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The Print Sources of New Mexican Colonial Hide Paintings

A NUMBER OF PAINTINGS of religious themes were done on animal hides in New Mexico during the Colonial era. Recent scholarship has uncovered some remarkable information about these works. What follows is a summary of the discoveries made to date and a discussion of the relationship between some hide paintings and the prints which inspired them.

Information about the hide paintings of Colonial New Mexico has come from several sources, both contemporary and modern. The few clues as to the identities of the hide painters and the patrons have come from the documents of the Spanish Archives of New Mexico, the Archives of the Archdiocese of Santa Fe, and the Land Records of New Mexico. Included in these archives are wills and inventories listing ownership of the paintings, descriptions of their subjects, and possession of the tools of the trade. The most useful discussion of the hides is the inventory compiled in 1776 by Fray Francisco Atanasio Domínguez.¹ The Franciscan *visitador* toured the mission churches of the Custody of the Conversion of St. Paul of the Province of the Holy Gospel, noting, among other things, the type and disposition of the sacred art found within. This and other inventories provide informa-

1. Francisco Atanasio Domínguez, *The Missions of New Mexico, 1776*, translated and edited by Eleanor B. Adams and Fray Angélico Chávez, Albuquerque, University of New Mexico Press, 1956.

tion to the researcher attempting to discern provenance, contemporary usage, and favorite devotions represented in the hides.

More recent investigation includes the work of E. Boyd, who attempted to identify the hands of the different hide painters in her 1974 book, *Popular Arts of Spanish New Mexico*.² An important contribution of this work is the list of all hides known to exist at that time and their locations. Donna Pierce has recently completed a study of the hides, focusing on the references to painters and patrons in the archives mentioned above.³ Thomas J. Steele, sr, has also found documents in Inquisition records referring to a possible hide painter.⁴ The author of the present article has taken a different approach, looking for European and American sources for the images painted onto the hides.⁵

As decoration for the mission churches of New Mexico, hide paintings were part of a large repertoire of sacred images that included paintings, prints, and sculpture from Spain and New Spain, and locally produced images in the round, relief panels, and altarscreens. Documentary evidence suggests that painting on animal skins began within forty years of the initial settlement of 1598.⁶ Unfortunately many, if not all, of the earliest hides were destroyed in the Pueblo Indian Revolt of 1680-1692. None of the remaining hide paintings are thought to predate the resettlement of the late seventeenth century,⁷ meaning that most of the hides found today in churches, museums, and private collections were painted sometime between 1693 and the

2. E. Boyd, *Popular Arts of Spanish New Mexico*, Santa Fe, Museum of New Mexico Press, 1974.

3. Donna Pierce, "The Hide Painting Tradition in New Mexico and its European and Mexican Sources," in *The Segesser Hides: An Anthology*, Santa Fe, Palace of the Governors, in press.

4. Thomas J. Steele, sr, "Francisco Xavier Romero: A Hitherto-Unknown Santero," in *The Segesser Hides: An Anthology*, Santa Fe, Palace of the Governors, in press.

5. This information, along with a summary of the research concerning hide paintings to date, can be found in Kelly Donahue-Wallace, "An Odyssey of Images: The Flemish, Spanish, and New Spanish Print Sources of New Mexican Colonial Hide Paintings," M.A. Thesis, University of New Mexico, 1994.

6. Pierce, op. cit., pp. 9-13, discusses documents referring to the painting of hides between 1637 and 1661.

7. Ibidem, p. 14.

end of the eighteenth century when the *santero* tradition began to dominate New Mexican painting.⁸ The only hides which may have been painted after 1800 were the work of one *santero* who will be discussed below.

The artists of New Mexico chose animal hides for their paintings for several reasons. Painting on prepared leather was a well-established tradition in Spain and the New World.⁹ Deer, elk, antelope, and buffalo skins were plentiful while canvas was not. Skins were durable, making them attractive to the Franciscan missionaries who may have used the hide paintings as portable tools of instruction.¹⁰ Most of the pigments were absorbed by the skin and so the hides would have suffered no ill effects from being rolled for transportation to outlying *visitas*.

The durability of the paintings was due to the technique employed by the artists. The hides, which were acquired in trade from Plains Indians or hunted locally, were scraped, cured and stretched before the application of the pigment. In some cases, the process of preparation of the skin left faint striations which can still be seen today. Once in the artist's studio, a preliminary sketch was made on the hide with carbon. A seventeenth-century document states that Indian hide painters could be found covered in carbon, suggesting that that material was used in the preliminary stages of the painting process.¹¹ The instrument used for the drawing is unknown but may have been a scorched stylus of some sort. The sketch consisted only of outlines without interior modelling. This drawing is still visible in many of the paintings. Local and imported vegetable and mineral pigments¹² were likely applied with

8. For information on the *santero* tradition see Boyd, op. cit., pp. 145-169 and 327-439. See also Thomas J. Steele, sr, *Santos and Saints: The Religious Folk Art of Hispanic New Mexico*, revised edition, Santa Fe, Ancient City Press, 1994; William Wroth, *Christian Images of Hispanic New Mexico*, Colorado Springs, Colorado Springs Fine Arts Center, 1982, and Larry Frank, *New Kingdom of the Saints: Religious Art of New Mexico, 1780-1907*, Santa Fe, Red Crane Books, 1992.

9. See Pierce, op. cit., pp. 2-4, and Juan Ainaud, "Miniatura, grabado y encuadernación," in *Ars hispaniæ: historia universal de arte hispánico*, Madrid, Plus Ultra, 1962, vol. 18, pp. 332-334.

10. No documentary evidence has yet been found which supports the theory that missionaries carried the hide paintings from church to church during the early years of evangelization. The idea was extrapolated from the use of *sargas*, or unframed canvases, by the friars of central Mexico. See Pierce, op. cit., p. 6.

11. Ibidem, p. 10.

12. Boyd, op. cit., p. 118, discusses the use of imported indigo and Prussian blue and of

brushes, though the staining effect of the pigments on the hide obscures any brushstrokes. Once the painting was completed, it may have been placed within a wooden frame, though none of the original frames survive.

From church inventories and private wills we learn that hides were acceptable vehicles for sacred images. Hide paintings were hung throughout the nave and sanctuary of the churches.¹³ Hides were no more or less prevalent in predominantly Indian churches than they were in Spanish communities. The Domínguez inventory reveals that some hides were commissioned by devout parishioners and friars who used their own funds to decorate the interiors of their churches.¹⁴ Hides were also found in domestic shrines as part of personal devotional collections which included prints, sculptures, and paintings on canvas.¹⁵

The themes represented by the hide painters refer to devotions of the Franciscan Order and advocations of Christ and the Virgin popular in Spain and New Spain. Paintings of the Virgin far outnumber all others, with the Crucified Christ a distant second. Many of the hide paintings were representations of miraculous images from Spain and New Spain, such as Our Lady of Guadalupe and Our Lady of Solitude. Following these in number were the standardized images of saints of the Franciscan Order, such as St. Anthony of Padua and St. Francis of Assisi. Paintings with narrative development were infrequent.

In addition to holy themes, two types of secular hides exist. The first, and most abundant, are paintings of a purely decorative nature. These ornamental pieces were used to cover the walls and ceilings of churches and homes.¹⁶ The second category of secular hide paintings consists of only two examples. These are the two battle scenes known as *Segesser I* and *Segesser*

locally produced vegetable dyes. In a personal conversation, Bettina Raphael, former director of conservation at the Museum of International Folk Art in Santa Fe, New Mexico, mentioned the use of an iron-based pigment.

13. See Domínguez, *op. cit.*, and *Spanish Archives of New Mexico*, Santa Fe, Museum of New Mexico, 1987, archives nos. 1360 and 1993.

14. For references to donated hide paintings, see Domínguez, *op. cit.*, pp. 93, 121, 133, and 191.

15. Richard E. Ahlborn, "The Will of a New Mexico Woman in 1762," *New Mexico Historical Review*, vol. 65, no. 3, July, 1990, p. 342.

16. Pierce, *op. cit.*, pp. 9-12, and *Spanish Archives of New Mexico, Series I General Records*

II.¹⁷ The first represents an unknown event and the second chronicles the events surrounding the Villasur expedition of 1720. There is no evidence of other types of secular hide paintings, such as portraits, produced in New Mexico during the Colonial period.

The hides were not signed, but some clues have recently been uncovered concerning the identities of a few of the painters. Seventeenth-century documents found by Donna Pierce refer to Indians painting hides.¹⁸ According to Inquisition records of 1637-1638, Governor Luis de Rosas ran a sweat shop of about thirty Indians painting hides. Land records from 1660 claim that Governor López de Mendizábal employed indigenous hide painters as well. Two inventories from 1715-1716 and 1728, discovered by Thomas J. Steele, sr, seem to suggest that a *mestizo* from Mexico City, Francisco Xavier Romero, painted hides in addition to making shoes and serving as the surgeon for the town of Santa Cruz de la Cañada.¹⁹ The 1763 will of hide dealer Manuel García Parijas, lists among the debtors Fray Andrés García,²⁰ who was known for his painted wood *retablos* and *bultos*, perhaps indicating that the missionary was also a hide painter.

The style of the works of these anonymous artists varies widely from naturalism to crude stylization. In general, the artists of this group consciously sought to emulate the dominant styles of larger artistic centers in Europe and America. Through formal or informal training received in New Spain or New Mexico, the painters learned the application, if not the principle, of linear perspective; human anatomy and proportion; strength of draftsmanship; color and modelling to create the illusion of volume; design and decorative motives, and iconography. However, while New Spain enjoyed the ebullient Baroque of Miguel Cabrera, New Mexican artists painted more somber forms reminiscent of the quiet spiritualism and power of the seventeenth-century tenebrist Baroque painters of Spain and New Spain. Compositions were simple and uncluttered in marked contrast to the direction of

and the Records of the Court of Private Land Claims, microfilm edition, Santa Fe, State Records Center and Archives, 1987, roll 2, frames 964-967.

17. See Gottfried Hotz, *The Segesser Hide Paintings: Masterpieces Depicting Spanish Colonial New Mexico*, Santa Fe, Museum of New Mexico Press, 1991, and *The Segesser Hides: An Anthology*, Santa Fe, n.e., in press.

18. Pierce, op. cit., p. 10.

19. Steele, op. cit., p. 4.

20. *Spanish Archives of New Mexico*, roll 2, frames 964-967.



Figure 1. Wavy Hem Painter, *Christ Washing the Feet of the Disciples*, 18th century. Millicent Rogers Museum, Taos, New Mexico. Photograph courtesy of the Center for Southwest Research, Zimmerman Library, University of New Mexico, and the Millicent Rogers Museum.

Mexican Baroque painting in the eighteenth century. However, New Mexican palettes did reflect some of the luminosity of eighteenth-century vice-regal painting in New Spain, including a similar predilection for reds and blues.

The work of the most skilled painter, whom I have named the Wavy Hem Painter, is characterized by an exaggerated treatment of the curves of hemlines (figure 1).²¹ He painted long, elegant figures with proportions typical of the persistent Mannerist aesthetic in Mexican painting. Another commonality among the paintings by this artist are the strongly drawn and softly modelled facial features. The inclusion of details, like the wavy hems, which did not appear to such extravagant lengths in the print sources (see below), suggests an artist experienced enough to have developed a style of his own.

21. The works of this painter were previously believed to be the work of an artist known as Franciscan F., so named by E. Boyd, op. cit., pp. 118-122, because one of his paintings included that letter. Subsequent research has discovered that the "F" was copied from the print source of the painting and was not a signature.

Figure 2. Mountain-Tree Painter,
St. Dominic of Guzmán, 18th century.
Taylor Museum. Courtesy of
the Taylor Museum of the Colorado
Springs Fine Arts Center.



He was the most daring of the hide painters, frequently choosing difficult compositions with multiple figures, and was clearly the most skilled at rendering figures in space. It stands to reason that either the Wavy Hem Painter was trained elsewhere in New Spain or he was much better self-taught than his contemporaries.

Other painters identified by their unique characteristics are the Mountain-Tree Painter, the Dashed Sky Painter, and the *santero* Molleno. The work of the Mountain-Tree Painter is characterized by the inclusion of small mountains covered with oddly placed trees with rounded leaves (figure 2). This artist was not as skilled as the Wavy Hem Painter and clearly was troubled by the representation of anatomy and the placement of figures in space. His contemporary, the Dashed Sky Painter, negated space by placing his figures in front of backgrounds made of short, dashed lines (figure 3). This type of sky may have come from Mexican engravings that placed the figures before backgrounds of thin parallel lines (figure 14, for example). An exception to the general characteristics described above are the four hide paintings which have been attributed on the basis of the highly stylized figures and two-dimensional space to a *santero* known only by the name Molleno, who was active between 1812 and 1845. This artist is believed by Boyd and Pierce to be one of the last practitioners of the technique and his work belongs



Figure 3. Dashed Sky Painter, *St. Joseph and the Christ Child*, 18th century. Fred Harvery Collection of the International Folk Art Foundation, at the Museum of International Folk Art.



Figure 4. Wavy Hem Painter, *Infant Savior Standing on the Serpent with the Globe*, 18th century. Collection of the Spanish Colonial Arts Society, Inc., at the Museum of International Folk Art.

more properly to the *santero* tradition of the late eighteenth, nineteenth, and twentieth centuries.²²

Aspiring hide painters probably had few “masters” with whom to study. The exigencies of daily living made a life dedicated solely to art impractical. Most known artists had other careers, such as Bernardo Miera y Pacheco, who was a captain in the army, Fray Andrés García, the missionary, or Francisco Xavier Romero, mentioned earlier, who worked as a shoemaker and town surgeon. To learn the standardized, European forms demanded by patrons, the New Mexican artists had to rely almost entirely on the study of printed images and a few imported paintings for artistic inspiration, and formal and thematic instruction. Both knowledge of contemporary—or nearly contemporary—stylistic developments and of accepted European norms of representation for sacred subjects were received from the information transmitted by prints imported from Europe and New Spain. The prints available to the hide painters of New Mexico were supplemented by various texts intended to aid artists in the correct depiction of religious themes. The published decrees of the various Provincial Councils celebrated in New Spain were found in the Franciscan library at Santo Domingo Pueblo.²³ Also found at the library were the published decrees of the Council of Trent.

The print sources used by the New Mexican hide painters came from Europe and New Spain. It is impossible to tell how many prints arrived in the far-northern province. Prints appear in church inventories as well as private wills. For example, two lists made of the belongings of Francisco Xavier Romero, when he appeared in court in 1715-1716 and 1728, counted forty prints and sixty-seven prints respectively.²⁴ Prints, in the form of loose images and book illustrations arrived in New Mexican territories via official supply caravans and in personal belongings.

The most complex compositions of those reproduced onto hide came from prints of Flemish origin. The hide painting of *The Infant Savior Standing on the Serpent with the Globe* by the Wavy Hem Painter (figure 4) was

22. Boyd, op. cit., p. 127, and Pierce, op. cit., pp. 17-18.

23. Domínguez, op. cit., p. 223, entry no. 37, and p. 226, entry no. 98. For information on the decrees of the Provincial Councils see Mariano Galván Rivera, *Concilio III provincial mexicano, 1585*, Barcelona, Imprenta de Manuel Miró y d. Marsa, 1870, and Francisco Antonio Lorenzana, ed., *Concilios provinciales*, Mexico, Imprenta de Superior Gobierno de Br. Joseph Antonio de Hoyal, 1769.

24. Steele, op. cit., pp. 5 and 7.



Figure 5. Pieter de Jode II, *Infant Savior Standing on the Serpent with the Globe*, 1661. British Museum. Courtesy of the British Museum.

inspired by a 1661 engraving by Pieter de Jode II (figure 5) of a design by the Flemish Baroque painter Anthony van Dyck. This hide painting, in the collection of the Spanish Colonial Arts Society Inc., and housed in the Museum of International Folk Art in Santa Fe, depicts the blessing Christ Child holding the cross that surmounts a globe. Behind the figure is a great billowing cloth. Above, heavy clouds roil in a sky cut by shafts of light. To His left, a vine climbs a wall. Though it has largely been cut off, there is a small part of the snake visible in front of the globe. One obvious difference between the engraving and the painting are the diagonal bands of color at the top of the hide. The painter transformed the delicate shafts of light found in the print into these heavy bands. This appears to have been or become a convention in New Mexico for representing sunlight. Another change to the composition is the wall. Instead of a natural grotto, the direct access to the underworld, the hide painter has built a man-made wall out of regularly placed masonry.

The image of the Christ Child standing on the serpent is based on a passage from the Book of Genesis in which the snake gave Eve the fruit and caused the Fall of humankind. In God's condemnation of this act, He said that Eve's offspring would one day crush the snake underfoot.²⁵ This prophecy was alternately interpreted to mean that the Virgin, the Christ Child, or both, would defeat the serpent. It is the visual representation of Christ's victory over evil. By clutching the cross that surmounts the globe, the Child proclaims the preeminence of Christianity in the world and presents himself as its saviour.

The Wavy Hem Painter used another Flemish print source for his two paintings of the *Crucifixion with Cup-Bearing Angel*. Both are housed in the Museum of New Mexico. The first, in the collection of the Spanish Colonial Arts Society, Inc., measures 182 by 134 cm, and the second, belonging to the International Folk Art Foundation, 200 by 165 cm (figure 6). In the first painting, Christ is alive on the Cross, closely surrounded by the Virgin, St. John the Evangelist and the angel, with the Magdalen clutching the base of the Cross from behind. In the second, Christ hangs dead on the Cross and the arrangement of figures around the central axis is looser. The model for the paintings was an engraving based on a design made by Rubens in 1616 (figure 7). This image appeared in several editions of the *Missale romanum*

25. Genesis, 3:15.



Figure 6. Wavy Hem Painter, *Crucifixion with Cup-Bearing Angel*, 18th century. Fred Harvey Collection of the International Folk Art Foundation, at the Museum of International Folk Art. Courtesy of the Museum of International Folk Art (photo by Blair Clark).



Figure 7. *Crucifixion*, ca. 1687. From *Missale romanum*, Officina Plantiana/Moretus, Archdiocese of Santa Fe, New Mexico, at the Museum of International Folk Art, Santa Fe.

Figure 8. Jan Wiericx, *Christ Washing the Feet of the Disciples*, 1596, Jerónimo Nadal from *Evangelica historiae imagines*. Courtesy of the Getty Center for the History of Art and Humanities, Resource Collections.



published by the heirs of Christopher Plantin. Several missals of the Colonial period bearing this engraving remain in New Mexico.

Unlike the *Infant Saviour Standing on the Serpent with the Globe*, in these two cases the Wavy Hem Painter chose to make substantial alterations to the printed model. While the Rubens design included a rather large angel collecting the blood of Christ, both hides have an angel greatly reduced in size. Conversely, the town of Jerusalem in the background was enlarged in both paintings. One hide departed even further from the print source, depicting Christ *before* His death. This reduction and redirection of attention back to the central narrative, coupled with the enlargement of the town in the background, served to emphasize the actual event and lessen the allegorical value in favor of the more concrete narrative.

The third print source (figure 8) found to date for a hide painting by the Wavy Hem Painter can be said to have an international provenance: an Italian designer, a Flemish engraver, and a Spanish patron. The engraving source of the *Christ Washing the Feet of the Disciples*, by the Wavy Hem Painter



Figure 9. José Antonio Rementería, *Nuestra Señora de Begoña*, 1717. Biblioteca Nacional, Madrid. Courtesy of Biblioteca Nacional, Madrid.

(figure 1), was the work of Jan Wiericx of Antwerp. Wiericx reproduced a design by Italian Mannerist Bernardo Passeri for the illustrated gospels, *Adnotationes et meditationes in Evangelia quæ in sacrosanto missæ sacrificio toto anno leguntur; cum Evangeliorum concordatia historia integritati sufficienti*, by the Spanish Jesuit Jerónimo Nadal.²⁶ Wiericx's work appeared in several editions of the *Adnotationes et meditationes* beginning in 1595. The engraving and its 152 companion images of the annotated gospel were also used for other publications, such as the 1593 edition of *Evangelicæ historiæ imagines ex ordine Evangeliorum quæ toto anno in missæ sacrificio recitantur in ordinem temporis vitæ Christi digestæ* and the 1722 edition of Sor María de Jesús de Agreda's life of the Virgin entitled *Mystica ciudad de Dios*, published by the Hendrick Verdussen firm of Antwerp.²⁷ Because Sor María was believed to

26. A.J.J. Delen, *Histoire de la gravure dans les anciens Pays-Bas et dans les Provinces Belges des origines jusqu'à la fin du XVIIe siècle*, Paris, F. de Nobele, 1969, part 2, p. 155.

27. Delen, op. cit., part 2, pp. 154 and 154, note.



Figure 10. *Nuestra Señora de Begoña*, 18th century. Collection of the Archdiocese of Santa Fe, photograph on file at the Museum of International Folk Art (photo by Bernard López).

have miraculously appeared in New Mexico during the seventeenth century and because her book was present in New Mexican colonial libraries,²⁸ the *Mystica ciudad de Dios* becomes the most likely source for the print of Christ and the disciples seen by the hide painter. The engraving features a central narrative of Christ kneeling before Peter with the apostles seated to His left. Opposite the main scene is the image of Christ removing His outer garment. Above this group, as if in another room, Christ and the disciples are seated around a table. An inscription at the lower, right-hand corner of the image, identifies Jan Wiericx as the engraver. Above the scene is the inscription, "*Cæna communis, et lavatio pedum. Isidem capitibus. 101 lxxvij*," identifying the event as those surrounding the Last Supper and below the scene is a group of lettered annotations corresponding to letters found in the illustration.

The hide painting of *Christ Washing the Feet of the Disciples*, in the collection of the Millicent Rogers Museum of Taos, New Mexico, is the largest of the remaining examples of Colonial painting of a sacred theme on skins, measuring 170 by 253 cm. It features the three scenes described above: Christ

28. Eleanor B. Adams, "Two New Mexican Colonial Libraries," *New Mexico Historical Review*, vol. 19, no. 2, April, 1944, p. 151.

removing His outer garment, Christ kneeling as He washes the feet of Peter, and the Last Supper. As with his other works, the Wavy Hem Painter did not reproduce the inscription accompanying the printed image. He did, however, include at least one of the letters from the annotations, the “F”, though he did not reproduce the annotations themselves.²⁹ This curious choice has several possible explanations. It is likely that the New Mexican artist, fearing censure for departing from the proscribed model, faithfully reproduced the reference letters in the image and only one remains visible. Perhaps the painting was to be viewed in conjunction with the book bearing the inscriptions and the referent letters would aid in instruction. If the hide was used by the friars to teach catechism, the letters would have helped to direct the attention of the audience to the correct portion of the painting.

Flanders was not the only source for the printed images that inspired the hide painters of Colonial New Mexico. Prints from Spain also arrived in the distant province for the use of local artists. One such print was the engraving by José Antonio Remetería of the miraculous sculpture of *Nuestra Señora de Begoña* (figure 9). Made in 1714,³⁰ the engraving shows the Virgin and Child in rich robes standing on a pedestal. Both figures are crowned and the Virgin has a flaming nimbus surmounted by a cross. She holds the rosary of her advocacy and the Child raises a hand in blessing. Surrounding the pair are six flower-bearing angels fluttering in the niche which houses the sculpture. Above the scene is an inscription which reads, “ASSUMPTA EST IN CÆLUM.” Below the pedestal is the inscription bearing the name of the artist and an illegible name—the publisher?—and date. Below the identifying information is a cartouche bearing the words, “La Prodigiosa Imag.n de Nra. S.ra de Begoña Patrona dl M.N. y M Leal Señorío de Vizcaya sita en la Villa de Bilbao.” As the inscription suggests, the print was a portrait of the miraculous sculpture of the patroness of Bilbao, Our Lady of Begoña. According to her legend, the tiny sculpture was found by a Basque peasant on a hill overlooking the city of Bilbao.³¹ Her name comes from her words to the

29. This letter “F” was previously believed to be a signature, leading E. Boyd to dub the painter, “Franciscan F.” See Boyd, *op. cit.*, p. 121.

30. The catalogue of prints from the Biblioteca Nacional in Madrid lists this print with the date 1714. See Elena Páez Ríos, *Repertorio de grabados españoles en la Biblioteca Nacional*, Madrid, Ministerio de Cultura-Secretaría General Técnica, 1981, catalogue number 1789-2.

31. José Augusto Pérez Sánchez, *El culto mariano en España*, Madrid, Consejo Superior de Investigaciones, 1943, p. 75.



Figure 11. Antonio Castro,
*Nuestra Señora de la Asunción
de Santa María la Redonda.*
Reprinted from *Artes de Mexico*.

workers constructing her shrine. When they wondered where to put her during construction, the image said, “Begoña,” meaning “I will stay here at the foot (of the tree)” in Basque.

In the collection of the Archdiocese of Santa Fe is a hide painting of the Begoña based on the Basque print source (figure 10). The image measures 146 by 108 cm and bears the same image of the Virgin and Child found in the print. Unlike the Wavy Hem Painter, this artist included some identifying text. The upper border of the painting bears the inscription, “Assumpta est Maria Regina in Cælum.” Below the figures is a cartouche with the inscription, “La Milagrosa Imagen de Na Sa De Begoña 1608.” The date inscribed on the painting does not correspond to the known date of the print. It is possible that Rementería’s 1714 image was a copy of an engraving from the early seventeenth century and that this hide, made soon after, survived the Pueblo Indian Revolt. More likely, the hide was painted in the eighteenth century to commemorate an event that occurred in 1608, such as the founding of a mission or town, the departure of the patron’s family from Bilbao,³² or the occurrence of a miracle.

32. The selection of this uncommon advocacy of the Virgin was probably due to the large Basque population in New Mexico.



Figure 12. *Nuestra Señora de la Asunción de Santa María la Redonda*, 18th century. Fred Harvey Collection of the International Folk Art Foundation at the Museum of International Folk Art, Santa Fe.

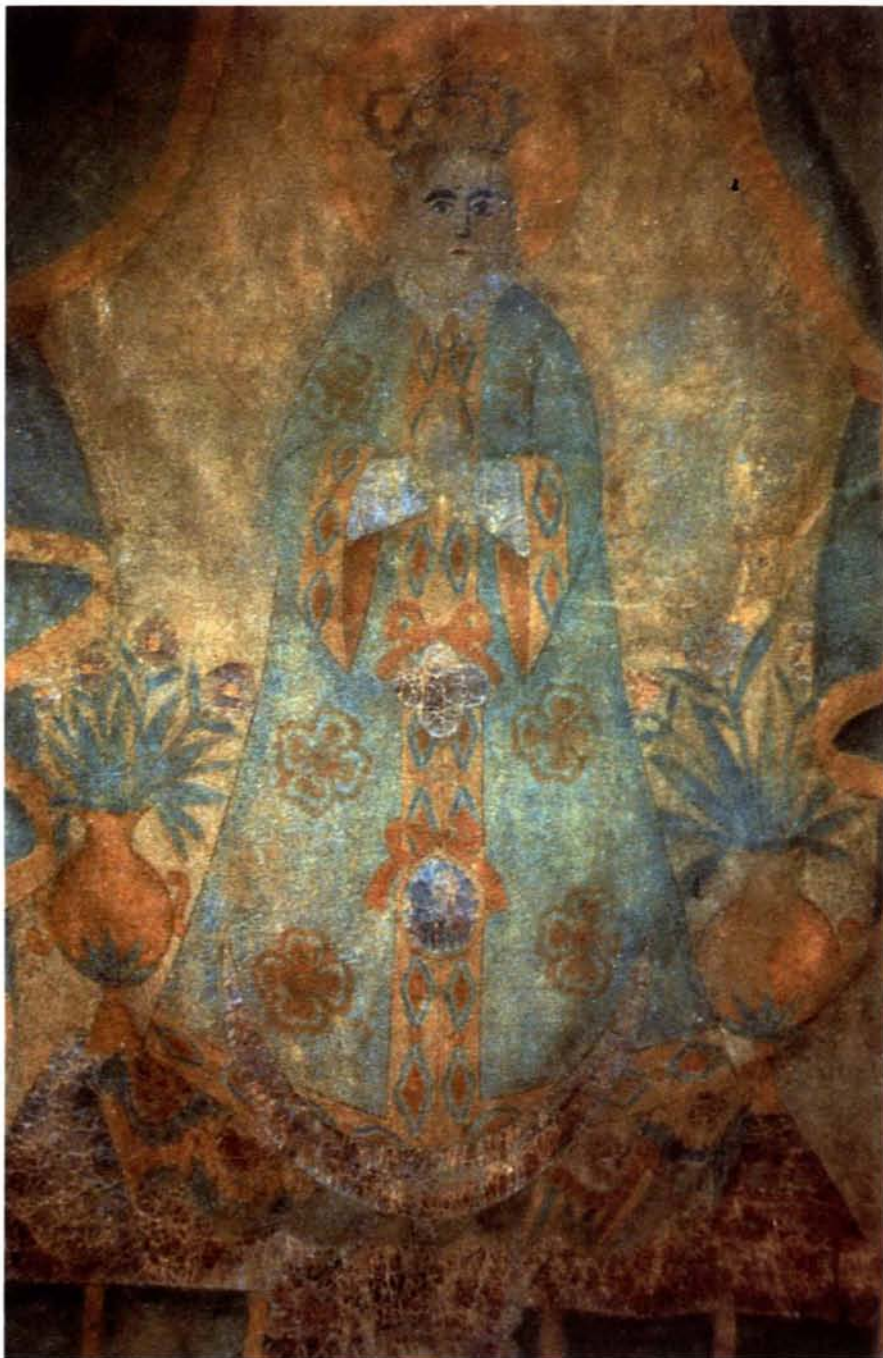


Figure 13. *Nuestra Señora de Zapopan*, 18th century. Fred Harvey Collection of the International Folk Art Foundation at the Museum of International Folk Art, Santa Fe.

Two interesting alterations made by the artist are the columns and the decoration of the skirt of the Virgin's dress. Instead of copying the classical pilasters of the Spanish image, the New Mexican artist chose to replace them with swelling, highly-decorated columns. Clearly this architectural form held more significance for the New Mexican viewer than the restrained classicism of the pilasters in the print. The other change which the New Mexican artist made was the addition of medallions on the skirt of the Virgin. In the engraving, two simple lines of beads fall symmetrically down the front of the skirt. In the hide painting, the artist replaced the beads with a single strand of medallions bearing the images of five unknown holy figures. The busts may be intended to represent the religious cameos, reliquaries, medals, and medallions worn on the dresses of pious ladies. Such adornments were frequently given to venerated sculpture. Therefore, as with the columns, the New Mexican artist altered the composition to make it more familiar and appealing to his audience without losing the basic devotional image of the Basque Our Lady of Begofia.

Prints from New Spain also arrived in New Mexico, where they supplied artists and parishioners with objects of devotion and mementos of regional cults. One such image was the early eighteenth-century engraving of *Nuestra Señora de la Asunción de Santa María la Redonda* by Antonio de Castro (figure 11), which inspired a hide painter in the distant province. The engraving was based on the miraculous sculpture of the Virgin of the Assumption at the Church of Santa María la Redonda in Mexico City. It features the Virgin ascending to Heaven with the aid of three groups of tiny putti. Behind the Virgin's head is a wide nimbus and she wears a robe bearing the marian and christological monograms. Typical of prints of venerated sculpture, the central figure is revealed by curtains held open by cords. To either side of the Virgin is an urn filled with flowers. The central figure group stands on a pedestal which may have borne an inscription. To the right of the pedestal is the artist's signature, "Anti. de Castro."

The hide painting of *Nuestra Señora de la Asunción de Santa María la Redonda* (figure 12), in the collection of the Museum of New Mexico, is based on the Castro print. The impetus for copying the print of this venerated image from Mexico City may have come from local parishioners transplanted from the capital. A significant difference between the painting and the print is the addition of two angels, one on either side of the Virgin. The angel to her left holds a sun on a stick while the angel to her right holds a

moon. Another alteration to the composition of the print was the overpainting done well after the hide left the hands of the painter. The nature of the technique of hide painting, in which pigments stain the skin rather than sitting on top of it, led to rapid fading of the images. Faithful parishioners, hoping to give a revered image new life, repeatedly retouched the hides. Sometimes the existing image was simply redrawn and/or repainted. Other hides were altered more substantially; some given completely new subjects or different settings. The *Redonda* in Santa Fe received this latter type of alteration. Surrounding the central image of the Virgin is an arch made to simulate Native American design patterns, reminiscent of the decoration of some Pueblo Indian pottery. The jambs are surmounted by squat columns and topped by pots. Springing from the jambs is a corbelled arch with rainbow-like archivolts and downward-pointing geometric forms. Another change, or rather omission in the overpainting is the palm frond which has been reduced to a curved line.

Finally, a second Mexican print source has been discovered for a New Mexican Colonial hide painting. The hide painting of *Nuestra Señora de Zapopan* (figure 13), in the collection of the Museum of New Mexico, was based on an engraving of the same subject that appeared as the frontispiece of the book *Origen de los dos célebres santuarios de la Nueva Galicia* by Francisco de Florencia, published in 1757. This anonymous engraving (figure 14) features the Virgin as she was to be found in her sanctuary near Guadalajara, standing on a pedestal between curtains, urns of flowers, and candles. She wears a campaniform dress with long, pointed cuffs, and a mantle. On the dress are eight pendants. Her hair flows over the shoulders of her gown and she is crowned. The figure and pedestal stand on an altar with a frontal decorated with a scroll design. This anonymous engraving inspired a copy on hide in New Mexico, which testifies to the spread of this cult and advocacy into the northern province. As in the print, the Virgin stands between curtains and is flanked by urns of flowers. Her dress, patterned with diamonds, bears two reliquaries or medallions suspended from bows, and four rosettes. Below the hem are four angels and a half moon.

There are several differences between the painting and the print. The hands of the Virgin point up rather than down. The dress of the Virgin was simplified in the painting, eliminating all of the curving, vegetal motifs. Similarly, the highly ornate pedestal was transformed into a crescent moon with small angels. The border of the Virgin's dress which, in the print, is a



Figure 14. *Milagrosa imagen de Nuestra Señora de Zapopan*, 1757. In Francisco de Florencia, *Origen de los dos célebres santuarios de la Nueva Galicia*. Benson Latin American Collection, University of Texas at Austin.

small zigzag design with points between the lines is changed into diamonds connected by dots. This border is substituted for the ornate design on the center section of the dress. Finally, the candles on the altar are missing altogether. In this case, I believe the differences between the print source and the painting can be attributed to the artist's training, or lack thereof. It is evident that the artist sought to avoid all minute details, especially those with intricate, curving designs. Instead of the highly ornate pedestal, the painter chose a familiar form: the crescent moon and tiny angels. The change in position of the hands may be the result of the difficulty in reproducing the fingers as seen in the print. The hide painter avoided the challenge by pointing the hands up in a simple triangle, without articulation of the fingers. A miscalculation in available space caused the absence of the candles. Even the flowers are partially hidden by the curtains that were probably painted first.

One difference between the print and the hide painting, produced through no fault of the New Mexican artist, is the image of the Christ Child. The Virgin of Zapopan is of the advocacy of the Expectancy, and a tiny image of the Christ Child appears in the abdomen of the sculpture.

However, as this attribute is so small as to be unreadable in the print, the hide painter did not understand that this was the key identifying attribute. Instead, he interpreted the small object hanging from the dress of the miraculous sculpture as a reliquary, painted medallion, or *escudo*.

Connecting some of the hide paintings with their print sources allows several conclusions to be drawn. First, New Mexican artists, like their contemporaries throughout Europe and the Americas, relied on prints as sources of inspiration and as vehicles of stylistic and iconographic information. Second, the selection of print sources by either the artist or the patron was not haphazard. The images were carefully selected from a reasonably large repertoire of prints for both iconographic and formal qualities.³³ Third, the information taken from the print sources was applied selectively depending upon the wishes of the painter and/or his patron. Finally, the selection of some themes taken from the print sources represented ancestral loyalties and the desire to establish specific cults in the province.

It appears that hide painting was in decline by the last quarter of the eighteenth century, with the burgeoning *santero* tradition opting primarily to paint on wood panels rather than on animal skins. In 1776, Domínguez described most of the one hundred and twelve hides he saw as old and illegible with only a handful said to be almost new or not very old.³⁴ Another inventory made in 1796, though admittedly much less thorough than that of Domínguez, counted only sixteen hide paintings.³⁵ In 1817, when another *visitador*, Fray Juan Bautista Niño Ladrón de Guevara, was sent to report on the conditions of the churches of the province, the poor state of the images led him to order the removal of several hide paintings.³⁶ In Santa Fe, for example, Ladrón de Guevara demanded that the hide painting of St. Barbara "be removed and done away with completely as it [was] improper as an

33. The quantity of prints available to New Mexican artists is extrapolated from the inventory of the possessions of Francisco Xavier Romero.

34. Domínguez, *op. cit.*, pp. 121 and 172.

35. José E. Espinosa, *Saints in the Valleys: Christian Sacred Images in the History, Life and Fold Art of Spanish New Mexico*, revised edition, Albuquerque, University of New Mexico Press, 1967, p. 98.

36. "Acts of the Guevara Visitation of New Mexico, 1817-1820," 1817, Book of Accounts LXII, box 5, reel 45, book 2, in *Archives of the Archdiocese of Santa Fe*, microfilm edition, Washington, D.C., Academy of American Franciscan History, 1957.

object of veneration and devotion.”³⁷ Later clerics continued to order the removal of hide paintings from the churches of New Mexico.³⁸ Fortunately, some of the paintings were preserved in former missions, private homes, and some chapels of the lay brotherhood known as the *Penitentes*. In the twentieth century renewed interest in the art of Colonial New Mexico has led to the collection of hides by individuals and museums and the placement of some hide paintings in churches throughout the state.✽

37. Ladrón de Guevara from Boyd, op. cit., p. 125.

38. Fray Fernández de San Vicente in 1826, Bishop José Antonio Zurbiría in 1833, and Bishop Jean-Baptiste Lamy in 1851 all ordered the removal of hides. See Pierce, op. cit., p. 17, and Boyd, op. cit., p. 128.

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