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*On the Colonial Formation
of Comparison:
The Virgin of Chiquinquirá, The
Virgin of Guadalupe and Cloth**

MODERN SCHOLARS OFTEN use a comparative method as a means to create general categories of likeness and difference so that particularities may be subsumed within a macro system of relationships. Within the theoretical field of art history, this is clearly the basis of Wölfflin's visual dialectic between linear and painterly, a polarization for comparative needs that is, in some way, continuously and unconsciously re-enacted by the pairs of slides used for most art historical lectures.¹ In general, the comparative method as employed by contemporary scholars may be understood as the construct of "questions of judgment with respect to difference."² Certainly within the study of the various forms of colonial Latin American art and architecture, comparison is often a scholarly means of describing and

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1. Heinrich Wölfflin, *The Principles of Art History: The Problem of the Development of Style in Later Art*, M. D. Hottinger, Nueva York, Dover Publications, 1950 (1915).

2. See for example Jonathan Z. Smith's discussion of comparison, uniqueness and individual in *To Take Place: Toward a Theory of Ritual*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1987, pp. 13-14; 34-35.

understanding similarities and differences across temporal and spatial boundaries predicated on the historical establishment of the viceroyalties by Spain. As art historians, we tend to stress a model of comparison that takes as its base the European original by which its various transformations can be measured. This comparative method can be applied to studies of style, iconography, social history of institutions such as *gremios*, *cofradías*, and the like. Or, it can cast into comparison the artistic reactions and/or assimilation of native populations to European visual production. The focus of comparison depends on the desired results. For example, comparative studies of form can map the macro history of influence on a region and/or period or they can map the micro history of a school or an individual artist's work.

However, by performing this intellectual operation, Latin American colonial art and Latin American colonial culture are submitted implicitly or explicitly to a discursive model that is always comparative within a hierarchical system that situates Europe as that by which all comparisons are ordered. In general it is important to remember that any form of comparative analysis, in this case the comparisons of visual images and architecture, is never a neutral act of disinterested scholarship. Wölfflin's formulation of linear and painterly as abstract and universal properties leads him to a discussion of how they might be applied comparatively as criteria for describing cultural forms of European vision in relation to nationalism.³ I would stress here, however, that the underlying logic of judgment based upon a hierarchy of relations by which comparison is structured is most especially problematic in the context of colonial relations. Edward Said lays out this problem in broader terms and in a different context in his book *Orientalism*. In discussing the rise of philology and comparative method in the late eighteenth century and the early nineteenth century, he demonstrates how the normative is understood to reside within the Indo-European and becomes the standard by which the Semitic is judged. This structure is embodied and produced through the philologist himself so as to create the intellectual conditions for a

3. "As every history of vision must lead beyond mere art, it goes without saying that such national differences of the eye are more than a mere question of taste: conditioned and conditioning, they contain the bases of the whole world picture of people", H. Wölfflin, *Principles of Art History*, 1950, p. 237. See also the important discussion of Wölfflin in a broader critical essay that influenced my thinking on this subject by Claire Farago, "'Vision Itself Has Its History': 'Race,' Nation and Renaissance Art History", 1995, pp. 77-81.

scientific form of cultural relativism that naturally places the European in a superior position, capable of making the proper and logical judgment.⁴

By laying out some of the epistemological problems implicit in comparative studies does not mean that we should do away with this type of comparative framework. The models, techniques and referential system of colonial art are, for the most part, European based. It would be senseless to deny this historical relationship and its importance for the way one can organize thought about Latin American colonial art within broader, more abstract categories of knowledge. At the same time it is important to be aware of its implications in the formation of colonial discourse, an issue to which I will return at the end of this essay. It is therefore also important to stress that this form of comparative method does not mean that as scholars we must restrict our understanding of comparison in terms of this particular and ahistorical axis.

I, therefore, want to move away from the comparative method as an analytical tool of art historical theory that frames the analysis of Latin American colonial art in relation to its European origins. Instead, I want to think of comparison as a convention that has an historical dimension and therefore a political and social agenda that is not dependent upon the modern scholar's comparative construct. Rather, as noted, the urge for comparison is already embedded in the very formation of colonial relations. That is, I want to take the need for and act of comparison as a subject of study of Latin American colonial art rather than as a method of art historical inquiry into that art.

Taking this approach, one might then ask where and how does comparison become strategic in the colonial discourse of images. One instance, for example, occurs at the very beginning of the conquest when the appearance of native images was assessed comparatively with European images in terms of idolatry.⁵ In

4. "As Renan was often to say, linguistic temporality and history are full of lacunae, enormous discontinuities, hypothetical periods. Therefore linguistic events occur in a non-linear and essentially discontinuous dimension controlled by the linguist in a very particular way. That way, as Renan's whole treatise on the Semitic branch of Oriental Languages goes very far to show, is comparative: Indo-European is taken as the living *organic* norm and Semitic Oriental Languages are seen comparatively to be *inorganic*." Edward Said, *Orientalism*, Nueva York, Vintage Books, 1979, p. 143; and in general see pp. 131-148.

5. For example *Doctrina Cristiana y Catecismo Para Instrucción de los Indios y demás Personas que han de ser Enseñadas en Nuestra Santa Fe*, Lima, Antonio Ricardo in *Monumenta Catechetica Hispanoamericana (Siglos XVI-XVIII)*, 2 vols., Buenos Aires, Pontificia Universidad Católica Argentina, vol. I, 1990, pp. 482-483.

a different but related context, comparisons were made wherein the capacities of the native were judged in regard to their ability to reproduce European style images. One need only think of Bernal Díaz's favorable judgement when he compares the work of three native Mexican painters with that of Michelangelo, Berrugete and others.⁶ Clearly his statement is intended as hyperbole. But the comparison strategically calls to mind in the sixteenth-century reader's eye a set of images that permits Bernal Díaz then to demonstrate by analogy the Indians' capacity to learn and understand Christians doctrine.

Another late sixteenth-century example is found in the evangelization narrative of Viceregal Peru. Here the initial attempt by a native artist, Tito Yupanqui, to create a sculpture of the Virgin and Child for Copacabana is judged negatively. As an Indian, his capacity to be a sculptor was understood to be inherently inadequate and the result of his work was therefore considered ugly in comparison to the standards set by European models. The appearance of the sculpture only became acceptable after a miraculous transformation which took place overnight when the aesthetic misunderstanding of the Indian artist was "corrected" by the intercession of the Virgin herself, and finally giving the small statue a "proper" or "pleasing" form.⁷ Here the aesthetic standard of comparison has agency by which the miraculous transformation of an image could be framed and narrated thereby setting into motion the establishment of a potent Andean site of ongoing Christian devotion.

There are many other early colonial examples that begin to establish some of the criteria for colonial visual forms and their participation in the construction of and mediation between colonial identities. Art historians however have not, I think, fixed upon the rhetoric of comparison sufficiently as an analytical site for understanding the parameters of sixteenth-century visual expectations in the New World.⁸

6. Bernal Díaz del Castillo, *Historia verdadera de la conquista de la Nueva España* (c. 1580), 2 vols., Madrid (Historia 16), 1984-1985, vol. 2, pp. 455-462.

7. See Sabine MacCormack, "From The Sun of the Incas to the Virgin of Copacabana", *Representations* no. 8, 1984, pp. 50-52; Verónica Salles-Reese, *From Virgin to the Virgin of Copacabana: Representations of the Sacred at Lake Titicaca*, Austin, University of Texas Press, 1997, pp. 18-41, 177-181. The miraculous transformation is described in Book II, chapter VII, entitled "Del Primer Milagro Que la Santísima Virgen Hizo, en su Misma Imagen", by Alonso Gavilán (1621), *Historia del celebre santuario de nuestra Señora de Copacabana, y sus Milagros, e Invencion de la cruz de Carabuco*, Lima, Prado y Prado, 1988, pp. 240-244.

8. There are notable exceptions such as Sabine MacCormack's *Religion in the Andes: Vision*

The ends to which comparisons are put are neither universal nor static, however. This brief paper therefore takes up a later historical period in which comparison plays a different role than that which it had in the initial period of New World evangelization. The story focuses on one specific image, the Virgin of Chiquinquirá, a painting that is one of the best-documented miraculous images of the sixteenth-century New World. What are of concern in this study are the subtle, seemingly inconsequential, changes in the details of the thaumaturgical narrative that appear in late seventeenth-century and early eighteenth-century accounts. The changes, although minor, are not incidental. They act to reconfigure the Virgin of Chiquinquirá within the shifting needs of colonial identity. The changes in key narrative elements permit the image to be brought into a broader network of seventeenth and early eighteenth-century comparative rhetoric. In mapping this rhetoric in relation to a specific image, it is not only possible to recognize the political dimension of comparative judgement as an important element in the constitution of colonial culture; but also to give it an historical specificity of how comparison was conceived, deployed, and to what aim.

The Virgin of Chiquinquirá

The Virgin of Chiquinquirá is a mid sixteenth-century devotional painting that came to have tremendous power and recognition by the end of the century (figure 1). Today the painting hangs in the basilica of Chiquinquirá located in the state of Cundinamarca and some one hundred and twenty kilometers to the north of Bogotá (figure 2). It was and is an international pilgrimage shrine of such significance that Pope John Paul II visited the site in 1986.

The image's extensive textual history gives an unusually early and precise account of the origin of the painting's prodigious nature. The formation of

and Imagination in Early Colonial Peru, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1991; and Serge Gruzinski, *La guerre des images de Christophe Colomb à "Blade Runner" (1492-2019)*, Paris, Fayard, 1990. Nonetheless, there is nothing comparable to the detailed study of the Spanish formation of philosophical and political discourse concerning the nature of man in the Americas, see Anthony Pagden, *The Fall of Natural Man: The American Indian and the Origins of Comparative Ethnology*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1986.



Figure 1.
The Virgin of
Chiquinquirá painted
by Alonso de Narváez,
oil on cotton, c. 1555,
112 x 110 cm,
Chinquinquirá.

this history is also important because it establishes the indisputable acceptance of the image's authenticity within Catholic orthodoxy. As such there comes into existence, almost simultaneously to the creation of the image itself, a set of texts whose eventual permutations permit the painting to be pulled into a specific field of comparison in the eighteenth century such that the painting takes on an ontology different than that of its origin. That is, the act of employing terms for comparison in the late seventeenth-century transforms the painting of Chiquinquirá into having an excess of being. The painting becomes more than it once was. The question is then how can the painting become even more after it has already become miraculous and therefore self-referential? As I shall discuss, the painting remains unique as a miraculous image but it simultaneously becomes an image that is like other particular or unique colonial miraculous images, a likeness not based on similitude but one that is based upon physical properties as well as spiritual qualities. These new qualities and properties of the late seventeenth and early eighteenth-centuries are necessary for the strategic redefinition of the sacred in the colonies and to the definition of certain forms of colonial identity.

To begin, we know a great deal more about this painting than any other image from this early period of Nueva Granada's (Colombia) history. Alonso de Narváez painted it around 1555 in tempera on cloth, in Tunja, a town settled by Spaniards. The image depicts the Virgin of the Rosary standing and looking down at the Christ Child she cradles in her left arm. Two saints stand on either side each engaged with looking at the attributes they carry in their hands.

The painting is today very much faded. The colors once described as brilliant and lively are almost unrecognizable.⁹ The now almost monochromatic painting hangs above the main altar of the basilica and is enthroned within a massive silver frame. The two-dimensional image is embellished by a gold scepter that appears to be held in the Virgin's right hand. She also stands on a gold crescent moon. Both are attached to the surface of the canvas, as are the golden crowns that she and Christ wear. Two golden rosaries are appended to her left arm. This type of ornamentation was added sometime in the early or mid-seventeenth century, as were probably the gilded borders of the saints' garments.¹⁰

The subject of the painting corresponded to the wishes of Antonio de Santana who commissioned the work and who held a special devotion to the Virgin of the Rosary. Antonio de Santana was a locally powerful Spaniard who held the *encomienda* that included the native town of Chiquinquirá whose pastoral needs were administered by the Dominicans. In some accounts, it was a Dominican friar, Andrés Jadraque, to whom Antonio de Santana turned in order to have the Virgin of the Rosary painted. In fact, Andrés Jadraque is usually identified as the one who commissioned Alonso de Narváez for the painting.

The relationship between the Dominican priest and the *encomendero* may be configured in the painting itself. The two figures in the painting flanking the Virgin are often identified as the patron saints of the two Spaniards responsible for its creation. St. Anthony of Padua, Antonio de Santana's patron saint, appears to the Virgin's right, and Saint Andrew, Fray Andrés Jadraque's patron saint, appears to her left. The position of the two saints is

9. For a detailed description of the colors in 1694, see Fray Pedro de Tobar y Buendía (1694), *Verdadera Histórica Relación del Origen, Manifestación y Prodigiosa Renovación por Sí Misma y milagros de la Imagen de la Sacratísima Virgen María Madre de Dios Nuestra Señora del Rosario de Chiquinquirá*, Bogotá, Instituto Caro y Cuervo, 1986, BK I, Chapter VIII, pp. 34-39.

10. F. Gil Tovar, "La virgen de Chiquinquirá en el arte", *Chiquinquirá 400 años*, Bogotá, Fondo Cultural Cafetero, 1986, pp. 93-94.



Figure 2. Map locating Bogotá and Chinquinquirá.

incorrect according to standards of church hierarchy. Saint Andrew, as one of the apostles, should occupy the privileged or right hand side of Mary, whereas Saint Anthony, a Franciscan saint of the thirteenth-century, should be on the left. One chronicler attributes the error to the desire of the patron, Antonio de Santana, who wanted his patron saint placed on the privileged side.¹¹

11. "Como ideó Antonio de Santa Ana la imagen, así la pintó Alonso de Narváez; mas al

The question of orthodox iconography and composition only becomes an issue later in the history of the painting, after it had become miraculous and the focus of an inter-viceregal pilgrimage. However, in the early period of the conquest and settlement of Nueva Granada and in an isolated locale, the idiosyncratic composition of a devotional painting for a Spaniard was inconsequential. In fact within two decades the painting had been relegated to a storeroom and was in the process of complete deterioration. Antonio de Santana was by then dead and his widow had put the painting away. If the events of 1586 had not occurred, the painting would have soon disappeared and would have been forgotten, as was the lot of almost all other sixteenth-century colonial paintings.

Some years after Antonio de Santana's death, one of his relatives, Pedro de Santana, and his wife María Ramos arrived from Spain and settled in Chiquinquirá. María Ramos asked Antonio de Santana's widow if there were not an image of the Virgin to which she could pray. Antonio's widow, remembering the old painting, retrieved it from the storeroom where it was kept. María Ramos hung the now very much faded painting on the wall of a small chapel on the hacienda of Chiquinquirá where she prayed the rosary. On December 26, 1586, just after she finished her prayers, the painting fell. It stood upright appearing resplendent, new, and beautiful. The face of the Virgin emanated intense rays of beautiful light for the entire day and filled the room with wondrous colors. In the following days, a number of other miracles were said to have occurred. All of them were attributed to the image, originating with its own miraculous renovation. It is on account of this and the following events that we know so much about the origins of the painting, because almost immediately, the first archbishop of Bogotá, Luis Zapata de Cárdenas, undertook an investigation of the events, sending a team of investigators to the region to gather the testimony of the eye-witnesses to the miracles.¹²

parecer con un defecto, que ha sido reparado siempre de muchos, y sabida la causa de pocos: porque deviendo pintar a San Andrés Apostol al lado derecho del la Sacratissima Virgen, lo pintó al izquierdo; y discurro yo, sería la causa por parecerlo, que quedaría mas a gusto de Antonio de Santa Ana, la imagen, viendo en mejor lugar a San Antonio, de quien tenía su nombre", fray Pedro de Tobar y Buendía, *Verdadera Histórica Relación... de la Imagen... de Chiquinquirá*, Bogotá, Instituto Caro y Cuervo, 1986 (1694): BK I, Chapter III, p. 12.

12. In investigating the miraculous nature of the painting, Luis Zapata de Cárdenas, as archbishop of Bogotá, was only following the recently published decree of the Twenty-fifth Session of the Council of Trent which stipulated "that no new miracles be accepted and no relics

Much of the documentation from the first investigation has been published several times, but it is important to review some key passages from the major witnesses so as to appreciate how it was re-written in the late seventeenth-century and early eighteenth-century.¹³ María Ramos, the person responsible for having had the painting brought out of storage and who had constantly prayed before it, was one of the first witnesses to be examined. Swearing upon the sign of the cross, she stated that:

fue a hacer oración a la capilla que está en estos aposentos de Chiquinquirá donde está una imagen de lienzo grande de Nuestra Señora del Rosario con dos santos a los lados que es San Andrés y San Antonio de Abad de Padua que la dicha imagen es su abogada desde su niñez.¹⁴

She knelt and prayed before the image that was tied with a fiber string (cabuya) and hung by a nail above the altar. Having finished praying she turned to leave the chapel when

una india cristiana y ladina de mucha razón llamada Isabel... le dijo “mira mira señora que está Nuestra Señora la Madre de Dios está en tu asiento parada”, y luego esta testigo volvió el rostro hacia el altar y vio la dicha imagen en el suelo parada en el lugar donde esta testigo solía o suele estar hincada de rodillas, haciendo oración.

The two women then tried to rehang the painting over the altar, however: “vieron el rostro de la dicha imagen de diferente color que antes y al presente tiene, porque la vieron colorada y hermosa coma una rosa y estuvo y duró con esta color todo aquel día”.¹⁵

be recognized unless they have been investigated and approved by the same bishop, who, as soon as he has obtained knowledge of such matters, shall, after consulting theologians and other pious men, act thereon as he shall judge consonant with truth and piety, *Canons and Decrees of the Council of Trent*, H.J. Schroeder Trans., St. Louis and London, B. Herder, 1960, p. 217.

13. The ecclesiastical document, housed in the Archivo Provincial Dominicano de Bogotá, was transcribed and first published by Alberto Ariza, *Hagiografía de Nuestra Señora del Rosario de Chiquinquirá*, Bogotá, Editorial Iquemía, 1950.

14. *Ibid.*, 18.

15. *Ibid.*

What is important to point out here is that prior to the miraculous event, the painting is described as the devotional image of a Spanish woman who when finished praying before it, turns away to have it fall silently to where she had just been kneeling.

Isabel, the India ladina, was the next person to be called to testify. She too swore to the same story adding that Miguel, a boy of four or five, for whom she served as a nursemaid, had been the one who drew her attention to the fallen painting. That is, the very first person to have witnessed the miracle was neither the Spaniard María Ramos nor the Indian Isabel but a young boy identified as a mestizo.¹⁶

The Archbishop's investigators heard a number of other corroborating witnesses, some of whom testified to subsequent miracles such as healings. Finally, Fray Luis Zapata de Cárdenas acknowledged the miraculous nature of the image in January 1588 when he wrote in his decree that there was "una imagen de Nuestra Señora del Rosario, en un lienzo, (y) somos informados que ha hecho algunos milagros así dentro de su iglesia como fuera della y que han acudido y acuden muchas gentes a visitarla y a tener novenas".¹⁷ A sanctuary under the control of the Dominicans was soon established and the image quickly became renowned for its miraculous power. The image was not only a site of pilgrimage, but it was processed to Tunja and other locales during periods of epidemics and drought.

The image also quickly became the subject of elite literary genres. Juan de Castellanos, one of Nueva Granada's great sixteenth-century poets as well as one of the men appointed by Archbishop Cárdenas to investigate the

16. "...pasando por la puerta de la capilla donde está una imagen de Nuestra Señora en el altar y llevaba esta testigo un niño *mestizo* llamado Miguel por la mano de edad de cuatro o cinco años al parecer, y el dicho niño le dijo al pasar de la puerta de la dicha capilla madre mira que la madre de Dios está en el suelo y así volvió a ver hacia el altar.." Ibid., 19; That a young boy was a mestizo is not crucial at this historical stage; however, that it was a young boy, an innocent, who was the very first to see the vision is probably not incidental. Women were believed to be extremely susceptible to the deceits of the devil and their visions were the least credited, whereas "children were symbols of purity used by communities for intercession with God", William Christian, *Apparitions in Late Medieval and Renaissance Spain*, Princeton, University of Princeton Press, 1981, p. 216 and in general pp. 19-20; 197-199; 215-222.

17. *Decreto del Arzobispo de Bogotá Fray Luis Zapata de Cárdenas, en que ordena la investigación Eclesiástica sobre los milagros ocurridos en Chiquinquirá. Enero 6 de 1588*, cited in Octavio Arizmendi Posada, *Chiquinquirá 400 años*, Bogotá, Fondo Cultural Cafetero, 1986, pp. 41-43.

painting, gave literary form to its miraculous nature in several poems. One in particular recounts the image's early intervention on behalf of the people of Tunja during an outbreak of measles in 1588.¹⁸

18. Pero desta ciudad llamada Tunja
 Fueron por una imagen de la Virgen
 Que está en Chiquinquirá, pueblo de indios
 Que dista deste más de siete leguas,
 Do la bondad de Dios ha comenzado
 A se mostrar con altas maravillas,
 Sanando ciegos, cojos y tullidos,
 De que daremos cuenta más extensa
 En otra parte, dándome Dios vida.

Trájose con debida reverencia
 Sérico palio, hachas encendidas,
 Y era para notar la muchedumbre
 De bárbaros incultos que salía
 A vella, recebilla y adoralla,
 Con lumbres encendidas en las manos,
 Postradas en el suelo las rodillas,
 Pidiendo favor, reconociendo
 Ser Madre del que puede socorrellos,
 Hasta coger las gotas de la cera
 Que las ardientes hachas destilaban
 En tierra, que tenían por reliquia,
 Y los caciques que tenían pueblos
 Algo más apartado del camino,
 Rogaban la pasasen por sus casas
 Prometiendo magníficas limosnas.

Finalmente, después que la trajeron
 Y la pusieron en una capilla
 De ricos ornamentos adornada
 Innumerables gentes acudían
 Ansí de naturales como nuestros,
 Continuando santos sacrificios
 Que celebraban voces acordadas
 Con solemne concento y armonía:
 Y fue servido Dios por su clemencia
 De luego mitigar aquella ira,
 Que agora va corriendo y abrasando
 Tierras de Popayán y Quito y Lima,

The growth of the cult quickly spread beyond the archbishopric of Bogotá. Fray Pedro Bedón, one of the most influential Dominicans of the late sixteenth-century in the northern Andes, visited the shrine and brought her cult back to Quito. And in the mid seventeenth-century Lucas Fernández Piedrahita (1624-1688) in his *Historia general de la conquista del Nuevo Reino de Granada* describes Chiquinquirá as a place “poblado al presente de indios y españoles, . . . acaíssa de la frecuencia con que acuden allí de todas las partes del Perú y del Nuevo Reino a visita el templo de la Madre de Dios que en él hay, donde se venera un milagroso retrato suyo”.¹⁹

As a miraculous image, the painting now becomes a prototype. That is, its particularity becomes universally recognized as being in and of itself a miraculous image with copies first made throughout the northern Andes and then elsewhere (figure 3). Moreover, as a *retrato* (portrait/image) of the Virgin that is miraculous, other *retratos* (copies) of the image also are potentially miraculous.²⁰ The painting becomes therefore not only the subject of its

Por gran descuido de los que gobiernan
A propios intereses anhelantes
Sin que de bien común tengan acuerdo
[...]

Llevamos pues la imagen a su casa
Con la veneración que fue posible,
Y con magnificencia de limosnas,
De que se van labrando más decentes
Y más autorizados edificios,
Donde también hay lámparas de plata,
Ricos y muy costosos ornamentos,
Por devotos cristianos ofrecidos,
Y según la frecuencia de los fieles
Será basílica de gran momento;
De la cual a su tiempo, Dios mediante,
Trataremos particulares.

From *Relación breve de las tierras de la gobernación del Chocó*, canto II, in *Obras de Juan de Castellanos* Edición de Parra León Hermanos, vol. II. Caracas, Editorial Sur Americano, 1932, p. 289.

19. Lucas Fernández Piedrahita, *Historia general de las conquistas del Nuevo Reino de Granada*, libro sexto, cap. V, Bogotá, Imprenta de Medrado Rivas, 1881, p. 155.

20. William Taylor has already suggested that “una concepción de belleza en los siglos XVII y XVIII que valoraba tanto la copia como el objeto real, y [quiero] surgir que las imágenes (incluso imágenes de imágenes) eran al mismo tiempo poderosas, evocadoras y peligrosas porque ofrecían una mediación con lo sagrado que podía escapar a la vigilancia del clero”,



Figure 3. Copy of the Virgin of Chiquinquirá. Anonymous, 17th century, oil on canvas, 107 x 123 cm. Parish of Nuestra Señora de las Aguas, Bogotá.

own history such as in *Verdadera histórica relación del origen (de) nuestra Señora del Rosario de Chiquinquirá* written by Fray Pedro de Tobar y Buendía and published in 1694 in Madrid. It also becomes an agent that authorizes the miraculous capabilities of its many copies as described in Tobar y Buendía's Chapter Three of Book III entitled "Milagros Obrados por esta Soberana Señora, mediante los Retratos de su Imagen de Chiquinquirá."²¹ The numerous miracles that are performed throughout the vicero-

William Taylor, "Nuestra señora del Patrocinio y fray Francisco de la Rosa: Una intersección de religión, política y arte en el México de siglo XVIII," in *Relaciones: Estudios de Historia y Sociedad*, 73, 1998, p. 298.

21. This process is not at all unusual. For example the Jeronimite monk, Diego de Ocaña, came to the Americas to spread the cult of the Virgin of Guadalupe and painted several copies, some of which became miraculous in their own right, see Diego de Ocaña, *Un Viaje Fascinante por la América Hispana del Siglo XVI*, fray Arturo Álvarez, ed., Madrid, Studium (1606), 1969, pp. 257-59. However, the Virgin of Chiquinquirá is one of the first officially recognized miraculous images of the Americas that authorizes its own miraculous copies.

alty are attributed to the different local copies of the Virgin of Chiquinquirá, all of which are described or understood as being a “retrato desta milagrosa Imagen tocada à su Original”.²²

These are the conditions, common among many miraculous images, by which the painting of the Virgin of Chiquinquirá came to occupy a position of supra-regional representational significance in the late seventeenth-century. As an image that becomes emblematic of the viceroyalty, it enters into a field of colonial comparative rhetoric that emerges in the second half of the century. To acquire a comparative value of specific historical valence, the image must be re-imagined to be something other than that which it originally had been so as to become a truly autochthonous image of Nueva Granada. To understand what is involved, I want to turn to the work of Alonso de Zamora, who in 1701 published in Barcelona his *Historia de la Provincia de San Antonio del Nuevo Reino de Granada del Orden de Predicadores*.

Fray Alonso de Zamora was born in 1635 in Santafé de Bogotá and died in 1717. Supposedly he was a mestizo with a Spanish father and Chibcha mother. At age twelve he entered the University to study and later became a Dominican priest in the Convento del Rosario in Bogotá. Zamora occupied a number of roles as a Dominican friar including being its principal chronicler. In 1669 he was named the Procurador de la provincia de Madrid y Definidor en Roma but returned to Bogotá in 1670 as Lector de Teología. In 1691 he became the prior of the parish of Las Aguas in Bogotá and began writing his *Historia*, which he finished four years later.²³

Like all other colonial historians of Nueva Granada, he describes the miraculous events of December 26th 1586 as first recorded by the archbishop Zapata de Cárdenas in 1588. His account, like many other mid seventeenth-century accounts, is slightly different than earlier ones. It is in the nature of his varying details that the painting shifts from being the devotional image of a Spanish lady that becomes miraculous through its own renovation to

22. All the miraculous copies are termed “retratos” but only one copy is termed a “retrato desta milagrosa Imagen tocada à su Original”, but by extension it applies to all others, see Fray Pedro de Tobar y Buendía (1694), *Verdadera Histórica Relación... de la Imagen de la Sacratísima Virgen María Madre de Dios Nuestra Señora del Rosario de Chiquinquirá*, 1986, Bk II, Chapter III, p. 187.

23. Horacio Bejarano Díaz, “Nuestra Señora del Rosario de Chiquinquirá en Nuestros Primeros Historiadores”, in *Chiquinquirá 400 años*, Bogotá, Fondo Cultural Cafetero, 1986, pp. 55-56.

being something more than that as well as to being something else. In doing so Zamora discursively brings the painting into the wider comparative orbit of late seventeenth and early eighteenth century colonial Latin American cultural politics.

Zamora relates, like everyone else, how the image was painted in Tunja where Andrés Jadraque “halló a Alonso de Narváez que entendía de pintura”. But then he begins to do something else. He writes that Narváez:

la pintó en una manta de algodón. Como este género de tejido tiene más de ancho que de largo, dispusieron entre los dos, que al lado derecho se pintara la imagen de San Antonio, por ser el santo de Antonio, que costaba la pintura; y al lado izquierdo la de San Andrés que era del hermano que la solicitaba, y había buscado los colores. Ésta es el origen del aquel prodigioso lienzo de N. Señora de Chiquinquirá, imagen taumaturga de todo este Nuevo Reino...²⁴

That is, Zamora emphasizes that the Virgin of Chiquinquirá was painted on native Chibcha cloth. Moreover, because the nature of the indigenous cloth was to be wider than it was long, it determined the painting's rather unusual composition with the two saints painted on either side of the Virgin.²⁵ The implication is that the cloth always maintained its indigenous cultural form, and, rather than being cut, the norms of Spanish painting were reconceived to accommodate that form. That is, the cloth's indigenous shape opened up

24. Alonso de Zamora, *Historia de la Provincia de San Antonio del Nuevo Reino de Granada del Orden de Predicadores*, Barcelona, Imprenta de Joseph Llopis, 1701.

25. Zamora is not the only author to suggest that the image was painted on native cloth. Two contemporary authors make the same but less forceful assertion in their printed volumes. Juan Flóres de Ocariz writes that the image was painted on “una manta de algodón más ancha que larga; y por quedar mucho blanco en los lados los ocuparon, el derecho con san Antonio, por ser Antonio el nombre del platero pintor y el izquierdo con san Andrés, por llamarse Andrés el religioso”, Juan Flóres de Ocariz (1674), *Genealogías del Nuevo Reino de Granada*, Bk I, vol. II, Bogotá, Prensas de la Biblioteca Nacional, 1944, p. 201. Pedro de Tobar y Buendía writes that it was painted “en una Manta de Algodon (que era el lienço, que era en aquel tiempo:) era la manta mas ancha, que larga; y porque no quedassen en blanco los campos, que quedan a los lados de la Madre de Dios, mandó pintar a un lado San Andrés Apostol, y al otro a San Antonio de Padua”, *Verdadera Histórica Relación del Origen, Manifestación y Prodigiosa Renovación por Sí Misma y milagros de la Imagen de la Sacratísima Virgen María Madre de Dios Nuestra Señora del Rosario de Chiniquirá*, Bogotá, Instituto Caro y Cuervo, 1986 (1694), Bk I, Chapter III, p. 12.

the possibilities to express the desires of the two men to have their patron saints included in the painting. Nothing of this explanation appears in the testimony gathered by Zapata de Cárdenas in 1588. Yet, Zamora's version is neither frivolous nor gratuitous, something that merely permits him to account in an anecdotal way for the otherwise odd and heterodox composition. This account will allow him later on in the book, as we shall see, to make even broader claims for the painting, claims that would have been completely outside the orthodox discursive formation of the sixteenth-century miraculous in colonial Latin America.

In only a slightly later part of the book, Zamora almost literally repeats the same crucial information, but writes even more emphatically that:

En aquellos tiempos no había otros lienzos que mantas de algodón, ni más colores, que los que usaban los indios para pintarlas, mixturando tierra de diferentes colores con el zumo de algunas yerbas y flores correspondientes. Cogió Alonso de Narváez una manta de algodón que son más anchas que largas según el modo tosco que tienen los indios en sus tejidos y pintó en medio una imagen de Nuestra Señora del Rosario que cuentas blancas tiene en la mano derecha y está sobre pies el del Niño que tiene en el brazo izquierdo.²⁶

Not only was the image painted on native cloth, but it was also painted using indigenous colors. Certainly, anyone in the surrounding area of Chiquinquirá would have understood precisely what kind of manta Zamora was describing. Native women still wore white cotton mantas painted with black traditional geometric designs. They could also be seen as pictorial images as in the mid-seventeenth-century mural portrait of a native noble woman painted in the church at Sutatausa, a *reducción* located on the road between Bogotá and Chiquinquirá (figure 4). The figure wears the manta over her shoulders and great care was given to showing the linear geometric design so as to clearly mark the indigenous character of the garment. This is in distinction to adjoining male portraits of the town's *caciques* who are depicted in purely Spanish dress. More interesting still, she piously holds a rosary in her clasped hands, a common Christian gesture, but which in this case may very well echo the most important devotional image in the northern Andes.

²⁶ Zamora, *Historia de la Provincia de San Antonio del Nuevo Reino de Granada del Orden de Predicadores*, 1701, p. 306.



Figure 4. Mural Portrait of a Cacica. Nave Wall of the Church of Sutatausa. Anonymous, ca. 1630, fresco. Sutatausa.

The question, however, is what compelled Zamora to ground the narrative in the local, why was it important for Zamora to be so emphatic that the miraculous image was painted on a native “manta de algodón”? It can not simply be for local consumption. After all, any local readers would have had direct access to the image itself as well as the oral texts that surrounded it in the form of sermons, stories, and legends. But of course Zamora imagines his audience differently, and he casts his net much more broadly. His aim is in fact intertextual in the sense that he is in dialogue not only with his readers but also with other similar colonial texts. He therefore strategically resituates the Virgin of Chiquinquirá so as to be able to participate fully in a comparative discourse of local manifestations of the Christian sacred in the Americas. In relation to other local histories, Zamora imagines a history of the Americas that is coherent and self-contained. He begins his move as he recounts the events of the early stages of evangelization.

Zamora writes how, following America’s dark era of idolatry, the four voices of the Gospels first began to be preached throughout the islands and mainland of the New World. As the seed of God’s word was spread, it

brought forth His beauty and abundance in the far away lands of Peru. The clearest manifestation took place on the 20th of April 1586 in Lima when “brotó aquella fragante Rosa de Santa María, que como eximias primicias de la predicación Apostólica dieron a la iglesia de las indias occidentales”.

He writes then that “y para que en ellas fuera más dichoso, y feliz este Nuevo Reyno de Granada en 26 de Diciembre del mismo año se vio coronado con la Reyna de las flores en la portentosa Imagen de Nuestra Señora del Rosario en el pueblo de Chiquinquirá”.²⁷

Zamora focuses the reader’s attention on the historical coincidence between the birth of America’s first native born saint, Santa Rosa of Lima, and the miraculous renovation of the painting of the Virgin in Chiquinquirá. More importantly, the temporal relationship is framed within a metaphor of first fruits, suggesting that Christianity had fully taken root in America’s fertile and receptive soil, flowering into its own. By suggesting that the two events should be seen in relationship to each other within a universal, biblical history, Zamora brings his history of Nueva Granada into an ever-expanding discourse of shared Creole devotional identity. The series of interrelated prodigious events evokes a sense of the Americas as a place that is both blessed and self-possessed. This evocation, through a sense of shared history, is a part of a pan-viceregal phenomenon within elite creole cultural production. Zamora’s association of the Virgin of Chiquinquirá with Santa Rosa powerfully links the history of the former with wider creole claims. Even before achieving sainthood, Isabel Flores de Oliva was already a locus of enunciation for creole political expression, especially in Lima.²⁸ Moreover, the cult of Santa Rosa soon spread to Mexico in the mid seventeenth-century and it may have affected the Creole rise of the cult of the Virgin of Guadalupe.²⁹

27. *Ibid.*, p. 307.

28. See Ramón Mújica Pinilla, “El ancla de Santa Rosa de Lima: mística y política en torno a la Patrona de América”, in *Santa Rosa de Lima y su Tiempo*, Lima, Banco de Crédito del Perú, 1995, pp. 175-184.

29. *Ibid.*, pp. 174-175 and Elisa Vargaslugo, “Una Bandera del Criollismo”, in *Del Arte. Homenaje a Justino Fernández*, México, Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, 1977, pp. 191-199 and “Proceso iconológico del culto a Santa Rosa de Lima”, *Actas du XLII Congres International des Américanistes*, vol. 10, París, 1979, “Iconografía de Santa Rosa de Lima, en los virreinos del Perú y de la Nueva España”, *Estudios de la pintura colonial hispanoamericana*, México, 1992. A study of seventeenth-century published texts of Santa Rosa’s life, such as that by the Dominican Leonhard Hansen of *Vita mirabilis et mors pretiosa B. Rosae de Marica Limerensis*, Lovanii, H. Nempaei, 1668, might reveal even greater parallels, such as the importance given to the young Indian female servant and companion of Santa Rosa. I thank Ken Mills for this suggestion.

Of course by the time that Zamora writes, Isabel Flores de Oliva had already been made a saint (1671) and her cult had spread well beyond the shores of the Americas.³⁰ But what will become clear is the fact that Zamora textually constructs a set of interrelationships that is not only based upon various local manifestations of the sacred in the New World, but that these manifestations have an autochthonous essence that thereby makes them equivalent and therefore comparable.

Zamora's move toward equivalence with other metaphysical narratives begins in a seemingly insignificant change from the original testimonies in Bishop Cárdenas de Zapata's sixteenth-century investigation. For Zamora, Miguel, the young boy who is the very first to notice the miraculous image, is no longer a mestizo as identified in the testimony of Isabel. Rather now, the first person to witness the miracle and who calls everyone together to see the painting "estando suspenso en el aire" is identified as "un indiecillo como otro Moisés". The change of identity shifts the tenor of discovery and vision. The actions of a small mestizo boy of four or five are no longer incidental to the sixteenth-century narrative of a Spanish-born woman's vision. Miguel becomes a central agent in the late seventeenth-century narrative through whom God's plan is revealed. He now plays a role in the Americas amongst its people that is analogous to the narrative role that Moses occupies in the Old Testament.

The transformation from Mestizo to Indian is clearly not just a forgetful error, and it certainly is not an incidental mutation in the narrative. The figure of Miguel takes on a semantic function and through the alteration of his identity Zamora radically alters the thaumaturgical nature of the narrative. The sixteenth-century figure of the boy as Mestizo is in the seventeenth-century that of someone who stands between the two worlds into which the colonial Americas could be conceptually divided, that is he occupies both a real and a semantic position between the poles represented by María Ramos and Isabel. As an Indian in Zamora's narrative, Miguel no longer occupies a "natural" position of mediation. He thereby shifts the nature of the origin narrative of the image just as the narrative role of the very materiality of the image (cloth and color) shifts the nature of the image itself.³¹

30. For the diffusion of the image of Santa Rosa see José Flores Araoz, "Iconografía de Santa Rosa", in *Santa Rosa de Lima y su tiempo*, Lima, Banco de Crédito del Perú, 1995, pp. 213-228.

31. It will be noted that my analysis here of the semantic role of the figure of Miguel implies a comparative method between several variants of the origin narrative of the Virgin of Chiquinquirá.

The Virgins of Chiquinquirá and Guadalupe and Cloth

The changes that Zamora inserts into the narrative allow him to draw the feast of the Virgin of Chiquinquirá out of the particular history of Nueva Granada and into an ever increasing orbit of American experiences of Christian manifestations of the sacred. The miraculous renovation of the painting is no longer understood as something local, its celebration as a discrete feast. It is understood in terms that no peninsular would make. Zamora writes:

El Día es éste tan festivo para la Virgen Santísima, porque celebramos en él su parto virginal, que lo ilustró en este Reino con su milagrosa aparición, y en el de México, inspirando a su ilustrísimo arzobispo don fray Juan de Zumárraga para que el mismo día, sacara en solemne procesión la milagrosa imagen de Santa María Virgen de Guadalupe, que con maravillosas circunstancias se manifestó pintada en otra manta de aquel dichoso indio llamado Juan Diego.³²

Zamora makes no specific reference to the source or combination of sources from which he had derived his information about the Virgin of Guadalupe. He perhaps had read a copy of Miguel Sánchez's *Imagen de la Virgen María, madre de dios de Guadalupe, Milagrosamente aparecida en la ciudad de Mexico* published in Mexico in 1648. Sánchez was the first person to describe the translation of the image from the cathedral where Zumárraga had taken it from his home to its new chapel at Tepeyac.³³ Moreover, Sánchez compared the creoles to the children of Israel wandering the desert between Egypt and the Promised Land just as Zamora compares Miguel to Moses.³⁴ Or he may

My use of comparison here is theoretically based on Lévi-Strauss's structural study of myth, which is itself a highly structured comparative study; see Claude Lévi-Strauss, *The Raw and the Cooked. Introduction to a Science of Mythology*, Nueva York, Harper and Row Publishers, Inc., 1975, pp. 56, 132. I have allowed history in the sense of a sequential development to be the overriding structure by which the comparison is made and thereby privileging the testimonies gathered by Zamora as being the base by which later texts are evaluated. One could, however, by the logic of a structural comparison begin with any of the variants of the miracle stories.

32. Zamora, *Historia de la Provincia de San Antonio del Nuevo Reino de Granada del Orden de Predicadores*, Barcelona, Imprenta de Joseph Llopis, 1701.

33. Stafford Poole, *Our Lady of Guadalupe: The Origins and Sources of a Mexican National Symbol, 1531-1797*, Tuscon, University of Arizona Press, 1995, p. 103.

34. Miguel Sánchez, *Imagen de la Virgen María, Madre de Dios de Guadalupe...* (1648:50) as

have been reading Francisco de Florencia's *La estrella del norte* published in Mexico in 1688. Zamora's phrasing is somewhat similar to that in the title page of Florencia's book.³⁵ What the precise sources Zamora was reading is not critical. What is significant is the fact that even though Mexico's Virgin of Guadalupe was not yet an officially recognized miraculous image by Rome,³⁶ its miraculous nature was unquestionably accepted within the Americas, in part because of the circulation of such writings. In Zamora's text, the Virgin of Guadalupe's prodigious nature is cited along side that of the officially recognized cult of the Virgin of Chiquinquirá as being equal. They are both physical manifestations of the mother of God's apparition in the Americas.³⁷

But Zamora goes beyond drawing general parallels between their miraculous nature. He materially equates them in a very concrete and specific way. By saying that the Virgin of Chiquinquirá appears on a cloth made by the Chibcha and painted with native paints, he can make reference to "la otra manta" in Mexico. The miraculous images, united first of all by the universality of Mary, are also alike not because of how they appear but on what they appear. What Zamora seeks to establish is that the miracle at Chiquinquirá occurred on and through an indigenous object; that it, the miracle, is proper to the region in an autochthonous sense. It unites through a single type of object Christianity and the Americas. Zamora compares the Virgin of Chiquinquirá with the Virgin of Guadalupe and what they mean by means of a remarkable commonality: the *tilma* or Aztec cloth³⁸ and the Chibcha manta. Whether or not Zamora directly read Sánchez's book on the Virgin of Guadalupe, the association he draws between the importance of the Mexican and Colombian cloth certainly has a resonance in Sánchez's

cited in David Brading, *The first America: The Spanish monarchy, Creole patriots, and the Liberal State 1492-1867*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1991, p. 357.

35. See Sylvia R. Santaballa, "Writing the Virgin of Guadalupe in Francisco Florencia's *La estrella del norte de México*", *Colonial Latin American Review*, vol. 7, no. 1, 1998, 98 ft. 2.

36. Florencia's *La estrella del norte de México* was written to gain official recognition for the image, *ibid.*, p. 83.

37. I thank William Taylor for pointing how the local can be connected throughout colonies through the universal nature of Mary in relation to specific apparitions.

38. Sánchez writes that the proper name of the cloak is *ayatl*, in Miguel Sánchez, *Imagen de la Virgen María, Madre de Dios de Guadalupe...* (1648) as translated in *The Story of Guadalupe: Laso de la Vega's Huei tlamahuiçoltica of 1649*, Sousa, Poole and Lockhart, Stanford, Stanford University Press, 1998, p. 139.

claim that the Virgin of Guadalupe's likeness was imprinted on a native cape made of cactus fiber *magüey*. Sánchez wrote that the cactus fiber was "so useful, beneficial, rare, and unique, that it seems that in it God condensed the whole world for comfort of man".³⁹ The painting on the *tilma* could therefore be articulated as an "image which (*sic*) originated in this land and is its primitive criolla".⁴⁰ The point is that Sánchez pays elaborate descriptive attention to both the fiber and then the woven cloth on which the Virgin of Guadalupe appeared so as draw the reader's attention to their significance for the understanding of the specific nature of the Image. If this were the case for cloth on which appeared the Virgin of Guadalupe, it also certainly could be claimed for the Virgin of Chiquinquirá. They were, so to speak, "cut of the same cloth".

Clearly, Zamora's assertion is part of a Pan-American dialogue in which Creole identity was being formed around the particularities of regional histories in distinction to Spain. The intertextual references are meant to bolster localized claims through images and the things they are made of through a comparative history. That is, for Zamora, the refashioning of the evidence so as to place weight on the cloth and pure indigenous identity of the boy Miguel allows him to employ a strategy of comparison that occurs within the miraculous rather than the mundane world of culture. Just as the Virgin of Guadalupe appeared on the cloth of the Aztec so too the Virgin of Chiquinquirá appeared on the manta of the Chibcha and all the similar claims that go with it.

Zamora creates an indissoluble bond and therefore reciprocity in his account between the miraculous and the autochthonous. Just as the autochthonous offers the site for the miraculous renovation of the painting, the miraculous offers renovation to the autochthonous. That is, Zamora claims an even greater miracle for the Virgin of Chiquinquirá than the mere curing of plagues and other human problems. He says that

todo el sitio gozó del privilegio de la renovación porque siendo antes lugar de nieblas como significa en el idioma de los indios este nombre Chiquinquirá y tan

39. Ibid.

40. Miguel Sánchez, *Imagen de la Virgen María, Madre de Dios de Guadalupe...* (1648:50) as cited in David Brading, *The first America: The Spanish monarchy, Creole patriots, and the Liberal State 1492-1867*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1991, p. 357.

frío que raras veces se descubría el sol siempre cubiertos con nubes pardas, se mostró hasta los frutos de trigo, maíz, raíces y bellisimas flores cuya amenidad alumbrada ya del sol con luces más alegres sirve de entretenimiento a la multitud de gentes, que de varias partes vienen a venerar a esta Santísima imagen.⁴¹

The miraculous presence of Virgin of Chiquinquirá transforms the very land itself into a beautiful and productive region. That is, the metaphor for colonial evangelization in which the darkness of the pagan past is thrown into light by the spreading of the Gospels becomes literally grounded in the climatic transformation of the site itself. By extension all the Americas show themselves to be a beautiful and blessed land as manifested equally through the appearance of Santa Rosa and the Virgin of Guadalupe.

Conclusion

Zamora's *Historia* is not necessarily to be understood as an intentionally polemical creole tract. It is after all a history of his order, the Dominicans in Nueva Granada, written by someone who was perhaps mestizo.⁴² But this is not the issue. What is clear is that his text is consciously engaged with other texts whose authors were employed in constructing similar histories some of which were much more conscious in being creole than others.⁴³ To participate implicitly and explicitly in this discourse is the issue. To do so, Zamora produces a field of comparison in which images can be deployed naturally so as to achieve the intended results without calling attention to itself. Most importantly, perhaps, Zamora shifts the colonial logic of comparison. That is, he shifts the criteria by which comparison is to be made and thereby appears to subvert the hierarchy implicit in the paradigm. European norms are no longer those by which comparison is to be constructed and judgement (positive or negative) is to be rendered. The terms of comparison are all from within an American spectrum. Their deployment does not set up a

41. Ibid.

42. By saying that Zamora was perhaps a mestizo does not mean that he did not identify with "creole" sensibilities whatever those might be. *Creole* and *Peninsular* are categories of identification which although they were in some ways restricted by birth were permeable.

43. David Brading, *The first America: The Spanish monarchy, Creole patriots, and the Liberal State 1492-1867*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1991, pp. 293-421.

relationship of dependency. Rather they act to reify each other within a structure of comparison.

One should not think however that this creole structure of comparison is a radical alternative to the colonially hieratic structure of comparison that sets Europe at the apogee. It participates fully within its discursive logic. By setting equivalencies between creole criteria, commonality of identity can be forged in distinction to others. These others are not just *peninsulares*. In fact, one segment of the intended audience to which these texts were imagined to address were the *peninsulares* and not just those living in the Americas. The underlying and unarticulated issue at stake was as much about creating equivalence with Spain as it was establishing difference. The real and unbridgeable difference occurred between the creole readers of these texts and the other inhabitants of the same blessed land. They were easily found and known. They occupied the countryside and even worse the streets of creole cities, always just outside the writing chambers of creoles authors like Sigüenza y Góngora who in 1692 upon looking out his balcony window was able to recognize the social distance between himself and them just long enough to register his disgust and horror.⁴⁴ ♣

44. See Anthony Pagden, "Identity Formation in Spanish America", in *Colonial Identity in the Atlantic World 1500-1800*, N. Canny and A. Pagden eds., Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1987, p. 75.

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