
CONVERSION IN COLONIAL TIMES: THE FESTIVAL OF *CORPUS CHRISTI* IN PERU AND BRAZIL. THE IMPORTANCE OF THEOLOGY IN THE HISTORY OF THE MISSIONS

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For some historians of the missions, the question of conversion has at times been dealt with as merely a matter of who has been baptized or who has assimilated Christian practices into their daily lives.¹ Statistics on the number of “conquered souls” do not give a true picture of conversion, which is an inner movement of the *heart*

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¹ See Boschi, Caio. 1998. “As missões no Brasil.” In *História da expansão Portuguesa*, edited by Francisco Bethencourt and Kirti Chaudhuri. Vol. 2. Navarra: Círculo de Leitores, 388-402, who uses the phrase “conquista da almas” as a way to indicate converts. Also see Ricard, Robert. 1937. “Les Jésuites au Brésil pendant la seconde moitié du XVIIe siècle (1549-97). Méthodes missionnaires et conditions d’apostolat.” *Revue d’Histoire des Missions* 14 : 321-366, who measures conversion in terms of the number of baptisms. Even if various authors choose to measure conversion like they did in the sixteenth century, based on how many



and *mind* toward embracing the triune God. Some historians have based their histories about the extent to which Christianity spread throughout the Portuguese and Spanish empires on the recorded number of baptisms and miss the true picture of what type of Christianity and conversion was taking place.²

The study of theology proves to be essential in understanding the Christian conversion that was taking place in Peru and Brazil as seen through the feast of *Corpus Christi*. Instead of separating theology and history as two distinct disciplines, they must serve each other in favor of an approach that considers the importance of all data. The feast of *Corpus Christi* is ambiguous and multivocal: it means different things to the Europeans and the indigenous peoples. The festival from the indigenous perspective inverts in many ways the traditional view that the Europeans conquered the indigenous way of life. To have Christ paraded around town in the holy monstrance meant little if the Tupinambá were gnawing at the leg of the Portuguese slave.³ Therefore, what conversion means is open-ended and contingent on the criteria chosen to establish it. To speak of conversion is almost a question *mal posée*, as it can never be truly answered and should not be judged. Instead, the goal is to understand what is particular and distinctive about a group's beliefs and then to seek an explanation of why they believe what they do.

Religious experience in Cuzco and Rio de Janeiro cannot be compared since these entities are so distinctive. Comparing them would force categories and frameworks that would not allow each region to express itself

souls had been baptized or conquered, this oversimplification of the convert is problematic and the terminology proves inadequate to address the complex reality of conversion.

² For an interesting study on the complexities of conversion see, Schwartz, Stuart. 2008. *All Can Be Saved. Religious Tolerance and Salvation in the Iberian Atlantic World*. New Haven: Yale University Press. For a detailed study on the ways one can identify a Christian conversion in various contexts see Bevans, Stephen, and Roger Schroeder. 2004. *Constants in Context. A Theology of Mission for Today*. New York: Orbis Books.

³ Leite, Serafim, ed. 1956. *Monumenta Brasiliae*. Vol. 4 of Monumenta Brasiliae. Roma: Monumenta Historica Soc. IESU, 146.

fully. Rather, one can observe how the various key tenants or rituals of the Roman Catholic faith emerged distinctly in two localities of Latin America in complimentary yet inventive ways. Conversion to Christianity was a unique expression of local customs. Christianity is always a conglomerate of local customs and its appropriation is always specific to its cultural context.⁴

As is the case throughout its 2,000 year history, Christianity has always interacted with other so-called “pagan” cultures and created itself anew, risking its orthodoxy but in so doing, allowing itself to survive based on its ability to adapt and assume different forms.⁵ Since Christianity has adapted to local culture throughout its history, the cultural norms of a particular place and time, which in this case includes the Amerindian customs of Cuzco and Rio de Janeiro before the arrival of the Europeans, will contribute to an understanding of how conversion occurred. Thus, the same issue surrounding conversion that existed since late antiquity, that “there could be no Christian present if there was not at the same time a valued pagan past,” was experienced again in the distinctive cultural context of the Andes and Rio de Janeiro.⁶

To briefly clarify what is meant by Inca and Andean religion, Inca practices are those which happened before the fall of the Inca Empire and Andean beliefs are those which persist until today, infused with traces of the Inca past.⁷ Likewise, referencing the Brazilians of Rio de Janeiro also connotes this awareness that some of the beliefs of the Tupinambá, the indigenous peoples of the coast of Brazil, have remained with the Brazilians throughout their years of acculturation.

⁴ Realizing the limitations of words such as *mestizaje*, *hybridity*, *syncretism*, etc. to address the artistic and religious reality of Latin America, I have opted instead to use “conglomerate.”

⁵ An example is Gregory the Great who in the sixth century recommended that pagan altars be destroyed and Christian ones erected in their place.

⁶ Maccormack, Sabine. 1991. *Religion in the Andes. Vision and Imagination in Early Colonial Peru*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 12.

⁷ Maccormack 1991, 4.

Since the customs, practices, and knowledge of Inca religion and the Tupinambá worldview were the basis for the process of appropriating Christianity, then what is merely cultural and what is merely religious cannot be distinguished. Therefore, a “true” religious conversion is only really achieved with a cultural conversion, which entails a change in one’s view of reality. The Amerindian’s whole view of reality had to be changed in order for a Christian conversion to be authentic in western European eyes. Indigenous religious beliefs only fade away through the generations, as their view of reality shifts.⁸ Anthropologist Hildred Geertz explains the late medieval sense of a conversion, which is the same sense of conversion in South America. “And those beliefs that we today consider magical apparently began to lose their popularity when this deeper substratum of convictions about the nature of the universe began to fall apart.”⁹

As most of the documents about Amerindian religious experience were written by the hands of Europeans or *mestizos*, a reconstruction of their religious beliefs can be done through the aesthetic – through cults, images they created – the visual world. In trying to understand the religious experience in colonial Peru or Brazil in theological or historical terms, theological aesthetics – the dynamic, symbolic representation of spiritual truths – constitutes an aid for our understanding.¹⁰ Theological aesthetics is the study of the interior, dynamic attitudes that makes the mystical presence of God felt in the eyes of the beholder. In the case of the indigenous peoples, this concept can be applied as well since they felt that a supreme power was really present in their worship to the sun god, for example. History has always engaged art, ritual, dance, etc., yet recogniz-

⁸ Boxer, Charles. 1978. *The Church Militant and Iberian Expansion 1440-1770*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 97.

⁹ Geertz, Hildred. 1975. “Anthropology of Religion and Magic,” *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 1 (6): 84.

¹⁰ A branch of theology founded by Von Balthasar, Hans. 1986. *The Glory of the Lord: a Theological Aesthetics*. San Francisco: Ignatius Press. For more information see Roberts, Louis. 1987. *The Theological Aesthetics of Hans Urs Von Balthasar*. Washington, D.C, Catholic University of America Press.

ing that God or a spiritual being is present in art is what this branch of theology offers. The most genuine encounter human beings can have with God is through *feeling* God's presence. In the beauty of the arts, in this case a procession, the participant can experience God's presence and this experience of God in the arts can be a powerful tool for understanding the Christianity of the new converts in the Andes and in Rio de Janeiro.

Historical investigation in the colonial world should include an understanding of society's 'theology' in the broadest sense, meaning a way of viewing reality, understanding how the world works and the powers that control life and death, etc. The colonial world was, for the Spaniards and the Andeans, Portuguese and Brazilians, a deeply spiritually-embedded world. For the Spaniards, such as the Jesuit José de Acosta, the devil manifested itself all over the Andes as seen in his *Natural and Moral History of the Indies*.¹¹ Likewise, the Andeans believed that the success of their crops depended on their worship in the festival of Capacocha. All reality had an intrinsically spiritual meaning. As the majority of society had a religious frame of mind, regardless of the doctrine they did not know, the religious and spiritual realm was the lens through which all of life was interpreted.

Generally speaking there is a different experience of God, Christianity, and beauty for each individual, but it is especially noticeable between the Europeans and the Amerindians. The indigenous people's response to Christianity was aesthetic – as it took on the form of songs, festivals, and oral stories. While the Europeans sought to speak of, or theologize about their experiences of God in a hierarchal, authoritative way, the Andeans were more focused on the experience itself.¹² Conversion is a mixture of the two approaches. Strictly speaking, a genuine encounter with God is a question of the balance between ratiocination, or reasoning, and emotion, or feeling. St. Anselm (1033-1109) was one of the first Church Fathers to question how far one must walk down the road of understanding in order to be a true Christian. Anselm encouraged the faithful not merely

¹¹ Acosta, José de. 2002. *Natural and Moral History of the Indies*. Durham: Duke University Press.

¹² Exceptions being Garcilaso de la Vega and Guaman Poma de Ayala.

to believe what they ought to, but to search out a deeper knowledge of the faith. Faith holds priority to reason, for Anselm, because it is in believing that one may understand. He states, “For I do not seek to understand so that I may believe; but I believe so that I may understand.”¹³ He proposed the motto “faith seeking understanding” (*fides quarens intellectum*) and encouraged those of faith to question and wrestle with what it means to be a Christian.

Yet it was in the aesthetic realm that the Europeans and the indigenous peoples could find a more immediate common ground. The style of Baroque, a European born style transported to the Americas, was meant to tap into the sacred and create an experience of it. William Taylor summarizes that,

It is not surprising that late colonial Indians made Baroque art their own in some inventive ways. Baroque was a style without strict rules, a style of excess, of lavish decoration and dramatic light and shadow that attempted to create an experience of the sacred, not merely to symbolize it.¹⁴

Theologian Garcia-Rivera states, in relation to the paintings at Lascaux done 15,500 years ago, that “[They] demonstrate a truth our world seems to have forgotten. There exist values that transcend space and time. There exist realities that pervade the entire universe. There exist presences that allow us an intimacy with God.”¹⁵

Just as one can experience great emotion when seeing the paintings of Lascaux, so can non-Christians experience emotion in front of Michel-

¹³ St. Anselm’s Proslogion. 1979. “Neque enim intelligere ut credam, sed credo ut intelligam.” In *St. Anselm’s Proslogion*, edited by M. J. Charlesworth, 114-115. Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press.

¹⁴ Taylor, William. 1996. *Magistrates of the Sacred. Priests and Parishioners in Eighteenth-Century Mexico*. Stanford: Stanford University, 61.

¹⁵ Garcia-Rivera, Alejandro. 2003. *A Wounded Innocence. Sketches for a Theology of Art*. Minnesota: Liturgical Press, 3.

angelo's *Pieta* in St. Peter's Basilica. This is possible because the affective quality of the works goes beyond their religious beliefs and touches some part of human reality, in these two cases suffering. The *Corpus Christi* festival in colonial Peru and Brazil is similar. Even though it was a procession proclaiming faith in the living presence of Christ, it also had an affective quality that went beyond Christianity all together, being that it appeals to a sense of community and belonging. Religious occasions were generally the social events of the year and thus the communal quality of the festival itself drew Andeans and Brazilians to it. Saint Augustine (354-430) claims that the community is strengthened and supported through its unity.¹⁶ Thus, the communal and participatory nature strengthens the solidarity of the group, even though in the European mind the indigenous peoples held a subjugated position.¹⁷ Yet this communal nature was an inversion of the reality that the Europeans were imagining. If *Corpus Christi* was being celebrated in Rio de Janeiro while the indigenous peoples were cannibalizing one of their enemies, this one festival, therefore, had a different religious significance for the each group involved.

Corpus Christi celebrates the consecrated host, the body of Christ brought to the people, and thus the host was paraded around the city in a gold monstrance. *Corpus Christi* began in medieval Europe in the twelfth century but only gained its supreme importance during the Catholic Reformation. The calculation of the date for *Corpus Christi* is dependent on the movable feast of Easter. Easter is the first Sunday after the first full moon after the vernal equinox. *Corpus Christi* is the Thursday after Trinity Sunday. The feast was initiated in the Church in order to affirm the doc-

¹⁶ Augustine, Saint. 1997. *Sermons. III/11 Newly Discovered Sermons*, edited by Edmund Hill. New York: New City Press, 390.

¹⁷ Geertz, Clifford. 1957. "Ritual and Social Change: A Javanese Example." *American Anthropologist* 1(59), "The sociological approach emphasizes the manner in which belief and particularly ritual reinforce the particular social ties between individuals; it stresses the way in which the social structure of a group is strengthened and perpetuated through the ritualistic or mythic symbolization of the underlying social values upon which it rests," 32.

trine of transubstantiation and was a way to communicate dogma.¹⁸ In 1551, when the Catholics of Europe were amidst the threat of the Protestant Reformation, *Corpus Christi* was an opportunity to voice doctrine loudly in the streets through dances, statues, colors and music. *Corpus Christi* was declared a “triumph over heresy” by the Council of Trent and all those who did not participate were heretics.¹⁹

The feast was brought to Cuzco in 1533 after the initial conquest by Francisco Pizarro. Likewise, the Armada of Martim Afonso brought with it people that celebrated the *Santo Sacrificio* and the feast arrived in Guanabara Bay, present day Rio de Janeiro, for a ninety day stay in 1531 when *Corpo de Deus* was celebrated for the first time on the 8th of June, 1531.²⁰ However, the feast did not remain in Guanabara Bay because the Portuguese did not officially settle there until after the end of the France Antarctica in 1567, when the Portuguese expelled the French traders.²¹ However, the feast returned to Guanabara Bay before the Portuguese settlers, as Jesuit Superior Manuel de Nóbrega and José de Anchieta, S.J. celebrated *Corpus Christi* on the 10th of June, 1563.²²

When the feast made its way into Peru and Brazil, it became once again the most important feast in South America because it symbolized triumph over the native infidels, as well as triumph over evil, “savages”, moors and Turks.²³ Ironically, the First Council of Lima (1551-1552) banned

¹⁸ Gisbert, Teresa. 1999. *El Paraíso de los Pájaros Parlantes, La Imagen del Otro en la Cultura Andina*. La Paz: Plural Editores, 238.. “La tradición verbal está presente en la fiesta, donde la representación teatral juega un papel importante no sólo como realce de determinados acontecimientos sino como transmisora de ideas.”

¹⁹ Dean, Carolyn. 1999. *Inka Bodies and the Body of Christ. Corpus Christi in Colonial Cuzco, Peru*. Durham: Duke University Press, quoting October 11, 1551 Council, session 13.

²⁰ Leite, Serafim. 1965. *Novas Páginas de História do Brasil*. São Paulo: Companhia Editora Nacional, 90.

²¹ France Antarctica is the name the French gave to the area around the *Baía de Guanabara*, during their occupation from 1555-1567.

²² Leite 1965, 91-92. The feast was believed to be celebrated in 1565 by Padre Nóbrega and in 1566 it was celebrated by Padre Gonçalo de Oliveira until it was firmly established in 1567.

²³ Dean 1999, 12.

Andeans from the Eucharist except under special conditions and yet at the same time included them as natives in the festival “as the people over whom Christians had triumphed.”²⁴ How was it, then, that the Spaniards convinced the natives to participate in a festival that symbolized triumph over them, their religion and their way of life?

Scholars of Peru and Brazil have dealt differently with the process of religious and cultural assimilation, principally because religious idols were found in the Andes in the sixteenth century, while Brazil was believed to be free of idolatry. In Cuzco, the Andeans had their own way of viewing the festival of *Corpus Christi* which had corresponded to their own festivals at approximately the same time of the year. Carolyn Dean’s extensive discussion of the importance of Inti Raymi presents one point of view as to why Andeans participated in the festival of their conquerors and why the festival appealed to them. The very location of Cuzco itself signified holy ground, as it was once the capital and religious center of the Inca Empire. Dean states, “Post-conquest Cuzco was a concept as well as a geographical location. It was an ‘imagined’ city of the imperial past and the symbolic heart of indigenous Peru.”²⁵ It also proved convenient to the missionaries that the Virgin Mary appeared in Cuzco, where a church was later built, thus legitimizing Cuzco as holy ground for Christians as well.

Inti Raymi, or the festival of the winter solstice, marked the beginning of a new Inca year, which falls between the end of May and early June according to the moon. Inti Raymi means “Festival of the Sun” in Quechua and honors the sun god, Inti. The festival of the sun god was the most important festival in Inca Cuzco and consisted of nine days of dances, processions, and animal sacrifices to insure a good harvest. The religious orders wanted to take advantage of Inti Raymi as it happened to fall at the same time of year as *Corpus Christi* and involved extremely elaborate festivities. Juan Polo de Ondegardo, a lawyer, magistrate, and tax collector in Peru

²⁴ Dean 1999, 15.

²⁵ Dean 1999, 25.

from 1545-1575 was one of the first to state that he thought the Inti was present in *Corpus Christi*.

Some things [the two festivals of Inti Raymi and *Corpus Christi*] have some appearance of similarity (as in dances, performances, or songs) and that because of this there was and still is among the Indians that seem to celebrate our festival of Corpus Christi, a superstitious belief that they are celebrating their ancient feast of Inti Raymi.²⁶

The similarities between *Corpus Christi* and Inti Raymi included temporal correspondence, the same location of Cuzco, and performances of Inca past, which included images of the sun which corresponded to the golden monstrance that holds the consecrated host of *Corpus Christi*.²⁷ Dean writes on the use of the sun in *Corpus Christi* and its parallels to the monstrance.

They [Spaniards] did not discourage the display of solar imagery by indigenous leaders, specifically sun disks in their chests and often on their foreheads.... These disks were understood as symbols of the affiliation of the post-conquest Inkas with Christ, the new Inti, who, when in the form of the host, is displaced in his own golden disk. The whole notion of solar worship was refashioned in order to underscore the triumph of Christ over Inti, and of *Corpus Christi* over Inti Raymi as well.²⁸

Thus the Spaniards saw *Corpus Christi* triumphing in the Andes, yet the Andeans believed otherwise.

²⁶ Quoted by Dean 1999, 32.

²⁷ Dean 1999, 32.

²⁸ Dean 1999, 43.

David Cahill writes that the Inca festival of Capacocha, having to do with rituals and harvest dances that lasted longer than Inti Raymi, was more similar to *Corpus Christi*.

It is probably true, however, that parallels between *Corpus Christi* and Capacocha are closer than those between *Corpus* and Inti Raymi. This is the case argued by Fiedler, who points out that Inti Raymi “was performed by and for the Incan nobility exclusively” whereas Capacocha “involved the entire social community dependent in Cuzco.”²⁹

Besides for the two theories mentioned here, there exist other hypotheses as to which Inca festival could have been acted out in *Corpus Christi*, as there were many festivals occurring in the Andean world, all with dances and songs that usually consisted of generic festive behaviors that could be performed at a variety of Andean occasions and were not specific to any one festival.³⁰

Now let us now examine how the Amerindians of the Guanabara Bay expressed themselves in the feast of *Corpus Christi*. In Guanabara Bay existed the Tupinambá, Amerindians of the Tupi group. Owing to the French occupation in the Guanabara Bay from 1555-1567 and their prolific orthographers, such as André Thevet, one can construct the basic anthropological view of the festivals that the Tupinambá celebrated.³¹ The festivals of the Tupinambá were grand events after war in which warriors

²⁹ Cahill, David. 2002. *From Rebellion to Independence in the Andes: Soundings from Southern Peru, 1750-1830*. Amsterdam: Askant Academic Publishers, 82.

³⁰ Maccormack states (1991, 421), “Corpus Christi was used to disguise the manifold observances of Caruamita. Carumita was the time when Pleiades reappeared in the sky after being invisible for two months. During this time frost was liable to spoil the crops, so that the Pleiades were known as Oncoicoillur, ‘stars of disease’. In Andean awareness, *Corpus Christi* thus marked the time when one must make confession and sacrifice to the huacas and mallaquis for the sake of the crops.”

³¹ See Thevet, André. 1997. *Le Brésil d’Andre Thevet. Les Singularités de la France Antartique (1557)*, edited by Franck Lestringant. Paris: Éditions Chandeigne.

brought back enemies to be executed and eaten, celebrating the revenge taken against their enemy for killing men of their own tribe. The ritual sacrifice of an enemy constituted the central event and most meaningful ceremony in the life of the Tupinambá.³² The act of human sacrifice was a rite of passage for young men and was seen as central to their culture.³³ Certain body parts, such as legs and genitals, were saved to be used in festivals.³⁴ Therefore, as the festivals were essentially celebrations of revenge, could the consummation of the body of Christ have been perceived, consciously or subconsciously, as an extension of the customs of their ancestors? Could Christ have been seen as their enemy to sacrifice “on the cross” and then consume? In Tupinambá customs, a three day party occurred before the anthropophagic ritual.³⁵ As they sang, danced, and drank alcohol made of mandioca (a plant similar to a sweet potato) uninterruptedly for three days did they perceive Christ as a savior or an enemy?

In the first account of the Portuguese and the Amerindians celebrating the feast together in Rio de Janeiro, in 1563, Jesuits Manuel de Nóbrega and José de Anchieta recounted their horror at the scene as the indigenous peoples celebrated in their own manner, with alcohol, dances, and gnawing on the leg of a slave of the Portuguese that an Amerindian had captured in Guanabara Bay.³⁶ After observing this cannibalistic display,

³² Couto, Jorge. 1997. *A Construção do Brasil. Ameríndios, Portugueses e Africanos, do início do povoamento a finais de Quinhentos*. Lisboa: Edições Cosmos, 103.

³³ Perrone-Moisés, Breatriz. 2000. “A Vida nas aldeias dos Tupi da Costa.” *Oceanos. Viver no Brasil colónia*. 42: 18, “Assim o rapaz poderá realizar sua primeira execução para tornar-se adulto, para poder casar-se.”

³⁴ Couto 1997, 102, “Tinham ainda o hábito de retirar os órgãos genitais das mulheres e das crianças mortas no ataque para entregar às esposas, que os preparavam no moquém e os consumiam por ocasião das grandes festividades.”

³⁵ Couto 1997, 103. “Este acto festivo precedia o ritual antropofágico.”

³⁶ Leite 1965, 91. “Na festa de Corpus Christi (10 de junho), a missa foi na aldeia doutro índio, que o defendeu das ciladas dos que vinham de Guanabara. Festa que o índio celebrou também à sua maneira com vinhos e danças; e com grande horror do Padre Nóbrega e do Ir. Anchieta que conta a cena, roeram a perna dum escravo dos portugueses, que o índio tomado no Rio de Janeiro.” Original letter from *Monumenta Brasiliae* IV, 146.

Nóbrega included cannibalism at the forefront of his list of obstacles to conversion.

You must make laws that prohibit them from eating human flesh and going to war without the permission of the Governor; that permit them only one wife; that oblige them to wear clothing...; that outlaw their sorcerers...; that make them live in one place without moving around.³⁷

However, Anchieta did not make cannibalism the *summum malum* of Tupi society and instead insisted that the Tupi should not be pulled away too quickly from the custom in which they put their greatest happiness.³⁸

Dancing was an essential part of the Tupinambá culture, as they performed religious dances every night in lavish costumes of feathers with their instruments and maracas in their hands.³⁹ The Tupinambá actually borrowed dances from other tribes.⁴⁰ “Dances can pass from one tribe to the other as an object or a technique.”⁴¹ As the Tupinambá easily borrowed dances from other tribes, they could borrow dances or customs from the Christian religion as well. Likewise, Europeans borrowed native dances for the feast of *Corpus Christi* as the annual letter of the Jesuits in Japan in 1606 depicts. Japanese boys danced their own native dances in the feast of

³⁷ Leite 1954, 58.

³⁸ Anchieta, José de. 1993. *Cartas: Informações, Fragmentos históricos e sermões*. Rio de Janeiro: Civilização Brasileira, 201. “mas eles diziam que ainda haviam de comer seus contrários, até que se vingassem bem deles, e que devagar cairiam em nossos costumes, e na verdade, porque costume em que eles têm posta sua maior felicidade não se lhes há de arrancar tão presto.”

³⁹ Métraux, A. 1928. *La Religion des Tupinamba et ses rapports avec celle des autres tribus Tupi-Guarani*. Paris : Libraire Ernest Leroux, 193. “Les Tupinamba exécutaient chaque soir des danses dont le caractère religieux s’était considérable effacé et qui, comme dans le Chaço, s’étaient transformées en de véritable parties de plaisir.”

⁴⁰ Flexor, Maria. 1996. “Da fé à dança: a procissão como síntese de manifestações artísticas (Bahia-Brasil).” *International Symposium, Struggle for Synthesis. The Total Work of Art in the 17th and 18th Centuries*, 464. “Também é conhecida a vocação que índios e negros sempre tiveram para a dança, e a música. Desses atos apareceram atos ou atitudes espontâneos de fervor que moveram a colectividade baiana.”

⁴¹ Flexor 1996, 194.

Corpus Christi side by side their European counterparts.⁴² The dance constituted a space where doctrinal differences and legacies of conflict between Europeans and indigenous peoples could be pacified. The absence of doctrine permitted a mysterious freedom that allowed Christianity to take on new forms, and which allowed a multitude of spiritualities to express themselves uninhibited.

By the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the dances in the feasts had become highly regulated.⁴³ The authorities at the time had grown suspicious of the activities performed in the dances, even though in theory the style of the procession was very similar to Portugal.⁴⁴ Yet, with the arrival of the court in Rio de Janeiro in 1808, feasts were celebrated with greater frequency and more lavishly. *Corpus Christi* in Rio de Janeiro in 1808 was “with a pomp and magnificence never seen in this city,” due to

⁴² Costa, João. 1998. “O Cristianismo no Japão e o episcopado de D. Luís Cerqueira.” PhD diss., Universidade Nova de Lisboa, 358. Taken from the Annual letter, March 20th, 1606. “... mas o que entre tudo mais alegrou foram duas danças de meninos japoens; hũa ao modo de Japam, e outra ao de Europa todos ricamente vestidos, os da dança de Europa a portuguesa, e os da Japam a japoaa...”

⁴³ Monteiro, Marianna. 2001. “A dança na festa colonial.” In *Festa. Cultura e Sociabilidade na América portuguesa*, edited by István Janesó and Íris Kantor. Vol. 2. São Paulo: Editora Hucitec, 814. “Ao longo dos séculos XVII e XVIII...foram inúmeras as regulamentações impondo limites a dança, ao vestuário, aos gastos com festas. Esse carácter contraditório da relação entre as instituições de poder civil e religioso e as diversas instancias de produção simbólica expressava-se portanto, negativamente, no rastro deixado pelos numerosos atos e regulamentações que visavam conter a dança, diminuendo sua interferências nas igrejas, evitando a permanência de praticas pagas.” Also see Schwartz, Stuart. 2008. “The King’s Processions: Municipal and Royal Authority and the Hierarchies of Power in Colonial Salvador.” In *Portuguese Colonial Cities in the Early Modern World*, edited by Liam Brockey, 117-203. Farnham: Ashgate, 177-203 for an account of *Corpus Christi* in mid-eighteenth-century Bahia and how the procession conveyed the messages of the Church and the State. See Cardim, Pedro. 2002. “Ceremonial, Political Allegiance and Religious Constraints in Seventeenth-Century Portugal.” In *Religious Ceremonials and Images: Power and Social Meaning, 1450-1700*, edited by José Pedro Paiva, 351-368. Coimbra: Palimage Editores, 351-368 for more on the connection between the crown and the people in ceremony.

⁴⁴ Santos, Beatriz. 2001. “Unidade e Diversidade através da Festa de *Corpus Christi*.” In *Festa. Cultura e Sociabilidade na América portuguesa*, edited by István Janesó and Íris Kantor. Vol. 2. São Paulo: Editora Hucitec, 521, “A festa de *Corpus Christi* na América Portuguesa era, em muitos aspectos, semelhante à praticada no Reino.”

the crown's presence in Brazil, which presumably meant that there was greater control over the content of the dances.⁴⁵

Christianity, particularly in the sixteenth century, was ruthlessly hierarchical, as all of society was, civil and religious. The obsession with the marching order of the procession illustrates the case in point. The church had limited spaces so it was reserved for the most important dignitaries of the region and as the procession went out onto the street, those closest to the sacrament held the most honored position.

From here we conclude that the procession was the privileged *locus* of social hierarchical representation, having in view the exaltation and maintaining of the hierarchical order of society. In this sense, the presence of the blacks carrying giant float images is emblematic and confirms their condition as a manual worker.⁴⁶

Through all of the debates about who was first in the procession and who occupied the space closest to the holy sacrament, the “place” (literally and figuratively) of the indigenous peoples in colonial society can be observed.

At the same time that the festival was considered a highly stratified event it was also considered a communal event, represented and reinforced by the idea that people of the community had a major role to play in the procession. All the population was required to participate in the festival as can be seen from the letter written in 1735 from the Officials

⁴⁵ Silva, Maria. 1993. “O Sagrado e o Profano nas Festas do Brasil Colonial.” In *Revista de Ciências históricas* 3: 107-108, “De qualquer modo podemos afirmar que a mudança da Corte para o Rio de Janeiro em 1808, acarretou uma maior frequência dessas festas e também uma maior sumptuosidade.” “A festa de Corpo de Deus, foi nesse ano celebrada ‘com uma pompa, e magnificência nunca vista nesta cidade.’”

⁴⁶ Santiago, Camila. 2001. “Gastos do Senado da Câmara de Vila Rica com Festas.” In *Festa. Cultura e Sociabilidade na América portuguesa*, edited by István Janesó and Íris Kantor. Vol. 2. São Paulo: Editora Hucitec, 493. “Dai concluímos ser o cortejo locus privilegiado de representação social hierarquizada tendo em vista a exaltação e manutenção da ordenação hierárquica da sociedade. Nesse sentido, emblemática é a presença de negros carregando imagens gigantescas, o seja, confirmando representativamente sua condição de trabalhador braçal, tão degradante nas Minas do Ouro.”

of the Town Hall (*Camera*) to King John V.⁴⁷ In the letter, the officials of the Town Hall asked that local people be nominated to hold the rods of the canopy which is carried over the Sacrament in the procession, instead of the letting the military orders do it, as was the custom. The Knights of the Order of Christ always wanted the prime spot in the parade and the priests at times argued against it, as this specific correspondence shows. This act symbolized active local Brazilian participation in the procession, a chance for the common people to view their participation as essential to the feast. Letters from Minas Gerais in the seventeenth and eighteenth century specifically mentioned that the bread makers, candy makers, and butchers, in other words, the local craftsmen, were required not only to attend but to contribute with “allegories, dances and ornaments,” as the expenses for the feast were too much for the town hall to pay alone.⁴⁸ Thus, the participation of the local craftsmen can be viewed as a pathway for which the creativity of the commoners could be expressed in the feast.

The process of conversion that was taking place throughout colonial Brazil was just as much a matter of a conversion of culture as it was of religion, as we observed in tracing the practices of the festival in the colonial period. The unorthodox cultural practices, such as the eating of human enemies, were slowly eradicated and the more ambiguous practices were preserved. However, the question must still be asked, were the Andeans and Brazilians appropriating Christianity? Gauvin Bailey answers this question in an inventive way:

Whether for political, social, or purely spiritual reasons, whole communities embraced Christianity – but they did so selectively. They indigenized the Christian religion, and interpret-

⁴⁷ Arquivo Historico Ultramarinho, Brasil-Avulsos, Rio de Janeiro, Caixa 28, D. 2938.

⁴⁸ Flexor 1996, 468. “*Além da obrigação de toda a população comparecer a esses atos religiosos públicos, os oficiais mecânicos e os padeiros, padeiras, confeiteiros, quintadeiros e marchantes eram obrigados, não só a comparecer, mas também, contribuir com as alegorias, danças, e ornamentos.*”

ed it on their own often very idiosyncratic terms, giving it their own stamp of identity. Consequently, it was not so much a case of converting to Christianity but of converting Christianity.⁴⁹

If the art of *Corpus Christi* can be seen through the lens of theological aesthetics, a different interpretation arises that does not depict the feast as polarized as Carolyn Dean portrays. In recognizing God or a Supernatural Being's presence in the procession tensions are eased as it offers yet another reason as to why the indigenous peoples might have been attracted to the conquerors' feast. If God is believed to be present in the procession then the two groups can join in the religious and cultural rituals displayed in the feast with more ease because they recognize that their god is present. The festival itself and the sixteen paintings produced in its aftermath were spiritual pathways in themselves and a form of beauty in both the Spaniards and the Cuzqueños' eyes.⁵⁰ The Andeans did not see this festival as symbolizing a grand exoteric battle in which Christianity triumphs over Andean religion, but rather the Andeans saw it more "locally" as an operating system from which they saw their own world view represented, in slightly different forms.⁵¹

A series of sixteen paintings depicting *Corpus Christi* are believed to be done by indigenous hands from the Cuzco school in the seventeenth century.⁵² The painting *Confraternities of Saint Rose and La Linda* focuses on the

⁴⁹ Bailey, Gauvin. 1999. *Art on the Jesuit Missions in Asia and Latin America, 1542-1773*. Toronto, University of Toronto Press, 19.

⁵⁰ For information on how Andeans found it beautiful, see Klein, Cecilia. 1990. "Depictions of the Dispossessed." *Art Journal* 49 and also Adorno, Rolena. 1990. "The Depiction of Self and Other in Colonial Peru." *Art Journal* 49: 106-118.

⁵¹ Bailey 1999, 20.

⁵² Bailey, Gauvin. 2005. *Art of Colonial Latin America*. London: Phaidon Press, 199. The Cuzco school was "founded in the second half of the seventeenth century in the midst of an intensive building campaign that followed the 1650 earthquake." It is believed that Mollinedo, the bishop of the time in Cuzco, commissioned the series of paintings in order to have art to decorate the churches after their reconstruction. No original contracts or documents of the paintings survived, yet based on the date of the earthquake they have been dated 1675-1680. They are

two confraternities, Saint Rose and *La Linda*, which were religious brotherhoods dedicated to female devotions.⁵³ At the start of the procession is Saint Rose of Lima, the first saint born in the Americas and behind her is *La Linda*, which was the title of the Virgin Mary who had been worshipped in Cuzco since her appearance.⁵⁴ *La Linda* is surrounded by native Andean elites. The young native that leads is a *curaca* (Inca noble) and the man to his left is his father (as the writing at the bottom of the painting tells us) who is staring straight at the viewer.

Saint Rose of Lima, the patron saint of Lima, was viewed with pride by Lima's Creole population as a symbol of their own Christianity in the Americas. *La Linda*, who is on a silver platform and closer to the triumphal arch than Saint Rose, was a sign of the rivalry between Cuzco, whose patron saint was *La Linda*, and Lima in colonial times.⁵⁵ Thus, *La Linda*'s position and more prominent place in the painting suggest the artist's preference for Cuzco. Yet the Eucharist, which is at the top and center of the painting, is still the focus. Protecting the consecrated host is Charles II, whose sword is ready to fight the Muslims, symbolizing the Hapsburgs' role in Christendom that has arrived in Peru.

The Creole saint is decidedly localized, an act symbolizing that Christianity has become part of the Andean world. To have a Creole saint officially confirmed that Christianity had arrived in a specific Peruvian place, meaning that the Andeans could now appropriate Christianity on their own, in their local context. Therefore, Christianity was no longer interpreted as a Spanish imposition and symbol of triumph, but rather something uniquely local. Just as the Virgin of Guadalupe symbolized the first

some of the best known paintings of southern Andean colonial art and are so often studied for their hybrid style – a mixture of European influences with Peruvian sensibilities. The artwork of these guilds in Peru was influenced heavily from Baroque and late Renaissance art from Europe.

⁵³ Philips, Elena, Johanna Hecht and Cristiana Martín, eds. 2004. *The Colonial Andes. Tapestries and Silverwork*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 315.

⁵⁴ Philips, Hecht & Martín eds. 2004, 315.

⁵⁵ Philips, Hecht & Martín eds. 2004, 316.

real acculturated Christian moment in Mexico, so to does the worship of Saint Rose signify Christianity's presence in Peru.

The sixteenth-century Latin American missions constituted, “in numbers of persons involved, in geographical extent, and in the scope of intellectual and theological reflection, the largest expansion of missionary efforts in the history of Christianity.”⁵⁶ As the extirpation of idolatry campaigns proved in seventeenth and eighteenth-century Peru, it was impossible to decipher entirely what was religious and what was cultural about Andean practices.⁵⁷ Spirituality permeated every aspect of Andean life and could not be easily separated and sifted out. The festival of *Corpus Christi* was a spiritual and cultural event for the Andeans, as all of life was seen to be. It was a festival of worship, of Andean and Spanish worship in the multiplicity of diverse ways that worship and ritual was possible in a mutual space. The festival itself and the sixteen paintings produced in its aftermath were spiritual pathways in themselves and a form of beauty, a form of community to both the Spaniards and the Cuzqueños' eyes.

In the history of missions, the notion of “conversion” is generally not probed in its complexity, but rather viewed in terms of baptism or the learning of basic doctrine or rituals. Yet theology shows a different side of conversion – dealing with the ultimately unanswerable question of if this baptized Christian has had a true conversion of the heart and mind. Even though theological questions of conversion might go beyond the historian's scope, the study of religious experience does not, and thus an awareness of theology adds depth to the history of the missions and leads to a better understanding of what happened in colonial times. In focusing on the different reasons as to why the indigenous peoples and Europeans were attracted to and participated in the joint festival of *Corpus Christi*, theology offers its own reason for this participation – the Divine

⁵⁶ Provost-Smith, Patrick. 2000. “Rhetorical Category of *Dicere Aptius* as Moral Discourse and Missionary Praxis in *De Procuranda Indorum Salute*.” *Memorie Dominicane*, 31: 9.

⁵⁷ Mills, Kenneth. 1997. *Idolatry and Its Enemies. Colonial Andean Religion and Extirpation, 1640-1750*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

was present to all who participated through the beauty of the art of the procession. In examining how these artistic religious expressions were being interpreted – in their ambiguous and questionably unorthodox yet necessary ways – it was the local culture that defined Christianity's appropriation. At the same time we are reminded, through a complementary look at these two localities, that the religious experience of Christianity and the question of conversion that was taking place in South America is the same question repeated throughout Christianity's history.