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THE ANDEAN HYBRID BAROQUE

Convergent Cultures in the Churches of Colonial Peru

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Introduction

“Mestizo Style”
and Andean Hybrid Baroque

In the southern Andes during the last century and a half of colonial rule, when the Spanish Crown was slowly losing its grip on the Americas and Amerindian groups began organizing into activist and increasingly violent political movements, a style of architectural sculpture emerged that remains one of the most vigorous and original outcomes of the meeting of two cultures. Known most commonly as Estilo mestizo (Mestizo Style), this flourishing school of carving is distinguished by its flattened, textile-like decoration—achieved by cutting into the stone rather than sculpting in the round—and its virtuoso combination of European late Renaissance and Baroque forms with Andean sacred and profane symbolism, some of it deriving from the Inca and pre-Inca past (e.g., figs. 1.1, 2.4). But its crowning glory is the phenomenal assortment of indigenous flowers, birds, animals, and plants that burst from the surfaces, often carved with great accuracy and traceable to specific geographic regions, from the mountain highlands, or Altiplano, to the Amazonian lowlands. Although the style later spread to domestic architecture—in particular, the mansions and town halls of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Arequipa, Collao (Lake Titicaca region), and La Paz—it found its genesis and most comprehensive iconographic expression in the architecture of Catholicism: the churches, chapels, cloisters, and conventual buildings that are the subject of this book.
In this book I substitute the term “Andean Hybrid Baroque” for “Mestizo Style” because though some scholars—most recently Serge Gruzinski—have neutralized the latter to refer to a blending of cultures, it originates in a racial categorization and runs the risk of confusing a stylistic phenomenon with an ethnic one (see chap. 1). The term has semantic problems as well: as Pablo Macera noted succinctly in 1973, “Mestizo culture was not made by mestizos.” He offers an alternative, “colonial Andean culture,” as a pragmatic style label that “delimits a territory (the central Andes), a certain period of time (sixteenth–nineteenth centuries), and various determining factors (European colonial domination, precolumbian indigenous cultures) and expresses the global character of a process (the restructuring of European and indigenous components within a new classification).” My term “Andean Hybrid Baroque” encompasses a range of meanings similar to Macera’s “colonial Andean culture,” including the style’s geographic location and its cultural admixture, but it is more useful for an art historical study because it relates more specifically to how this culture fits into an international stylistic movement.

The Andean Hybrid Baroque began in the southern Peruvian town of Arequipa in the early 1660s and spread with alacrity via trade and migratory labor north and northwest to the Colca and Cotahuasi Canyons, Chumbivilcas, and Apurímac; east and northeast to the left shore of Lake Titicaca; southeast through La Paz to Oruro, Potosí, and (through wood carving) to Salta and Tucumán, deep inside present-day Argentina. Its astonishing early momentum was interrupted neither by the Amerindian uprisings of the 1720s to 1780s—the latter laying waste entire towns—nor, in the second two decades of the nineteenth century, by the Independence movement. Likewise, its wonders have survived one of art history’s most enduring and contentious debates, one that tore the field in half for most of the twentieth century. The scholarly debate over the Mestizo Style—about whether it was a genuine fusion of European and Andean motifs or merely part of a universal tendency toward folk or naive art—is the subject of chapter 1. The debate ended in the 1980s, with most scholars acknowledging the profound artistic and cultural contribution made by the Andeans, who were almost single-handedly responsible for building and decorating Andean Hybrid Baroque monuments and who—in rural areas at least—were among its most enthusiastic patrons. Consequently a new generation of scholars is free once again to tease out indigenous motifs, pattern structures, and interpretations and to try to understand the religious, political, and ideological underpinnings of this extraordinary tradition of carving.

Although Andean Hybrid Baroque decoration appears on buildings, it has little intrinsic bearing on their spatial composition, especially since many of the façades and portals on which the carving usually appears were added to preexisting structures. But it is important to recognize it as relating to architecture because the ornamentation alters and interacts with the columns, pediments, entablatures, and finials that support it. Non-Andean architects were often responsible for the architectural
framework, introducing the fundamentals of metropolitan styles from Cuzco or Lima or standard patterns based on European printed books, most notably Sebastiano Serlio’s *Tutte l’opere d’architettura et prospettiva* (1537). But when it came to executing these designs, Andean master and journeyman masons and stonemasons departed from these models in novel and sometimes radical ways. I believe—and I provide supporting evidence in this book—that architects and patrons were often uninterested in what Andean teams did with their columns and pediments, provided that they did not diverge from the basic scheme and did not pay much attention to—indeed, at times they seemed actually not to see—the carved decoration.

I do not overlook the buildings that supported these façades and portals, as has most past scholarship on Mestizo Style. In fact, this book is as much about those buildings as it is about their decoration, because they are the most literal context for the carving and because a systematic inquiry into the construction history of the most important fifty Andean Hybrid Baroque churches has been crucial to revealing the chronology of the style, the identity and methods of the people who carved it, the goals and prejudices of its patrons, and the ways in which it spread across the southern Andes. Only by investigating this entire body of churches and reconstructing the historical, physical, and social milieu for which they were created have I been able to gain insight into this poorly understood style and, in broader terms, to extend our understanding of the complex interrelations of art, ethnic identity, power, and religion in colonial Latin America. In spite of eighty years of active interest in the Andean Hybrid Baroque, no such inquiry has been attempted.

The Andean Hybrid Baroque was primarily the product of itinerant teams of Native American architects, masons, and sculptors, who, with a few exceptions such as Simón de Asto, Diego Choque, and Lorenzo Chambilla, worked anonymously, at times independently and at times under the supervision of white architects or project directors such as Diego de Adrián or Carlo Avancini. Many of these churches belonged to influential religious orders, most notably the Dominicans and Jesuits. In the indigenous parishes that are the main subject of this book, the curacas (indigenous leaders) had more influence and church decoration appears to have been subjected to less scrutiny by colonial authorities—although their isolation did not preclude the existence of authoritarian curates like Juan Domingo Zamácola y Jáuregui of Cayma (1746–1823), who ruled his parish with an iron fist. Other curates were more open-minded, encouraging sculptors and masons to create an indigenizing style so that the Andean congregations would, as David Kowal noted in reference to Indo-Portuguese architecture, “recognize . . . the power of the native visual languages to attract a local audience into the Christian spiritual domain by interpreting and representing Christian ideas in a way both familiar and enticing.” But Native Americans were also active participants in the style. As Thomas Abercrombie recently noted about the success of religious hybridity in present-day Bolivia, “Much as we might like to attribute such facts to the conversion strategies of wily priests, we must also recognize
that Andeans themselves were adept at the process of cultural translation.”6 The rich anthropological, historical, and art historical scholarship I cite throughout this book—especially in chapter 10—provides overwhelming evidence that Native Americans never lost that adeptness and were able to transform these imposed iconographies and religious practices so that they reflected their own beliefs and worldviews.

Relationships of power set this book apart from my earlier studies on cultural convergence in the arts.7 Unlike the artistic interactions that took place in Asia and parts of Latin America (such as Paraguay) where the Native American population enjoyed a greater degree of freedom from colonial powers, the Andean Hybrid Baroque was created under conditions of military and cultural oppression in which European visual forms were dominant: it was at times built by laborers treated little better than slaves, and it emerged after more than a century of systematic and brutal destruction (known as extirpation) of the sacred objects and rites of Andean religion. This situation makes the hybridity of Andean Hybrid Baroque seem all the more astonishing. Yet it becomes less so when we take into account that Native Americans were overwhelmingly in the majority, that most of the villages discussed in this book were isolated from white settlements, and that a Machiavellian partnership between Spanish authorities and Andean elites began in late-sixteenth-century Cuzco—the subject of a groundswell of recent scholarship, discussed in chapter 10—allowed each interest group to appropriate the ideology (and imagery) of the other. Andean sculptors enjoyed a surprising degree of freedom to embellish their buildings with motifs and symbols of Andean derivation, and—more significantly—they were able to reinterpret Euro-Christian iconography in ways meaningful to them. Elsewhere I have referred to this process as “converting Christianity.”8 As Thomas Cummins noted about colonial imagery in general, “The campaigns against Andean symbolic forms and the introduction of a new system of representation did not mean the undoing of Andean codes of meaning. Rather . . . such western forms had somehow to be restructured and reimagined to convey Andean terms of meaning.”9 People who deny the vitality of indigenous religion during the colonial era—and there have been many—cannot have witnessed firsthand the degree to which much of the apparatus of Andean religion still coexists with Christianity.

Until recent decades, few artists’ names were known, and the Andean Hybrid Baroque was treated as a monolithic movement that arose from the land as naturally as the crops of quinoa that line the shores of Titicaca. One of the main objectives of this book is to dismiss this illusion by resuming recent efforts (by Teresa Gisbert, José de Mesa, and Ramón Gutiérrez) to restore these artists’ identities and their distinctive regional styles, not solely by unearthing new names from archives, but also by distinguishing the carving of the six major regions (Arequipa and environs, Caylloma and Cotahuasi, the Intermediate Zone [between Tisco and Abancay], Northern and Southern Collao, and Alto Perú).10 Regional disparities are inevitable in a style that
spread over an area larger than Iberia and France combined, where lines of communication were challenged by the world’s deepest canyons and some of its highest mountains. I also explore the degree to which the communities’ livelihoods—as shepherds, agricultural workers, textile and ceramic manufacturers, fishermen, and miners—had an impact on artistic style and iconography, and I do not shy away from the horrific living conditions of many indigenous parishes or their primarily antagonistic relationship with the white landowners who surrounded them—sometimes this enmity directly influenced church architecture—and the importance of forced and semivoluntary rotational labor systems in church building.

In spite of decades of scholarship, our understanding of the Andean Hybrid Baroque and its churches has been severely handicapped by a lack of archival documentation and consistent stylistic analysis. Although Gutiérrez and his team began retrieving archival data for the churches of Collao, Colca, and Cuzco in the 1970s, they overlooked many sources and neglected Arequipa, the style’s crucible.11 I wrote this study specifically to fill these gaps. It is the product of six years of photographic surveys in Peru, Bolivia, and Argentina and archival research in thirteen governmental and ecclesiastical archives in Peru, Bolivia, and Italy, resulting in transcriptions of 211 documents related to the construction history and decoration of the churches. The majority are published here for the first time. This book accompanies this documentation with the first methodical descriptions of the individual buildings and their carved ornamentation, allowing me to look at the decoration as a whole instead of merely excerpting motifs as so many have done in the past. These visual analyses have also allowed me to support the chronologies found in the archives, fill in lacunae where documents do not exist, highlight regional variations, and focus on the often innovative ways buildings and their ornamentation responded to their communities and geography. They have allowed me to understand the character of the Andean Hybrid Baroque more subtly than I could have done with a less painstaking approach. Notably, as a result of these empirical observations I have been able to expand the identifications of the flora and fauna that are the most significant indigenous contribution to the style. These plants and animals have not received the same attention as the figural and celestial symbolism, but they are not mere decoration: they have significant ties with Andean religion, oral histories, livelihood, and rituals, and they reveal many secrets about the decoration’s meaning.

In some ways this is a traditional book, a regional survey in a postmodern era. On the most basic level it is a catalogue raisonné arranged in separate chapters chronologically (by the date of the ornamentation) and by region. Each “catalogue entry” combines descriptive analysis based on new photographic surveys with building histories and inventories derived mostly from archival sources. In some ways this book is similar to the early surveys of colonial Latin American architecture by Harold Wethey (1948) or Sydney David Markman (1966), but like more recent surveys by
Ramón Gutiérrez (1978, 1986, 1987) it moves beyond issues of style and patronage to consider the monuments’ social, ethnic, religious, and political contexts. I cannot do full justice here to the archival transcriptions in the Appendixes since they provide more information than I could possibly address in a single book. In particular, I have not provided in-depth analyses of the retablos, paintings, and sculptures inside the churches, except briefly to consider their commissioning, execution, and dedications. It is pointless to attempt a study of retablos on this scale until a more comprehensive body of Peruvian and Bolivian retablos have been catalogued and photographed, a gargantuan task at least as ambitious as this book. I have also found that most retablos in Andean Hybrid Baroque churches have little stylistic affinity with the stone carvings in the same church. Most have been altered, destroyed, or replaced since colonial times, but even those that formed part of the same commissions—namely the high altar at the Compañía in Arequipa (1692–98) built at the same time as its Andean Hybrid Baroque façade by the limeño retablo maker Juan de Salas—often reflect the metropolitan styles of Cuzco or Lima and not local trends. Caylloma is another case in point: in the Colca Valley style was dictated by itinerant cuzqueño retablo makers and plans were sent from Arequipa, even though the men who built the retablos were usually local.

I begin in chapter 1 with a historiography of the concept of Mestizo Style, which—owing to the richness of the literature—allows me to introduce several important overarching themes that resonate throughout the book. I devote the subsequent eight chapters to each of the major regions where the style prospered, beginning with Arequipa, its suburbs, and early Cotahuasi (chaps. 2 and 3), then Caylloma and later Cotahuasi (chaps. 4 and 5) and the vast regions of Northern and Southern Collao, Alto Perú, and the Intermediate Zone (chaps. 6–9). In the final chapter I propose an interpretation of Andean Hybrid Baroque ornamentation, drawing on not only primary sources such as sermons, extirpation documents, oral histories, and chronicles but also a rich literature on Andean religion and iconography by ethnohistorians and anthropologists. In the five Appendixes the manuscript sources are also arranged chronologically in different categories, beginning with inventories and account books and ending with miscellanea such as artists’ commissions, labor contracts, viceregal decrees, and visitation reports. Some sources relate directly to building activity; others paint a more contextual picture of the life of the parish and how it affected the history of the church. The number and quality of sources vary according to place. Thus I have enough documents to reconstruct almost the entire building and decorating history of the Arequipa Compañía, yet I am left with mere fragments for the equally grand Compañía in Potosí (the compiler of the Potosí inventory wrote that he was in too much of a hurry to record more than the most basic features of the church). For some churches, such as Puno and Santiago de Pupuja, I have found nothing at all—even in their own archives. Such are the vagaries of documentary research.
In chapter 10 I seek answers to one of the most vexing questions of the field: what does Andean Hybrid Baroque sculptural ornamentation mean? Although my conclusions owe much to scholars such as Teresa Gisbert, I am more selective, analyzing only the motifs that I believe bore widely understood meanings for their Andean audiences and concentrating more closely on floral and bird imagery. This is the first study of Andean Hybrid Baroque imagery to draw on the wealth of information about Andean religion and ritual in extirpation documents. But my most significant departure from the literature is that I consider the ornamentation as a whole, concentrating on the arrangement and interaction of motifs as well as their individual meanings. This approach allows me to draw parallels with profoundly meaningful organizations of motifs and structural divisions in textiles and other Andean art forms.

In the past, scholars have almost exclusively investigated the Andean Hybrid Baroque by a method that Inga Clendinnen, writing about early colonial religion in Mexico, aptly terms “vivisection.” 

One can say that the specific language of the fabrics has been ignored. . . . From an iconographical point of view, attempts have been made to identify figurative motifs (flora, faunal, mythical scenes) or to interpret abstract forms that suggest the presence of more or less recognizable symbols. Efforts to isolate a possible lexicon, using a hierarchy exterior to the design, have started with the most immediately legible (head, sun, hut), but the syntax that would explain how such elements are articulated within the whole of the cloth remains unknown.

Scholars of the Andean Hybrid Baroque have also begun to lament the loss of a sense of syntax. Antonio San Cristóbal notes, “The past controversies about what was at first termed ‘Mestizo Style’ . . . artificially carve[d] divisions between the elements. . . . This prolific work of dismantling the unitary in order later painstakingly to attempt a reconstruction of the divided only leads to the creation of fictitious unities.” Hiroshige Okada concurs, remarking that taxonomic approaches to Andean Hybrid Baroque have dominated the field, “but the interrelationship among these motifs within the whole visual culture of colonial society seems not to have received similar attention.” This dismembering of ornamentation has done the subject a disservice: it has provided encyclopedic lists of motifs (such as that published by Ilkmar Luks in 1973) but reveals little about how these motifs and symbols go together.

Hints for how to unlock the meaning of these motifs without losing a sense of the design’s overall syntax can be sought in recent studies of Andean Christianity,
which shares much of the cultural and religious complexity of the Andean Hybrid Baroque; the style is, after all, primarily sacred ornamentation. Instead of dividing it into Christian and Andean components, Kenneth Mills has asked the disarmingly simple question, what was Andean Christianity like? In his study of the trials surrounding the extirpation of Andean religious objects and rites during the mid-colonial period (ca.1650–ca.1750), Mills has overturned the widely held belief that Catholicism was nothing more to the Andeans than a convenient veneer of liturgy, ceremony, and exterior piety cobbled together to satisfy colonial officials, an idea widely promoted in the past century by scholars such as José Carlos Mariátegui and George Kubler. Mills also takes to task alternative anthropological models from the 1970s and 1980s that denied the reciprocity or mutability of Andean Christianity: Nathan Wachtel proposed that indigenous and European beliefs remained juxtaposed in eternal opposition—in Wachtel’s words, “less a fusion than juxtaposition”—and Manuel Marzal suggested that a static syncretism or religious “crystallization” existed between the two, in which “certain elements of Christianity were accepted as legitimate Andean sacra, a moment when a syncretic ‘conversion’ was, for the most part, reached.”

Mills’s main criticism of these positions hinges on his belief that there was no stable, unchanging fusion of religious tenets but an eclectic, fluctuating mixture that comprised significant differences within each side of the Christian/Andean dichotomy: “Colonial Andeans resisted Christianity at the same time as they reacted to its presence and included aspects of what began as the invader’s religion into their emerging and reinterpreted ways of seeing and managing the world.” Some aspects of Christianity were voluntarily embraced by Andean worshipers and even introduced into the practices of Andean religious specialists (popularly known as shamans), although not in a way that would have been approved by the Church: “The Church was becoming a source of sacred power in the Andes, and personal identification with at least some rendering of Catholic Christianity represented more than just prudence or an instinct for self-preservation.” These identifications were not always conscious, and Andean Christianity transformed alongside the society that practiced it. Cummins characterizes the interaction between Christianity and Andean religion as “dialectical”: “It is not just a matter of extreme polarization between victimization and resistance, Catholicism and idolatry, exploited and exploiter. . . . These are real binary categories, but they tend to present colonial society as only something bifurcated, Spanish and Indian. Colonial society is more fluid than that.” Thierry Saignes illustrates this dialectical interaction with the example of a colonial-era curaca whose mummified body was buried in the traditional way in the Chilean high Andes but who was also furnished with a 1680 document recording that he had paid the “Papal Bull for the Holy Crusade” to get an early pass out of Purgatory. By hedging their bets, his community was drawing on “cultural complexities that the dead man’s family . . . envisioned in terms of an Andean-Christian afterlife.” Such complexities
are not just a relic of the colonial past. Abercrombie’s observations about the nature of Andean religion are based on studies of societies living today:

The devotion to the saints... as far as I could see was entirely heartfelt, betokening something other than a “thin veneer” of Christianity... The qualities and characteristics of “Christian” and “Andean” deities seem to have interpenetrated one another so thoroughly that the contrast seems in some ways vacuous. Try as I might to seek out the secret and private rites, to plumb local sorceries and sacrifices, I seemed always to find the saints, Christ, and the Virgin at the heart of “native” ceremonies. By the same token, I also found shaman and mountain spirits in the church at High Mass.27

The society Abercrombie witnessed at the end of the twentieth century was not the same one that built the churches of the eighteenth but the untidy and muddled interaction of religions and cultures, and the ever-changing terms of that interaction bridge the centuries.

Andean Hybrid Baroque and Rebellion

It is important to stop polarizing Euro-Christian and Andean cultural contributions, lest we lose sight of the more intricate interactions and transformations that characterized Andean Christianity and Andean Hybrid Baroque alike. To my mind one of the most effective antidotes to that kind of thinking is to consider the deeply conflicted relationship between the Catholic Church and the various Andean rebel groups that erupted into action in the eighteenth century—events that coincide chronologically with the golden age of the Andean Hybrid Baroque. While scholars in the early twentieth century alluded to a connection between the rebellions and Andean Hybrid Baroque (see chap. 1), no one investigated more directly how the one might help us to interpret the other. At first glance, no episode in the history of colonial Peru appears to manifest such a blatant polarity between whites and Andeans and between Native American messianism and Catholicism. Yet if we inquire further, the distinctions begin to blur.

The Great Rebellion of Túpac Amaru II (1742–81) and Túpaj Katari (1750–81) was one of the most decisive episodes in the history of the Altiplano, from its beginnings in the town of Tinta in 1781 to its eruption over the entire southern highlands during the next two years.28 The political activism and earlier revolts that led to the Great Rebellion began as early as the 1720s, incited by the repressive measures of the Bourbon government.29 Scarlett O’Phelan Godoy divides the insurrections into three phases: the first (1724–36) was a response to financial and organizational reform; the second (1751–58) was fueled by the Crown’s sale of products to Native Americans.
at artificially high prices; and the third and most violent phase (1770s–1783) was a reaction against the reforms of Charles III (1759–88), notably the expulsion of the Society of Jesus in 1767, the curtailing of Native American confraternities, a draconian restriction of popular devotion and policing of parishes, and the introduction in 1770 of the hated arancel, an ecclesiastical schedule of fees that sought to control and homogenize the costs of masses and other church ceremonies. Specifically, the reforms of the third phase had to do with reducing the role of Andean participation in Christian ritual, and the Andean response reveals how Christianity and its priests had already become an important part of their daily lives.

On the surface the ideology of the Great Rebellion was more blatantly anti-Spanish. The mestizo José Gabriel Condorcanqui (he styled himself Túpac Amaru II, after the last Inca) attracted thousands of impoverished and exploited Andeans with his calls for an end to slavery, lower taxes, fairer courts, and a more equitable economy. He also sought the expulsion of all Europeans from Peruvian soil, demonstrating his commitment by executing the corregidor of Tinta, Antonio de Arriaga. The Aymara peasant Julián Apaza (Túpaj Katari, “Resplendent Serpent”), leader of the rebellion in Alto Perú, again aimed his rhetoric against Spanish rule. The Spanish got the message, seeing the rebellion as a threat to their sovereignty, as did many parish priests: Don Tomás Pinto y Sea, the curate of Mururata characterized the uprising as a “barbarous revolution” (bárbara revolución). Yet other curates, most famously Don José Maruri of Asillo, became active and even violent supporters of the indigenous cause (see chap. 9).

Rebel armies held out well against the Spanish forces. Túpaj Katari’s greatest strategic move was the siege of La Paz, the region’s chief commercial center and the only town with a significant Spanish population, in 1781. For 184 days, from March to October, his troops surrounded the city, seizing haciendas and burning surrounding villages—reducing its inhabitants to eating horses, dogs, and animal skins—and the siege was lifted only with the arrival of a royalist force from Buenos Aires. Although Túpac Amaru and Túpaj Katari were captured, drawn, and quartered in 1781, the rebellion persevered in Collao and Alto Perú under the leadership of Condorcanqui’s nephew, Diego Cristóbal Túpac Amaru, who went on a vengeful rampage, sacking and burning towns such as Puno and Pomata before his capture and execution in 1783. In addition to the staggering human carnage (100,000 to 140,000 Amerindians alone are estimated to have died), the Great Rebellion exacted a huge toll on the region’s agricultural and built environment, seriously harming the economy and destroying entire towns.

Not surprisingly, scholars in the past interpreted these insurrections as attempts to expel the entire apparatus of colonialism—including the Catholic Church—and reinstate an Inca monarchy. This was the version of the events that Ángel Guido and other early art historians accepted when they equated the uprisings with the rise of the Andean Hybrid Baroque, and it explains his and later art historians’ reluctance.
to take the association any further. For if popular opinion favored the overthrow of the clergy and the Catholic Church, why would they bother to integrate their millennialist message into church façades? Surely they could get their point across more effectively by alienating themselves from local parish churches, restricting Andean imagery to domestic life and the secret rituals of the religious practitioners, or even storming the churches and setting them on fire? But recent studies have overturned prevailing assumptions about the insurgency, reassessing the relationship between the rebels and the Catholic Church in a way that helps to explain the Andean Hybrid Baroque. Specifically, it allows us to understand how Andean imagery—even imagery tied to indigenous religion and Inca legitimacy—shared space on church façades with the iconography of European Christianity.

The first point to bear in mind is that Amerindian relations with the Crown and the Church were very different in the eighteenth century than in the sixteenth.41 During the first century of colonialism, when memories of pre-Hispanic traditions were fresh, Andean groups considered the Spanish regime and the Catholic Church a common enemy and actively sought their destruction. One and a half centuries later, at the dawn of the age of insurrection, this relationship had undergone a subtle but critical change: the Catholic Church had become so integrated with indigenous practices and the cycles of the social and agricultural calendar that Andeans felt it now belonged to them (i.e., Andean Christianity was born). As Sergio Serulnikov comments:

Ideologically, the attachment to Christian rituals proved more resilient than the allegiance to secular political authority. . . . [C]ommunities continued to celebrate Catholic festivals while engaged in forthright confrontations with Spanish people and government. Historians have shown that elements from Christian theology were firmly embedded in a larger system of religious beliefs and practices that encompassed worship of ancestors, sacred places, and Andean deities.42

Therefore, when the Bourbons imposed unpopular reforms Andeans did not seek a return to the pre-Hispanic past as much as they sought a reinstitution of the pragmatic compromise Andean elites had enjoyed for generations under the Habsburgs and the indigenized Church. In the words of O’Phelan, “To return to the past was, perhaps, not to go back to the Inca Empire, but to return to a much closer past, the period of concessions and recognitions on the part of the politics of the Habsburgs, to return to the ‘equilibrium’ of the colonial pact.”43

No indigenous group enjoyed the benefits of this pact with the colonial Church as much as the Cuzco elite. From the early seventeenth century the Jesuits and Franciscans sought an alliance with the colonial Inca nobility. The Jesuits were the first to found colleges for curacas, in Lima in 1618 and then in Cuzco in 1621, and they created a Christianized Inca ideology that served both parties: the Jesuits achieved a

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resilient partnership with the influential Andean elite, and the Andean elite strengthens its power base within colonial society. By the second half of the eighteenth century curacas were placing their children in religious orders, and in the years after the Great Rebellion some of them were elevated to the priesthood. Jesuit-sponsored Amerindian confraternities, especially those dedicated to the archangels, ranked among the primary organizations of indigenous influence and self-expression and were recipients of lavish patronage from curacas and other elites, including non-nobles seeking to gain status. Through the financing of confraternity chapels and processions and the building and decorating of churches pertaining to their chiefdom, curacas bolstered their prestige in a manner unrelated to bloodline. This book reveals many examples of this patronage, a movement that led to the industrialization of the Cuzco painters in the late eighteenth century as painters struggled to meet Andean patrons’ demands. Taking this pragmatic alliance into consideration, it is now easier to understand why many rebellions were provoked by attempts to limit or prohibit exterior manifestations of Christianity by a Bourbon monarchy suspicious of popular religion. The expulsion of the Society of Jesus in 1769 was only the beginning of what Jacques Lafaye, referring to New Spain, called a “Holy War.”

Pro-Catholic sentiments fueled the declarations of some of the earliest rebel leaders. In 1730 the Cochabamba insurrectionist Alejo Calatayud announced that he was a Christian and did not oppose priests (in fact, priests like Don Francisco de Urquiza supported his rebellion), and the Oruro rebel Vélez de Córdoba declared in 1739 that he would not oppose the church “nor permit that the temples of God nor the holy houses be profaned.” The perpetrators of the 1750 Lima uprising—begun by an archangel confraternity in which the angels were armed with real guns—took an oath of allegiance before the Cross and agreed to place their new society under the rule of twelve princes in imitation of the Twelve Apostles. Túpac Amaru and Juan Santos Atahualpa (founder of a revolt in central Peru in the 1740s) were educated by the Jesuits and drew on the Book of Revelation to justify their actions. Atahualpa went so far as to appoint himself head of the Church and incarnation of the Holy Spirit, while Túpac Amaru, who wrote that he was “not opposed either to the Church or to the priesthood,” peppered his pronouncements with biblical quotations provided by the curate of Tinta, promised that his warriors would enjoy immediate Salvation on their deaths, and ordered that the Holy Sacrament be removed from a church before it was set ablaze. Túpaj Katari, who had been a church sacristan, carried a shrine of the Virgin of Copacabana with him and fought under her protection, even executing Andeans who insulted the image. Both Túpac Amaru and Túpaj Katari kept priests in their retinue. Even Christian saints were roped into the conflict: in Oruro the rebels divided saints into friends and enemies, decapitating the Virgin of the Rosary, patron of Oruro, for being an ally of the Spanish while revering the Virgin of Carmel, the protector of Túpac Amaru’s troops. Saint Rose of Lima was credited with a prophecy that in the year of the three sevens (interpreted as 1777) Peru would...
return to the hands of its legitimate rulers, a prophecy with a widespread following not only in the indigenous community but among criollos and mestizos as well.57

All of this is not to say that relations between priests and Andean rebels were always rosy: many curates preached against the rebellion, and others were killed by insurrectionists because they sided with the Crown, because they did not live up to expectations, or because the village held a particular grudge against them. Nevertheless, the intimate relationship of priests with indigenous communities meant that curates played a more integral role in village life than did civil authorities: “the priests and their assistants (tenientes de cura) did reside among the Indians, often spoke native languages, had some kind of presence in the everyday life of the Andean families, and, above all, presided over crucial moments of the annual ritual cycle of the community.”58 They and the confraternities, Christian processions, saints, and churches had become by the eighteenth century an inextricable part of Andean Christianity and daily life.

The history of the rebellions helps to illuminate the ambiguous nature of Andean Christianity and by extension the Andean Hybrid Baroque, both of which were the product of a fluid interaction between alien cultures. In the early 1950s this relationship intrigued a young Argentine medical student personally invested in the consequences of social and racial interaction. On a visit to Cuzco during the epic trek across South America that would inspire his vocation as a revolutionary, Ernesto “Che” Guevara (1928–67) was struck by a late-seventeenth-century pulpit in the church at San Blas—it has recently been restored to its former glory—that derives from the same kind of cultural admixture that created the Andean Hybrid Baroque. In referring to it as the result of “the fusion of two hostile but somehow complementary races,” Guevara captured the essence of the artistic dialectic that forms the inspiration and primary subject of this book.59
1

The Great Debate

Andean Hybrid Baroque
and Latin American Art History

It would be difficult to exaggerate the stranglehold the debate over the Mestizo Style has had on the historiography of Latin American colonial art. For almost ninety years the leading scholars in the field passionately disputed its origin and meaning and its legitimacy as a school of architecture. The implications of this debate went beyond the geographic and chronological limits of the style, touching on a fundamental question for the field as a whole: can one speak of Native American stylistic or symbolic content in the arts and architecture of colonial Latin America after the first decades of conquest, or was this 275-year era of creativity primarily an altered and debased European transplant? Those in the former camp used terms like “Estilo mestizo” or “arquitectura mestiza” to parallel the interracial blending (mestizaje) of colonial society and generally saw it as specific to a particular region and ethnic group. Those in the latter camp believed that the style was part of a universal phenomenon in which artists from Bulgaria to Borneo misunderstood Western European models, and they applied to it perjorative labels such as “popular art” or “folk art.” While scholars today have moved beyond this debate and now recognize the immense indigenous impact on the arts throughout colonial Latin America, the Mestizo Style remains a tendentious and unresolved subject that continues to deter scholars. I want to use this chapter to trace the development of this debate from its origins in the 1920s to the present.
Early Studies of “Mestizo Style” Architecture (1925–1958): The Patriotic Age

Concern over the Andean Hybrid Baroque’s significance has occupied the energies of architects and architectural historians from around the globe. This widespread interest began in tandem with twentieth-century Latin American nationalism and a colonial revival architectural movement known as the Colonial Renaissance (renacimiento colonial) that swept South America from the 1920s to 1950s. The movement—it paralleled the Mission Style revival in the southwestern United States—was championed by Latin American architects as a homegrown alternative to international Modernism, satisfying nationalist sentiments by returning to America’s indigenous and colonial roots much as indigenistas Frida Kahlo (1907–54) and Tarsila do Amaral (1886–1973) had done for painting in Mexico and Brazil. The Colonial Renaissance was especially prominent in Peru and Argentina, where grandiose buildings such as Ricardo Malachowsky’s Palacio Arzobispal in Lima (1929), the neo-Andean Hybrid Baroque banks on Calle Mercaderes in Arequipa (1930s and 1940s), and Estanislao Pirovano’s La Nación building on Calle Florida in Buenos Aires (1920s) combined colonial Baroque ornamentation with the brutalism of fascist Europe.

Many of the scholars who first theorized about the Mestizo Style were directly involved in these projects, most notably the Peruvian architect Emilio Harth-Terré (1899–1983), one of the masterminds of the outsized remodeling of Plaza de Armas in Lima (1945); Alfredo Benavides Rodríguez (1894–1959), Chile’s leading colonial revival architect; and the Argentines Martín Noel (designer of the Cajamarca-Baroque Argentine Pavilion in the 1929 Exposición Iberoamericana in Seville); and Ángel Guido (1896–1960), the heavy-handed renovator of the colonial centers of Salta, Tucumán, and Luján. Opposing both the Beaux-Arts eclecticism of turn-of-the-century Buenos Aires and the international Modernism of Corbusier (1887–1965), Guido maintained that the future of American architecture lay in a return to its indigenous and colonial past and a harmonious interaction with its landscape. He found an ideal combination of all three elements in his beloved Mestizo Style. It is with Guido—who even built himself a neo-Andean Hybrid Baroque house in Rosario in the 1920s—that the historiography of the Mestizo Style begins.

After toying with terms such as “fusión hispano-americana-aborígen” in his first publication on the subject in 1925, Guido eventually settled on “Estilo mestizo” in his theoretical manifesto, Redescubrimiento de América en el arte (1940). In his patriotic vision of Latin American art Guido divided his topic into four cycles of conquest and reconquest, of dictatorship and freedom. During the “First European Conquest of Art” (sixteenth and seventeenth centuries), indigenous artistic traditions were “dictatorially suppressed” by those of Spain; in the “First American Reconquest of Art” (eighteenth century), Amerindian motifs and structures resurfaced throughout
Latin America, and Amerindian art even exerted its influence on Europe, as with
the Sacristy of the Cartuja (1730–60) of Granada, Spain, which he saw—placing the
horse before the cart—as “the purest Mexican mestizo style.”4 These two cycles then
repeated themselves with the “Second European Conquest of Art” (early Republican era through early twentieth century) and the “Second American Reconquest of
Art,” or Latin American Modernism. Guido saw the second of these four cycles,
the “Estilo mestizo,” or “Estilo criollo,” as common to all Latin America, but he also
employed the terms more specifically, to refer to the architecture of the southern
Andes, in particular Arequipa and Potosí. Guido considered Mestizo Style largely a
late-eighteenth-century phenomenon.

Guido characterized the resurgence of Amerindian culture in the Mestizo Style
as an “aesthetic rebellion” that paralleled political revolutions like the Great Re-
bellation of 1780–81: “In the eighteenth century, this groan that had been muffled,
constricted, and stifled, became surprisingly energetic, with a stubborn eagerness to
reveal itself, to live, to have its say, to foment an American artistic insurrection.”5 He
even equated the sculptors of the Andean Hybrid Baroque doorways with Túpac
Amaru’s warriors: “While Túpac-Amaru made part of America tremble, stirring up
revolt among his Quechua and Aymara armies, the Quechua Indian José Condori
sculpted the sun and the moon, elements of indigenous flora, and his extraordinary
indíatides [Amerindian caryatids], in the façade of San Lorenzo in Potosí.”6 His de-
scription of the architectural transformation reads like a military epic:

Elements of indigenous flora and fauna . . . displaced the European Baroque
decorative entities. The sun, the moon, and the astronomical conception
of the Inca cosmos introduced themselves heretically into the façades of
Catholic churches. The indíatides replaced the European caryatids. . . . For
the first time, after almost two centuries, art once again embraces American
landscapes and people. . . . The indian and the mestizo—metaphorically
men of the earth, and therefore an anthropomorphic extension of the land-
scape—in serving their obligatory duty as master masons, as painters, as
sculptors, as woodcarvers, overturned the Spanish Baroque order, replacing it
with another one that was new to the History of the Art of the World, the
Indiospanish-American order [orden indoespañol-americano].7

But Guido does not explain how these long-suppressed artistic voices survived two
centuries of conquest, a problem that would vex later generations. The Amerindian
and mestizo artists’ innate association with the land is at the core of what Guido
called the “voluntad de forma criolla” (criollo will to form), in a nod to the theory of
Kunstwollen introduced by the Austrian art historian Alois Riegl (1858–1905).8 But
Guido’s notion of an indigenous Kunstwollen is hampered by his ambiguity when re-
fering to the people who made these buildings: in places he calls them “Indians,” at
times “mestizos,” and elsewhere “criollos,” groups with very different ethnic backgrounds and social agendas.

Guido was the first to itemize the style’s indigenous symbolism. His four categories began with flora—“corncobs and ears of corn, in examples in Pomata, Arequipa, Yanaguara [sic]; Pineapples, chirimoyas, *kantucta* [cantuta] flowers, in Juli, Pomata, Potosí; *Cardón* [cactus] flower, cacao, in Puno”—and native fauna—“Little monkeys in Juli and Pomata; Pumas or jaguars in Puno; Toucans in Pomata and La Paz[,] especially in Santo Domingo; Hummingbirds in Puno, Arequipa, Potosí; Chinchillas in Sepita [sic], Juli, etc.” His third category comprised human figures such as the Native American caryatids he termed *indiátides* and Andean angels with feathered headdresses or skirts like those at San Pedro in Juli. His fourth category encompassed mythical symbols that he related to Andean religion: “the Sun, in Potosí, Pomata, Juli. The Sun and Moon combined and which exactly recalls the Inca concept of the Cosmos.”

Guido did not limit his analysis to ornamentation: he found hybridity in the very structure of Andean Hybrid Baroque buildings. He believed that the flat and blocklike surfaces of Peruvian Baroque—a striking contrast to the dynamic, complex plans of their European Baroque counterparts—derived from pre-Hispanic buildings. Acknowledging a debt to the Swiss art historian Heinrich Wölfflin (1864–1945), he contrasted Andean Hybrid Baroque and Spanish Baroque architecture in terms of polar opposite criteria he named *continencia* (restraint) and *incontinencia* (lack of restraint):

The geometric and cubic plasticity of Inca architecture vigorously curbs the dynamism of the Spanish Ultrabaroque. . . . [T]he delicate and flat ornamentation, in the technical manner of Chan-Chan or Chavín de Huantar, adheres and creeps along like delicate ivy on the wall. That is to say, that in the aesthetic battle of our *criollo* style, Inca restraint triumphs against the Spanish Ultrabaroque’s lack of restraint.

In addition to Chan Chan and Chavín—pre-Hispanic monuments in the far northwest of Peru—Guido referred to the nearby Gate of the Sun at Tiahuanaco (fig. 1.1) as a model for Andean Hybrid Baroque ornamentation, a prototype many later scholars would note thanks to its uncanny similarities to façades such as the Compañía in Arequipa. Despite the universal conception of his “First American Reconquest of Art,” Guido was very specific in his analysis of the Mestizo Style of southern Peru and Bolivia, and he never spoke of it as a generic phenomenon as did later scholars such as Graziano Gasparini and Ilmar Luks. In fact—and in contrast to that “folk art” or “popular art” school of thought—Guido firmly believed that each variation of Baroque found in Latin America was a unique manifestation of culture, “a specific spiritual state of the artistic sensibility of a people.”
Guido fine-tuned his theories in a more defensive 1956 reaction to an international debate over the Mestizo Style that gained momentum during and after World War II, a polemic he characterized as “intellectual fencing between Hispanists and indigenists.” Denser and more Wölfflinian, this study subjected individual Andean Hybrid Baroque monuments to each of Wölfflin’s polar pairs. It is also more patriotic, reflecting the jingoism of the Peronist era and the military coup that followed it—in fact, at that very moment Guido was completing the gargantuan National Monument to the Flag in Rosario (finished 1957), which Ramón Gutiérrez aptly compares to the works of Albert Speer in Nazi Germany. Guido now claimed the discovery of the “Mestizo Style” and even the beginning of the “Colonial Renaissance” for Argentina: “It is very satisfying for Argentine art historiography to claim to be the first to discover this transcendental art that developed in Latin America.” Yet, ironically, the style existed almost entirely outside Argentine borders. Here Guido introduced another topos that would dominate the field for decades—that the Baroque was a more forgiving style than the Renaissance, more accepting of indigenous contributions:

The few examples of Renaissance [architecture] of the sixteenth century in Mexico and Peru clearly demonstrate their complete disregard of the things of the earth and local inhabitants. . . . The Baroque, on the contrary, very free and without definite boundaries, allowed for this permeability, and for this reason it grasped the folkloric emotion of the nations it crossed as it traipsed through the Western world.

Guido’s theory overlooked not only the substantial indigenous contributions to sixteenth-century architectural ornament in New Spain but also—as José de Mesa, Teresa Gisbert, and Ilmar Luks would later point out—that many of the buildings of the Andean Hybrid Baroque were essentially Renaissance in structure and drew deeply on motifs derived from late Renaissance prints. Martín Noel (1888–1963), Guido’s cohort and another key architect in Argentina’s “restauración nacionalista,” wrote a preface to Guido’s Fusión hispano-indígena en la arquitectura colonial (1925) in a less scholarly style that was more given to nationalistic bombast. Sharing Guido’s fondness for neologisms, he introduced a panoply of terms ranging from “arte indo-criollo,” “indo-barroco,” “indo-hispanica,” and “indígena-barroco” to “indo-mudéjar” and “indo-plateresca” (all in a single book), exacerbating what had already become a terminological quagmire. Although agreeing with Guido’s topos of the Baroque as a forgiving style, Noel also introduced the idea that Andean Hybrid Baroque was the American equivalent to mudéjar, the mixture of Islamic and Christian styles characteristic of medieval Andalusia: “that mudéjarismo which inspired the most beautiful pages in the architecture of Granada is in Arequipa the indianismo that determines the origin of hispano-Andean
forms." Noel made the most comprehensively list of the indigenous motifs of the Andean Hybrid Baroque architecture:

In the vegetable kingdom we will begin the indigenous repertory with the Kantuta, which was the imperial flower of the Inkas; then the Miscu—a flower of seven petals,—the pamagua, thistles, passionfruit, papayas, cactus stalks, ears of corn, simple or complex dahlias in the shape of stars, cattail flowers, all stylized and at times integrated into a vegetal tangle of winding stems, scrolls, and luxuriant foliage. In the animal [kingdom]: lulis—hummingbirds of the region,—the wildcat called “Titi-pissi” in Aymará, guallatas, parrots, vizcachas, macaws, pumas and monkeys; and in the anthropomorphic realm: pre-Columbian masks, Indian figures and busts which recall the aparapitos or pongs (Indian servants of the Altiplano). We must add to these naturalistic elements the abstract representations of geometrical stylizations derived from pottery, keros, and liturgical vestments, and also winged “ñustas” [Inca princesses], mermaids playing charangos, or strange cherubs crowned by laurel flowers that seem to copy the llauto or crown of the Inkas.

Noel’s list served for decades as a catalogue of the style’s basic repertory of motifs.

The question of origin was the first bone of contention as scholars around the world reacted to the Guido-Noel canon, beginning with the Chilean architect Alfredo Benavides Rodríguez (1894–1959) and his influential book La arquitectura en el Vto. del Perú y en la Capitanía de Chile (1941). Although Benavides agreed about the non-European origin of many Andean Hybrid Baroque motifs, he sought increasingly distant sources. Inspired by a comment by the Italian fascist painter Giulio Aristide Sartorio (1860–1932), Benavides traced many Andean Hybrid Baroque features to Hindu and Buddhist sources—that is, from Indian, not Amerindian, tradition. In rhetoric that echoes both seventeenth- and twentieth-century racial theories, Benavides maintains that “mestizo artists” were attracted to Asian models because of their racial origins in Asia:

[They were] always influenced by the technique and ancestral forms of the region and the temperament of aboriginal races, undoubtedly of Asiatic origin, Hindu, and Chino-Japanese. The trade, which the colonies of America maintained through the intermediary of the Philippine Islands with these nations of Asia, reinforced the Oriental character of American art, and although we believe that the racial influence was much more significant, we cannot neglect to recognize and cite the direct influences brought about by the interchange that commerce provoked.
Although he admitted that the Asiatic link derived partly from the Manila Galleon and the Jesuit mission network, the key to Benavides’s hypothesis was race. He was not deterred by the minor detail that the Amerindians crossed the Bering Straits landmass ten thousand to sixty thousand years before Hinduism, not to mention China or Japan.

Otherwise, Benavides agrees with Guido. Dividing colonial architecture into two phases, he characterized the first as “Hispanicizing” (españolizada)—from 1550 to 1700—and the second as “Hispano-Aboriginal Fusion”—from 1700 to 1780—which he traced to Cuzco. He also contributed the particularly unmellifluous neologism “xylomorphic” (woodcarving-like), referring to the flattened carving of the Andean Hybrid Baroque façades. He maintained that carpentry influenced the gouging and grooving techniques of woodworkers: “Peruvian Baroque clearly manifests the influence that the carpenter’s technique exercises in the masonry of their buildings.” Like Guido, Benavides tied Andean Hybrid Baroque to the Gate of the Sun at Tiahuanaco (fig. 1.1), particularly in reference to the Arequipa Compañía (fig. 2.3): “At times we have thought that, when individuals or peoples moved about the shores of the sacred lake, the fabulous monolith must have made an impression on their spirits as the only canon of good sculpture, causing a pagan wave to rise across the scant varnish of Christianity imposed by the Conquistadors.” Romantic rhetoric aside, I agree with his characterization of the Tiahuanaco link, as the ancient site would have been well known to migrant Andeans passing between Collao and the mines in Potosí (see chap. 10).

The first Peruvian to publish monographs on Andean Hybrid Baroque buildings was Ricardo Mariátegui Oliva, director of the Instituto de Investigaciones de Arte Peruano y Americano and also a specialist in pre-Hispanic art. Although his rhetoric was less jingoistic than that of his Argentine colleagues, he tried to claim Peruvian patrimony for Peruvian scholars, “as patriotism demands . . . of those [of us] who proudly call ourselves Peruvians.” In works such as his 1942 study of the Church of Santiago in Pomata (fig. 8.4), or his later monographs of Collao and Arequipa churches, Mariátegui was careful to steer clear of Guidoan terminology—he did not use the term “Estilo mestizo” at all—and largely avoided questions about the style’s origins. Although Mariátegui described these buildings as “plateresque”—a Spanish architectural movement of the sixteenth century possessing a similar flatness of overall decoration—he nevertheless acknowledged the profound Amerindian influence on the buildings:

Peruvian aborigines and Spanish masters undoubtedly created [the style]; both in mutual understanding, in a sympathetic act of intuition; the ones, artists in training, in executing the ornamentation according to their abilities, gradually came to modify the styles, leaving something that belonged to
them . . . inspiration of their fantasy, palpitation of their soul; a secret fiber, in the end, that they wove with care and with caution. It is thus that one notices . . . the reciprocal rapport between the technique and the art, the mutual understanding between the Hispanic master, supreme dominator of artistic style, and the indigenous stonemason, a Peruvian Indian, Aymara or Quechua, of vigorous and strong race, bronze complexion, [an] intelligent and tireless laborer.31

Mariátegui was the first to notice that many of the animals and fruit on Andean Hybrid Baroque buildings were not native to the Altiplano, although he merely stated that they must have grown there once and “disappeared today.”32 Mariategui accepted Benavides’s Asian link, although he saw the influence as coming from trade and not racial determinism:

The high altar [at Santiago de Pomata] makes me think very seriously again of Indo-Chinese civilization, especially that called Khmer. What strange relation existed with this exoticism of the Far East? One can do no more than admire it, since it is known that commerce on one hand and missions on the other brought much of this decorative inspiration from far-off lands, which by consequence infiltrated America, a living reflection therefore of Spain the Conqueror.33

In general Mariátegui wrote in a refreshingly self-deprecating style, was cautious about jumping to conclusions, and was generally prudent about accepting extravagant theories. Such is his admission that the great mysteries of the Andean Hybrid Baroque will probably remain forever in the graves of its makers:

What was the mentality of the artists who created this unsurpassable work, or of those who carved and sculpted it? Nobody knows! It is an enigma; an unfathomable mystery of the centuries!! Meanwhile the mind interprets—everyone in his own way—the things that those wise artisans of the past carved brilliantly, taking their secret to the tomb, which has made it indescribable for the scholars of the present . . . !!!34

In spite of his fondness for excessive punctuation, Mariátegui is a pleasant change from Guido or Noel. Yet his most noteworthy contribution is not his humility but his systematic use of archival sources: he was one of the few to do so before the late 1970s.

The next scholar to join the fray was the Argentine Mario José Buschiazzo (1902–70), who worked in the Ministry of Public Works of Buenos Aires Province and later in the Chief Architect’s Office in the National Ministry of Public Works.
Buschiazzo began with a 1944 volume titled *Arquitectura colonial*, a survey of monuments from California to Argentina, which he augmented over the next two decades in several scholarly journals. His conception of the Andean Hybrid Baroque as a fusion of indigenous and Spanish elements concurred with those of Guido and Noel, and he accepted Benavides’s Asian theories. However, he was especially intrigued by the lowland origins of much of the flora and fauna on the buildings. Together with Enrique Marco Dorta, Emilio Harth-Terré, César Arróspide de la Flor, and others, Buschiazzo suggested that Jesuit missionaries imported these motifs to Arequipa and the Altiplano via handicrafts made in their lowland missions in Moxos, Chiquitos, or the Chaco. Unfortunately, there is little evidence that such handicrafts reached the highlands, and in any case the motifs on surviving pieces are stylistically unrelated. It never occurred to any of these scholars that the Jesuits might have imported actual specimens of lowland flora and fauna, as I suggest in chapter 6.

But Buschiazzo had a focused understanding of the Andean Hybrid Baroque’s range, maintaining that it was specific to Arequipa, Collao, and Alto Perú (Bolivia) and was not a universal style that also applied to Guatemala and Mexico. Buschiazzo was supported in this opinion by the Spanish scholars Diego Angulo Iníguez (1901–86) and Enrique Marco Dorta (1911–80) and the Spanish-Chilean scholar Leopoldo Castedo (1915–99), who tirelessly insisted that the Andean Hybrid Baroque was specific to the Arequipa-Collao-Alto Perú region. Buschiazzo based his theory on the notion that the style was the direct product of its geography:

Located in a zone of transition between the arid dunes of the Pacific and the desolate Altiplano of the sacred lake, Arequipa quickly converted itself into a crucible where the Spanish and indigenous elements were merged, giving the place of absolute dominion to the mestizo, the “cholo.” The four life-giving horizons of Peru, the “chincha,” the “kolla,” the “anti,” and the “cunti,” converged in this river basin to blend with the robust yeast of the Spanish, creating a neo-Indian town, an American town distinct from the others in the colony. . . . But this fusion is most visible in its architecture, without doubt the most original in all of colonial America.

Marco Dorta entered the debate in 1945 with his contributions to the three-volume *Historia del arte hispano-americano*, a Franco-era celebration of Spanish culture in the Americas that he coauthored in Barcelona with Ángulo and Buschiazzo. In that work he coined the neutral term “planiform” to characterize Andean Hybrid Baroque ornamentation, avoiding reference to culture. In this and his later volume, *La arquitectura barroca en el Perú* (1957), Marco Dorta studiously avoids the term “Estilo mestizo,” focusing on technique and relating the style’s “anti-naturalist” quality to similar phenomena in late antiquity.
Arequipan Baroque distinguishes itself through the anti-naturalist manner of treating the relief decoration, in being shallow and not deep. The anonymous decorators of Arequipa—as Syriac, Coptic, and Byzantine artists had done in reaction to Classic art—carve incisions around the ornamental motifs so that, illuminated by the living light of the sun, they stand out against the background in shadow. . . . The ornamentation thus forms a tapestry of low relief, which recalls the delicate qualities of a baroque embroidery.41

In this later work Marco Dorta acknowledged a new approach developed by Alfred Neumeyer (see below) that related Andean Hybrid Baroque to more global stylistic hybrids and was one of the first to associate the carving with textiles—even if obliquely and only to European embroideries. Marco Dorta emphasized the Spanish Renaissance heritage of the motifs: “Arequipan architects always remained faithful to the old Renaissance models, respecting the straight lines of the scheme and presenting the elements with absolute frontality[:]. . . . clusters of grapes, and quatrefoils, egg-and-tongue and plaiting of classical ancestry, venuses and Renaissance masks and even the two-headed eagle of the arms of the house of Austria make up the varied decorative repertory.”42 Similarly, he tied the style to plateresque and mudéjar, citing, among other things, a similar horror vacui.43 Despite his Hispanophile perspective, Marco Dorta believed that the style could be related to pre-Hispanic arts. Referring to the Church of Santo Domingo in Arequipa (fig. 3.4), he cited “stylizations of corn and cantuta flower, figures of nude children and masks seen in profile which perhaps respond to pre-Columbian influences”; elsewhere he suggests that a “cat-tiger with the body of a centipede so many times stylized in pre-Hispanic pottery” appears on the Compañía in the same city (fig. 2.6); and he remarks that the lateral doorway at Zepita (fig. 7.8) “seems to recall the pre-Hispanic relief of Chavín de Huantar, interpreted liberally by a Baroque artist.”44 In explaining the presence of lowland flora and fauna, Marco Dorta again points to the Jesuits.45

The Peruvian architect Héctor Velarde (1898–1991), like his compatriot Maríategui, interpreted Andean Hybrid Baroque more cautiously in his 1946 volume, Arquitectura peruana, but he believed firmly that the style was hybrid: “the architecture of Arequipa was that of a marriage between the conquistador and the conquered, that of a true fusion, the perfect colonial architecture, perhaps the most fulfilled of the American mestizo architectures.”46 Like Marco Dorta, Velarde compared Andean Hybrid Baroque ornamentation to textiles: the tympanum decorations of two houses in Arequipa were “a kind of white tapestry” and “made as if with flecks of wool (motas de lana).”47 The tapestry metaphor suggests a much more plausible link with indigenous culture—that is, with colonial textiles—than references to wide-ranging pre-Hispanic sites, although Velarde, like Marco Dorta, did not specifically mention Andean textiles. Marco Dorta sought pre-Hispanic sources in Chavín and especially Tiahuanaco (fig. 1.1): “The style of this ornamentation is

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unique and relates mysteriously to that which the architecture of Tiahuanaco flaunts in the celebrated frieze of the Gate of the Sun. . . . The motifs, strongly stylized and of well-defined outlines, look like thick mosaics worked into the porous and white stone. . . . One sees the architecture of Spain through Indian eyes in Arequipa.”

Velarde is more wary about Asian influence, although he still links it to race:

There are writers who point toward Indo-Asiatic [influences] and even Chino-Japanese ones, which could have taken place as a result of commerce with the Philippines and with missionaries from India and China. This is possible and very eloquent in some isolated cases in the colonial art of Peru; but . . . origins become so intensely linked to indigenous ancestral methods and are so in harmony with the material and with the light of the region, that it seems much more like a natural outbreak of race and landscape than something imported.

In a later reference underscoring the importance of landscape he comments that “these baroque temples are . . . enveloped in a dense atmosphere related to the earth that transforms them into unique buildings.”

But not all scholars agreed about geography. The Modernist German émigré Alfred Neumeyer (1901–73) from Mills College in Oakland, in consultation with George Kubler at Yale, proposed a more unitary vision of colonial architecture, in which European models underwent similar processes of provincialization throughout Latin America. His article in *Art Bulletin* (1948) on the indigenous contribution to Latin American colonial architecture was the first salvo on behalf of what would later be called the “neo-colonial” school, which saw indigenizing architecture less as a product of specific cultures than part of a worldwide phenomenon of “popular art” or “folk art” created when people unfamiliar with Western techniques imitated European art (cf. the references to the Copts and Byzantines noted nine years later by Marco Dorta). Neumeyer’s conception of Latin American Baroque as “a folk idiom of classical Mediterranean art[,] . . . partak[ing] of those general features of the hybrid fringe civilizations of the Mediterranean which in antiquity reached from Gandhara to Scotland[,]” would later be pursued more forcefully by Kubler. At one point Neumeyer famously likened the angels in the cupola at Santiago de Pomata (fig. 8.1) to figures in Bulgarian cross-stitch embroidery. Although he insisted that “folk art” is not a derogatory term, the reader cannot help interpret it that way from comments such as these: “Representation of three-dimensional space and full-round corporality are a foreign element to the folk decorator. . . . They are the product of urban civilizations and demand a power of perception which goes beyond what a rural people can and want to perform.”

Neumeyer directly attacked Guido and the idea of geographic specificity in the Andean Hybrid Baroque:
It is wrong, in our opinion, to see in it, as Ángel Guido has done, a specifically Peruvian “lineal” manner which has its origin in pre-Columbian monuments of the Lake Titicaca region. . . . We conclude from this that the Arequipa style is neither an isolated phenomenon nor even typically Peruvian, but rather the most radical, or genuine, expression of the fusion of the Mudéjar-Plateresque-Baroque with the underlying Indian approach to design.55

Nevertheless he repeatedly contradicts himself as he is not ready to give up the idea of distinctly local symbolic models:

Colonial art has here returned to the original principles of native decoration. That this return must have been made with a certain awareness on the part of the builders becomes evident through the extensive use of native motifs: the floral design is that of the sacred flower of the Incas, the “Kantukta” (Spanish: cantuta), and the waterspouts show puma heads.56

Most telling, Neumeyer even employs the term “Mestizo Style.”

Neumeyer did do the field a service by dismissing the racist Asian theories of his precursors: “At first glance the facade of La Compañía in Arequipa indeed recalls Hindu architecture. . . . In deriving Arequipa’s architectural style from Hindu art, one deprives it of its larger context with the Americas and degrades it to an architectural curiosity.”57 He also discredited Benavides’s xilomorphic concept, commenting, “It must always arouse suspicion if a style is explained by exclusively material or technical factors. . . . If this explanation were really valid, then the similar phenomena which we found in sixteenth-century Mexico would also be ‘xylomorphic’ and yet we know that there was no wood carving to hark back to.”58

In the first book-length treatment of Peruvian colonial art in English (1949), Harold Wethey (1902–84) of the University of Michigan summarized his predecessors’ theories without picking favorites—a diplomatic but confusing approach.59 Along with Kubler and the Hungarian émigré Pál Kelemen (1894–1993), Wethey belonged to a generation of scholars trained in the history of European art—he would later be the premier Titian scholar of his age—who turned to colonial Latin America after World War II made work in Europe impossible. Using “Mestizo Style” to refer specifically to the seventeenth- and eighteenth-century buildings of Arequipa-Collao-Alto Perú, Wethey nevertheless remarked that “it exists all over Latin America . . . and cannot be regarded solely as Peruvian.”60 This opinion was echoed in Kelemen’s nearly contemporary Baroque and Rococo in Latin America (1951).61

Wethey echoed Neumeyer by linking the style to a universal “natural primitivism,” which he tied to the “naïveté of the Indian”: “That same preference for
two-dimensional pattern characterizes the art of all prehistoric and primitive peoples; it is indicative of a certain state of intellectual development.” At the same time he acknowledged pre-Hispanic prototypes, mentioning Tiahuanaco, the Nazca, and pre-Hispanic textiles. This was the first mention of the influence of Andean textiles on Andean Hybrid Baroque ornament, something he would expand on in a 1951 article in which he replaced pre-Hispanic textiles with colonial ones:

Colonial textiles . . . involve the same decorative motives and the same stylized primitive type of composition as the architectural sculpture. . . . The stylized rosettes, placed in a frontal position with an intertwining stem linking them together, are common to both textiles and architectural sculpture. Generally, flat textile patterns characterize the sculpture under discussion. Numerous decorative themes are common to both media.

Wethey emphatically rejected supposed non-Altiplano origins for the motifs in Andean Hybrid Baroque architecture, including lowland mission arts, and called the theory of Asian influence “preposterous.”

Wethey made two especially important observations about the field. He blamed scholars’ ignorance of the origins and meaning of the Andean Hybrid Baroque on their disinclination toward archival research, and he was the first to observe that the Andean Hybrid Baroque was “purely decorative” and therefore primarily a sculptural, as opposed to an architectural, phenomenon: “We must insist that it has nothing to do with the structural features of these colonial churches. . . . [I]t applies solely to the ornamental carving, generally in stone, upon the interiors and exteriors of churches.” Although this latter comment is well taken—I disagree in part because architectural elements such as projecting cornices and types of column are also part of the style—it was soon used by the “neo-colonial” camp to discredit the Andean Hybrid Baroque.


Although the early literature did not always agree about the origins and identity of the Andean Hybrid Baroque, scholars agreed that it was a fusion of European and Andean features. The Yale art historian George Kubler (1912–96) was the first to debunk the entire idea of indigenous content, first in a paper at the 1958 International Congress of the History of Art in New York and then in a brief and dismissive discussion of the debate in Art and Architecture in Spain and Portugal and Their American Dominions, 1500–1800 (with Martín Soria, 1959). Kubler dismissed the term “Mestizo Style” as racist:
This style is often called “mestizo.” . . . The term is abusive to nearly everyone in the Andean region, to the mestizo people, whom it singles out, as well as to the creoles, Spaniards, Indians, and Negroes, whose many contributions it excludes. Hence it is preferable to discuss the style in question as “provincial highland” architecture, in which the flat pattern and prolixity characteristic of provincial design everywhere in the world become dominant.68

At a congress at Princeton in 1963, he stated, “Many art historians persist in referring to those planiform expressions of Latin America, which are typical of provincial and rural arts everywhere, as mestizo, or hybridized art.”69 Kubler’s reaction was understandable: he was reacting to patriotic posing, wild speculation, and especially the kind of nefarious racial theories that had so recently been used to justify the horrors of Nazism and which he called “regrettable in the present world, where racial discrimination is inconsistent with human dignity.”70 But belief in racially inherent artistic characteristics is not the same thing as acknowledging that Amerindian visual culture, a living and flourishing tradition in the colonial period, had an impact on the arts of the colony. By denying an Amerindian voice and insisting on terms such as “provincial art” and “folk art,” Kubler’s interpretation of the Andean Hybrid Baroque is derogatory—whether he meant it that way or not.

On the other hand, Kubler wisely rejected pre-Hispanic sources such as Nazca pottery, which was “unknown until about 1900, when Max Uhle discovered the burial-grounds of the south-coast valleys of Peru.”71 But he went too far in dismissing influence from pre-Hispanic monuments, such as Tiahuanaco, that were known to colonial Andean carvers: “Pre-Conquest styles were extinguished, with the exception of a few weak images that appeared during the sixteenth century; . . . on the other hand, the artifacts of the post-Conquest are usually provincial extensions of European styles. The presence of indigenous forms in these artifacts . . . is sporadic, casual, and not very frequent.”72 Kubler made a more famous denunciation of pre-Hispanic influence in a reference to the architecture of New Spain: “Such survivals are so few and scattered that their assembling requires an enormous expenditure for a minimal yield, like a search for the fragments of a deep-lying shipwreck.”73 He chose his terminology carefully to disassociate the Andean Hybrid Baroque from any sense of Amerindian contribution, using terms such as Marco Dorta’s “planiform” and words that refer solely to its material or technical properties drawing on Benavides’s xylomorphism or Velarde’s tapestries.74 Kubler’s stubborn belief in an almost total “extinction” of indigenous motifs in colonial art unleashed a backlash against the recognition of Amerindian content in the arts of colonial Latin America as a whole.

Reaction was swift from Emilio Harth-Terré. In a 1961 letter to Graziano Gasparini, a twenty-one-year-old Italian émigré scholar living in Venezuela and Kubler’s most vocal disciple, Harth-Terré formally responded to Kubler’s remarks
during the New York conference. This letter, preserved in typescript at Harvard’s Loeb Library, begins by disputing Kubler’s ability as an Anglo-Saxon to understand the concept of *mestizaje*, a chauvinistic barb that mars the Peruvian architect’s otherwise mostly reasonable arguments (the underscoring is his own):

I do not believe that the opinion of the critic in question can be considered well founded. . . . [T]he Saxon in general, and in particular the Puritan, do not yet sufficiently understand the meaning of *mestizaje*, nor do they try to understand for many reasons; one, the principal one, is that he, in colonizing, always pushed the native to one side; and he applied this adjective to him in an ever more pejorative sense in his banal language. The mestizo . . . is a word and concept totally alien to his sentimental mind-set, which in contrast is very familiar for the Latino.75

Nevertheless, Harth-Terré was quick to distance himself from the racial determinism of his Latin American colleagues and the idea of an Amerindian *Kunstwollen*: “It would be equally [mistaken] to attribute to [the Amerindian] an intellectual capacity—an interior vision of innate Indianness—or a special Will resulting from this ontological principle.”76 He accepted the term “mestizo” as a legitimate blending of European and American elements but cast his net wider to include mestizos and blacks: “the term *mestizo* is best used to characterize the offshoot of Hispanic art on American territory, Peruvian territory; made by hands ranging from those of the Spanish to those of the Indians, including those of the mestizos and without forgetting to add the mulattoes and blacks, freemen and slaves, whose work is a fine chapter in our viceregal architecture.”77 But Harth-Terré departed from most scholars by maintaining that the metaphor did not refer to a mixture per se but to a new product created by that mixture, something more akin to my own conclusions in this book: “Between both poles, the standard of the Spanish maestro and the sentiment of the indigenous craftsman[,] . . . one discovers that both sides have forever lost something of what was once their world, and everyone has been submitted to a social readjustment full of surprises.”78 Harth-Terré also believed firmly in the pre-Hispanic origins of some of its motifs—most famously the *figuras parlantes* (talking figures), the profile masks that appear on the lateral borders of many Andean Hybrid Baroque doorways (fig. 2.6), which he related to Paracas and Moche culture.79 In later works Harth-Terré was to treat the Mestizo Style as a more pan-Latin American phenomenon that occurred whenever indigenous features and styles blended with Spanish Plateresque.80

If Harth-Terré believed that his defense of the term Mestizo Style would be the last word on the subject, he was mistaken. What ensued was what I call the Great Debate, a prolific and enduring polemic about the origins and meaning of the Andean Hybrid Baroque that divided scholars into “indigenists” (Harth-Terré et al.)
and “Hispanists” (the Kubler school)—to use Guido’s terms—and that paralyzed the field between the 1960s and 1980.81 The Great Debate paralleled (and intersected with) a dispute over indigenous content in the architecture of early colonial New Spain, often referred to as “Tequitqui” (a Nahua word for “vassal” coined for this purpose in 1946), that came to a head in the 1970s.82 One of the most remarkable things about the scholars in the Hispanist school is the defensive tone they used when discrediting the scholars they also called “indigenists” (indigenistas). During conferences such as the one at Mar del Plata, Argentina, in September 1966, talks would erupt into shouting matches, with Hispanists insulting and discrediting their opponents. By contrast, scholars in the indigenist camp tended to be respectful of the works of their adversaries, even trying to reach a happy medium. One stand-out feature of the work of the Hispanists is their disrespect for archival documentation, a source of information that they did not merely avoid, but to which they were ideologically opposed.

Most of the key contributions to the Great Debate were published in two sources: the Venezuelan journal Boletín del Centro de Investigaciones Históricas y Estéticas and the published proceedings of the 1980 Simposio Internazionale sul Barocco Latino Americano held in Rome. Graziano Gasparini, director of the Centro de Investigaciones, officially opened the debate in the first issue of the Boletín (1964) by sending out a petition to twelve leading art historians and architects asking whether or not “Mestizo Style” was an appropriate term—of twelve correspondents, only two (Kubler and the Mexican scholar Ricardo de Robina) replied in the negative.83 Although the Boletín contains more than twenty contributions to the discussion by the leading lights of the field over the course of more than a decade, it only succeeded in galvanizing the partisan nature of the debate. Aside from Emilio Harth-Terré, the protagonists of the indigenist camp included Teresa Gisbert, José de Mesa, Leopoldo Castedo, Ramón Gutiérrez, and Damián Bayón; Kubler’s and Gasparini’s Hispanist camp included Ilmar Luks, Erwin Walter Palm, Antonio Bonet Correa, Yves Bottineau, and Robert Smith. None of the members of the Hispanist camp was born in Latin America or specialized in Andean architecture, whereas all but one of the indigenists came from South America and were experts in the Andes region.84

Gasparini (b. 1940) was the most fervent Hispanist, dismissing not only the term “Mestizo Style” but also the work of his predecessors on the basis that they did not understand the spatial essence of architecture: “I categorically do not support the definition of ‘mestizo architecture,’ not for its racial or biological implications, but because the definition tends principally to highlight a regional decorative modality instead of founding itself upon values more appropriate to the work of architecture.”85 Gasparini’s spatial conception of architecture derived from fellow Italian Bruno Zevi (1918–2000), who popularized such approaches in the 1950s and 1960s.
with his seminal publication, *Saper vedere l'architettura: Saggio sull'interpretazione spaziale dell'architettura* (1948). But while Zevi was an outspoken critic of absolutism, Gasparini was dictatorial in applying his architectural theories. He claimed that Latin Americanists had missed the point altogether by focusing on motifs (revealing a “great ignorance of architecture and its values”), declared that their work was fatally flawed because of an “absence of a spatial interpretation of architecture,” and even attacked their use of archival documents, which he called “a fetishistic dependence upon objective facts”—anticipating the postmodern assault on the notion of objective truth. Gasparini reiterated his position in his 1972 book, *América, barroco y arquitectura*:

> A large part of Latin American architectural historiography . . . is reduced to a description of forms and a compilation of facts in which a cold and archaeological language predominates, [which is] above all detached from any attempt to clarify the architectural process. . . . They employ a method which does not communicate the experience and living reality that architectural work must produce, and thus are reduced to mere reports.

But Gasparini’s spatial understanding of architecture, developed with Borromini or Guarini in mind, is not very effective in Latin America, where the most interesting part of a building is usually its decoration or the architectural framework of its façade, while the buildings themselves—except in Brazil—usually had rectilinear plans and flat walls. He also overlooked the key role played by columns, cornices, corbels, and pediments/tympana in the façades and doorways of the Andean churches.

More significantly, Gasparini used his spatial theories to demote the Andean Hybrid Baroque from a style of architecture to a provincial or folk decorative phenomenon, echoing Kubler but taking a different tack. His argument was that any indigenous content (which even he admitted was possible at times) was peripheral to the architecture: “In these buildings, the indigenous contribution only appears in the ornamentation, that is to say, in an activity more related to the decoration than to the experiences which relate to the work of architecture.” In the Rome symposium Gasparini even denigrated Andean sculptors: “The question of a native hand does not constitute a factor of change in colonial architecture and the differences attributed to the contributions of the ‘indigenous sensibility’ are nothing more than alterations and deformations of the process of reproduction of imported concepts and forms.”

The Mexican art historian Francisco de la Maza (1913–72) scoffed that Gasparini’s spatial theory was little more than the flavor of the month (“*moda del momento*”), and Gasparini’s Latin American colleagues called his ideas “harmful,” “devastating,” and “insulting”—all of which Gasparini proudly printed in a postscript to one
of his articles, calling them “sensationalist reactions and scandalous polemics” from “untouchable scholars.”

Gasparini also challenged the literature by insisting that Andean Hybrid Baroque motifs derived from late classical and early medieval sources, owing to the superficially similar ways they altered classical models: “Many of the decorative motifs that ‘mestizo architecture’ kept using well into the eighteenth century come from long before the Renaissance and moreover preserve the same primitive character.” The problem with this theory is that Gasparini never explained how Byzantine or Syriac motifs could have reached the eighteenth-century Andes—it recalls Benavides and his Asian connection—and why the artists would not have achieved this “primitive character” simply through their interpretation of models found in readily available late Renaissance and Baroque printed books. Consequently when Luks, Gasparini’s pupil, attempted a demonstration of ancient and medieval European prototypes it backfired: the resulting 1973 monograph used far more convincing models from Renaissance manuals than from Lombard or Syriac carvings. Although it is short on analysis and went to excruciating pains to avoid reference to Baroque printed sources, Luks’s manual is an impressive piece of detective work and valuable as a visual reference for the European prototypes in the Andean Hybrid Baroque. The book’s primary shortcoming is its lack of archival documentation, to which Luks freely admits: “because of the lack of documentation it is not possible to establish an exact chronology for this artistic movement.” These documentary gaps are especially problematic where he treats the training, hiring, and work habits of the artists and masons (e.g., pp. 36–37, 55–55), which he has to leave to conjecture, as well as in some of the printed models he chose, which included extremely rare editions of books that do not exist in any known Andean library inventories, as Gutiérrez later pointed out.

Gasparini’s and Luks’s stance is echoed in publications by Erwin Walter Palm (1910–88), Robert Smith (1912–75), Antonio Bonet Correa (b. 1925), and Yves Bottineau. Palm, a German émigré and a specialist in the colonial architecture of the Dominican Republic, agreed that Latin American colonial art was a provincialization of metropolitan (European) forms and cited work on the diffusion of ancient Roman forms by the “Vienna School” art historians Franz Wickhoff (1853–1909) and Alois Riegl (1858–1905): “We note, in fact, the progressive deformation of ornament in the architecture of the Indian hinterland beginning in the eighteenth century. . . . I agree with Kubler in saying that it is not a specifically Indian sight with which the architectural decoration of the eighteenth century in Guatemala and the south of Peru present us. . . . [I]n effect, these are the same effects of provincialization.” The American Smith, a specialist in Brazilian and Portuguese art, concurred, commenting, “I find myself in the position of supporting Prof. Gasparini’s condemnation of the claims of certain ultra-nationalists that an American style exists based on mestizo ornament.” The French scholar Bottineau also stressed the unity of the
Hispanic world, downplaying the indigenous in favor of the Spanish in the architecture of the Americas. The Catalan architect Bonet went further than his colleagues in claiming a near-total elimination of indigenous culture: “The iconographic tradition expresses itself, therefore, in a ‘primitive’ and ‘medieval’ manner. Its origin might derive from Western paganism or Christianity. It was the same. The Indian, withdrawn in his rural world, had to accept totally, as something of his own, the new concepts, perhaps because he had almost completely lost the cultural forms that were his own, irredeemably destroyed by the conquest.” These four scholars, like most of the so-called Hispanist camp, were concerned more with generalizations on a hemispheric and even global scale than on the specifics of South Andean architecture of the late seventeenth and eighteenth century.

It was left to the scholars of the indigenist camp to return to detailed regional studies. This group was led by the young Bolivian scholars José de Mesa (b. 1925) and Teresa Gisbert (b. 1926), both still active in the field. From the beginning, the Mesa-Gisbert team took a conciliatory approach, trying to navigate between the work of earlier generations such as Guido and Buschiazzo and the Hispanists. Working from a greater typology of motifs, a wider sampling of buildings, and a more extensive archival foundation, Mesa and Gisbert probably knew more about the subject than anyone of their generation. Yet they were willing to find common ground with the Hispanists, even entertaining Gasparini’s claim that some motifs might be traced back to pre-Renaissance Europe and the Middle East. But they firmly and eloquently defended the indigenous contributions to the style and the name “Mestizo Style,” saying that it came from a “distinct point of view that responds completely to indigenous sensibility” and that it therefore should not be disparaged with names such as “primitive,” “popular,” or “provincial.” Emphasizing the style’s uniqueness, they wrote:

We believe that the Baroque architecture that developed in America broke free of European molds at the beginning of the eighteenth century. The planiform decoration with unique motifs, [and] the nationalization of the plans . . . point toward fundamental differences between American Baroque architecture and Spanish Baroque architecture. This American Baroque needs a label to distinguish it. . . . [T]he terms “ultrabaroque” or “Churrigueriesque” are not sufficient because they refer to external forms of European Baroque, but not different concepts. For this reason we have used the term “mestizo,” which, although not totally adequate a term as Professor Kubler indicates, is the most appropriate to refer to an architecture that is structurally European, but produced with an indigenous sensibility. The Baroque architecture of the eighteenth century is the result of a mixture not only of elements, but also of culture and ways of interpretation, and for this reason we call it “mestiza.”
Mesa and Gisbert acknowledged that Andean churches were conservative and rectilinear in plan and consequently agreed with Gasparini that they did not belong spatially to the Baroque: “[There was] little interest in space, above all interior space.” But they were firmly opposed to his belief that the Andean Hybrid Baroque was not a school of architecture.

Like Wethey, Mesa and Gisbert linked indigenous motifs (such as the monkey and cat-tiger) to colonial textiles—they called them “probably the principal transmitters of mestizo motifs”—as well as furniture and queros (ritual drinking vessels), but they did not deny the possibility of influence from the pre-Hispanic world, chiding Bonet for his dismissiveness: “We believe that this destruction was not nearly as radical as it appears to have been in some documents. It is certain that indigenous culture was eradicated in many parts of America, but it survived in others, fossilized and entrenched into the culture of the victors.” Mesa and Gisbert also convincingly explained the appearance of lowland motifs, citing the work of anthropologists who showed that in pre-Hispanic and colonial times Altiplano communities imported food and other necessities from lowland regions, and “for which reason there was a constant contact between the highlands and lowlands, including the sea.” The colonial forced-labor method known as mita, in which indigenous communities were called upon on a rotational basis to provide labor for a fixed period and salary, could also have been responsible for moving the people who built the churches between the lowlands and highlands.

Perhaps Mesa and Gisbert’s most significant contribution is the idea that even if motifs (such as siren figures) were of European origin they had alternate meanings for their Amerindian audiences that derived from Andean traditions and could be gleaned from written sources and other external evidence. Amerindian sculptors therefore selected and arranged European motifs according to their own needs: “The Baroque[,] . . . with its many possibilities, its innumerable decorative options, its liberty of expression and its taste for the unusual, permits the representation of a complex world without altering its apparent relationship with European models. Every detail, with few exceptions, can be traced to an engraved source; nevertheless only literary texts speak to us of the chosen forms’ undercurrent of meaning.” This interpretation, which allowed for a richer, more contextual understanding of Andean Hybrid Baroque ornamentation, liberated the field from the straitjacket imposed on it by scholars who used European sources as proof of the elimination of indigenous culture. Mesa and Gisbert’s elegant argument may have struck the death knell for the “Hispanists,” at least with regard to colonial Andean architecture.

The theme of syncretism and multiple meanings in Andean Hybrid Baroque ornamentation was absorbed by scholars such as the Spanish-Chilean Leopoldo Castedo (1915–99) and the Argentine expatriot Damián Bayón (1916–95), whose 1968 study of Puno Cathedral (fig. 7.14) tried to demonstrate an indigenous sensibility in the architecture of the church in its hollow pyramidal shape, its elevated
Bayón wrote, “Starting from a form that recalls the pyramids—a form already built with success by the Indians—some master masons, European or not, led by a native project coordinator, were capable of constructing true pyramids of stone or brick and—the most extraordinary for the epoch—empty on the interior.” Although I find this theory a bit far-fetched, Bayón rightly spoke out against forcing European-style labels on South American buildings that derived from an entirely different cultural context, contesting Gasparini’s claim that the style was merely a branch of the international Baroque and (like Mesa and Gisbert) stressing the “polyvalent” meanings of its carved decoration: “South American history is not only the poor relative of that of Europe: on the same basic watch their hands tell another time, their own. . . . [I]t is precisely the difference that makes studying it interesting, and not the perennial search for sameness, which historians seem always interested in demonstrating.” He avoided the term “Mestizo Style,” not because he disagreed with what it represented, but because he felt that an overabundance of labels had brought his field to a standstill. Bayón’s approach to South American architecture was influenced by the Annalist school of Pierre Francastel (1900–1970), a French movement (Bayón lived in Paris) that interpreted art through its social, economic, cultural, and other quotidian contexts, and he maintained that the building should be studied as a whole and not separately from its ornamentation—an approach that would soon be followed.

Post-Debate Scholarship (1980–2010)

During the 1980 Rome conference the field had become so crippled by its partisan stalemate that it needed someone willing to take the subject apart and start from the beginning. This role fell to the Argentine architectural historian Ramón Gutiérrez (b. 1951), whose passion was urbanism and who had just completed a massive and deliberately antipolemical collaborative survey in 1978 of the churches of Collao, making use of extensive new archival data, photo surveys, plans, and interdisciplinary approaches. Gutiérrez’s study, like his later ones on the regions of Cuzco and the Colca Canyon, did not confine itself to Andean Hybrid Baroque buildings but embraced colonial Altiplano architecture as a whole. In fact, Gutiérrez generally avoided the term “Mestizo Style,” agreeing with Bayón that an abundance of labels was part of the problem. He spoke out sharply against the totalitarian attitudes of Gasparini and his followers, chastising them for using degrading terms such as “provincial” and blaming them for causing an almost complete rupture with pioneering works from Guido to Wethey:

Gasparini has skill and vocation as a critic, he knows how to do it and he does not lack for arguments, but he usually fails in his conclusions, above all
when he refuses to recognize the peculiar characteristics of American architecture and to contextualize his analysis of its intrinsic factors, and when he expands the European (especially Italian) vision of the theme uncontrollably. . . . Perhaps because of a problem of temperament, we are not partisan to iconolastic systems. Gasparini usually adopts the attitude of wiping the slate clean and . . . he discredits the earlier contributions.114

Gutiérrez restated his understanding of the problem: namely, that instead of accepting a variety of methodological approaches, scholars regularly make the mistake of “trying to explain the entirety of a problem using partial viewpoints, each one of which is supposed to exclude all others.”115 About Gasparini’s spatial theories, he commented, “Unfortunately one frequently encounters studies which ramble on about super-structural conditions (generally based on a priori ideological premises) without ever arriving at an explanation of the object of analysis; or others who try simply to cut reality away in order to force a theory, loading arbitrary meanings onto the object.”116 He especially took Luks to task for this misdemeanor, accusing him of going out of his way to find obscure and irrelevant models for Andean Hybrid Baroque ornamentation from books that would never have been seen by the artisans themselves.117

Documentary sources were a major bone of contention. Gutiérrez complained that almost all the literature on the “Mestizo Style” was based on the limited archival work done in the first half of the twentieth century.118 He chastised Gasparini and his followers for avoiding new documentary research: “Ecclesiastical archives (diocesan or parochial) provide an enormous quantity of information about the construction of the churches, their characteristics, their transformations, their architects, etc., which, all things considered, do not merely expand the field of knowledge but also shed light on the most controversial processes of the so-called mestizo baroque.”119 He concluded with a plea that echoed Wethey thirty years earlier: “All of this implies . . . the necessity of redefining the scope of the whole business, expanding it quantitatively and qualitatively; in the number of examples and in our knowledge of the same. Regarding this second point, the recommendation should be to aim at advancing the historical knowledge before continuing the polemics over interpretations of imperfectly known objects.”120

Gutiérrez’s team took great pains in their 1978 study to employ archival records in precisely this way, as they did in their later studies—books that have been immensely helpful as a foundation for the present volume. The Gutiérrez team also moved beyond the “Great Debate’s” focus on about twenty churches to a corpus several times that number—albeit most of them not Andean Hybrid Baroque structures—and their rich haul of archival sources allowed them to study not only building history but also historical and social issues such as labor practices, migrations of people, and religious beliefs. One of their greatest contributions was to confirm the
importance of indigenous labor groups in the construction of Andean churches, increasingly so in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries when Amerindian and mestizo maestros replaced their Spanish or criollo counterparts. Gutiérrez wrote, “This growing presence of the indigenous artisan will change, together with contextual circumstances, the architectural characteristics of the region and produce the phenomenon that has been defined as ‘Mestiza architecture.’” The study also revealed an ever-increasing corporate organization among builders and carpenters, demonstrating the existence of workshops and artisanal families such as the Ticona who moved freely from place to place, spreading their style over a large region. We also owe Gutiérrez—a long with Mesa and Gisbert—an immense debt for discovering the names of many indigenous and mestizo artists and architects in the archives. Important new studies of Andean Hybrid Baroque architecture have further expanded the field. The Peruvian art historians Luis Enrique Tord (b. 1942) and Francisco Stastny, the late Spanish émigré to Peru Antonio San Cristóbal (1923–2008), the Peruvian architect Roberto Samanez Argumedo, and the Japanese art historian Hiroshige Okada are the most prominent of the new scholars working on Andean Hybrid Baroque architecture. Their work has widened the geographic and temporal range and number of Andean Hybrid Baroque buildings under consideration, and they have enhanced our understanding of the buildings’ socioeconomic context, their relationship to the other arts, and the multiple meanings of their imagery and structural forms. But, unlike recent work by Gutiérrez’s exhortation to scour the archives for new primary documents.

The most original new work is a pair of books by Gisbert that depart from the more conventional art history of her earlier studies toward a more interdisciplinary and contextual approach. These are her 1980 manifesto, Iconografía y mitos indígenas en el arte, and her 1999 book, El paraíso de los pájaros parlantes—the latter title a nod to Harth-Terré’s “figuras parlantes.” These books do not focus exclusively on Andean Hybrid Baroque architecture but interpret it in the wider context of Andean traditional arts, from painting and sculpture to queros, ceramics, furniture, and textiles. Her books go a long way toward unlocking the meaning of colonial-era Andean imagery through a closer look at the sociocultural milieu in which the buildings and objects were constructed and a deeper understanding of Andean mythology. Gisbert’s focus is on how the indigenous world used imagery—much of it of European origin but given Andean meanings—to express aspects of their faith, politics, and collective identity. As in her essays in the Boletín, Gisbert has opened our eyes to the multiple associations and perspectives that lie behind symbols such as the siren (fig. 7.17), angels (fig. 6.13), and the sun, moon, and stars (fig. 5.9). Her work considers the changes wrought on Euro-Christian imagery by Andean creation myths and oral histories and how artistic forms are used to affirm Andean self-identity even to the point of rebellion—an echo of Guido’s more romantic statements of the 1940s. Gisbert’s contextualization of Andean visual culture paved the way for a new
wave of indigenist studies of Andean material culture (centering primarily on Cuzco) by scholars such as Sabine MacCormack, Thomas Cummins, Carolyn Dean, Carol Damian, and Elena Phipps. Perhaps Gisbert’s most important revelation for Andean Hybrid Baroque architecture is its relation to the Andean paradise, a blend of the Christian Heaven with Andean paradises such as Hanacpacha and especially the earthly eastern paradise garden of Antisuyo that was the refuge of the last Incas. She was the first to draw an explicit connection between Andean Hybrid Baroque and Antisuyo, a connection I explore in detail in chapter 10.

Gisbert uses the term “Mestizo Style” unapologetically to this day. She insists that pre-Hispanic imagery can be found in Andean Hybrid Baroque architecture, some of which she believes early missionaries encouraged to facilitate conversions. Tackling one of the field’s oldest enigmas—one that gave fuel to the “Hispanists”—Gisbert provides a very reasonable explanation for the late appearance of indigenous forms in Andean architecture (in New Spain by contrast, Tequitqui was easily explained because it occurred shortly after the conquest):

The integration between Europeans and Indians is sparse in the earliest times, when the impact of war and politics imposed humanist models, but as time passes the acculturated natives recover more of their power, to the extent where they become ... an important factor in the arts. Thus Mannerism passes to Baroque, often by means of copying engravings, to pour forth at the end of the seventeenth century in a liberation of form that results in original expressions in architecture as much as in painting. This process responds to an ideology and is produced by the persistence of indigenous values which fight for survival in the face of a great avalanche of Western cultural importations, in which Christianity is decisive.

Gisbert established a date of around 1680 as the beginning of an Andean Hybrid Baroque in all the viceregal arts, from painting and sculpture (especially in maguey) to textiles and ephemera, and this style acquired meanings linked to indigenous nationalism in the eighteenth century and the rebellion of Túpac Amaru.

Tord makes headway in other ways, although his work is largely descriptive, does not consider the Andean Hybrid Baroque’s larger social context, and ignores archival sources. His first and most important contribution was Templos coloniales del Colca-Arequipa in 1983, a photo survey in which for the first time he incorporates sixteen of the churches of the Colca Valley into the corpus of Andean Hybrid Baroque buildings, demonstrating their close affinity with the architecture of Arequipa and Collao and emphasizing the contribution of the Collagua people to the Andean Hybrid Baroque in Colca and Arequipa alike through labor and textile designs. Soon afterward Francisco Stastny undertook a large collaborative survey of
the Colca Valley churches that would have included archival documents such as inventories and account books, as well as an extensive series of photographs of artworks, but it came to naught and now languishes in a fragmentary state in the Archiepiscopal Archives in Arequipa.129

Although Tord at first uses the term “arquitectura mestiza” only obliquely—“this is not the opportunity to detain ourselves with an analysis of the polemic surrounding the existence of a Baroque that is properly mestizo”—he later uses terms like “decoración mestiza” and “arquitectura mestiza surperuana” and maintains that the architecture of this region was profoundly influenced by the indigenous artists who created it, not only through the carved decoration, but also through open chapels, atria, and other forms cited by Gisbert as deriving from pre-Hispanic traditions.130 Unfortunately, in Templos coloniales and the later book Arequipa histórica y monumental and a 2003 essay on the Baroque in Arequipa and Colca, he spends little time on analysis or discussion of the meaning of the carved decoration other than to refer to a “textile tendency” that is typical of “reliefs carved in stone by aboriginal artists.”131

San Cristóbal first approached Andean Hybrid Baroque architecture in Arquitectura planiforme y textilográfica virreinal de Arequipa (1997), which focused on Arequipa and environs, and he more recently surveyed the style in Collao in his Puno: Esplendor de la arquitectura virreinal (2004). San Cristóbal was receptive to the anthropological approach of Gisbert—he sought sources in Andean myths and symbols, most notably relating to the siren and Tiahuanaco (fig. 1.1)—and he was an avowed “indigenist,” although he preferred the more neutral designation “planiform and textilographic architecture” to “Mestizo Style,” because of the latter’s racial overtones.132 San Cristóbal considered the textilelike arrangement of the patterns the most significant stylistic legacy from indigenous arts:

On the whole, what is decisive is not to point out the presence of this or that indigenous vegetal or animal ornamental motif considered separately; but the fact that in the decorative architecture of Arequipa and Collao there exists a textilography of motifs in the greatest majority indigenous, and a practically insignificant percentage of them with European origin, executed in a mono-planiform and uni-dimensional manner. . . . In its complex structure, this uni-dimensional and planiform textilography categorically cannot be an ornamentation produced by European artists; rather it is inexorably a spontaneous creation of indigenous workshops which created in it their own stylistic categories.133

Although I share San Cristóbal’s opinion about the role played by textiles, I do not agree that European motifs form a minority, and I find his terminology
cumbersome—especially “textilography,” which sounds even worse in English than in Spanish and is reminiscent of the neologisms of the early literature. Like Gutiérrez, San Cristóbal sought indigenous influence in the buildings’ surroundings, or “the immediate reality of the indigenous communities.” But he devoted little space to the kind of contextual analysis he promoted.

Another important theme in San Cristóbal’s work is the regional variation between Andean Hybrid Baroque monuments in Arequipa and Collao and especially Northern versus Southern Collao. Although Gutiérrez had already noted these distinctions in his 1978 volume, the point is important, as is San Cristóbal’s criticism of the prevailing view that the buildings are monolithic in their late Renaissance, blocklike construction and do not reveal creative new solutions. Renaissance classicism was abandoned (he refers to a “decomposition of Renaissance design”) in favor of unorthodox solutions “not subject to the rules of the architectural orders or of the columns, in which plinths, tympana, niches, mezzanine stories, multiple columns on an axis, etc., are freely interspersed.” Such novelties include oversized semicircular tympana in place of triangular pediments, broken entablatures and pediments, prominent corbels, pilasters inside the tympanum, highly decorated lateral borders, and multiple entablatures on divided pilasters. San Cristóbal also challenged the perception that these façades are flat, demonstrating that their entablatures and cornices often project forcefully from the wall, giving the whole a sense of volumetric expansion.

But in the final analysis San Cristóbal’s work on Arequipa and Collao is a disappointment, especially when compared to his work on limeño architecture. His descriptions often seem rushed, his conclusions contradictory, and he frequently overlooked contributions by earlier scholars: for example, his greatest complaint about earlier scholarship was that studies of Andean Hybrid Baroque architecture have driven a wedge between the architecture and the carved surface ornamentation, but it overlooked the surveys of the Gutiérrez team, whose very purpose was not only to study the buildings as a whole but also to do so in their urban and geographic context. The main shortcoming is the lack of primary research. San Cristóbal freely admits to this weakness himself:

Scholars will have noted a fundamental lacuna in this work: the absence of documentary sources concerning the monuments under analysis. . . . The only excuse I can give is the impossibility of consulting archives during the rapid trips to the region. But we would like to inspire the zeal of Arequipeño historians to investigate, in notarial records and other sources, the building contracts, the letters of payment, and any other document relative to planiform and textilographic architecture. This is a job of the highest urgency in historical scholarship.
Thus we are still waiting for a systematic documentary study of the churches of the Andean Hybrid Baroque in Arequipa nearly thirty years after Gutiérrez first made his plea and sixty years after Wethey pointed out the lacuna in the first place.

Although three scholars have contributed to the field in the past decade—at times offering incisive analyses of the style’s hybridity—their avoidance of archival research prevents them from advancing beyond the kind of generalized statement that characterized the Great Debate. Samanez included Andean Hybrid Baroque architecture in a 2002 survey of the retablo façades of the cuzqueño Baroque and a 2004 chapter on the Andean Hybrid Baroque outliers in Apurímac and Chumbivilcas. Although brief, the earlier study is useful as a “state of the question” for the field in the early 2000s, above all demonstrating the lasting influence of the contextual and anthropological approaches of Gutiérrez and Gisbert. Samanez uses the terms “arquitectura mestiza” and “barroco andino” with the same confidence as Gisbert: “The tolerance and intellectual openness that characterized the Bourbon period allowed for processes of transculturation with indigenous participation, opening up the possibility that, through artistic expressions, they could proclaim their concept of an Andean world and their form of understanding the Catholic religion.”

Echoing San Cristóbal, he shows how this syncretic architecture enjoyed significantly more stylistic freedom than the cuzqueño Baroque in the seventeenth century: “The skillful Cuzqueño masons did not have this creative liberty that was given to the builders and carvers [of Arequipa and Collao], as they executed their façades under other conditions in the previous century.” Samanez also does the field a service by illustrating more remote churches such as Santo Tomás de Chumbivilcas and San Miguel de Mamara in Apurímac, isolated buildings that have been left out of discussions of the Andean Hybrid Baroque.

Okada has undertaken what may be the most extensive photo survey of colonial Andean church decoration, visiting 116 locations and publishing them on an unfortunately no longer functioning Internet site. The majority are not Andean Hybrid Baroque buildings, but Okada has presented a paper (2004) and published an article (2006) that reconsider the meaning of that style’s symbolism. Although Okada agrees in essence with Gisbert’s notion of bilingual imagery, he warns against neglecting the European meaning of visual models, notably the monkey, parrot, and siren. Like Luks, Okada traces these motifs to printed frontispieces, maps, and atlases—he goes beyond Luks by considering the influence of costume and ephemeral decoration in allegorical processions—and he places the credit for their selection firmly in the hands of the missionaries who commissioned the churches. But Okada goes on to demonstrate how these same images were subverted by the very Native Americans whose world they were meant to represent, particularly the indigenous elite, and like Harth-Terré he insists that they take on a third, new significance: “So-called mestizo motifs are, in essence, neither simply European nor simply...
Andean; they form a particular category of iconography that obtained new meanings and functions through intercultural contacts in the colonial period." Okada labels the process by which Andeans co-opt European imagery of the exotic as "inverted exoticism." His argument is partly inspired by a 1999 monograph by Carolyn Dean on the Corpus Christi paintings in the Museo del Arzobispo in Cuzco (1674–80), in which she concludes that the representation of indigenous rulers served two conflicting purposes, affirming the power of criollo society by depicting Andeans as subservient to the colonial system but also allowing Andean leaders to fortify their political status within the power structure of indigenous colonial polities.

I have already mentioned in the introduction Okada’s objection to the field’s overemphasis on individual motifs at the expense of the whole, a complaint with which I am in full agreement and address in chapter 10.

The latest scholar to consider the Andean Hybrid Baroque is Thomas Da Costa Kaufmann, a specialist in Central and Eastern European architecture who has made recent forays into colonial Latin American art history, primarily—it seems—to discredit the notion of indigenous content in the arts. Returning to a debate that has been dead for decades, Kaufmann dismisses the anthropologically inspired approaches that have gained universal currency and returns to Kubler’s notion that the Andean Hybrid Baroque and similar styles are "examples of provincial design." As he declares in a 2004 book, “There is a need to reclaim the Western or European element as the dominant historical factor instead of an overemphasis upon indigenous elements in the façade. Indigenous peoples were surely involved in its construction and reception, but ascertaining their traces in more than matters of labor, hence technique and execution, remains a hypothesis in need of support.” Similarly, in an analysis of the façade of the Church of San Lorenzo in Potosí, he comments that “there is . . . no visible evidence of anything indigenous in the obvious symbolism of the façade, which has been insufficiently studied heretofore.” However, Kaufmann’s return to “Hispanist” ideas has had little effect on the scholarship as his hypothesis is based not on fresh documentation but on a priori theoretical models such as the early-twentieth-century German concept of Kunstgeographie or the writings of the Polish architectural historian Jan Białostocki to Latin American art history. I have noted elsewhere that Kaufmann’s reliance on such models results in chronological and other factual errors. In the end even Kaufmann may have changed his mind: in his most recent article on the subject (2006), a brief contribution to an exhibition catalogue on Andean painting, he has toned down his rhetoric and appears more receptive to the anthropological approach he earlier scorned.

The field has now arrived at the point, nearly ninety years after it began, where further progress is impossible without a comprehensive campaign of archival research combined with a systematic stylistic examination of all of the primary Andean Hybrid Baroque churches and their decoration. I have written this book to answer this need. Armed with new evidence and insight, I am now in a position to
challenge or support accepted chronologies, rewrite the history of the spread and development of the style, and offer new contextual interpretations based on a wider range of sources. But I will not fall victim to the increasingly common vogue for discarding the work of earlier scholars, especially those whose theoretical methodologies or political leanings are deemed old-fashioned. I acknowledge from the outset that I would not have been able to begin this book without the rich, varied, and often contradictory legacy of the scholarship recounted above—from Guido and Gasparini to Gisbert and Gutiérrez—which first opened my eyes to this spectacular and enduringly fascinating chapter in the history of art.