as the rest of the elements in the image. As such, beauty and danger are presented as if equal in their aesthetic and symbolic force.

While all the visual elements of these images come to the foreground, conveying a sense of pictorial flatness, the images themselves are sometimes not flat to the touch. In some of these objects, the figures are slightly raised since each is composed of a different number of resin layers. Each figure varies in thickness according to the effect the artist was pursuing. The viewer/owner of a mopa mopa object encounters a visually and sometimes tactilely loaded surface, an experience that elicits the profusion of images and surfaces that one would have come across while journeying on foot through the Northern Andes.

The flat pictorial space in mopa mopa images evokes the “blind forest” described by early explorers of the Colombian Pacific coast.⁴³ In both, dense overgrown vegetation prevents easy movement and the possibility of penetrating landscape and space with the power of sight. By contrast, maps—byproducts of early modern colonial expansion and the geometric rationalization of space, which also gave birth to the depth of perspectival pictorial space—conjure a visual representation in which vast areas can be apprehended at an instant. The map allows viewers to abstract themselves “from the body’s limitations, to issue that commanding

⁴³ Scott, *Contested Territory*, 27.

position from which the eyes can follow any route, no matter how difficult, no matter the obstacles.”⁴⁴ Pictorial figuration on mopa mopa surfaces, like the chronicles by Fernández Piedranhita and Simón, “imagines territory from the perspective of the earthbound traveler,”⁴⁵ an embodied experience that figures out space as the body suffers, encounters obstacles and perceives beauty. Though we tend to consider the practical aspects of early-modern circulation processes somewhat abstractly, in terms of routes on maps, mopa mopa objects invite us to pursue a more detailed understanding of how central physical journeys were, not only for the experience and production of objects such as those decorated with the mopa mopa resin, but to the conceptualization and construction of the colonial territories.

Across the Amazon piedmont

Another set of journeys crucial to understanding mopa mopa production and the conception of the Northern Andean territory are the trajectories through the Andes-Amazon piedmont. This region, which comprises the eastern slopes of the Andean cordillera’s easternmost branch that give way to the Amazon basin, survived as an Indigenous space, “through the persistence of traditional forms of exchange” and Native resistance to colonizing efforts.⁴⁶ From the colonizers’ perspective, it was incredibly difficult to navigate not only because of its geography and environment, but also because the Indigenous groups that lived in

⁴⁴ Ricardo Padrón, *The Spacious Word: Cartography, Literature, and Empire in Early Modern Spain* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004), 61.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.* 74.

⁴⁶ Simón Uribe, *Frontier Road: Power, History, and the Everyday State in the Colombian Amazon* (Hoboken, NJ: Wiley/ Blackwell, 2017), 30.

the area spoke many different languages.⁴⁷ It became the frontier that set the Amazon and the Andes diametrically apart. In the colonial record, the piedmont appears as a region trekked mainly to connect the lowlands with the highlands. However, the piedmont was inhabited and traversed routinely by Native groups. As I will show, mopa mopa resin harvesting is proof of such journeys. Natives of Andaki ethnicity, for instance, were reported to live in towns all across the piedmont throughout the colonial period.⁴⁸ The connectivity of the region helps us understand the relationship between the towns mentioned in colonial records as the sources of mopa mopa objects. While Pasto became the most renowned locale of mopa mopa production, period sources also refer to Timaná and Mocoa.⁴⁹ All these places are situated on or close to the piedmont. More specifically, they are close to the ideal ecological zone for mopa mopa resin production. The plant thrives in the humid slopes of the piedmont forest, in areas between 1400 and 1700 meters, with high concentrations of mosses and thick topsoil. The tree, however, has never been domesticated or cultivated in a traditional sense, most likely because its growing conditions are tough to replicate. Instead, mopa mopa harvesters have, until recently, relied on

⁴⁷ On the 1594 report about the Mocoa region drafted by Francisco Velez de Zuñiga for the crown, the Spanish official states: “Ay diez y nueve provincias y en ellas nueve lenguas diferentes unas de otras... es toda tierra de montaña sin que aya genero de sabana ninguna y tierra muy fragosa de serranias y ríos muy caudalosos y en muchos no se pueden hazer puentes...” Francisco Velez de Zuñiga, “Relacion de Los Indios de Mocoa,” 1597, f.1r., f. 2r., QUITO, 24 , N. 49, AIG.

⁴⁸ Juan Friede, *Los andakí, 1538-194; historia de la aculturación de una tribu selvática* (México: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1953).

⁴⁹ Descobar, “Memorial Que Da Fray Geronimo Descobar,” 405; Fernández de Piedrahita, *Noticia Historial*), 360; Ulloa, *Relacion historica del viage a la America Meridional*, 45.

their knowledge of the piedmont terrain across which mopa mopa tree pockets are found to collect resin efficiently.⁵⁰

In light of where the resin grows and how it is harvested, the piedmont, which colonizers dreaded and feared, emerges as an interconnected region that was lived, traversed, and known by Natives throughout the colonial period. Meanwhile, the towns where mopa mopa objects were made emerge as nodes where the colonial spatial order connected with the piedmont, which survived as an Indigenous space. In contrast to Timaná and Mocoa, Pasto was not only a point of connection between an Indigenous and a colonial space, it was also a necessary stop in the *Camino Real*—the backbone of the colonial spatial order. No doubt that is a crucial factor in Pasto becoming the center of colonial mopa mopa objects' production.⁵¹

The trail that connected Pasto to the Amazon

The resin, sourced from the forest of the Andes-Amazon piedmont, arrived at the town of Pasto via the Mocoa-Pasto trail, one of the routes that connected the Andes highlands to the Amazon basin. Natives of Pasto and of the Sibundoy area had since pre-Hispanic times provided the highlands with resin, alluvial gold, beeswax, and dyes.⁵² From Pasto, the path ascended to La

⁵⁰ Today, harvesters have developed cultivation techniques to increase the number of trees in forest areas that already are pockets of *mopa mopa* trees, and they harvest only in those areas. However, some of them started harvesting at a time when it was still necessary to pick resin in different areas of the piedmont to get enough to sell. Personal communication with Jesus Cerón, Manuel Mueces, current harvesters, and Vicente Iles, former harvester. Mocoa, January, 2019.

⁵¹ Quito shared the same conditions with Pasto. It was a stop in the *Camino Real* and also had trails connecting it to the Amazon. It was also a much bigger town. That Pasto became the most renowned place of production must have been due to the expertise of working with the resin by Natives from the area and the adjacent piedmont.

⁵² María Victoria Uribe, "Caminos de los Andes del sur: Los caminos del sur del Cauca y de Nariño," in *Caminos reales de Colombia*, ed. Mariano Useche Losada (Bogotá: Fondo FEN Colombia, 1995), 70.

Cocha Lake, then to the Bordoncillo paramo to finally initiate the descent toward the Amazon basin. On the way down, the first stop was the town of Santiago in the Sibundoy Valley, from which the trail continued down to Mocoa through dense tropical forest.

The use of mopa mopa resin in the highlands reflects a typical Andean socioeconomic structure that has been defined in modern scholarship as a vertical economy.⁵³ Andeans made use of the different ecological zones across altitudes to provide themselves with a wide variety of products. However, the trade of lowland products to the highlands became charged with meaning in the colonial period. For the Spanish, culture was produced in the highlands, whereas the lowlands yielded only raw materials.⁵⁴ The movement of the resin along the path up the mountains was therefore the first phase of the transformation of raw material into cultural product. In general, Spaniards favored the development of settlements in the highlands but also developed their own antagonistic conception of the Amazon lowlands. In particular, as anthropologist Michael Taussig articulates, during colonial and republican times, the descent into the Amazon from Pasto was understood as a descent into hell, in contrast to the “terrestrial paradise” of the highlands.⁵⁵ The symbolic meaning of the journey down the Amazon piedmont

⁵³ Frank Salomon, “Vertical Politics on the Inka Frontier,” in *Anthropological History of Andean Politics*, ed. John V. Murra, Nathan Wachtel, and Jacques Revel (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 89–117.

⁵⁴ A similar conception of the highlands as cultured vs. lowlands as uncultured is well documented for the Inka. I am not sure it worked like that in the Northern Andes. I have not found colonial sources stating that conception operated in the same way in the Northern Andes. However, scholars like Rappaport and Cummins agree that a similar conception must have existed in the Northern Andes as well. Joanne Rappaport and Tom Cummins, *Beyond the Lettered City: Indigenous Literacies in the Andes*, Narrating Native Histories (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2012), 106; Salomon, “Vertical Politics on the Inka Frontier.”

⁵⁵ Michael T. Taussig, “On the Indian’s Back: The Moral Topography of the Andes and Its Conquest,” in *Shamanism, Colonialism, and the Wild Man: A Study in Terror and Healing* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987), 287-335.

was intimately related to the dense vegetation, humid weather of the terrain,⁵⁶ and abrupt topography.⁵⁷

According to French botanist Edouard André, who visited the area in 1884, the trail was so bad that only Indians were dexterous enough to use it. In particular, Mocoa Indians, who were important to Pasto's economy because they carried up from the Amazon lowlands dyes for wool and cotton ponchos, and mopa mopa resin for cabinet making—the two primary industries of the town. Guided by Natives, André ventured into the trail, climbing up “often on all fours, scrambling in the mud, slipping between roots, sinking into swamps” (fig. 3.12). High up, at 3,200 meters, the trail became “a canyon many meters high covered by an interwoven fabric of branches and roots...Now and again a greenish ray of light slipped onto the dark pathway, whose walls covered with hepatic lichens, mosses, and hymenophyllas, produced one of those fantastic effects impossible to describe.”⁵⁸ A greenish ray of light producing a fantastic effect recalls the metallic greens that bounce off vegetation on colonial mopa mopa surfaces (figs. 4 and 13). André's account is much later than the objects in question, but his description of the path nonetheless serves to anchor the objects in the specific trajectories from which they emerged. It is literally on the trail that André records in writing the words “mopa mopa,” one of the two earliest known written records of this term for the resin, which is highly likely a term from a

⁵⁶ The area is impossible to see via satellite because it is always covered with clouds. Juan Camilo Osorio from MIT COLAB. Personal communication. February 2018.

⁵⁷ Due to such conditions, the trail was traveled only by foot until the early twentieth century. Heavy loads, which sometimes included European and Creole travelers, were carried on “Indians' backs.” For discussions of trekking this trail see: Taussig, *Shamanism, Colonialism, and the Wild Man*, 287-335; Scott, *Contested Territory*, 133-159.

⁵⁸ As quoted in: Michael T. Taussig, *Shamanism, Colonialism, and the Wild Man: A Study in Terror and Healing* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987), 308-10.

Native language that is now extinct.⁵⁹ This is probably no accident and has to do with the fact that the information was recorded on the trail, not in Pasto.

On the trail, André and his group conversed with two Mocoa Indians—mother and daughter—on their way to Pasto, carrying medicines, mopa mopa resin, dyes, and hammocks. André recorded this encounter in his diary, with a sketch of the two women (from the sketch an engraving print was produced in Paris by Édouard Riou ca. 1877) (fig. 3.14). His encounter is doubly significant. It is the earliest known instance that anything about the resin is recorded from the perspective of the Indians who brought it to Pasto,⁶⁰ which is probably why he records the name of the resin. Up the strenuous path, once in the “cultured” highlands (by the eighteenth century) the resin was generalized into a *barniz*, a word that obscures the origin and texture of the substance—confounding it with traditional varnishes, which are liquid. At the same time, as discussed in Chapter 2, “*barniz*” highlights the value that the resin held for Europeans, namely, the fact that it produced a lustrous, protective finish on wood. The Spanish word “*barniz*” might have also precluded any meanings that the resin had within Indigenous cultures.

The unruly Amazon

In spite of its difficulty for colonizers, the path from Pasto to Mocoa headed an area of great potential. As with other trails connecting the Amazon to the Andean highlands, in the early

⁵⁹ Edouard François André, “America Equinoccial,” in *América pintoresca descripción de viajes al nuevo continente* (Barcelona: Montaner y Simon, 1884), 762. The earliest mention of the expression “*mopa-mopa*” that I have found so far appears in: Antonio de Alcedo, *Diccionario geográfico-histórico de las Indias Occidentales ó América* (Madrid: Imprenta de Benito Cano, 1786), 113. Several Native languages from the Pasto area have been lost, including the language spoken by the Pastos, the Mocoas, and the Andakis.

⁶⁰ Today, the resin is both harvested and brought to Pasto by the same people, though they identify as *colonos*, not as Indians. The Indians that brought it to Pasto in 1884 probably also knew where it grew and was harvested, since it has never been cultivated.

colonial period it was a trail supposedly leading to El Dorado.⁶¹ For missionaries during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, it held abundant souls still in need of the gospel. But, as we will see in Chapter 4, the trail was also a gateway for the Portuguese and their contraband into the highlands—both menaces to the Spanish colonial establishment.⁶² The administration ordered the closure of the path in 1750, to little avail. The Amazon foothills, which colonizers construed as barrier between these opposing territories and the site from which mopa mopa resin was harvested, remained a charged liminal space with the potential of great wealth and great danger, that, ultimately, was never fully integrated into the colonial regime.

Velasco, in his 1789 *Historia Moderna del Reino de Quito*, calls the borderland of the Amazon piedmont “*el Quito impropio*.” “*Impropio*” here connotes that the region does not quite belong to the *Reino*, capturing in hindsight the liminality of the area. Because the region was one of the most appealing to colonizers, either for its gold wealth or for the promise of thousands of souls to be converted, Spaniards tried—continuously, beginning in the mid-sixteenth century—to establish settlements, but few of their attempts lasted very long. Feared, but desired, the piedmont, and through it the Amazon, continued to be pursued by the Spanish administration with the aid of missionaries of various orders. The adjective “*impropio*” has a resonance even

⁶¹ Fernandez Piedrahita mentions *mopa mopa* objects as an aside to the retelling of Hernando Quesada’s failed search for El Dorado. Fernández de Piedrahíta, *Historia general*, 360.

⁶² Sebastián Gómez González, “*El espíritu de contrabando que reina por estas partes.*” *Comerciantes portugueses, misioneros y comercio ilícito en el piedemonte andino-amazónico, 1730-1790*,” *Tempo* 23, no. 3 (December 2017): 547–66.

today, as the historic lack of state presence in the area that is now part of modern-day Colombia made it optimal for the operation of armed groups and the cultivation of illicit crops.⁶³

In its image form, the translucent resin—a “spontaneous” product that still grows without “artifice or cultivation”⁶⁴ in this liminal area—mediates a vision that evokes the dynamics of the *Quito impropio* and of what it promised to those who dared traverse it. On the front of a mopa mopa chest, now in the Museo Civico Medievale in Bologna, within a loaded surface of tendrils and overgrown flowers, a Native Andean sports long hair topped with a feather headdress, matching loincloth, and chest ornaments (fig. 3.15). He pierces a wild boar with a spear. As discussed previously in this chapter, his outfit performs to different registers; broadly, this figure plays to European early modern stereotypes of Indigenous Americans; locally, it denotes a Native from the lowlands.⁶⁵

To the right of the image, we see a Jesuit missionary clad in a black cloak; unlike his counterpart to the left, we see very little of this naked body. But echoing the Native’s active arm gesture, he holds a cross. Below it, one Native kneels, holding a hunted bird in his right hand and a spear in his left; another stands, holding a hunted mammal also in the right hand and a shield in the other. The scene is one of missionary success: it portrays the soft power of the cross and the purported willingness of Natives to be subjected by the gospel. The narrative aspect of the image is unusual within the corpus of mopa mopa objects that survives, but it is also unusual in that few

⁶³ Simón Uribe, *Frontier Road: Power, History, and the Everyday State in the Colombian Amazon* (Hoboken, NJ: Wiley/Blackwell, 2017).

⁶⁴ Juan de Velasco, *Historia Del Reino de Quito En La America Meridional* [1789], vol. 3, 3 v. vols. (Quito: Impr. del Gobierno, 1842), 132.

⁶⁵ In fact, the headdress looks similar to contemporary Cofanes’ feather headdresses. But it is impossible to assert at the moment if Cofanes’ feather headdresses were like this in the seventeenth century.

images depict missionary success in the Amazon or its piedmont. Most of the graphic depictions that refer to missionary efforts in the Amazon are of martyrdom.⁶⁶ Yet, this image might allude to an early but short-lived success, one that promised the vastness of the Amazon and that held an important place in Jesuit history.

Rafael Ferrer and the first Jesuit glimpse of the Amazon

In 1602, the Valencian Jesuit, Father Rafael Ferrer, entered the Cofanes' territory with the purpose of converting them. The Cofanes, one of the many Indigenous groups that inhabited the Amazon piedmont, comprised various tribes that occupied the area just south of Mocoa.⁶⁷ Ferrer's involvement with the Cofanes is an account of a short-lived missionary triumph in the Amazonian foothills and of the promise the vast Amazon held for eager missionaries. It was the prelude to the almost two-centuries-long Jesuit efforts to establish missions in the Amazon and its piedmont. Ferrer was labeled by Jesuit historian Antonio Astrain "the most famous worker among infidels" that the Society of Jesus had in the first quarter of the seventeenth century.⁶⁸ News of his feat with the Cofanes circulated in Spanish America and Europe soon after 1602. It

⁶⁶ Carmen Fernández-Salvador, *Encuentros y Desencuentros Con La Frontera Imperial : La Iglesia de La Compañía de Jesús de Quito y La Misión En El Amazonas* (Siglo XVII) (Frankfurt am Main: Vervuert, 2018).

⁶⁷ The Cofanes lived dispersed in the Amazon piedmont in an area that borders to the north with Mocoa (modern-day Colombia) and to the south with Baeza (modern-day Ecuador).

⁶⁸ "El más famoso operario entre infieles que tuvimos estos años fué el P. Rafael Ferrer." Antonio Astrain, *Historia de la Compañía de Jesús en la asistencia de España*, vol. 4, 7 vols. (Madrid: Administración del Razón y Fe, 1912), 577.

was reported in the Jesuit Annual letters from 1605⁶⁹ and appeared in several Jesuit histories during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.⁷⁰

The earlier Spanish settlements of the Amazon-Andes foothills were constantly under attack by Indigenous groups. Mocoa, one of those early settlements, was besieged by the Cofanes repeatedly. After a strong attack in 1582, the Spaniards fled Mocoa. In a push to reclaim the territory one more time, the *Audiencia de Quito* government called upon the Jesuits for help. That is what prompted Father Rafael Ferrer's entrance to the Cofanes in 1602. According to Velasco's idealized account, Ferrer did not take weapons or provisions other than a small pectoral crucifix (just like the one the Jesuit figure sports in figure 15), his breviary, and basic writing supplies. Seeing him alone and unarmed, one of the Cofanes tribes welcomed Ferrer.⁷¹ His prudence, affability, and lack of interest in any material trappings of this world conquered the will of the Indians. In this mopa mopa depiction, the Jesuit's face is almost comically benign (fig. 3.16). "Always around him, Indians listened to him as an oracle and respected him as a superior being, or like a god that had come to visit them with no other purpose than to make

⁶⁹ According to Astrain in the Annual Letters of 1605 and to Velasco in those of 1602. I have been unable to find the complete Annual Letters for those dates.

⁷⁰ These are some of the publications in which Ferrer's story appeared: Fernando Montesinos, "Ophir de España: Memorias Historiales Politicas Del Pirv" (1644), Fondo Antiguo de la Universidad de Sevilla; Juan Eusebio Nieremberg, *Varones Ilustres de La Compania de Jesus* (1666), 2nd ed., vol. 4, 9 vols (Bilboa: Administracion del "Mensajero del corazon de Jesus," 1887); Manuel Rodríguez, *El Descubrimiento Del Marañón* [1684] (Madrid: Alianza Editorial, 1990), 109-114; Charles-Marie de La Condamine, *Relación abreviada de un viaje hecho por el interior de la América meridional...* [1735-1745]. (Madrid: Calpe, 1921), 32.

⁷¹ Juan de Velasco, *Historia Del Reino de Quito En La America Meridional*, vol. 3, 3 v. vols. (Quito: Impr. del Gobierno, 1842), 137.

them happy.”⁷² This description of veneration echoes the two Indians, one kneeling and the other standing, who approach the Jesuit figure as if bringing offerings.

Ferrer was able to stay in the Cofanes territory evangelizing for about two years. During this time, he sent a report of his accomplishments to Quito. Filled with joy for the success Ferrer was having with the hostile Cofanes, the Jesuits and citizens of Quito sent back tools, gifts, sacred ornaments, and even bells for a new church.⁷³ The church was to be the anchor to “reduce” the Cofanes to a single town since their different tribes lived spread apart in an extended and difficult terrain for Europeans. In June 1604, Ferrer inaugurated the town and named it San Pedro de los Cofanes.⁷⁴

However, Ferrer’s zeal did not stop with his work with the Cofanes. As told by Velasco, he once asked a senior, judicious Indian:

Which other nations lay to the East? Pointing to a leaf of nearby tall and lush tree, the Indian said: this and only this, is us, the Cofanes altogether. All the other leaves that you see are as many as the nations that are spread throughout many rivers, as many as the large and small branches of this tree, all which unite with the mother of all the rivers.... With his imagination fixed on this idea of the tree that vividly represented a world to discover ... he departed from the branch of the tree he had at hand: I mean, the union of rivers inhabited by the Cofanes ... following this first branch, he journeyed from the Cofanes to the Marañon for two hundred and ten leagues.... This is nothing compared to his journey discovering the innumerable rivers that enter that branch [the Marañon] by the east and the west.... [Ferrer] had the glory of being the first Jesuit who saw so far into the Marañon and [the glory] of opening that great door to his brothers.⁷⁵

⁷² Ibid., 138.

⁷³ Ibid., 139.

⁷⁴ Ibid., 101.

⁷⁵ “¿de que naciones situadas por las partes orientales tenia noticia? Mostrole el Indiano un cercano árbol bien alto y muy frondoso, y cogiendo la mas pequeña hoja de el, respondió:

It is enticing to associate the tree allegory of the vast Amazon basin territory—which according to Velasco, compelled Ferrer to leave the Cofanes and journey for two years through its branches—with the curious, alluring tree that dominates the picture plane on the back of the Bologna chest (fig. 3.17).⁷⁶ Dead center, its thick trunk opens up in curvy branches, which are not populated with leaves, but that lead our sight to a dense array of foliage and overgrown flowers in gold, orange, and metallic greens that engulf the scene and the peccary, deer, and dogs that leap around. It is not uncommon to find trees in the middle of the picture plane on mopa mopa objects from the eighteenth century. However, usually these trees have leaves and/or branches that more closely resemble actual trees (fig. 3.5). In light of Velasco’s account of the tree metaphor to describe the Amazon basin, the tree on the chest’s back, depicted leafless and with peculiarly contorted branches, could potentially be a schematic and poetic representation of the Amazon territory.

The context in which the chest arrived in Bologna in 1751 is indicative of its strong association with the Amazon. It was part of a gift sent from Rome by Pope Benedict XIV to the *Instituto delle scienze*, which included six mopa mopa gourds, and a series of exclusively

“esto, y nada mas, somos todos juntos los Cofanes. Todas las demás hojas que ves, son otras tantas naciones que habitan desde nuestros confines, regadas por tantos ríos, cuantas son la mayores y menores ramas del mismo árbol, las cuales van a unirse con la madre de todos los ríos...Fija la imaginación en esta idea del árbol que le representaba vivamente un mundo por descubrir...se cogió de la misma rama del árbol que tenía a la mano: quiero decir, la unión de los mencionados ríos habitados por los Cofanes...siguiendo el P. Ferrer su primera rama, camino desde los Cofanes hasta el Marañon 210 leguas de via recta...Esto es nada, caminó descubriendo innumerables ríos transversales que le entran a esa rama por el oriente y por el poniente...Tuvo la gloria de ser el primer Jesuita, que vio tan abajo del Marañon, y de abrir a aquella gran puerta a sus hermanos.” Ibid, 140.

⁷⁶ Velasco claims that he consulted Ferrer’s writings conserved in the archives, though he does not specify which archives. I have not been able to confirm whether the story about the tree was indeed in Ferrer’s writings. Ibid., 140.

Amazonian artifacts, such as a spear similar to the one the Indigenous man holds on the chest's front (fig. 3.18), a feather headdress,⁷⁷ a belt made with *Chambira* palm fiber, and a couple of hammocks.^{78, 79} Considering the association between the Bologna chest and Amazonian artifacts, the imagery on the chest—the conversion scene of lowland Indians on the front and the “tree-river” on the back—seems to be a direct allusion to the Jesuit missionary work in the Amazon. The image of the Amazon as a tree also provides a visualization of an unknown territory that one can envision traversing. Therefore, the imagery on the chest evokes the crucial role that both imagining and journeying the land played in missionary work, which in turn was key to annex territories to the colonial enterprise.⁸⁰

⁷⁷ On the *Instituto delle scienze* inventory the headdress is described as being made of parrot feathers, so potentially similar to the one the on the chest. On a different source, I found that the Pigorini Museum in Rome also has a feather skirt from an Amazonian group, and a pair of armbands, which are said to have entered the collection in 1881. This is relevant because between 1877 and 1878 Luigi Pigorini managed to acquire, for the Pigorini Museum, part of Pope Benedict XIV's gift in which the *mopa mopa* chest in question arrived in Bologna, including a feather headdress. Therefore, there is a possibility that the depiction of the Indian on the chest is accurate and in fact, a representation of the artifacts in the gift itself. But this hypothesis will require further research. For a discussion of the objects now at Pigorini Museum see: Thomas P. Myers, “Conservatism in Ucayali Dress and Ornamentation,” in *Resistencia y adaptación nativas en las tierras bajas latinoamericanas*, ed. Maria Susana. Cipolletti (Quito: Ediciones Abya-Yala, 1997), 123–56.

⁷⁸ Archivio di Stato di Bologna ASBo, Assunteria di Istituto, Diversorum, Folder 13, number 11. I owe this reference to Samuele Tacconni who is preparing a manuscript on Pope Benedict XIV's gift. Tacconi, Samuele. “Benedict XIV's donation of Amazonian objects to the Instituto delle Scienze of Bologna (1751). Origins and history, ms in preparation, 2019.

⁷⁹ Velasco might have known of the gift Pope Benedict XIV sent to Bologna because in his description of the *mopa mopa* technique, he mentions the admiration that *mopa mopa* objects elicited in Rome. Velasco, *Historia Del Reino de Quito* [1789], vol. 3, 3 v. vols. (Quito: Impr. del Gobierno, 1842), 130.

⁸⁰ Missionary work was undoubtedly crucial to pacify Indigenous groups and establish colonial settlements throughout the Spanish colonial territory.

On another mopa mopa chest, now in a private collection in Bogotá, there is an image that might be in line with this interpretation (fig. 3.19). A very similar tree dominates the composition. Its trunk separates in six branches, none of which have leaves, but open ends. The branches burst into buoyant foliage, not unlike the Amazon and its subsidiary rivers give birth to the exuberant jungle. To the right, the figure of the Indian, half-naked and carefully adorned with matching bracelets, necklace, belt, and chain along his torso, also alludes to the Amazon. Similarly, to the left of the tree-shape is a *zaino* or peccary, a common target of hunters of the Amazon and its piedmont. The image is also associated with the Jesuit order, like the one in Bologna. The Spanish Habsburg's double-headed eagle is perched atop the tree, displaying the Society of Jesus' symbol's initials, with subtle luminosity on the bird's chest.⁸¹ This is, of course, not a real bird. It is an emblem that represents the Spanish crown and the Jesuits. In this light, the schematic representation of a tree might also function as a symbol of the Amazonian territory. This double-headed eagle grabbing the top branches of the tree-shape could then be an allegory of the concerted effort of the Spanish empire and the Jesuits to claim possession of the river basin.

The “tree-river” image alluding to the newly “created territories” also recalls the map made by Jesuit F. Samuel Fritz (fig. 3.20). This was the first map of the Amazon drawn from firsthand experience of the river. Like the “tree-river” on the Bogotá mopa mopa chest, it bears the Society of Jesus symbol; it is located in a prominent position, slightly right of center, which was the Spanish “side” of the river's basin. This is a moment in which Spanish and Portuguese

⁸¹ The Jesuit symbolic initials appear backward. This is an indication that the artist who made this image was unfamiliar with the Jesuit symbol. Furthermore, it indicates that perhaps the artist was working from a model either printed backward or from a flipped print.

are contending to extend their Amazon “possessions.” Historian Camila Loureiro Dias argues that Fritz’s map makes territorial claims for the Jesuits and Spanish the crown.⁸² Though correct, that assessment is incomplete. At a more fundamental level, the map also participates in creating the Amazon as a colonial territory, visible and apprehensible in European terms.

Interestingly, the visual configuration of the Amazon in Fritz’s map resembles a tree of innumerable branches. The multitude of labels for river tributaries and Indigenous groups seem to diffuse into leaves. The tree metaphor in Velasco, also clearly a visualization of the territory, resonates strongly with this map. The metaphor is so enticing that it propels Ferrer to embark on the same kind of journey that Fritz would later repeat to actually draw the map. Both journeys, enmeshed with their missionary endeavors, were fundamental to create and maintain the colonial territory. Like Fritz’s map and Velasco’s account, the two *mopa mopa* images in question are unequivocally associated with the lowlands and the Jesuits’ missionary enterprise. The peculiar tree-shapes on these images echo the tree-shaped river basin on the map and Velasco’s tree metaphor, prompting us to acknowledge the relationship between images, traversing a region, and the construction of a colonial version of a territory (fig. 3.21). Fritz’s map is a clear example. It makes territorial claims and constructs the Amazon as a colonial dominion based on missionary work and on journeying through the land. As we would expect, the purely decorative *mopa mopa* images operate quite differently than the map. These images offer no precision, nor do they provide commanding views, but expand on the experience of being in a place and, like the map, contribute to the reimagination of the territory.

⁸² Camila Loureiro Dias, “Jesuit Maps and Political Discourse: The Amazon River of Father Samuel Fritz,” *The Americas* 69, no. 1 (2012): 95–116.

Conclusion

The context in which mopa mopa objects were produced and functioned cannot be reduced to a single geographical location to which models and raw materials arrive and from which finished products depart. Mopa mopa objects were generated as part of constant movement and reflect Indigenous modes of movement as well as the deep “desire of mobility” that characterized the colonial enterprise. The journeys involved in the production and circulation of mopa mopa objects were more than a pragmatic necessity. The way these journeys were experienced and their multiple iterations reconfigured colonial territory. Intimately tied to such treks, mopa mopa objects enable us to understand the extent to which the journeys were key to conceptualizing the colonial territory, ultimately determining how it was experienced and imagined. Adhering resin figures to the wood surface of these objects was intimately related to adhering paths to the surface of the land, creating its topography anew.

Cosmopolitanism at “the discretion of the Indians themselves”

Introduction

Let us zoom into the exquisite dragon on the top left corner of the ca. 1650 coffer discussed in Chapter three’s opening (fig. 4.1). Silver, covered in tinted yellow resin, makes its body glow golden. Each scale, carefully delineated with hair-thin strips of white resin, is punctuated by a minuscule metallic orange square. The light and shadow effects that make the body twist are still discernible, giving way to the meticulously rendered head.

The gold over pitch black, the inlaid small metallic geometric shapes, the delicate lines, and the busy surface recall *Nanban* lacquers—Japanese lacquerwares made for the European market during the early-modern period using *maki-e* decoration.¹ The scrolling vegetation, in turn, echoes the decorative pattern of seventeenth-century Dutch silver works, while some of the plants depicted are local to the northern Andes. The dragon, as well as the other fantastic creatures on the coffer, clearly echo late medieval European motifs (fig. 4.2). An almost identical dragon appears in a totally different medium –ink on paper – but was similarly produced by a Native Andean in what was at the time the Viceroyalty of Peru: Felipe Guaman Poma’s 1615 manuscript, “*Nueva corónica y Buen Gobierno*” (fig. 4.3). Guaman Poma’s manuscript is a long letter, profusely illustrated and addressed to King Philip II, that provides a history of the Andes and denounces abuses towards the Native population by colonial officials. Both Guaman Poma

¹ Meiko Nagashima, “Japanese Lacquers Exported to Spanish America and Spain,” in *Asia & Spanish America: Trans-Pacific Artistic and Cultural Exchange, 1500-1850*, vol. 2006, Mayer Center for Pre-Columbian and Spanish Colonial Art at the Denver Art Museum (Denver: Denver Art Museum, 2006), 107.

and mopa mopa artists exploited a complex and diverse array of foreign and local imagery in their work from which they drew inspiration to produce original compositions. Scholars have shown Guaman Poma's familiarity with multiple intellectual works and image repertoires of European import.²

These two very different objects, the mopa mopa coffer and Guaman Poma's manuscript, were made by Indigenous artists working in distant locales of the Viceroyalty of Peru for European audiences. Interestingly, both Guaman Poma and mopa mopa artists found late medieval imagery particularly appealing.³ Such coincidence can shed new light onto patterns of European consumption in the mid-seventeenth century and help us discern with more specificity which sources of late medieval imagery were available in the Viceroyalty of Peru. But what is relevant for this chapter is that, although working in very different contexts, in both cases various structures of the colonial establishment enabled these Indigenous artists to gain access to a diverse array of sources that allowed them to configure new aesthetics and create genuinely global objects.

² Rolena Adorno and Ivan Boserup, *New Studies of the Autograph Manuscript of Felipe Guaman Poma de Ayala's Nueva corónica y Buen Gobierno* (Copenhagen: Museum Tusulanum Press, 2003); Rolena Adorno, *Guaman Poma: Writing and Resistance in Colonial Peru* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2000).

³ Maarten van de Guchte, "Invention and Assimilation: European Engravings as Models for the Drawings of Felipe Guaman Poma de Ayala," in *Guaman Poma de Ayala: The Colonial Art of an Andean Author*, ed. Adorno Rolena (New York: Americas Society, 1992), 92–109; Jorge Pérez Rivas, "Mediterranean Material Culture in the Andes: Spanish Furniture in Guaman Poma de Ayala's El Primer Nueva Corónica y Buen Gobierno," in *The Arts of South America, 1492-1850* (Denver: Denver Art Museum, 2010), 119–40; Cécile Anne Michaud, "Modelos tardomedievales, herencia prehispánica: hacia una intención estilística en la visualidad de Guaman Poma de Ayala," *Histórica* 42, no. 2 (March 27, 2019): 8–41, <https://doi.org/10.18800/historica.201802.001>.

Iconographic analyses have been crucial to determine what kinds of models Guaman Poma had at hand. From his texts, biographical information, and close relationships with local Catholic officials, we can envision the kinds of image sources he would have been able to draw upon for inspiration in creating a message that would have been meaningful to a European audience. We also understand his motivations for embarking on such a project. However, this methodological approach does not work in the case of the *mopa mopa* decorated chest (and in the case of *mopa mopa* production in general). We know nearly nothing about the *mopa mopa* artists or their intentions, nor does it seem that they left written records.⁴ Yet, the objects themselves reveal that these artists studied a wide variety of representational models hailing from disparate locales around the globe. But how did these models become available to them if Pasto was so difficult to access, according to colonial officials, and was not an important colonial capital or port with extensive economic activity? Furthermore, what could have motivated Native artists to engage in creating these images? While we lack the biographical information that could help us answer these questions, combining iconographic studies with a multivariate analysis of the socio-economic dynamics of the Pasto region allows us to go beyond biographical details and situate

⁴ I have only found three names of 17th-century *mopa mopa* artists cited by Pasto 19th-century historian, Rafael Sañudo. Sañudo does not cite any specific archival records and so far, I haven't been able to corroborate this information in the archival holdings that have survived in Pasto. Sañudo states: "En este siglo es cuando por primera vez hemos podido saber el nombre de un artífice de pintura de barniz industria privativa de la de la Ciudad, que fue Sebastian esposo de Lorenza de Trejo, nativa de Guachucal [pueblo de Pastos] e hija natural del montañés Gonzalo de Trejo y de Doña Mariana cacica de ese pueblo y que testó el 89 sin dejar hijos. En 1693 también eran Sebastián Sapillos y el indio pastuso D. Marcos Bastidas." José Rafael Sañudo, *Apuntes Sobre La Historia de Pasto*, vol. 2 (Pasto, Colombia: Imprenta la Nariñesa, 1939), 120.

mopa mopa artists as agents acting in a vast global network where multiple economic motivations, histories, and desires shaped the colonial project at its territorial margins.

In this chapter I show that the analysis of colonial labor conditions and of the trade routes that connected Pasto to the world brings to light the convoluted nature of the networks and motivations that fueled the colonial mopa mopa industry. A 1766 description of the mopa mopa objects and the context in which it was written serves as a poignant illustration of the complex socio-economic dynamics in which mopa mopa objects were produced.

A Singular Mine

In 1765, a weakened Spanish monarchy established reforms in Quito to increase fiscal revenue but ended up causing several revolts in the city. This news reached Don Dionisio de Alonso y Alcedo in Madrid. Don Dionisio had been president of the Audiencia de Quito from 1728-1736, the highest position in the Audiencia. Prompted by the crisis, Dionisio wrote the *Plano Geográfico e Hidrográfico de la Real Audiencia de Quito*, a report intended to provide information about the region that could be useful for the crown to better govern and exploit the area for financial gains. In this capacity, the document provides a comprehensive description of the region's geography, the state of the roads, the weather, its commerce and products.

Administratively, the Pasto district was under the jurisdiction of the governors of Popayán. However, for legal matters, the southern part of Popayán's governorship, where the Pasto district was located, was under the authority of the Audiencia de Quito.⁵ In Dionisio's

⁵ The northern part of the governorship of Popayán was under the Audiencia de Santa Fe. However, the governorship of Popayán retained its political unity, even if its legal administration

survey of the Pasto district, he begins by mentioning gold mining, which was the sector of the economy that most merited the crown's attention. Dionisio states that the province had abundantly rich gold mines. However, these were not nearly at full extraction capacity because of laborers scarcity, a complaint commonly made by Spanish officials in this region throughout the colonial period. There were few Africans enslaved in the area and Natives had been exempted from mining to work in agricultural production, textiles, and, crucially for our purposes, to work solely in "a singular *mine*," mopa mopa production. This mine, Dionisio continues, is "unknown in any other part of both Americas." From it, "they make a [high-gloss] varnish more outstanding than the best patent leather." The varnish was used to make images "of different styles with fine and beautiful figures at the discretion of the Indians themselves." In keeping with the relationship that he establishes between mopa mopa image production and mining, he affirms that the objects decorated with this technique were "as valuable as if made of silver."⁶

was split under two Audiencias. Ecclesiastically, the southern part of the Popayán governorship was under the bishop of Quito, whereas the northern part was under the see of the bishop of Popayán. This division was a point of contention between the Quito and Popayan dioceses throughout the colonial period. Luis Fernando Calero, *Chiefdoms under Siege: Spain's Rule and Native Adaptation in the Southern Colombian Andes, 1535-1700* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1997), 13.

⁶ "Tiene copia de minas de oro del mismo color y quilates de ley de que las de Barbacoas, pero poco trabajadas por la escasez de esclavos negros y de estar los indios relevados de este servicio y empleados en la labor de los campos, y otras manufacturas, como el aprovechamiento de una mina muy singular que no se conocen otra ninguna parte de ambas Americas, de que hacen un barniz mas especial que el del mejor charol, porque se incorpora con fuego y primorosas diferencias de labores y figuras, a discreción de los mismos indios, en cualquier madera con tanta firmeza y constante permanecía, que nunca le borra el agua, aunque continuamente se la echen hirviendo ni se le quita el lustre con el uso del tiempo, mientras no se quemee o se rompe. Y de este genero hacen adornos, menages, muebles y utensilios para el

Denoting the production of mopa mopa objects as a mining activity and comparing the objects' value to that of silver was not a just a rhetorical strategy employed to signal that the objects were held in high esteem.⁷ By equating mopa mopa production with mining, Dionisio was, in part, justifying why there was a lack of Indigenous workers in the Pasto area available to work the actual gold mines. His argument goes as follows: since Natives were dedicated to another economically valuable activity—mopa mopa production—and there were few Africans enslaved in the area, the gold mines were underexploited. Describing mopa mopa practice as “a singular mine” was therefore part of a strategy to build on an argument that colonial officials had made since the late sixteenth century for bringing enslaved Africans to the region to boost the labor force working in the gold mines.⁸ This reveals that mopa mopa production, an industry that crystalized cosmopolitan taste in the colonial period, was far from being an isolated phenomenon in the colonial economy. On the contrary, it was deeply, if obliquely, tied up with the resource-based economy of the northern Andes, which revolved largely around gold mining and the slave trade.

servicio de las casas, de las haciendas y de los viajes en los caminos, que a no ser tan comunes, fueran tan estimables como de plata.” Dionisio de Alcedo, “Plano geográfico e hidrográfico de Quito,” in *Relaciones histórico-geográficas de la Audiencia de Quito: s. XVI-XIX*, ed. Pilar Ponce Leiva, vol. 2 (Quito: Marka, instituto de historia y antropología andina, 1994 [1766]), 429.

⁷ Alcedo might have also been remarking on the estimability of the objects to signal *mopa mopa* production as something that could be lucrative for the crown.

⁸ Francisco Anuncibay, “Discurso sobre los negros que conviene que se lleven a la gobernación de Popayán,” in *Relaciones histórico-geográficas de la Audiencia de Quito: s. XVI-XIX*, ed. Pilar Ponce Leiva, vol. 1, 2 vols. (Quito: Marka, instituto de historia y antropología andina, 1992), 518–26; Pacheco Arias, “Relación de los pueblos de Quito en los que se saca oro y sus calidades,” in *Relaciones histórico-geográficas de la Audiencia de Quito: s. XVI-XIX*, ed. Pilar Ponce Leiva, vol. 1, 2 vols. (Quito: Marka, instituto de historia y antropología andina, 1992), 527–31. Add citas de archivo.

The analysis of the relationship between mopa mopa production, global circulation of objects, gold mining, and slavery is essential to tease out for the Spanish colonial context the implications of what scholar Simon Gikandi denotes as the “true entanglement of modernity.” In his insightful analysis of the relationship between slavery and the culture of taste in England during the eighteenth century, he elucidates the modes in which British “high culture” was “structurally connected” to the economy of slavery and yet was also “conceptually and symbolically separated” from it.⁹ In the Spanish colonial context, this structural connection occurred at multiple levels. One example is the arrival of luxury goods along with enslaved Africans; the same slaves were obliged to work extracting gold, an enterprise that gave the slaveholders the capital to consume high-end goods. The proximity of “high culture” to the exploitation of people of color that underpinned the economy makes the analysis of their uncomfortable entanglement a pressing matter. For the study of mopa mopa practice, this entanglement is crucial to understand what kind of incentives Natives had to embark upon and sustain a material production that catered to the cosmopolitan aesthetic desires of Europeans and Creoles throughout the colonial period. Teasing out this entanglement will also bring forth the particular socio-economic dynamics that operated in the Pasto area, a place emblematic of the empire’s periphery.

Studies that have pointed out the presence of Asian motifs on mopa mopa objects have not investigated in depth how these models arrived in Pasto, tacitly assuming that all Asian

⁹ Simon Gikandi, *Slavery and the Culture of Taste* Simon Gikandi (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2011), 54.

objects arrived at the Spanish colonies in the same way, via the Manila Galleon. However, the trade routes that connected Pasto to the world are far more complex and reveal the agency that Indigenous Andeans exerted in configuring the colonial Andes. In what follows, I counterpoint iconographic analysis with archival research, to trace the relationship between mopa mopa production, foreign trade, gold mining, and slavery at two crucial moments: the first towards the end of the sixteenth century and into the seventeenth; the second during the first half of the eighteenth century. Not coincidentally, each of these moments corresponds to significant stylistic developments in mopa mopa design: in the seventeenth century, European medieval motifs over black and metallic background were common, whereas in the eighteenth century, cream color backgrounds and more narrative scenes dominate. To understand the context in which those pictorial developments took place, some background on labor dynamics in colonial Pasto is in order.

Pasto towards the end of the 16th century and into 17th century

The earliest official visits to the Pasto region help us see the relationship between mopa mopa production, mining, and forced labor, while also letting us envision why Natives could have been drawn to colonial mopa mopa production in the first place. During the colonial period, the Pasto district corresponded to the southwest of modern-day Colombia (the Nariño department and the west of Putumayo) and the northwest of Ecuador. The district was mainly inhabited by three Native groups, the Pastos, the Quillancingas, and the Abades. Tomas López, the first *visitador* (a colonial official in charge of determining how towns should be taxed) to the area, was heavily influenced by the pro-Native arguments made by Dominican friar Bartolomé de las

Casas. Lopez relieved all the Indians in the Pasto province from *mita* labor—forced labor in the gold mines or other activities, which usually implied work away from one’s town for eight months to a year under the supervision of Spanish *encomenderos*.¹⁰ Lopez’s measures did not last, partly because his taxation was ill-informed. The tribute lists he drafted were very similar for every town. He knew little of what each Native town produced, likely because he did not actually visit most of the area, citing the difficulty of the terrain. Being taxed in things they did not produce was, of course, a problem for Natives, and not having laborers to work the mines was a total nuisance for colonists. Therefore, ten years later, in 1558, a new *visitador*, Garcia Valverde, redrafted the tribute of each town. Heeding requests from the area’s *encomenderos*, Valverde lifted the prohibition on sending Indians to work in the mines and expressly indicated that Natives from the Quillancingas and the Abades, who lived near mines, should work there as part of their tribute.¹¹ The Abades were apparently agreeable to work in the mines, but that was

¹⁰ “Que se notifique a todos los encomenderos de esta dicha villa lo contenydo en la cedula y prouision de SM acerca de no hechar yndios a las mynas y las penas alli puestas para que se guarde y nadie pretenda ignoracia y asi mysmo sobre el cargar tamenes en la forma y manera y so penas que SM lo proybe.” Tomás López, “Traslado del libro de tasaciones que el muy magnifico señor licenciado Tomás López hizo en la gobernación y provincia de Popayán, 1550-1551,” in *Relaciones y visitas de tasación en las tierras altas del departamento de Nariño, durante el siglo XVI: visitas del bachiller Tomás López y del licenciado García de Valverde*, ed. Ricardo Oviedo Arévalo (San Juan de Pasto: Universidad de Nariño, 2005), 125.

¹¹ Garcia de Valverde, “Visita hecha por el licenciado Garcia de Valverde, oydor de la Real Audiencia de San Francisco de Quito, año de 1570 y 1571, con ordenanzas y relacion de la visita y otros autos a ello tocantes,” in *Relaciones y visitas de tasación en las tierras altas del departamento de Nariño, durante el siglo XVI: visitas del bachiller Tomás López y del licenciado García de Valverde*, ed. Ricardo Oviedo Arévalo (San Juan de Pasto: Universidad de Nariño, 2005), 135–36.

not the case for Indians of Sibundoy, who in these documents are listed as Quillancinga.¹² Some encomenderos indicated that mine-work should be part of their required tribute because the Indians would not work in the mines of their own volition.¹³

Valverde decreed work at the mines as part of the tribute required of the Abades and of some Quillancinga communities, particularly those close to Sibundoy. However, inhabitants of La Laguna, a Quillancinga community near Sibundoy, were spared from mine work. Indigenous Andeans from La Laguna probably worried about being drafted for mine work. Yet they were assigned to pay tribute only in carpentry. This suggests that working in activities which responded to the needs of colonists, like carpentry or producing mopa mopa objects, could help Indigenous people avoid work in the mines or *mita* work in general. That is, being able to produce goods desired by colonizers provided Natives a higher degree of freedom.

Valverde stated that the town of La Laguna, also known as Yxcatixiu, had to pay the *encomendero*, yearly, three hundred and ten pesos of good gold, two hundred and sixty eight “*alfajias*” (wood boards used for window and doors, usually of a specific width and depth), forty

¹² Some sources refer to the Sibundoyes as its own group, which are probably today’s Camentsa people. In López they are listed within the Quillanga, listed as Provincia de Montaña, and in Valverde they are explicitly denoted as Quillancinga. Tomás López Medel, *Visita de la gobernación de Popayán: libro de tributos (1558-1559)*, ed. Berta Ares Queija (Madrid: Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas, Centro de Estudios Históricos, Departamento de Historia de América, 1989), 85; Valverde, “Visita hecha por el licenciado Garcia de Valverde, oydor de la Real Audiencia de San Francisco de Quito, año de 1570 y 1571, con ordenanzas y relacion de la visita y otros autos a ello tocantes,” 136–37.

¹³ Valverde, “Visita hecha por el licenciado Garcia de Valverde, oydor de la Real Audiencia de San Francisco de Quito, año de 1570 y 1571, con ordenanzas y relacion de la visita y otros autos a ello tocantes,” 137–39.

two wooden boards, and one hundred sixty eight “*bateas*” (carved-wood bowls or trays).¹⁴ He then stated that this tribute should be distributed between the three hundred and ten tributary Indians in the town, forty two of whom were carpenters. This is followed by a list with the names of the carpenters. This kind of specificity is rare in *visita* documents. It is certainly the only list of Native names that Valverde records for the Pasto province. What follows the list is also remarkable. Valverde was adamant in declaring that once the carpenters had fulfilled their part of tribute—each has to purvey four *bateas*, one golden *peso*, and one wooden board—they could not be forced to work on anything else. Once “the said Indian carpenters ... [have] complied with this tribute, they must be free to work on whatever they want without the *encomendero* or another person occupying them against their will in anything else, nor can [the *encomendero*] rent them to work with other people but let them work freely.”¹⁵

This provision is unique in Valverde’s document, and it indicates that the ability of La Laguna Natives to produce objects that colonists valued granted them such freedom. It should be noted that “*bateas*,” which were used for alluvial gold mining, were also used in domestic settings. The latter are one of the types of objects that mopa mopa artists decorated (fig. 4.4). This information gives us a potential critical hint into the conditions that incited the production of mopa mopa objects in Pasto. First, it suggests that one of the reasons Pasto became the center

¹⁴ “Yten le habéis de dar al dicho vuestro encomendero en cada un año ciento y sesenta y ocho bateas de las comunes y ordinarias que se acostumbra hazer en los términos de esa ciudad.” Valverde, 226.

¹⁵ “Los cuales dichos indios carpinteros ... cumplido con este tributo han de quedar libres para trabajar en lo que ellos quisieren sin que el encomendero ny otra persona los ocupe contra su voluntad en otra cosa alguna ny los pueda alquilar para travaxar con otras personas sino que ellos puedan trabajar libremente.” Valverde, 227.

of mopa mopa production was its proximity to areas with carpenters and wood. Second, the principle that applied in the case of La Laguna probably applies to Pasto as well. Therefore, the drive to produce objects that catered to colonists' tastes and their ways of life was not merely motivated by economic gain, but also by the kind of freedom Natives could gain, namely, avoiding forced labor.

The solution for the lack of Native labor in the Spanish Americas was the importation of enslaved Africans. Therefore, in light of the strategies to avoid forced labor, like the one deployed by Natives of La Laguna, it is not surprising that already in 1592, Francisco de Auncibay, a Spanish official, issued a report asking to bring enslaved Africans to work the mines of the governorship of Popayán.¹⁶ Despite Valverde's provisions, in 1607, once again, *oidor* Diego de Armenteros reports the Pasto region's wealth in gold mines and the lack of Natives to extract it.¹⁷ The significant Native demographic decrease in the area had to be a factor in this lack of available workforce, but Indigenous agency had to be another.¹⁸ In spite of the demographic decline, the documents show that there was still a considerable Indigenous

¹⁶ Anuncibay is explicit that Pasto needs slaves. Anuncibay, "Discurso sobre los negros que conviene que se lleven a la gobernación de Popayán."

¹⁷ "E la tierra desde Pasto hacia avaxo, hasta llegar a la jurisdicción del nuevo Reino de granada es pantanossa a cuya causa no se da trigo sino muy poco en algunas partes altas maíz en abundancia que es con que se sustenta toda la tierra e la lastrada de oro por cerros y quebradas y sacasse poco por la falta que ay de naturales que lo saquen aunque en las tassa que dexare hecha acavada e[n] la visita le sseñalase a los encomenderos y señores de minas a 25 porciento de los indios tributarios para que sercemuden y an deel trabajo por todos porque los demás acuden a otros servicios de mitas, guarda de ganados y labor de sementeras." AGI, QUITO, 9, R. 10, N. 71, f. 2 recto.

¹⁸ Calero, *Chiefdoms under Siege*, 81–88.

population. But, as Alcedo noted later, they were not working the mines but were devoted to other activities like textile and mopa mopa production.

In fact, in 1637, Antonio Rodríguez de San Isidro Manrique, another *visitador*, denounces not the lack of Native labor due to population decrease, but rather, the inaccessibility of Native labor. He complained that Natives in the Pasto district only obeyed the religious orders and not the crown. According to Rodríguez, the Catholic orders had taken advantage of the region's Indigenous population to employ them in textile production and in other industries that were useful for the priests, instead of instructing them in the Church's dogma.¹⁹ These other industries probably included mopa mopa production.²⁰ Furthermore, the strong presence of religious orders

¹⁹ “Aunque en esta provincia de Popayán no tienen los rreligiosos haciendas considerables para ocupar en ellas indios ni doctrinas en pueblos hechos y asentados a donde los doctrineros puedan tener grangerias por lo que he visto y rreconocido en la provincia de pasto me he hallado obligado a dar quenta a *Vues[tr]a Merced* de los excesos que he experimentado y rreconocido que los dichos rreligiosos hacen en la *dicha* provincia, porque estos en sus doctrinas tienen supeditados y sujetos a los indios que a solos ellos obedecen y temen y no a las justicias de *Vuesa Merced*, lo qual fuera virtuoso y tolerable si se encaminara a enseñarlos y yndustriarlos en las cosas de su salvación mas no es con otro fin que servirse dellos ocupándolos y a sus mujeres a que les hilen y tejan mantas y entiendan en otras cosas y grangerias de su útil y no para su enseñanza y doctrina.” AIG, SANTA_FE, 57, N. 49, f. 2 r.

²⁰ A 1628 letter now in the Popayan archive from Don Jerónimo Pérez de Ubillús, Tesorero Oficial de la Provincia de Popayán send to the abadesa of a convent (neither the names of the convent or of the abadesa are specified in the letter) says that there is another comission from Santafé and asks nun to send him two dozen boxes for tobacco “painted in different styles (forms?), colors, and beauty” that had been commissioned by the Sres. Del Tribunal de Santafé. (“dos docenas detabaqueras pintadas de diferentes hechuras y colores y lindeza”). Although is not clear to which convent the letter was sent, the only convent in Popayan at the time was the Augustinan convent of the Encarnacion. ACC, Signatura: 1784 (Col. P I -2 v), fs. 2. 1628. Two sources, one in 1582 and one in 1623, cite *tabaqueras* as one of the objects decorated with the resin. Moreover, the *mopa mopa* technique was more often than not referred as painting in the colonial period. Therefore, is highly likely that this is a commission of *mopa mopa* objects. However, it might have been for production in Timaná, not in Pasto. Geronimo Descobar, “Memorial que da Fray Geronimo Descobar predicador de la orden de sant Agustin al real

in the Pasto district at this time (Mercedarians, Augustinians, Dominicans, and Jesuits) would help explain how mopa mopa artists had access to similar sources that Guaman Poma had.²¹

“Diferentes hechuras y colores y lindeza” circa 1650

In 1652, Father Gabriel de Melgar wrote from Santa Fe to the Jesuit Rector in Rome telling him about the beautiful “paintings” made in Pasto over portable writing desks, boxes, and gourds that “have gained so much esteem in Europe and that with great care are commissioned to be sent there” (figs. 4.1-4.3). Melgar also mentioned that recently “the paintings” were done over a “layer of dark varnish, in order to highlight the figures of the most delicate brushes.”²² A considerable number of mopa mopa objects with a black background and finely delineated figures survive. These are most likely what Melgar is referring to. Recent publications that have noted some stylistic links between mopa mopa and Asian objects focus on lacquers from Japan,

consejo de Yndias de lo que toca ala provincia de popayan (1582),” in *Relaciones y visitas a los Andes, S XVI*, ed. Hermes Tovar Pinzón, vol. 1, Colección de historia de la Biblioteca Nacional (Bogotá: Colcultura: Instituto Colombiano de Cultura Hispánica, 1993), 405; Pedro Simón, *Noticias historiales de las conquistas de tierra firme en las Indias Occidentales*, vol. 4, Biblioteca Banco Popular (Bogotá: Banco Popular, 1981), 166.

²¹ “la rreligion de la merced en las haciendas que tiene en la villa de Ybarra, Pesillos, Cayambe y Chillo, tiene mas de 200 yndios poblados con sus casas y chusmas, los de Santo Domingo en Cayambe y Chillo mas de 100, los de San Agustín en las haciendas de los Pastos, Otavalo, Chillo y Rio Bamba mas de 130, la compañía de Jhesus en mira tierra muy enferma, Otavalo, San Antonio de Pomasque y Calicali, Chello, Ambato y Latacunga mas de 500.”

Fecha Creación: 1637-5-10 Santiago de Cali. AGI, Santa Fe, 57, N.49, f. 2v.

²² “En esta provincia tuvieron primer origen las pinturas de Mocoa y las que hoy con mayores primores se hacen en Pasto en escritorios, cajuelas, calabacillas que tanto aprecio se han ganado en Europa y que con grande cuidado se solicitan en estas partes para los envíos...de poco acá introducido el sembrarse las pinturas con el mismo barniz oscuro para que afecten lo relevado de los mas delicados pinceles.” My translation. *Cartas Anuas Jesuitas*, Santa fe. 23 octubre 1652. Gabriel de Melgar in Piñas Rubio, Francisco, ed. *Cartas Anuas de La Compañía de Jesús En La Audiencia de Quito de 1587 a 1660*. Quito: Compañía de Jesús, 2008, 160.

which are characteristic for having fine lines and black backgrounds and were in vogue during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries in Europe and the Americas.²³ Written sources from the eighteenth century also comment on the relationship between mopa mopa objects and Asian goods.

Melgar, however, does not link the dark background, which he notes as the new development in mopa mopa production, to Asian lacquers. The reason for this might not be that Melgar failed to notice an Asian influence, but instead that in mopa mopa production a black background could be used in quite distinct ways, showing the multitude of image repertoires Native artists deployed to maintain a vibrant mopa mopa output, a pursuit that would have saved them from being drafted into forced labor. A detailed iconographic analysis of colonial mopa mopa objects is necessary in order to appreciate mopa mopa artists' resourcefulness and creativity in synthesizing cosmopolitan aesthetics and creating novel objects.

Take, for instance, the two coffers in figures 4.5 and 4.6. They have the same geometrical shape and similar dimensions (16.5 x 22.3 x 11.5cm and 15x 18 x 8.6cm). Both have pitch-black backgrounds. Both have the same border pattern executed in white: circumferences interspersed with crosses, accompanied by an inner border composed of minute diagonals that echo a lasso.

²³ Yayoi Kawamura, "Encuentro multicultural en el arte de barniz de Pasto o la laca del Virreinato del Perú," *Historia y sociedad*, no. Número 35 (July 1, 2018): 87–112, <https://doi.org/10.15446/hys.n35.69838>; Mitchell Codding, "The Lacquer Arts of Latin America," in *Made in the Americas: The New World Discovers Asia* (Boston: Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, 2015), 75–90; María del Pilar López Pérez, "Oriente en el Nuevo Reino de Granada. Influencias y presencias en los objetos artísticos. El caso del arte del barniz de Pasto," *Jornadas Internacionales de arte, historia y cultura colonial, Asia en américa*, no. VI (2012): 86–117.

Both present mammals, such as deer and dogs. And in both, the compositional space is filled with foliage, vines, and birds. In spite of these commonalities, which suggest that they might be contemporaneous, their palettes, figure treatment, and some of the imagery are quite different. By comparing these two objects, it is easy to see the diversity of mopa mopa objects' connections to various aesthetic repertoires including, but not limited to, Japanese *Nanban* lacquers.

Palette-wise, the first coffer's imagery is treated in metallic yellows, greens, and reds (the metallic color was achieved by applying colored mopa mopa resin over silver). Most of the outlining is in white, with some details emphasized by using black outlining as well (fig. 4.7). As mentioned before, the metallic tones over a black background, the profusion of plants and birds, the delicate lines, and the gold background of the border, echo Japanese *Nanban* lacquers (fig. 4.8). The minute geometric forms in silver covered with colored resin also recall *Nanban*,²⁴ as do the "squirrel and vine motif" on the left front corner.²⁵ However, the difference between *Nanban* and this mopa mopa coffer is evident. As happens with all mopa mopa objects that have *Nanban* elements, this coffer is not trying to duplicate Asian counterparts. Salient differences are the broader palette (which includes red and green), the vertical axial symmetry, the white outlining, and the motifs inspired in late medieval imagery. In sum, mopa mopa artists synthesized multiple cosmopolitan influences, creating various styles that kept their production on demand.

²⁴ Kawamura, "Encuentro multicultural en el arte de barniz de Pasto o la laca del Virreinato del Perú," 92.

²⁵ Coddling, "The Lacquer Arts of Latin America," 81.

On the coffer's front, right below the area where the lock once was, there is a hybrid creature in metallic yellow. It is quite similar to medieval representations of the astrological sign Capricorn, which is half fish, half goat (fig. 4.9-4.11). This figure appeared in medieval astrological treatises and books of hours and continued to appear in astrological treatises during the seventeenth century (fig. 4.9). On the fish half, dense scales, each punctuated by a once lustrous rhombus (fig. 4.7), give way to a tail fin. In this rendition, however, the goat's front legs have morphed into swirls and its two horns into one, similar to that of a unicorn (which is a prevalent motif on mopa mopa objects) but shorter. This particular spin on Capricorn appears in yet another mopa mopa coffer executed in a completely different style and immersed in different iconography (fig. 4.12), a sign of the freedom mopa mopa artists had to create new contexts for image repertoires.²⁶

On each of the lower corners on the chest's front and back are dragon or canine-like heads (fig. 4.13). Each side of the chest presents a single head on the bottom (fig. 4.5). From the creatures' mouths sprout the plants and vines that give each compositional frame an organizing principle. On the lid, the foliage springs from rooster beaks. These motifs are reminiscent of capital letter ornamentation in medieval manuscripts (figs. 4.14), but also show up in silver Dutch silverwork from the first half of the seventeenth century (fig. 4.15). There is a notable similarity of the foliage with that on the metalwork. Moreover, silver coffers from this time had

²⁶ Yayoi Kawamura argues the figure in this coffer is a winged serpent. Therefore, she suggests it is a representation of an *amaru*, a serpent or dragon in Quechua. In Inka culture the *amaru* was associated with times and places of transition and transformation. However, the striking parallels between this figure and the "Capricorn" suggests that her interpretation is based on mistaken reading of the figure.

the same kind of feet that some mopa mopa coffers have, which indicates that this kind of objects was one of the models mopa mopa artists had (fig. 4.16).²⁷

The coffer also presents several identifiable mammals: two squirrels, one on the front and one on the lid, a jaguar on the back, and three deer, one on the front, one on the top, and one on the right side. Deer and squirrels appear frequently on European imagery and in *Nanban* lacquers. The latter also present felines like jaguars, although not as often. These animals, however, are also Native to the northern Andes. Their inclusion on mopa mopa images, which is quite frequent, must respond to that very fact. Deer are some of the few animals represented on pre-Hispanic ceramics of the Pasto area (fig. 4.17).²⁸ Jaguars are of utmost importance in multiple Native cultures across the Andes. Therefore, while the mode of representation on these images diverges from pre-Hispanic aesthetics, they must have functioned in ways relevant to their makers. In this light, the heads from whose mouths emerge the foliage that engulfs each compositional frame might be interpreted as an echo of the mopa mopa image-making itself, in which the productive power of the mouth plays a key role.²⁹ This coffer, therefore, juxtaposes elements from *Nanban*, Medieval, European silver-work, and Native Andean aesthetics.

The second coffer in question, now at the Hispanic Society of New York, appears more in line with European Renaissance aesthetics (fig. 4.6). The coffer presents a completely

²⁷ On an inventory of goods from 1620, Diego de Victoria -a merchant from Popayán- reports having several pieces that possibly corresponded to these kinds of coffers worked in metal. ACC, Notaria 1ra, año 1620, tomo 5, f. 20 r.

²⁸ Pasto natives were expert deer hunters. Deer held symbolic importance in their culture. It is, therefore, not surprising that they appear often on mopa mopa images.

²⁹ See Chapter 1 of the dissertation.

different palette in comparison to the former piece and has no metallic shimmer. The composition is treated in all matte colors—pastel rose, pale blue, light green, burnt yellow, and cream. The color scheme echoes Italian *pietra dure* works, inlaid colored marbles or semi-precious stones into a stone base, featuring plants, scrolls, and birds (fig. 4.18). It was an art form promoted by the Medici in Florence from the late sixteenth to the first half of the seventeenth century.

This second coffer presents vines too. However, the flowers and leaves represented are quite different than those on the first coffer. Other key differences are the dominant figures on the coffer's front and lid. On the front, a fully dressed woman appears on the left side. Her face has faded, but her outfit is still clearly discernible. She sports a dress emblematic of Spanish high fashion of the late sixteenth and early-seventeenth centuries (figs. 4.19-4.21). This lady wears a pink bodice with tight undersleeves and hanging oversleeves that match her closed overskirt. The skirt has borders that run vertically across the middle and go around at the bottom. Such borders can be seen in several European royal portraits of the late sixteenth century, like that of the Infanta Isabella Clara Eugenia, Archduchess of Austria c.1598-1600 (fig. 4.20). They also appear in a painting made in New Spain, ca. 1670, that of Doña Maria Luisa de Toledo, daughter of Antonio Sebastián de Toledo, viceroy of New Spain between 1664 and 1673 (fig. 4.22). Though the face of the lady on the mopa mopa coffer has faded, it is still noticeable that she wore her hair up with a diadem, not unlike that of the Infanta Isabella on the painting. A notable difference with the European fashion of the time is the collar. Our lady does not seem to have a ruff, which was very characteristic of Spanish style of the late sixteenth century, but a square collar with border that evokes lace.

Across the composition's vertical axis sits an oversized naked baby with short curly hair, very much like a renaissance *putto* (fig. 4.23). His cream, black-hatched body almost seems like a print cutout, yet he engages with the surroundings, grabbing vines with both hands, unlike any other figure in the composition. A pink, tiny unicorn jumps at his feet, balanced by a similar-sized dog at the lady's feet. These and other such details found in equivalent positions across the vertical axis, help us to understand that the baby's disproportionate size in comparison to the woman's, responds to the desire of maintaining the symmetry across the vertical axis—a feature common to all mopa mopa objects produced through the colonial period regardless of style. It appears that for mopa mopa artists conserving that symmetry was very important.

Above the woman and child, on the coffer's lid, one sees a man animatedly riding a horse (fig. 4.24). His left hands hold both reins up, as he lifts his right arm behind him even higher, a typical pose in equestrian portraits. Usually, the sitter would be holding a baton in the raised hand, but here the left hand is empty. He is as fashionable as the lady, wearing white boots with spurs, like those seen on the portrait of Charles I of England from 1631 (fig. 4.25), breeches, a sleeveless doublet that matches his hat, and a white shirt with a subtly ruffled collar. His mustache is carefully pulled up. Intently, he looks at a lion modeled on a heraldic type. The detailed clothing and especially the brand on the horse's hip give the sense that these are representations of specific people, not generic figures. The gender pairing suggests that it might have been a commission for a soon to be married couple.

Mixing aspects from prints, heraldic and portrait images, and presenting a color scheme and motifs from decorative arts such as *pietra dura*, it appears that the makers of this composition had at their disposal completely different sources than the makers of the first coffer.

Yet, there are plenty of indications that these two very different coffers are coetaneous, perhaps even made by the same workshop, proving the wealth of artistic repertoires mopa mopa artists were drawing from. In spite of their glaring differences, the animal heads from which vines and flowers spring are also present in the second coffer (fig. 4.26). Moreover, we have seen already that both coffers have similar basic elements, like the border design, which suggest at least that their makers saw each other's work. The aesthetic configuration of the coffers shows the diverse ways in which elements from Asian, European, and Indigenous traditions could merge to create new work. But we have to remember that the potential of being drafted into forced labor was part of the context in which mopa mopa artists operated. As such these artists had a strong motivation to fuel their great creative impulse. The two mopa mopa coffers discussed might recall either European or Asian luxury imports; both, however, partake in the oppressive labor conditions of people of color that underpinned the circulation, consumption, and, sometimes, the production of luxury objects in the colonial context.

Intersections

The circulation of aesthetic elements amid early-modern global trade is as interesting as the way these elements could merge in artistic production. Scholarship on this topic tends to put the production of the Americas on the receiving end, absorbing and digesting a variety of influxes to create something anew. While that was certainly the case in many instances, it is also quite possible that things produced in the Americas starting in the late sixteenth century were themselves inspiring other productions around the globe. Moreover, we should also consider parallel developments. Take, for example, the inside lid design of a mopa mopa *escritorio*, now

at the Presidential Apartments in Bogotá (fig. 4.27), and a *Nanban* tray from the Museu Nacional de Arte Antiga, in Lisbon (fig. 4.28). Although executed in different materials, presenting very different color schemes, and distinct plant motifs, the two compositions share a frame of similar proportions and are organized around a central circle that contains a flower with expanding concentric petals. A quarter of such circular motif occupies the four corners of each composition. The similarity between both images is undeniable, but there are no confirmed dates in either object to determine with precision which piece preceded the other. Based on the style, the *Nanban* tray is considered to have been made in the Ryukyu Islands in eighteenth-century.³⁰ The *mopa mopa escritorio* has a dedication and a date, 1583, but the inscription appears to be a later addition, and the style of most of it corresponds to eighteenth-century pieces.³¹

In any case, if 1583 were the actual date, the *escritorio* could have been earlier than the tray, a fascinating possibility since usually objects from the Americas are considered to be later than similar objects produced in Asia or Europe. Regardless, a viable alternative is that both objects were more or less contemporaneous and developed separately, in response to a European precedent. That is, both artists in Japan and the northern Andes would have been working parallel to one another, connected by the threads of early modern economic expansion. How exactly those threads were laid out is often difficult to reconstruct, but when it is possible, one can catch a glimpse of the complex motivations that operated and fueled the first era of

³⁰ On a different *mopa mopa escritorio* Michael Coddington notes another similarity Nanban lacquers from the Ryukyu Islands. There might be an interesting relationship between *mopa mopa* production and Ryukyu production. Coddington, “The Lacquer Arts of Latin America,” 81.

³¹ The object has suffered quite a bit and has been repaired, so it would be necessary to run technical analysis in order to determine more precisely when it was made.

globalization, an era in which delicately executed decoration patterns were linked to some of the most oppressive exploitations of people of color.

“Different styles with fine and beautiful figures:” mopa mopa production in the 18th century

Towards the end of the seventeenth century another style of mopa mopa images emerged. Cream colored backgrounds with thicker frames become common (fig. 4.29). Characters of colonial society and heraldic elements occur often, while bestiary-like motifs appear less. Flora and fauna continue to populate the surface, but their style has changed, and their size increased. Carnations and echoes of the three-lobed petal flowers common in Chinese porcelain and textiles become frequent. Furthermore, the dimensions of these later objects tend to be bigger, and their carpentry more complex than those that have medieval looking motifs.

Contemporary observers explicitly established the connection to Asian aesthetics. Antonio de Alcedo, Dionisio’s son, described mopa mopa objects as imitating “*maque de China*.”³² This is a specific reference to the perceived relationship between mopa mopa objects and Japanese lacquers. A piece, now at the Museo Santa Clara in Bogotá, is an excellent example of what Antonio de Alcedo was probably referring to (fig. 4.30). Ulloa and Santa Gertrudiz also mention a relationship between mopa mopa objects and Asia.³³ Clearly, by the eighteenth

³² In Hispanic sources of the period, “China” was used indiscriminately to denote Asian origin, while “maque” comes from the Japanese “maki-e” technique. Antonio de Alcedo, *Diccionario geográfico-histórico de las Indias Occidentales ó América*, vol. 4 (Madrid: Imprenta de Benito Cano, 1786), 113.

³³ Antonio de Juan Ulloa, *Relacion historica del viage a la America Meridional* (Madrid: Por A. Marin, 1748), 45; Juan de Santa Gertrudis Serra, *Maravillas de la naturaleza*, vol. 1

century, contemporaries saw and understood mopa mopa objects to be linked to Asian aesthetics. Elements of Indian textiles and various European objects, such as etched and leather boxes, can also be seen in mopa mopa objects from this time. Evidently, mopa mopa artists kept striving for new aesthetics, eager to continue exploiting their “singular mine.” Their aesthetic experiments are as interesting as the trade networks that, in all likelihood, increased their imagistic vocabulary.

By the eighteenth century, some of these trade networks were intimately related to mining and slavery. Towards the last quarter of the eighteenth century, the scale of mining in the governorship of Popayan, particularly in the Choco region on the Pacific coast, started to boom (as noted before, the mines in the Pasto district remained underexploited throughout the colonial period).³⁴ Both the economic surplus and the need for slaves increased the ways in which imported goods arrived in Pasto. An analysis of trade routes that connected Pasto to the world brings to light the convoluted nature of the networks and motivations that connected aesthetic elements from diverse cultures in the early modern period. Even though slaves, textiles from India, European goods, and mopa mopa objects may at first glance seem unrelated, they were conjoined in diverse ways by a global economy revolving around the capture and sale of Black

(Bogotá: Empresa Nacional de Publicaciones, 1956), 139–40. Serra was in New Granada from 1756 to 1767.

³⁴ Peter Marzahl, “Creoles and Government: The Cabildo of Popayán,” *The Hispanic American Historical Review* 54, no. 4 (1974): 636–56, <https://doi.org/10.2307/2512893>; Robert C. (Robert Cooper) West, *Colonial Placer Mining in Colombia* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1952); Jorge Palacios Preciado, *La trata de negros por Cartagena de Indias* (Tunja: Universidad Pedagógica y Tecnológica de Colombia, 1973), 14.

people from the West African coast for forced labor in the Americas; in the northern Andes, mainly to extract gold.

Context of international trade into South America

The Spanish government was very protective of the colonies, so it heavily restricted ships from other European nations from trading directly with their holdings in the Americas. Worldly goods were supposed to be sent from Cadiz or Seville and enter South America via Portobello. From there, they were shipped to Cartagena or to ports on the Pacific, like Lima and Guayaquil. By 1582, even Asian wares arriving to Acapulco via the Manila Galleon could not be brought to Pacific South American ports directly from Acapulco.³⁵ These measures were intended to protect the colonies from foreign invasions as well as to control the American markets and the flow of silver. Such trade restrictions created very inefficient sourcing of goods, which ended up encouraging substantial illegal trade of Asian and European merchandise into the colonies.³⁶

Since Spanish sanctioned shipments were not enough to satisfy the demand for foreign articles in the colonies, Dutch, French, British, and Portuguese merchants found plenty of opportunities to introduce contraband to the Spanish American territories, sometimes at lower prices than the crown's sanctioned goods.³⁷ Encouraged by colonial officials, an illegal direct

³⁵ Mariano Ardash Bonialian, *China en la América colonial: bienes, mercados, comercio y cultura del consumo desde México hasta Buenos Aires* (Buenos Aires: Editorial Biblos, 2014), 34–35.

³⁶ Bonialian, *China en la América colonial: bienes, mercados, comercio y cultura del consumo desde México hasta Buenos Aires*; Adrian Finucane, *The Temptations of Trade: Britain, Spain and the Struggle for Empire* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2016)..

³⁷ For instance, from 1698 to 1720, French merchants brought, illegally, European and Asian goods to ports what today is Chile, Peru, and Ecuador. Bonialian, *China en la América*

trade from Acapulco ensued. Contraband caused heavy losses to the crown and became a prevalent issue that proved intractable. It was such a problem in the northern Andes that it was one of the main reasons the Bourbons decided in 1717 to create the Viceroyalty of New Granada, comprised of the Audiencia de Quito, the Audiencia de Santa Fe, and the Audiencia de Caracas.³⁸ Until then, all of these Audiencias had been under the jurisdiction of the Viceroyalty of Peru. The move aimed at having more official presence in the area to better control the entrance of imports.

The official route through which Pasto was supposed to receive merchandise was via the *Camino Real* that ran from Cartagena to Quito. This commerce route was known in the colonial period as the *carrera* Cartagena-Quito. Several merchants that covered this route were based in the city of Popayán.³⁹ They were supposed to trade legal goods arriving in Cartagena and Guayaquil, but no doubt they traded illegal wares as well. Archival documentation lets us see the kind of objects that might have arrived in Pasto via these merchants. For instance, Diego de Victoria, who worked the *carrera* Cartagena-Quito and was based in Popayán, lists in a 1620 inventory, among many other items, multiple kinds of textiles from Italy, Portugal, Spain, Portugal, and Mexico.⁴⁰ Another of such merchants, Martín de Huegonaga, declares in 1621 that he has “an entire church ornament, another chasuble from China with stole, maniple, frontal, and

colonial: bienes, mercados, comercio y cultura del consumo desde México hasta Buenos Aires, 71.

³⁸ Palacios Preciado, *La trata de negros por Cartagena de Indias*.

³⁹ Marzahl, “Creoles and Government: The Cabildo of Popayán,” 648.

⁴⁰ ACC. Notaría 1ª, Año 1620, Tomo 5, ff: 15r.-20v.

(sic) caída, an entire old taffeta bed, and a Chinese candle holder.”⁴¹ Now, to understand the possibilities a merchant like Huegonaga had to attain such Chinese items, it is necessary to discuss the consequences of the Crown’s prohibition of direct trade between Acapulco and South America.

Trade from Acapulco

Official activities of the Manila galleon or *Nao de China* started in 1573. The ship sailed yearly from Manila to Acapulco, loaded with Asian goods such as Philippino carved ivories, Chinese porcelain and textiles, Japanese *Nanban* lacquers, and Indian chintz. In 1579, the crown authorized direct traffic from Manilla to other ports in colonial on the Pacific in Guatemala, Tierra Firme, and Peru. Soon after, in 1582, seeing the danger of Asian goods replacing European ones in the colonies and the prospect of silver flowing directly to Asia, Phillip II prohibited direct traffic between Manila and other ports besides Acapulco, as well the re-exportation of Asian products directly from Acapulco to Spanish South America. Instead, Asian goods for Spanish South America ought to be transported to Veracruz, then to Seville, and back to Portobello.⁴²

The prohibition was reinstated in 1604. But illegal trade ensued, promoted by local elites eager to supply the South American markets with the highly sought-after foreign goods. From

⁴¹ “un ornamento entero de la iglesia, otra casulla de la china con estola, manípulo frontales y caída, una cama entera vieja de tafetán y un candelero de la china.” ACC. Notaria Publica. Año 1621, ff. 100v - 101v.

⁴² Bonialian, *China en la América colonial: bienes, mercados, comercio y cultura del consumo desde México hasta Buenos Aires*, 36–37.

this point on, until the end of the eighteenth century when trade was finally opened, mentions of Asian and European contraband pepper colonial archival documents. For instance, a 1610 letter to the King by Francisco Valverde de Mercado, president of the Audiencia de Tierra Firme (modern-day Panama), asserts “every merchant and passenger that comes to Tierra Firme says that Lima, as well as all the other places, are full of merchandise *de China*, everyone knows about it.” The merchants also stated that, a year before, “some ships delivered the goods in every port from which they are distributed to the district of Quito, the governorship of Popayan, Yagual-songo, Bracomoros, Loxa, Camora, Piura, Saña, and Truxillo.”⁴³ These archival records illustrate how contraband through the Pacific gave the Pasto region, ascribed to the governorship of Popayán, access to Asian products, beyond trade coming from Cartagena.

The governorship of Popayán had two adjacent ports on the Pacific: Tumaco and the riverine port of Barbacoas. However, they were small, and had much less activity than Guayaquil or Lima for two reasons. First, a large vessel could not land in either port but had to send small canoes to reach the coast. Second, the trail from the coast to Pasto, the closest highland town, was long, strenuous, and could not be traversed by beasts of burden. However, precisely because these were not heavily guarded ports, they became good spots to deliver contraband. Valverde de Mercado’s letter seems to imply the use of these ports to deliver Asian goods. Pasto Natives would carry cargo from Barbacoas or Tumaco up the Andes, a tradition that was in place before

⁴³ “...cuantos mercaderes y pasajeros bienen dizen que así la ciudad de Lima como las ademas partes estan llenas de mercaderias de China con harta publicidad, y que unos naos que pasaron por el mes de febrero pasado las fueron dejando en todos los valles, de donde se distribuye al distrito de Quito, a la gobernación de Popayan, Yagual-songo, Bracomoros?, Loxa, Camora, Piura, Saña, y Truxillo.” AGI, PANAMA,16,R.2,N.23, f. 11.

the arrival of Europeans to the continent. The trade from the Pacific to the highlands of Pasto had functioned since pre-Columbian times.⁴⁴ By the eighteenth-century, this trade was in full bloom. Fray Juan de Santa Gertrudis, who traveled through the area during the middle of the century, reports that between forty and a hundred Pasto Indians arrived daily at Barbacoas loaded with foodstuff to support the mining industry. On their way back, Pasto Natives would bring salt, Chilean wine, and European textiles.⁴⁵ They must have also brought up contraband goods.

Given its illicit nature, and the fact that in many cases colonial officials backed the entrance of contraband, the extent of this trade is difficult to estimate, more so for the seventeenth century, due to the lack of records.⁴⁶ The picture is easier to reconstruct in the eighteenth century because of two related events: an international commerce boom and a mining boom in the Choco region. In this context, the Barbacoas-Pasto path appears frequently in colonial written records because it connected the mines with the highlands to serve colonial interests.

In 1724, the Viceroy of Peru wrote to the king that the unlawful entrance of Asian and European goods coming from New Spain through the port at Guayaquil and “all the ports of this kingdom” was prevalent and also intractable because those ports were underpopulated.⁴⁷ Other

⁴⁴ María Victoria Uribe, “Pastos y Protopastos: La Red Regional de Intercambio de Productos y Materias Primas de Los Siglos X a XVI D.C. (1986).,” *Maguaré*, no. 3 (1986): 38–39.

⁴⁵ Juan de Santa Gertrudis Serra, *Maravillas de la naturaleza*, vol. 2 (Bogotá: Empresa Nacional de Publicaciones, 1956), 93.

⁴⁶ See Bolianian for discussion of other seventeenth century cases. Bolianian, *China en la América colonial: bienes, mercados, comercio y cultura del consumo desde México hasta Buenos Aires*, 110 and 132.

⁴⁷ AGI, Lima, 411, November 27, 1724, s.f.

related documents explicitly mention how the ships that carried contraband landed at Tumaco and Barbacoas.⁴⁸ For instance, a document written in Lima in 1725 talks about *El Rosario*, a vessel that sailed from Mexico with illegal merchandise and stopped in Tumaco.⁴⁹ The cases in which actual contraband was seized gives us a better sense of the objects that arrived this way. A 1724 inventory of a contraband load captured in the coast of Esmeraldas, just south of Tumaco, lists mostly cheap Asian and European textiles but also mentions expensive cassocks with gold buttons, Chinese brocades, and an embroidered Chinese textile, valued at one hundred pesos even while damaged. It was the highest appraised item. The inventory contains, too, three silver boxes for tobacco and a *congolito* (a gourd-shaped receptacle) with an affix in white metal. There are also decorated Asian cotton textiles, which perhaps correspond to chintz.⁵⁰

Other sources of Asian and European goods

During the eighteenth-century the Manilla Galleon was not the only source of Asian goods for South American Spanish colonies. From 1698 to 1720, French merchants were bringing European and Asian goods illegally to ports in what today is Chile, Peru, and Ecuador.⁵¹ At the same time the Portuguese were bringing contraband along the Atlantic coast. But perhaps what altered the trade landscape the most, and is seldom discussed, if ever, in the literature on

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ AGI, Lima, 411, Marzo 26, 1725, s.f.

⁵⁰ AGI, Quito, 170, ff. 27r., 31 v., 42 r., 44 v.

⁵¹ Bonialian, *China en la América colonial: bienes, mercados, comercio y cultura del consumo desde México hasta Buenos Aires*, 71.

global circulation and aesthetic developments in the Spanish Americas, was the establishment of the British *Asiento*.⁵²

After losing to England in the War of the Spanish Succession, the Spanish crown conceded the British monopoly of the slave trade in Spanish America under what was called the *asiento* contract. Signed in 1713, the contract required the British South Sea Company to import 4,800 slaves into the Spanish Americas each year, for a term of thirty years. The contract also allowed the Company to send one ship—the *navio de permiso*—loaded with five hundred tons of goods to trade at the Portobello fair each year. This was the first time a foreign country was given permission to sell goods directly in the colonies. Therefore, the *asiento* contract, coveted by other European nations, was a critical opportunity for direct legal trade with the protected Spanish markets. It was also an opportunity to expand the contraband trade that had long flourished in the colonies.⁵³

The British company was authorized to establish a factory at every major port of the Spanish American territory: Portobello, Panama, Cartagena, Buenos Aires, and Veracruz. Although the *navio de permiso* was in theory the only source of goods, extensive contraband coming on every British ship became prevalent, inundating the colonial market with imported goods. The inventory of the *Bedford*, the *navio de permiso* of 1716, gives us a limited glance of the kinds of objects that, along with enslaved Africans, made it to colonies. Mercury, multiple

⁵² The Asiento was in place 1710-1740. But British merchandise continued to reach the colonies afterwards. The colonial market was finally opened to international trade towards the end of the eighteenth-century. At that point, British wares flooded the colonial market.

⁵³ Adrian Finucane, *The Temptations of Trade: Britain, Spain and the Struggle for Empire*, 12–13.

metal tools, a great number and variety of fabrics, including different types of silks and wool fabric, as well as some specifically French (*Bretañas, Ruanes, Olanes de Paris*) and British (*Bayeta de colchester*) textiles, came in the *Bedford*.⁵⁴ Although there is no specific mention on the inventory for chintz, it is quite possible that chintzes were part of the imports given that British had colonies in Coromandel coast and the popularity of this kind of textile. For instance, the second entry lists 17,882 *varas* (1 *vara* is approx. 32.91 in) of diverse fabric (*paños diversos*), some of which could have been chintz or *sarasas*, a term that referred to cotton printed fabrics imported from mainly from India (*calicos, percales, indianas, palampores, and calamcares* belong to this category).⁵⁵ A 1731 inventory of a load confiscated in Cartagena specifically lists *sarasas*. The vessel from which the merchandise was seized had stopped in Portobello before arriving into Cartagena. Therefore, it is likely that it picked up the merchandise from the English *asentistas*.⁵⁶

The *asiento* increased the contraband that entered South America through the Pacific, and perhaps particularly the trade that came through the Tumaco and Barbacoas ports, because of the need for slaves in the Choco mines. The connection between imported luxury items and slavery is palpable in the cases of contraband that have survived in the archive. For instance, in a

⁵⁴ The inventory also mentions *Holandillas*, which could have been Dutch or inspired in Dutch textiles. Palacios Preciado, *La trata de negros por Cartagena de Indias*, 254–55.

⁵⁵ Vicent Ferrandis, “FILADIS,” accessed May 15, 2021, <http://filadis.blogspot.com/search?q=sarasa>; Tamara Estupiñán Viteri, *Diccionario Básico Del Comercio Colonial Quiteño*, Colección Fuentes Documentales, v. 1 (Quito, Ecuador: Ediciones del Banco Central del Ecuador, 1997), 344.

⁵⁶ The inventory of the merchandise seized in 1731 in Cartagena from the ship Jesus Nazareno lists: “ocho cortes de batas de mujer de sarasas de china, diez y siete piezas de dichas sarasas de ocho varas.” AGI, Escribania, 583A, f. 7v.

document from 1745, Tomás Suárez de Bolaños, angry because a slave of his was seized for having been brought over illegally, denounced that “blacks, pearls, iron, glass, cinnamon, gun powder, and other things” had been coming from Panama entering Barbacoas without license or permit. Along with *negros bozales*, he also cites socks from China, silks, mirrors, *ruanes*, and crystal bowls, among other things.⁵⁷ The contraband loads from Barbacoas were brought up to Pasto by Native Andeans. Such trade must have provided models for mopa mopa artists eager to continue exploiting their “singular mine” and producing objects of “different styles with fine and beautiful figures,” valuable as if made of silver. It was probably this kind of ability what kept them out of the gold mines.

Chintz on mopa mopa

Given this rich context of foreign trade, it should no longer be surprising that mopa mopa artists had access to cotton printed textiles from India, as the strong parallel between chintz floral

⁵⁷ [Folio 1 R] “y en su justificado zelo el denunciar los efectos que han entrado en esta [folio 1V] ciudad [de mala entrada] sin registro ni licencias asi de negros, perlas, fierros, vidrios, canela, polvora, y otros efectos, de todo lo qual no se a echo aprecio y los dueños lo an vendido sin ser molestados el año pasado de mil setezientos quarenta y dos, con el de setezientos cuarenta y tres que fue Alcalde y Oficial *real* Don Thomas Díaz del Castillo, en este tiempo de primer año de alcalde del referido año de setezientos cuarenta y dos, vino a esta ciudad un caballero Don Joseph Prieto y Coca de la ciudad de Panamá, este trajo perlas, [listones], medias de china, sevillanetas, canela, vidrio y espejos y antes... este mismo año llegó a esta misma ciudad de la de Panamá un caballero llamado Don Pedro Martínez y trajo un negro bozal sin licencia ni marca y lo bendio en esta ciudad libremente sin escritura y no hizo juicio el dicho Don Thomas Díaz del Castillo siendo Alcalde Oficial Real. Asi mismo entraron en este referido año más de zinquenta quintales de fierro sin licencias como también se vendieron en una tienda publica de esta dicha ciudad, balletas de Castilla, ruan [coleta] [folio 2R] Bretañas, sedas, canela y[¿] todo venido de la dicha ciudad de Panamá sin registros ni licencias.” ACC, 4066 (Col. J I -2 cr), f. 1r., 1v., 2v.

motifs and some mopa mopa images suggest. Take, for instance, the inside lid of a trunk, now at the Museo Franciscano in Quito (fig. 4.31). The overall organization of the composition evokes that found sometimes in chintz: notably, the large abstract design in the middle composition and the free-floating plants. Very similar flowers to the large ones at each side of the central design appear in Indian textiles, which also resemble Chinese ones (fig. 4.32).⁵⁸ The similarity has to do with the scale and type of flowers, characterized by fanning three-lobed petals. The shape of the large leaf on the flowers' stems has a large asymmetric bottom lobe and the movement implied by the curvature of the leaf's central vein are also quite similar to leaves found on chintz (fig. 33). What locks in the formal relationship is the peculiar spotted texture in both the stem and leaves. Spotted areas are very distinctive of chintz, they can be found as filling in recognizable forms, such as leaves, but also in amorphous shapes that animate and subtly highlight certain areas of the compositions (fig. 4.34).⁵⁹

On the outside of the lid at the Museo de San Francisco, the artist seems to be dabbling in the playful aspect of spotted shapes on chintz (fig. 4.35). Located at each side of the double-headed eagle, at the top, and at the outermost sides of the composition, oversized spotted scrolls emerge from a flower and leaf arrangement. It is still possible to see how the scrolls—whose border used to be golden—spout petals and greenery as they curl. Given the strong presence of these spotted shapes in the composition, it is impossible not to ponder why mopa mopa artists

⁵⁸ The particular kind of petal is very characteristic of Chinese porcelain, which we know circulated in colonial South America, and of Chinese embroidered textiles. Chinese embroidered textiles appear in the inventories of seized merchandize.

⁵⁹ Rosemary Crill, *Chintz: Indian Textiles for the West* (London: V & A Publications, 2008), 9.

were particularly interested on such aspect of chintz and gave it prominence in their design. The mottled forms create visual excitement, but their presence may also have to do with signaling the relationship to chintz explicitly.

Other floral patterns present in mopa mopa objects resemble designs that occur in British embroidered textiles from the seventeenth century. However, it is unclear that the same motifs would occur in objects brought by the Asiento contract, which was in place in the first half of the eighteenth century.⁶⁰ When comparing the designs of a British purse with the inside lids of two mopa mopa *escritorios* the resemblance is easy to spot (fig. 4.36). One can see, for instance, the grape bunches of similar proportions. One also recognizes the similarity between the stem and flower proportions and that the way the stem curls partly framing the flower is consistent between both objects. Furthermore, in a manner that characterizes mopa mopa artists' attention to detail, the stems echo each other in the pace of fabrication: on the purse, the stem grows stitch by stitch; on the cabinet, it builds by adding a progression of trapezoidal resin cuts that alternate in color. The result of the mopa mopa stem has a textile feel indeed. It actually resembles a two-colored twine.

The inside of another mopa mopa cabinet, very similar in construction to the one just discussed, has the very same elements from British purses. Moreover, it has chintz-like spotted

⁶⁰ Alcedo does lists *farqueas*, a kind of purses, in a discussion on British contraband. But the example I present is cataloged as being early seventeenth century. More research into British production of this objects is required to determine whether they could still be in production by the early 18th century.

leaves floating about the composition balancing the intense colors that dominate it (fig. 4.37).⁶¹ Describing this piece, Michael Coddling and Monica Katz note a strong Asian influence: “its joinery and shape with curved lids mimic Asian construction, as does the exterior decoration. Instead of the classic Asian motif of a grapevine with squirrels, the cream-colored ground is decorated with a trellis of passion fruit vines, interspersed with birds and monkeys.”⁶² The grapevine with squirrel motif they mention is actually a European motif used in Asian objects for the European market. Interestingly, the previously discussed *escritorio* (fig. 4.37), does have the grapevine and squirrel motif. Ultimately, it is evident that these two objects take us from the northern Andes to Britain, to India, to Japan, and back. Belying their relegated position colonial society’s and their location in the periphery of the Spanish empire, mopa mopa artists managed to seamlessly blend global aesthetic trends, very much like the most cosmopolitan of early-modern actors.

Other considerations on British trade

The switch to larger floral motifs that characterizes mopa mopa objects from the late seventeenth century on is also present in Indo-Portuguese and Indo-English inlaid work, which in

⁶¹ The object in question has been dated as ca. 1683 based on an inscription it bears with the last name Quiroz. Scholars have posed that piece was commissioned by the Popayan Bishop Bernaldo de Quiroz. Perez posits that piece belonged to the bishop, while M. Coddling proposes that the bishop commissioned it for his brother in 1683, before his death. Though these propositions are reasonable, it might very well be that the *escritorio* was made a little later. As I have outlined, stylistically, it has influence of objects brought by the Britons.

⁶² Coddling, “The Lacquer Arts of Latin America,” 81; Monica Katz, “Colonial Spanish American Lacquered Objects in the Collection at the Hispanic Society of America,” in *Wooden Artifacts Group Postprints 2016 AIC* (Washington, D.C.: The American Institute for Conservation of Historic & Artistic Works, 2016), 43.

turn might be related to chintz patterns (fig. 4.38). The use of British inlaid woodworks as models for Native furniture production in Ambato and Latacunga south of the Pasto area is confirmed by Alcedo, who was well informed on the particulars of British trade.⁶³ He states that these artisans made

beds, cots, tables, trunks, chairs, desks, and various kinds of tabletop cabinets, bins and bins of exquisite wood and beautiful designs, smooth and inlaid in the old fashion of Spain, and modernly in the English fashion, using models that have been brought by merchants, bought in the factories of Panama and Portobello. [The Indigenous versions] have a unique resemblance with the originals and have and ingenious new secrets.⁶⁴

As Native artists in Lacatunga, mopa mopa workers had since the seventeenth century been looking at inlaid work, initially, of Spanish origin. A gorgeous mopa mopa gourd, whose outer metallic green background and delicately colored figures bear no resemblance to Spanish inlaid woodwork, belie that appearance on the inner rim. Its fractal arranged tiny triangles are identical as those seen on the Spanish *taracea* (fig. 4.39). Therefore, it's not surprising that later mopa mopa artists were also interested in the new inlaid work now brought by the English. In his description of the Ambato and Latacunga work inspired by English inlaid pieces, Alcedo notes that Native products have "ingenious new secrets." This is also a novelty that appears in mopa mopa production in the first half of the eighteenth century. Several mopa mopa pieces of this

⁶³ Cite Alcedo's works where describes British trade and those where he denounced British contraband.

⁶⁴ "industria de muebles que incluye taracea "las fabricas de camas, catres, mesas, baules, sillas, escritorios, papeleras y escribanías de maderas exquisitas y primorosas hechuras, lisas y embutidas a la antigua moda de España, y modernamente a la Inglesa, por los ejemplares que han llevado algunos mercaderes, comprados en las factorías de Panama y Portobello, con rara semejanza a los originales, y ingeniosos nuevos secretos que se pueden equivocar con ellos." de Alcedo, "Plano geográfico e hidrográfico de Quito," 436.

period have a range of secret drawers. The most complex of these pieces that I have found has four hidden drawers and three secret compartments (figs. 4.40 – 4.43). By pulling out the top drawers, one finds three sets of hidden compartments. If one pulls out the top drawer slightly a previously concealed side drawer appears. But that is not all. If one dares to inspect the back of the bottom drawer, three more secret drawers come into view.

The back door: international trade through the Amazon basin

The intricacy of mopa mopa objects' motifs and carpentry is echoed in the complex trade networks involved in the objects production and circulation. Beyond the routes already discussed, there was, yet another way for Asian and European products to enter into Pasto: through the Amazon and up the Andes, a route that operated at least starting in the 1728 and throughout the century.⁶⁵ Like the British trade that was tied to the *Asiento de negros*, the contraband that traversed this route was unequivocally linked to slavery. Starting in the mid-seventeenth century, Portuguese ships active in Asia and Africa were allowed to sail directly from the African coast to Brazil's ports. These vessels arrived at Brazil with enslaved people and loads of goods from Europe and the East Indies. A portion of that merchandise was re-exported

⁶⁵ For discussion of this trade see: Sebastián Gómez González, “El espíritu de contrabando que reina por estas partes”. Comerciantes portugueses, misioneros y comercio ilícito en el piedemonte andino-amazónico, 1730-1790,” *Tempo* 23, no. 3 (December 2017): 547–66, <https://doi.org/10.1590/tem-1980-542x2017v230308>.

to the port of Buenos Aires, from which it was distributed to Chile and the central Andes through traditional commercial networks.⁶⁶

By the eighteenth century, part of these trade must have passed through the Amazon and up to Pasto.⁶⁷ At this time, Portuguese merchants began foraying up the Amazon in search of Native slaves. Their incursions took them further and further into Amazon, to the Caquetá and Putumayo rivers, breaching in what was allegedly Spanish territory in search of people to enslave.⁶⁸ These merchants brought iron tools and guns to trade with the Natives that sold them the slaves. They also brought textiles and supplies that missionaries in the area were willing to buy.⁶⁹ Building on traditional Native trade routes that connected the highlands of the Northern Andes with the Amazon, the Portuguese started bringing luxury items and textiles to be delivered to Pasto and be distributed to other locales in Spanish territory.⁷⁰

⁶⁶ José Roberto do Amaral Lapa, *A Bahia e a Carreira da Índia*, vol. 338, Coleção Brasileira (São Paulo: Cia. Ed. Nacional, 1968), 278-279; Bonialian, *China en America colonial*, p. 128.

⁶⁷ Textiles from British, Dutch, and Danish sources also entered through this route.

⁶⁸ Sebastián Gómez González, *Frontera selvática : españoles, portugueses y su disputa por el noroccidente amazónico, siglo XVIII* (Bogotá: Instituto Colombiano de Antropología e Historia, 2014).

⁶⁹ One of the earliest reports of this illegal trade that I have found in the archival record appears in a 1748 letter by Don Antonio Mota governor of Popayan (of course, this being an illicit activity is not clear when it begun). Don Antonio Mota stated: “dijo que acaba de recibir una carta escrita del pueblo de nuestra señora de la concepcion con fecha de 10 de julio de este año Misiones de los padres de San Francisco en las montañas de Mocoa y Sucumbios, la que se remitió de la ciudad de Pasto...reduciendose su contexto a dar noticia...de la llegada a otras misiones de la llegada de una canoa portuguesa cargadas de ropas de aquel reino, cuyo comercio como ilícito esta prohibido por aquellos parajes.” ACC, Colonia, 7394. f.1r.- 2r.

⁷⁰ See chapter 3 for a discussion of the route through which the resin arrived in Pasto; A 1747 inventory of the goods seized in Pasto that entered via Mocoa, Sucumbios, Pasto lists silver frames, religious images, and un “sillon de moscovia asiento de damasco espaldar con hebillas

Merchants from other European nations were also involved in this commerce. Fray Juan de Santa Gertrudiz, a Franciscan missionary who lived in the region during the mid-eighteenth century relates that a group of Eurodescendants from the city of Pasto, aided by Indians from Sibundoy, decided to travel through the piedmont all the way to the Rio Negro on the Amazon basin. The group was looking to buy textiles from British, Dutch, and Danish ships, which came to Rio Negro to sell goods to Spanish contrabandistas and take them back to the city of Pasto.⁷¹

The reason why it is important to consider links between this trade and mopa mopa production not only stems from the fact that the goods arrived in Pasto, where the artisans worked. It also stems from the fact that the trail from Mocoa to Pasto was the same route used to bring mopa mopa resin to Pasto and that Sibundoy was involved in both bringing the resin and the international goods into Pasto.⁷² In 1751, the Viceroy of New Granada ordered the *encomendero* Don Thomas Miguel de Santacruz to stop these Natives from bringing Portuguese trade to Pasto. Otherwise, Don Thomas would lose his *encomienda*:

I have been informed that the Indians of the towns of Sebondoy and Santiago, enter to collect contraband textiles to the close-by mountain, where beasts cannot pass. This illicit trade causes notable damages to the Real Treasury...thus I order and command Don Thomas Miguel de Santacruz, *encomendero* of the said towns, to prohibit these Indians entering the said mountain, with the warning that he will lose his *encomienda* ...in the event that the said trade continues.⁷³

de plata,” and a “silla polaca con coraza de paño azul bordada,” The goods belonged to a wealthy merchant from Popayan. ACC, Colonia, Civil, 4114, f. 36 r. and f. 34.v.

⁷¹ Serra, *Maravillas de la naturaleza*, 1956, 2:77.

⁷² Serra, *Maravillas de la naturaleza*, 1956, 1:165; Serra, *Maravillas de la naturaleza*, 1956, 2:76; Juan de Velasco, *Historia Del Reino de Quito En La America Meridional* [1789], vol. 3 (Quito: Impr. del Gobierno, 1842), 132.

⁷³ “Respecto de hallarme informado que los indios de los pueblos de Sebondoy (sic) y Santiago, entran a sacar ropa de ilicito comercio a la montaña inmediata, por donde no pueden transitar bestias, cuya permission de saca es en notable perjuicio, así de la Real Hacienda como de

The sternness of the Viceroy's order exhibits his ignorance of the region. It was very unrealistic to assume that an *encomendero* of this Amazon-Andes piedmont region could exert such control in the area.⁷⁴ But such sternness also suggests that the contraband that entered via this route was significant. The path that connected Pasto to the Amazon continued to be traversed, and the Portuguese continued to trade in the area throughout the eighteenth-century. What is more, it appears that mopa mopa objects were one of the items that Natives brought from the highlands to transact with the Portuguese in the Amazon basin. In 1806, the Franciscan Xavier de Pas y Maldonado, complained that one of the reasons that Natives in the piedmont were so difficult to convert was because they could get on their own, from the Portuguese, items such as knives and hooks, which the missionaries usually offered prospect converts as a way of attracting them to the mission.⁷⁵ In the same document, a Native from the Amazon-Andes piedmont, denouncing abuses committed by Xavier de Pas y Maldonado, relates that indeed he had come to the Putumayo river to trade objects from Pasto.⁷⁶

los mismos indios que suelen peligrar en aquellas asperezas, ordeno y mando a Don Thomas Miguel de Santacruz encomendero de dichos pueblos, cele y no permila que por ningun acontecimiento internen los referidos indios en la expresada montaña, con apercibimiento de que sera privado de su encomienda y de que procedera a lo demas que haya lugar en caso de verificarse dicha informacion y saca de ropas." AGN, Impuestos varios, tomo 8, f. 230r

⁷⁴ See Chapter three, *Imagining Territory*.

⁷⁵ Actually, Natives also acquired guns and ammunition from the Portuguese. AGI, Quito 305, No. 3, f. 9v.

⁷⁶ "Que viniendo de el rio Putumayo con unas carguitas que havia cambiado con trastecitos que de Pasto havia introducido, luego de que llego el declarante a Sardinias y posada donde habitaba su mujer, paso a esta el P.F., quien como hubiese prevenido a los Indios, no compraran a ninguno de los que entraban cosa alguna...y como pensase que havian sido cambios en su curato, comenzó a maltratar de palabras al que declara y decirle hiva a informar al Señor Gobernador..." AGN, Coleccion Bernardo Caicedo, Misiones, doc. 3, f. 85-86.

The Amazon-Pasto route is particularly important to consider not only because it was one of the ways in which Pasto was connected to the world and therefore to foreign objects and motifs, but also because the dynamics at play in this route show what happened in the cracks of the colonial armature. In the Amazon-Andes piedmont the nature of the territory and the social organization of Native groups continually undermined the aspirations of the colonial project. As such, mopa mopa production sits at a point where the fissures of the colonial project meet with its transformational aesthetic aspirations.

Conclusion

Mopa mopa production is a testament to Native creativity in the advent of multiple and diverse aesthetic repertoires, and it is evidence of the specific imagistic solutions Indigenous people in the Americas came up with when confronted with types of images much different from their own. Yet it is also a testament of Native agency when faced with the uncanny entanglements of desires at play in the Early Modern world, where luxury, beauty, and slavery were all part of the economic logic of the colonial project. To exploit their “singular mine,” that is, to keep their freedom by producing objects that were relevant for colonizers, Natives had to stay alert and filter through the translucency of the resin each and any “worldly” aesthetic development they could get their hands on. Yet most of those aesthetic developments and their transmission were immersed in an economy fueled by slavery and sustained by oppression. This analysis shows that the early-modern global transmission of motifs cannot be taken lightly. It is an example of what Simon Gikandi describes as the unlikely entanglements that characterize early-modernity. In this period, the culture of luxury and taste was related in multiple ways to the

exploitation of colored bodies, and not just because such exploitation equipped certain sectors of the population with enough capital to acquire luxury goods.

This analysis also reveals the interesting position that the Pasto district held in the colonial period. From the perspective of colonial power distribution and its geopolitical concerns, it appears at the periphery of the empire. It never became a sizeable colonial setting, it did not have large economic activity, it was not a big port or mining center, and it was not the capital of a vast Native empire. Moreover, in period chronicles and documents, it is always described as hard to access, surrounded by tortuous trails in every direction.⁷⁷ Yet, from the perspective of trade networks through the Pacific coast and the Amazon basin that were in place since pre-Columbian times, it was clearly connected to the world.⁷⁸ Nothing crystallizes more Pasto's distinct position as a meeting point of different cultural orders like colonial mopa mopa production.

⁷⁷ See chapter 3 for an analysis of this descriptions.

⁷⁸ For discussions of pre-Hispanic and native colonial trade routes in the region see: Frank Salomon, "A North Andean Status Trader Complex under Inka Rule," *Ethnohistory* 34, no. 1 (1987): 63–77, <https://doi.org/10.2307/482266>; María Victoria Uribe, "Los Pasto y etnias relacionadas: arqueología y etnohistoria," in *Area septentrional andina norte: arqueología y etnohistoria* (Otavalo, Quito: Instituto Otavaleño de Antropología. Ediciones del Banco Central del Ecuador, 1995), 367–438; Marta Clemencia Herrera Ángel, *El conquistador conquistado: Awás, Cuayquer y Sindaguas en el Pacífico colombiano, siglos XVI-XVIII* (Bogotá: Universidad de los Andes, 2006), 70.

Epilogue

In 2015, the Victoria and Albert Museum in London was offered a colonial mopa mopa table-top cabinet as a gift. Initially, they were unsure whether the cabinet was worthy of entering the collection.¹ The museum staff members who received the gift could not identify the material with which the object's imagery was made, nor where it came from. In their eyes, the object was, as the museum website states, "quite unlike anything else in the V&A's collection."² Yet, this "mystery" object (an article on their website still refers to it as the "box of mysteries") was actually just like two other objects already in the collection: two gourds also decorated with mopa mopa that, like the cabinet, were produced in the seventeenth century. The gourds, however, resided in the collection cataloged as Asian.³ The museum's misidentification was double.

This is not the only misidentification that I encountered during my research. In 2017, at the Museo Civico Medievale in Bologna, I alerted the staff that a chest they were exhibiting as Mexican was, in fact, a mopa mopa object made in the Northern Andes. I have not grown accustomed to these misidentifications. On the contrary, the more I think about them, the more puzzled I become. After all, this is an artisanal tradition that has been alive for more than four hundred years. It is hard to imagine that a museum specialist in Latin America, or anywhere really, would be bemused, for instance, by Venetian glass.

¹ Personal communication with conservator Monica Katz (March 2019).

² "V&A · Box of Mysteries," Victoria and Albert Museum, accessed May 7, 2021, [https://www.vam.ac.uk/articles/box-of-mysteries.](https://www.vam.ac.uk/articles/box-of-mysteries)

³ Personal communication with conservator Monica Katz (March 2019).

Even in Pasto, the center of mopa mopa production since the seventeenth century, mopa mopa history is somewhat blurred. Almost everyone there knows about the practice and its deep historical roots, but there are very few material traces of that history. When I first visited in 2015, I saw two eighteen-century artifacts in very poor condition. There are some more in private collections, but only a handful. The truth is that most contemporary mopa mopa artisans have not seen the richness of colonial mopa mopa production. While they carry embodied practices and profound knowledge of working with the resin passed down from generation to generation, they are paradoxically disconnected from mopa mopa history.

When I started this project, I knew about the existence of thirteen colonial mopa mopa artifacts (basically, those that had appeared in publications). Although I was hoping I would find more objects as I pursued my research, I could not envision the depth of mopa mopa practice. As I close this dissertation, I am aware of approximately ninety objects. In contrast to when I started, I have no doubt there are more. As collectors and dealers are learning about mopa mopa, more keep showing up for sale.

Although clearly colonial mopa mopa artifacts have been deemed worthy of preserving due to their aesthetic and material qualities, they have also lost the connection to their history. But why and how does that happen? This question is difficult to untangle, but I can outline some of its contours. Part of the problem is that these objects do not conform to preconceived notions of Indigenous aesthetics. More than once I have been asked, both by art connoisseurs and non-specialists, whether I am sure the images were made by Indigenous artists. Another issue is that current scholarship is only starting to understand the degree to which the reaches of early modern aesthetic globalization affected the periphery of colonial empires. A third aspect is the stubborn

colonial legacy of devaluating Indigenous people as intellectual producers, a necessary strategy to justify the expropriation of Indigenous material wealth.

This dissertation reconnects mopa mopa artifacts with their context of production. But more than procuring information about these objects, its underlying motivation has been to understand and dismantle the effects of colonial legacies on our epistemic resources. To put it simply, we need to interrogate why we know and do not know certain things. It is my hope that this dissertation provides methodological tools and lays foundations for us to keep trying to understand Indigenous intellectual and artistic contributions. As historian Marcy Norton has articulated, the study of Indigenous technologies is a fertile way to circumvent the omission of Native creators that plagues colonial written records.⁴ The extant colonial mopa mopa corpus offers us that opportunity.

Mopa mopa has fascinating material properties and possible applications, and we still know little about its use in Native communities in the Amazonian basin.⁵ There is also much to learn concerning pigment and colorants. Already, technical analysis has revealed the use of mercury chloride as a white pigment in seventeenth century mopa mopa objects, a chemical that was first identified as white pigment in mopa mopa production.⁶ There are also mentions of

⁴ Marcy Norton, “Subaltern Technologies and Early Modernity in the Atlantic World,” *Colonial Latin American Review* 26, no. 1 (March 2017): 18–38.

⁵ Carlos Arturo Jaramillo Giraldo, *Murmullos del lenguaje uik: la práctica del mopa mopa: de lo recolector a lo sedentario* (Pasto, Colombia: Universidad del Nariño, 1986), 23.

⁶ Federica Pozzi, Elena Basso, and Monica Katz, “In Search of Humboldt’s Colors: Materials and Techniques of a 17th-Century Lacquered Gourd from Colombia,” *Heritage Science* 8, no. 1 (October 19, 2020): 101, <https://doi.org/10.1186/s40494-020-00449-1>; Lucia Burgio et al., “Identification, Characterisation and Mapping of Calomel as ‘Mercury White’, a Previously Undocumented Pigment from South America, and Its Use on a Barniz de Pasto

pigments or colorants being brought from the Amazon to Pasto for mopa mopa production, yet to be investigated.⁷ These new avenues to pursue of research about mopa mopa production will lead to a better understanding of the Amazonian-Andes nexus, and more broadly, will illustrate how material culture is particularly potent for attending to the integration of subaltern and elite knowledge in the Atlantic world. More importantly, these studies will help subvert the epistemic injustices that the colonial project has inflicted on Indigenous people.⁸

Cabinet at the Victoria and Albert Museum,” *Microchemical Journal* 143 (December 1, 2018): 220–27, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.microc.2018.08.010>.

⁷ Edouard François André, “America Equinoccial,” in *América pintoresca descripción de viajes al nuevo continente* (Barcelona: Montaner y Simon, 1884), 762.

⁸ Miranda Fricker, *Epistemic Injustice: Power and the Ethics of Knowing* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 1.

Bibliography

Archives Consulted

AGN Archivo General de la Nación, Bogotá

AHN Archivo Histórico de la Universidad de Nariño, Pasto

ACC Antiguo Archivo Central del Cauca, Universidad del Cauca, Popayán

AHNE Archivo Histórico Nacional del Ecuador, Quito

AGI Archivo General de Indias, Sevilla

ASB Archivio di Stato di Bologna, Bologna

Printed Sources

Acosta, José de. *Historia natural y moral de las indias: en que se tratan de las cosas notables del cielo, elementos, metales, plantas, y animales de ellas, y los ritos, y ceremonias, leyes y gobierno de los indios*. 2. ed. revisada. México: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1962.

Adorno, Rolena. *Guaman Poma: Writing and Resistance in Colonial Peru*. Austin: University of Texas Press, 2000.

Adorno, Rolena, ed. *Guaman Poma de Ayala: The Colonial Art of an Andean Author*. New York: Americas Society, 1992.

Adorno, Rolena., and Ivan. Boserup. *New Studies of the Autograph Manuscript of Felipe Guaman Poma de Ayala's Nueva Corónica y Buen Gobierno*. Copenhagen: Museum Tusulanum Press, 2003.

Adrian Finucane. *The Temptations of Trade: Britain, Spain and the Struggle for Empire*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2016.

Alcedo, Antonio de. *Diccionario geográfico-histórico de las Indias Occidentales ó América*. Vol. 4. Madrid: Imprenta de Benito Cano, 1786.

Amaral Lapa, José Roberto do. *A Bahia e a Carreira da India*. Vol. 338. Coleção Brasileira. São Paulo: Cia. Ed. Nacional, 1968.

Astrain, Antonio. *Historia de la Compañía de Jesús en la asistencia de España*. Vol. 4. 7 vols. Madrid: Administración del Razón y Fe, 1912.

- Atkinson, Niall. *The Noisy Renaissance: Sound, Architecture, and Florentine Urban Life*. University Park, Pennsylvania: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2016.
- Bernal Vélez, Alejandro. “La circulación de productos entre los Pastos en el siglo XVI.” *Revista Colombiana de Antropología*, no. N. 2 (2000): 125–52.
- Bhabha, Homi K. “Of Mimicry and Man: The Ambivalence of Colonial Discourse.” *October* 28, no. Discipleship: A Special Issue on Psychoanalysis (Spring 1984): 125–33.
- Bonialian, Mariano Ardash. *China en la América colonial: bienes, mercados, comercio y cultura del consumo desde México hasta Buenos Aires*. Buenos Aires: Editorial Biblos, 2014.
- Bowser, Brenda J, 1957-. *Drink, Power, and Society in the Andes*. Gainesville: University Press of Florida. <http://pi.lib.uchicago.edu/1001/cat/bib/7644132>.
- Bray, Tamara L. *The Archaeology of Wak'as: Explorations of the Sacred in the Pre-Columbian Andes*. Boulder: University Press of Colorado, 2015.
- Calero, Luis Fernando. *Chiefdoms under Siege: Spain's Rule and Native Adaptation in the Southern Colombian Andes, 1535-1700*. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1997.
- Campuzano Cifuentes, Marcela, 1964-. *La chicha, una bebida fermentada a través de la historia*. Bogotá: Instituto Colombiano de Antropología, 1994. <http://pi.lib.uchicago.edu/1001/cat/bib/1706626>.
- Cañizares-Esguerra, Jorge, and Benjamin Breen. “Hybrid Atlantics: Future Directions for the History of the Atlantic World.” *History Compass* 11, no. 8 (August 2013): 597–609.
- Carr, Dennis, Gauvin A. Bailey, Timothy Brook, Mitchell Coddling, Karina Corrigan, and Donna Pierce. *Made in the Americas: The New World Discovers Asia*. First edition. Boston, Mass.: MFA Publications, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, 2015.
- Carruthers, Mary J. *The Book of Memory: A Study of Memory in Medieval Culture*. Second edition. Vol. 70. Cambridge Studies in Medieval Literature. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2008.
- Cennini, Cennino. *Cennino Cennini's Il Libro Dell'arte: A New English Translation and Commentary with Italian Transcription*. Translated by Lara Broecke. London: Archetype Publications Ltd, 2015.
- Cicala, Mario. *Descripción Histórico-Física de La Provincia de Quito de La Compañía de Jesús*. Translated by Julián G. Bravo. Vol. 2. 2 vols. Biblioteca Ecuatoriana “Aurelio Espinosa

- Pólit.” Quito: Instituto Geográfico Militar, 2004.
- . *Descripción histórico-topográfica de la provincia de Quito de la Compañía de Jesus*. Quito: Biblioteca Ecuatoriana “Aurelio Espinosa Polit,” 1994.
- Cieza de León, Pedro de. *La crónica del Perú*. Madrid,: Calpe, 1922.
- . *Obras completas*. Vol. 1. 3 vols. Madrid: Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas, Instituto “Gonzalo Fernández de Oviedo,” 1984.
- Cipolletti, Maria Susana., ed. *Resistencia y adaptación nativas en las tierras bajas latinoamericanas*. Quito: Ediciones Abya-Yala, 1997.
- Classen, Constance. *Inca Cosmology and the Human Body*. Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1993.
- Cobo, Bernabé. *Historia Del Nuevo Mundo*. Vol. 1. 4 vols. Sevilla: Imp. de E. Rasco, 1890.
- Coe, Sophie D. *America’s First Cuisines*. 1st ed. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1994.
- Covarrubias Orozco, Sebastián de. *Tesoro de la lengua castellana, o española*. 2 vols. Madrid: Melchor Sanchez, 1674. <http://archive.org/details/tesorodelalengua00covauoft>.
- Crill, Rosemary. *Chintz: Indian Textiles for the West*. London: V & A Publications, 2008.
- Cummins, Tom. “The Madonna and the Horse: Becoming Colonial in New Spain and Peru.” Edited by Tom Cummins and Emily Good Umberger. *Phoebus: A Journal of Art History, Native Artists and Patrons in Colonial Latin America*, VII (1995): 52–83.
- . *Toast with the Inca: Andean Abstraction and Colonial Images on Quero Vessels*. History, Languages, and Cultures of the Spanish and Portuguese Worlds. The University of Michigan Press, 2002.
- de la Peña Begué, Remedios. “El uso de la coca entre los Incas.” *Revista española de antropología americana* 7, no. 1 (1972): 277–306.
- De Man, Paul. *Aesthetic Ideology*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996.
- Dean, Carolyn. *A Culture of Stone: Inka Perspectives on Rock*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2010.
- . “The Trouble with (The Term) Art.” *Art Journal* 65, no. 2 (July 1, 2006): 24. <https://doi.org/10.2307/20068464>.

- Descobar, Geronimo. “Memorial que da Fray Geronimo Descobar predicador de la orden de sant Agustín al real consejo de Yndias de lo que toca ala provincia de popayan (1582).” In *Relaciones y visitas a los Andes, S XVI*, edited by Hermes Tovar Pinzón, 1:387–427. Colección de historia de la Biblioteca Nacional. Bogotá: Colcultura: Instituto Colombiano de Cultura Hispánica, 1993.
- Dias, Camila Loureiro. “Jesuit Maps and Political Discourse: The Amazon River of Father Samuel Fritz.” *The Americas* 69, no. 1 (2012): 95–116.
<https://doi.org/10.1353/tam.2012.0052>.
- Eagleton, Terry. *The Ideology of the Aesthetic*. Cambridge, MA, USA: Basil Blackwell, 1990.
- Espinosa, Carlos. “Poder pastoral, acomodo y territorialidad en las cartas anuales jesuitas de Quito.” *Procesos*, no. 38 (2013): 9–31.
- Estupiñán Viteri, Tamara. *Diccionario Básico Del Comercio Colonial Quiteño*. Colección Fuentes Documentales, v. 1. Quito, Ecuador: Ediciones del Banco Central del Ecuador, 1997.
- Fernández de Piedrahita, Lucas. *Noticia Historial de Las Conquistas Del Nuevo Reino de Granada*. 2 vols. Bogotá: Editorial Kelly, 1973.
- Fernández-Salvador, Carmen. *Encuentros y Desencuentros Con La Frontera Imperial : La Iglesia de La Compañía de Jesús de Quito y La Misión En El Amazonas (Siglo XVII)*. Frankfurt am Main: Vervuert, 2018.
- Ferrandis, Vicent. “FILADIS.” Accessed May 15, 2021.
<http://filadis.blogspot.com/search?q=sarasa>.
- Fricker, Miranda. *Epistemic Injustice: Power and the Ethics of Knowing*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007.
- Fontaine, Laurent. “El mambe frente al dinero entre los Yucuna del Amazonas.” *Revista Colombiana de antropología* 39 (2003): 173–201.
- Friede, Juan. *Los andakí, 1538-1947; historia de la aculturación de una tribu selvática*. México: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1953.
- Geurts, Kathryn Linn. *Culture and the Senses: Bodily Ways of Knowing in an African Community*. Vol. 3. Ethnographic Studies in Subjectivity. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002.
- Gikandi, Simon. *Slavery and the Culture of Taste Simon Gikandi*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2011.

- Gómez Aldana, Diego Fernando. “Diccionario Muysca-Español,” March 29, 2019. muysca.cubun.org/Categoría:Diccionario.
- Gómez González, Sebastián. *Frontera selvática: españoles, portugueses y su disputa por el noroccidente amazónico, siglo XVIII*. Bogotá: Instituto Colombiano de Antropología e Historia, 2014.
- . “‘El espíritu de contrabando que reina por estas partes’. Comerciantes portugueses, misioneros y comercio ilícito en el piedemonte andino-amazónico, 1730-1790.” *Tempo* 23, no. 3 (December 2017): 547–66. <https://doi.org/10.1590/tem-1980-542x2017v230308>.
- Guevara, Felipe de. *Comentarios de la pintura*. Madrid: Hijos de Ibarra y compañía, 1788.
- Gumilla, Joseph. *El Orinoco Ilustrado, y Defendido, Historia Natural, Civil, y Geographica de Este Gran Rio, y de Sus Caudalosas Vertientes*. Vol. 1. 2 vols. Madrid: M. Fernández, 1745.
- Henman, Anthony. *Mama Coca*. 4a ed. La Paz, Bolivia: Hisbol/VBD, 1992.
- Herrera Ángel, Marta Clemencia. *El conquistador conquistado: Awás, Cuayquer y Sindaguas en el Pacífico colombiano, siglos XVI-XVIII*. Bogotá: Universidad de los Andes, 2006.
- Hladik, Annette, and Olga F. Linares, eds. *Tropical Forests, People and Food: Biocultural Interactions and Applications to Development*. Man and the Biosphere Series. Paris: UNESCO; Parthenon Pub. Group, 1993.
- Hortegón, Diego. *La Gobernación de Los Quijos, 1559-1621*. Edited by Cristóbal Landázuri. Monumenta Amazónica 1. Iquitos: MARKA, Instituto de Historia y Antropología Andina, 1989.
- Inter-American Indian Institute. *La Coca -- tradición, rito, identidad*. México: Instituto Indigenista Interamericano, 1989.
- Jacanamijoy, Juan B. *Diccionario Bilingüe: Camëntšá: Español, Español: Camëntšá*, 2018. <https://www.sil.org/resources/archives/73123>.
- Jaramillo Giraldo, Carlos Arturo. *Murmullos del lenguaje uik: la práctica del mopa mopa: de lo recolector a lo sedentario*. Pasto, Colombia: Universidad del Nariño, 1986.
- Jennings, Justin. “La Chichera y El Patron: Chicha and the Energetics of Feasting in the Prehistoric Andes.” In *Foundations of Power in the Prehispanic Andes*, edited by Kevin J Vaughn, no. 14:241–59. Archeological Papers of the American Anthropological Association. Arlington, Va: American Anthropological Association, 2005.

- Jiménez de la Espada, Marcos, ed. *Relaciones geográficas de Indias. Perú*. Vol. 3. 4 v. Madrid: Tip. de M. G. Hernández, 1897.
- Katz, Monica. “Colonial Spanish American Lacquered Objects in the Collection at the Hispanic Society of America.” In *Wooden Artifacts Group Postprints 2016 AIC*, 37–47. Washington, D.C.: The American Institute for Conservation of Historic & Artistic Works, 2016.
- Kawamura, Yayoi. “Encuentro multicultural en el arte de barniz de Pasto o la laca del Virreinato del Perú.” *Historia y sociedad*, no. Número 35 (July 1, 2018): 87–112. <https://doi.org/10.15446/hys.n35.69838>.
- La Condamine, Charles-Marie de. *Relación Abreviada de Un Viaje Hecho Por El Interior de La América Meridional Desde La Costa Del Mar Del Sur Hasta Las Costas Del Brasil Yde La Guayana, Siguiendo El Curso Del Río de Las Amazonas, Por m. de La Condamine, Con Un Mapa Del Marañón, o Río de l.* Madrid: Calpe, 1921.
- Levinsohn, Stephen H. *The Inga Language*. The Hague: Mouton, 1976.
- López Cortés, Oscar Andrés. “Narrativas académicas historia oral en el pueblo de los Pastos.” *Antipoda revista de antropología y arqueología*, no. 25 (2016): 77–98.
- López Medel, Tomás. *Visita de la gobernación de Popayán: libro de tributos (1558-1559)*. Edited by Berta Ares Queija. Madrid: Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas, Centro de Estudios Históricos, Departamento de Historia de América, 1989.
- López Pérez, Maria de Pilar. “Quito, entre lo prehispánico y lo colonial: el arte del barniz de Pasto.” In *Arte quiteño más allá de Quito*, edited by Alfonso Ortíz Crespo, Vol. 27. Quito: FONSAL, 2010.
- Lucia Burgio, Dana Melchar, Stanislav Strekopytov, David A. Peggie, and Brett L. Clark. “Identification, Characterisation and Mapping of Calomel as ‘Mercury White’, a Previously Undocumented Pigment from South America, and Its Use on a Barniz de Pasto Cabinet at the Victoria and Albert Museum.” *Microchemical Journal* 143 (December 2018): 220–27.
- Magnin, Juan. *Breve descripción de la Provincia de Quito y de sus Misiones de Sucumbios y de Maynas, 1740*. Quito: Sociedad Ecuatoriana de Investigaciones Historicas y Geograficas, 1989.
- Martin, Richard T. “The Role of Coca in the History, Religion, and Medicine of South American Indians.” *Economic Botany* 24, no. 4 (1970): 422–38.

- Marzahl, Peter. "Creoles and Government: The Cabildo of Popayán." *The Hispanic American Historical Review* 54, no. 4 (1974): 636–56. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2512893>.
- Mauss, Marcel. "Techniques of the Body." Translated by Ben Brewster. *Journal de Psychologie Normal et Pathologique* Année XXXII (1935): 271–93.
- Méchoulan, Eric. "Intermediality: An Introduction to the Arts of Transmission." Translated by Angela Carr. *SubStance* 44, no. 3 (2015): 3–18.
- Michaud, Cécile Anne. "Modelos tardomedievales, herencia prehispánica: hacia una intención estilística en la visualidad de Guaman Poma de Ayala." *Histórica* 42, no. 2 (March 27, 2019): 8–41. <https://doi.org/10.18800/historica.201802.001>.
- Montesinos, Fernando. "Ophir de España: Memorias Historiales Políticas Del Pirv." Madrid, 1644. University of Seville.
- Mundy, Barbara E. *The Mapping of New Spain: Indigenous Cartography and the Maps of the Relaciones Geográficas*. Chicago; London: The University of Chicago Press, 2000.
- Murra, John V., Nathan Wachtel, and Jacques Revel, eds. *Anthropological History of Andean Politics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986.
- "Nasa Yuwe Talking Dictionary." Accessed May 21, 2021. <http://talkingdictionary.swarthmore.edu/paez/>.
- Newman, Richard, Emily Kaplan, and Michele Derrick. "Mopa Mopa: Scientific Analysis and History of an Unusual South American Resin Used by the Inka and Artisans in Pasto, Colombia." *Journal of the American Institute for Conservation* 54, no. 3 (August 2015): 123–48. <https://doi.org/10.1179/1945233015Y.0000000005>.
- Nieremberg, Juan Eusebio. *Varones Ilustres de La Compania de Jesus*. 2nd ed. Vol. 4. 9 vols. Bilbao: Administracion del "Mensajero del corazon de Jesus," 1887.
- Nieto Jiménez, Lidio, and Manuel Alvar Ezquerro. *Nuevo tesoro lexicográfico del español (s. XIV-1726)*. Vol. 8. 11 vols. Madrid: Arco Libros, 2007.
- Norton, Marcy. "Subaltern Technologies and Early Modernity in the Atlantic World." *Colonial Latin American Review* 26, no. 1 (March 2017): 18–38.
- O'Brien, Colleen Alena. "Grammatical Description of Kamsá, a Language Isolate of Colombia." The University of Hawai'i at Mānoa, 2018. <http://ling.hawaii.edu/wp-content/uploads/ColleenOBrienFinal.pdf>.
- Oviedo Arévalo, Ricardo, ed. *Relaciones y visitas de tasación en las tierras altas del*

- departamento de Nariño, durante el siglo XVI: visitas del bachiller Tomás López y del licenciado García de Valverde*. San Juan de Pasto: Universidad de Nariño, 2005.
- Pacheco, Francisco. *Arte de la pintura*. 2d ed. Vol. 1. 2 vols. Madrid, 1866.
- Padrón, Ricardo. *The Spacious Word: Cartography, Literature, and Empire in Early Modern Spain*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004.
- Palacios Preciado, Jorge. *La trata de negros por Cartagena de Indias*. Tunja: Universidad Pedagógica y Tecnológica de Colombia, 1973.
- Parshall, Peter. "Imago Contrafacta: Images and Facts in the Northern Renaissance." *Art History* 16, no. 4 (December 1993): 554.
- Pérez de Ribas, Andrés. *Triunfos de nuestra santa fe entre gentes las mas barbaras y fieras del nuevo orbe*. Vol. 2. 3 vols. Mexico: Layac, 1944.
- Pierce, Donna, ed. *The Arts of South America, 1492-1850*. Series: Symposium Series (Frederick and Jan Mayer Center for Pre-Columbian and Spanish Colonial Art). Denver: Denver Art Museum, 2010.
- Pierce, Donna, and Ronald Otsuka, eds. *Asia & Spanish America: Trans-Pacific Artistic and Cultural Exchange, 1500-1850*. Mayer Center for Pre-Columbian and Spanish Colonial Art at the Denver Art Museum. Denver: Denver Art Museum, 2006.
- Pillsbury, Joanne. "Reading Art without Writing: Interpreting Chimú Architectural Sculpture." *Studies in the History of Art* 74 (2009): 72–89.
- Piñas Rubio, Francisco, ed. *Cartas Annuas de la compañía de Jesús en la Audiencia de Quito de 1587 a 1660*. Quito: Compañía de Jesús, 2008.
- Piqueras Céspedes, Ricardo. "Los perros de la guerra o el 'canibalismo canino' en la conquista." *Boletín americanista*, no. 56 (2006): 189–202.
- Plowman, Timothy. "The Ethnobotany of Coca (*Erythroxylum* Spp., Erythroxylaceae)." *Advances in Economic Botany* 1 (1984): 62–111.
- Ponce Leiva, Pilar, ed. *Relaciones histórico-geográficas de la Audiencia de Quito: s. XVI-XIX*. Vol. 2. 2 vols. Quito: Marka, instituto de historia y antropología andina, 1994.
- Pozzi, Federica, Elena Basso, and Monica Katz. "In Search of Humboldt's Colors: Materials and Techniques of a 17th-Century Lacquered Gourd from Colombia." *Heritage Science* 8, no. 1 (October 19, 2020): 101. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s40494-020-00449-1>.

- Quesada Pacheco, Miguel Ángel. *El vocabulario mosco de 1612 (Transcripción manuscrito 2923 Biblioteca Palacio Real de Madrid)*. Vol. X. En estudios de lingüística Chibcha. Programa de investigación del departamento de lingüística de la Universidad de Costa Rica. San José, Costa Rica: Universidad de Costa Rica, 1991.
http://muysca.cubun.org/Manuscrito_2923_BPRM.
- Ramírez de Jara, María Clemencia. *Frontera fluida entre Andes, piedemonte y selva: el caso del valle de Sibundoy, siglos XVI-XVIII*. 1a ed. Colección Cuadernos de historia colonial. Santafé de Bogotá: Instituto Colombiano de Cultura Hispánica, 1996.
- Rappaport, Joanne. “Cultura material a lo largo de la frontera septentrional inca: los pastos y sus testamentos.” *Revista de Antropología y Arqueología*, 6, no. 2 (1990): 11–25.
- . *Cumbe Reborn: An Andean Ethnography of History*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994.
- Rappaport, Joanne, and Tom Cummins. *Beyond the Lettered City: Indigenous Literacies in the Andes*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2012.
- Reichel-Dolmatoff, Gerardo. *Los Kogi: Una Tribu de La Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta, Colombia*. 2a edición. Vol. 1. 2 vols. Bogotá: Procultura, 1985.
- Rey Fajardo, José del, Alberto Gutiérrez, and Archivo Histórico Javeriano Juan Manuel Pacheco, S.J, eds. *Cartas Anuas de La Provincia Del Nuevo Reino de Granada: Años 1604 a 1621*. Primera edición. Colección Archivo Histórico Javeriano. Bogotá, D.C: Archivo Histórico Javeriano Juan Manuel Pacheco, S.J, 2015.
- Rishel, Joseph J., and Suzanne L. Stratton, eds. *The Arts in Latin America, 1492-1820*. 1st ed. New Haven, Conn: Yale University Press, 2006.
- Rodríguez, Manuel. *El Descubrimiento Del Marañón*. Madrid: Alianza Editorial, 1990.
- Rowe, Ann Pollard, and Lynn Meisch, eds. *Costume and History in Highland Ecuador*. Austin: University of Texas Pres, 2011.
- Salomon, Frank. “A North Andean Status Trader Complex under Inka Rule.” *Ethnohistory* 34, no. 1 (1987): 63–77. <https://doi.org/10.2307/482266>.
- Salomon, Frank, Jorge Urioste, and Francisco de Avila. *The Huarochirí Manuscript a Testament of Ancient and Colonial Andean Religion*. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1991.
- Santistevan, Miguel de. *Mil Leguas Por América: De Lima a Caracas 1740-1741: Diario de*

- Don Miguel de Santisteban*. Colección Bibliográfica (Bogotá, Colombia). Santafé de Bogotá, D.C., Colombia: Banco de la República, 1992.
- Sañudo, José Rafael. *Apuntes Sobre La Historia de Pasto*. Vol. 2. 3 vols. Pasto, Colombia: Imprenta la Nariñesa, 1939.
- Scott, Heidi V. *Contested Territory: Mapping Peru in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries*. Notre Dame, Ind: University of Notre Dame Press, 2009.
- Seijas, Tatiana. “Inns, Mules, and Hardtack for the Voyage: The Local Economy of the Manila Galleon in Mexico.” *Colonial Latin American Review* 25, no. 1 (January 2, 2016): 56–76. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10609164.2016.1180787>.
- Serra, Juan de Santa Gertrudis. *Maravillas de la naturaleza*. 2 vols. Bogotá: Empresa Nacional de Publicaciones, 1956.
- Steward, Julian H., ed. *Handbook of South American Indians*. Vol. 4. 7 vols. New York: Cooper Square Publishers, 1963.
- Taussig, Michael T. *Shamanism, Colonialism, and the Wild Man: A Study in Terror and Healing*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987.
- Torres de Mendoza, Luis, ed. Colección de Documentos Inéditos Relativos al Descubrimiento, Conquista y Colonización de las Posesiones Españolas en América y Oceanía, Sacados, en su Mayor Parte del Real Archivo de Indias. Madrid: Imprenta Frias y Compañía, 1867.
- Tovar Pinzón, Hermes, ed. *Relaciones y Visitas a Los Andes, S XVI*. Vol. 1–4. Colección de Historia de La Biblioteca Nacional. Santafé de Bogotá, Colombia: Colcultura: Instituto Colombiano de Cultura Hispánica, 1993.
- Trever, Lisa, ed. *El arte antes de la historia: para una historia del arte andino antiguo*. Primera edición. Colección Estudios Andinos. Lima, Perú: Pontificia Universidad Católica del Perú, Fondo Editorial, 2020.
- . “Idols, Mountains, and Metaphysics in Guaman Poma’s Pictures of Huacas.” *RES: Anthropology and Aesthetics*, no. 59/60 (April 1, 2011): 39–59.
- Ulloa, Antonio de Juan. *Relacion historica del viage a la America Meridional*. Madrid: Por A. Marin, 1748.
- Uribe, María Victoria. “Los Pasto y etnias relacionadas: arqueología y etnohistoria.” In *Area septentrional andina norte: arqueología y etnohistoria*, 367–438. Otavalo, Quito: Instituto Otavaleño de Antropología. Ediciones del Banco Central del Ecuador, 1995.

- . “Pastos y Protopastos: La Red Regional de Intercambio de Productos y Materias Primas de Los Siglos X a XVI D.C. (1986).” *Maguaré*, no. 3 (1986): 36–46.
- Uribe, María Victoria, and José Echavarría, eds. *Area septentrional andina norte: arqueología y etnohistoria*. Otavalo, Quito: Instituto Otavaleño de Antropología. Ediciones del Banco Central del Ecuador, 1995.
- Uribe, María Victoria, and Roberto Lleras. “Excavaciones En Los Cementerios Protopasto y Miraflores, Nariño.” *Revista Colombiana de Antropología* XXIV (March 1982): 335–80.
- Uribe, Simón. *Frontier Road: Power, History, and the Everyday State in the Colombian Amazon*. Hoboken, NJ: Wiley/ Blackwell, 2017.
- Uscategui, Nestor. “The Present Distribution of Narcotics and Stimulants Amongst the Indian Tribes of Colombia.” *Botanical Museum Leaflets, Harvard University* 18, no. 6 (1959): 273–304.
- Useche Losada, Mariano, ed. *Caminos reales de Colombia*. Santafé de Bogotá: Fondo FEN Colombia, 1995.
- Victoria and Albert Museum. “V&A · Box of Mysteries.” Accessed May 7, 2021.
<https://www.vam.ac.uk/articles/box-of-mysteries>.
- Velasco, Juan de. *Historia del reino de Quito en la America Meridional*. 3 vols. Quito: Impr. del Gobierno, 1842.
- West, Robert C. (Robert Cooper). *Colonial Placer Mining in Colombia*. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1952.