

The music-iconographic source to define cultural identities: faith, worship and popular traditions in the *ierofania* of the Crib scene. An intercultural prospect.

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“The artist is he who creates, arranges reality”.¹

Ever since ancient times men have felt the need to *represent* what they thought to be essential and vital for their existence, so that the represented subject could be present even when it was physically absent.

This is why such images are charged with sacredness: they constitute a symbol and a guarantee of goodness.

“We represent in order to see *with the eyes of the body* what is desirable and beautiful, what we love and what is important for us”.²

Also Christian iconography, right from its very first forms of representation, adopts symbolic images in order to represent the essence of Good and Faith in the struggle against Evil that men need to face every day. “Universal categories” are indeed charged with Christian meanings in the light of the evangelical message proclaimed by Jesus Christ and his apostles to the ends of the known world.

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¹ “L’artista è colui che fa’, che ordina il reale”. Fernando e Gioia Lanzi, *Il Presepe e i suoi personaggi*, Jaka book, Milano 2000, p.12.

² “Si rappresenta dunque per poter vedere *con gli occhi del corpo* quanto è desiderabile e bello, ciò che si ama e sta a cuore”. Ivi, p.14.

A highly significant representation of the aforementioned aspects is the Frieze of the monumental Complex of the SS. Annunziata in Sulmona (located in the centre of Italy, in the Abruzzo region), a 40-cm-high sculptural work of art running along the façade of the building next to the church, creating one single religious “centre” with the church itself. [Fig. 1]



Fig. 1. Sulmona (Aq) - Building of the Complex of SS. Annunziata 1415–1522. Reproduced from: Raffaele Giannantonio - Ezio Mattiocco, *Il complesso della SS. Annunziata in Sulmona*, Carsa, Pescara 2000. By permission of Carsa Editor.

Even though the palace decorated by the Frieze was built at different times from the beginning of the XV century until the second decade of the XVI century, it reflects in many ways the previous artistic experiences of the Gothic movement and the Middle Ages. To that same artistic sensibility the Frieze itself seems to refer, “a document able to reveal, through figurative references, the cultural instances typical of a period which, from the Gothic age, reaches the Renaissance”.³ It is worth noting that for the Catholic Church the Middle Ages

³ “documento in grado di svelare, attraverso i riferimenti figurativi, le specifiche istanze della cultura di un periodo che parte dall’età gotica e giunge al secondo secolo del

represented a period of assimilation of the Hellenistic and classical culture, whose most enlightened philosophers and thinkers were considered nothing but the forerunners of the Christian truth.

From this perspective, the elements of the Frieze, which could be superficially judged as a mere ornamental pattern inspired by nature, myth and daily life (the vine, the leaves, the imaginary animals, the men and women engaged in various actions, etc.) or of classical origins, actually carry a Christian symbolic meaning of utmost importance: the images, in an extra- spatial and extra-temporal dimension, represent subjects and actions often referable to the theme of the wild and primitive life of man before the coming of Jesus Christ and the mixture with the animal element indicating decay; the imaginary monsters can be interpreted as allegories of Sin, while the scenes describing fights represent the negative side of human nature. On this background, a vine branch develops, which in the pagan world indicated an element of material support and vital “continuity”, while from the Christian perspective it is a symbol of spiritual salvation:⁴ the image of Christ who, during the last supper, tells his disciples «I am the vine, you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing» (John 15:5) and the image of the wine of which Jesus, on the very same occasion, says “this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins”. (Matthew 26:28)

This interpretation finds confirmation in the representation of the *Annunciation* of the coming of Jesus Christ, “who brings order to the sinful humanity”,⁵ attributing a considerable importance to the musical references contained in the Frieze.⁶

During the Renaissance, when the classical values of order, virtue and

Rinascimento”. Raffaele Giannantonio-Ezio Mattiocco, *Il complesso della SS. Annunziata in Sulmona*, Carsa, Pescara 2000, p.50.

⁴ Ivi, pp. 49-61.

⁵ “porta ordine all’interno di un’umanità peccaminosa”. Ivi, p. 57.

⁶ The *Annunciation*, located at the centre of the Frieze decorating the first part of the building façade and dated 1415, represents the climax of this work of art, being its unique element of human redemption.

discipline attributed to music were powerfully reaffirmed,⁷ the large gallery of cupids and other characters, each carrying a different instrument, represented in the musical element the Good as opposed to the worldly scenes, which alternate with the images of the musicians. [Fig. 2-3-4]



Fig. 2. Sulmona (Aq) - Building of the Complex of SS. Annunziata 1415–1522. Detail of the Frieze: two bombard and cialamello players. Reproduced from: Raffaele Giannantonio - Ezio Mattiocco, *Il complesso della SS. Annunziata in Sulmona*, Carsa, Pescara 2000. By permission of Carsa Editor.



Fig. 3. Sulmona (Aq) - Building of the Complex of SS. Annunziata 1415–1522. Detail of the Frieze: music-making angels with percussion instruments and a Faun playing a buccina. Reproduced from: Raffaele Giannantonio - Ezio Mattiocco, *Il complesso della SS. Annunziata in Sulmona*, Carsa, Pescara 2000. By permission of Carsa Editor.

⁷ It is worth remembering that Baldassar Castiglione, on the wake of the recovery of the Platonic and Aristotelian concept of music, asserted in his renown work, *The Book of the Courtier* (1528): “how it was always celebrated and held sacred among the ancients, and how very sage philosophers were of opinion [...] that the soul [...] awakes and as it were revives its powers through music”. (Book I-XLVII).



Fig. 4. Sulmona (Aq) - Building of the Complex of SS. Annunziata 1415–1522. Detail of the Frieze: on the left, a cloaked player playing a bagpipe; on the right, dulcian player and a music-making angel with tambourine. Reproduced from: Raffaele Giannantonio - Ezio Mattiocco, *Il complesso della SS. Annunziata in Sulmona*, Carsa, Pescara 2000. By permission of Carsa Editor.

Among them, the “player with the cloak playing a bagpipe” becomes particularly important in the light of the considerations that will follow (in fig. 4 on the left). Next to him, in the upper right corner, there is a small putto who, in a rejoicing attitude, keeps his arms raised towards the sky. This representation, hinting at the birth of Christ announced by the angels to the shepherds, is the natural fulfilment of the announcement of the redeeming incarnation of Jesus Christ, who reconciles in himself the human (earthly) and the divine (heavenly).⁸

This iconographic subject acts as a linking element between the “universal categories”, extra-spatial and extra-temporal, evoked by the presence of the naked characters, and the “territorial categories”, which are introduced through the clothes worn by some of the characters and the presence of musical instruments – such as the bagpipe – playing a strong “anchorage” role to the local cultural tradition. [Fig. 5-6]

⁸ The third and last section of the façade (dated 1519-22), in the name of a significant relationship of symmetry with the *Annunciation* described in the first section of the façade, represents the image of what, in my opinion, can be considered a clear allusion to the birth of Christ, the fulfillment of the announcement that makes the angels rejoice and the shepherds celebrate.

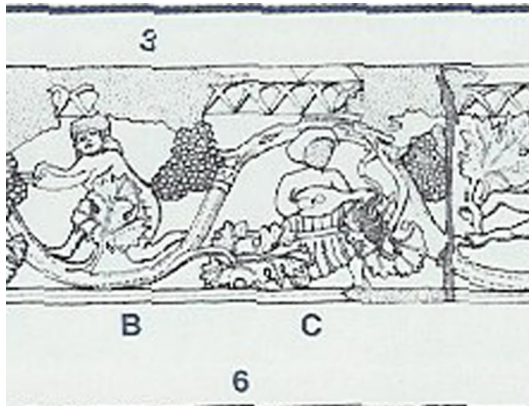


Fig. 5. Sulmona (Aq) - Building of the Complex of SS. Annunziata 1415–1522. Detail of the Frieze: a young man with short tunic playing a lute. Reproduced from: Raffaele Giannantonio - Ezio Mattiocco, *Il complesso della SS. Annunziata in Sulmona*, Carsa, Pescara 2000. By permission of Carsa Editor.

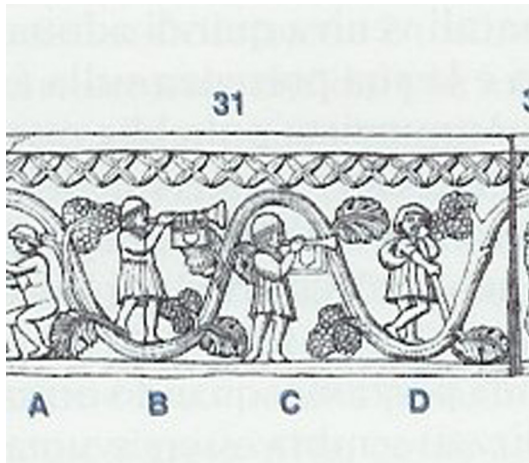


Fig. 6. Sulmona (Aq) - Building of the Complex of SS. Annunziata 1415–1522. Detail of the Frieze: heralds with buccines. Reproduced from: Raffaele Giannantonio - Ezio Mattiocco, *Il complesso della SS. Annunziata in Sulmona*, Carsa, Pescara 2000. By permission of Carsa Editor.

Indeed, the need of reducing the distance between the iconographical language and “the language of folklore tradition, so that the message conveyed by the image could be understood and accepted as internal to the community” became stronger and stronger.⁹

The primacy of the human being and his prerogatives, claimed by the new Renaissance sensibility, found a reason for praising the human dignity in the Christian mystery of the incarnation of God. As a consequence, the iconographic production started revealing “the people’s irrepressible need of projecting the ideals of Christianity in their world and daily life”.¹⁰

The many representations of the Nativity scene by the artists of this period are, in my opinion, the greatest way of expressing the aforementioned concepts.

For this reason, I would like to draw your attention to the *Crib scene* described in the fresco attributed to the most important Renaissance painter from Abruzzo, Andrea Delitio, datable to 1465 approx.¹¹ [Fig. 7] This work is part of a cycle embellishing the internal walls of the Atri Cathedral (situated in central Italy, in the Abruzzo region) entitled to the Virgin Mary, and it is portrayed in the centre of the highest register on the right wall of the central apse. At the centre of the scene there is the cave where Mary worships the Baby, while Saint Joseph seems to be sleeping; on the background, behind the angelical apparitions irradiating light in the dark night, some scenes depict what happened «when

⁹ “a quello della tradizione folklorica, perchè il messaggio contenuto nell’immagine fosse compreso e accettato come interno alla comunità”. Nico Staiti, *Identificazione degli strumenti musicali e natura simbolica delle figure nelle ‘Adorazioni dei pastori’ siciliane*, “Imago musicae” V/1988, p. 83.

¹⁰ “l’insopprimibile esigenza del popolo di proiettare nel suo mondo e nella sua vita quotidiana gli ideali del cristianesimo” Emiliano Giancristofaro, *Tradizioni popolari d’Abruzzo*, Newton & Compton, Roma 1999, p. 172.

¹¹ See F. Bologna, *Andrea Delitio ad Atri e dintorni. Gli affreschi della tribuna della Cattedrale*, in *Dalla Valle del Piomba alla valle del basso Pescara*, Documenti dell’Abruzzo Teramano, V,1, Fondazione Cassa di Risparmio della Provincia di Teramo-Tercas Spa, Teramo 2001, pp. 234-285.

Christ was born in the Bethlehem cave». ¹² On the left, a group of shepherds sleep, while another group, overlooking the first one, is called by the angel who brings the good news. The scene is “alive”: two shepherds look at the angelical apparition, while a third one sits on the ground playing his bagpipe. The man, the blowpipe into his mouth, has its cheeks inflated and, holding the bag in his arms, modulates its melody on a single chanter, a drone leaning on his shoulder.



Fig. 7. Atri (Te) - Cathedral of S. Maria Assunta (interior). *Crib scene*, fresco by Andrea Delitio. Reproduced from: *Dalla Valle del Piomba alla valle del basso Pescara*, Documenti dell’Abruzzo Teramano, V,1, Fondazione Cassa di Risparmio della Provincia di Teramo-Tercas Spa, Teramo 2001. By permission of Fondazione Cassa di Risparmio della Provincia di Teramo-Tercas Spa.

¹² “quando Cristo nacque nella grotta di Betlemme”. Inscription below the fresco.

On the opposite side, the scene is even more lively; the joy the characters bear in their hearts seems to be uncontrollable and transfuses in cheerful dancing rhythms: on the very right one may notice another piper - portrayed with the same wealth of detail as the previous one - accompanying the movements of four dancers. [fig. 8] Scholars have identified this dance as the ancient *saltarello*, largely known in Abruzzo and commonly danced to the music of bagpipes.¹³ The portrayed festive occasion beseems this joyful display: the *saltarello*, indeed, was a kind of cheerful *tarantella* usually danced during the most important festivities and the main agricultural and family events.¹⁴

Another *Crib scene*, a most valuable example of the goldsmith's art coming from the same geographical area and dating before the XV century, is portrayed on a tile of the antependium decorating the main altar of the Cathedral in the city of Teramo. [Fig. 9] Here, the artist Nicola da Guardiagrele portrays at the centre of the scene, in the lower part, the main elements of the Nativity (Jesus, Joseph, Mary, the ox and the donkey), while in the top corners two pastoral images are represented, the one on the left being particularly interesting for the musical picture contained. The dramatic strength of this representation is immediately perceived if only one draws his attention on the attitude of each character, all of them “main actors” of a prodigious fact. The shepherd watching its flock, for example, [Fig. 10] modulating ancient melodies with its bagpipe, is portrayed with his hands on the chanter, just as if he had abruptly interrupted its music to direct his astonished sight towards the angelical apparition proclaiming:

¹³ See G. Matthiae – B. Trubiani, *Gli affreschi della cattedrale di Atri*, Autostrade Spa, Pomezia 1976, comment to table LXXXIII.

¹⁴ For more information about the *saltarello* and the bagpipes as ancient accompaniment instrument, see: Saverio Franchi, *Sopravvivenze di elementi arcaici in musiche strumentali di Isola del Gran Sasso*, in *La valle Siciliana o del Mavone*, Documenti dell’Abruzzo Teramano, Cassa di Risparmio della Provincia di Teramo, 1983, vol. I/1, pp. 105-110; Saverio Franchi, *Il “laccio d’amore” di Penna S. Andrea*, in *La valle del medio e basso Vomano*, Documenti dell’Abruzzo Teramano, Cassa di Risparmio della Provincia di Teramo, 1986, vol. II/1, pp. 91-107; Maurizio Anselmi, *Canti e musiche popolari del teramano*, in *La valle dell’alto Vomano ed i Monti della Laga*, Documenti dell’Abruzzo Teramano, Cassa di Risparmio della Provincia di Teramo, 1991, vol. III/1, pp. 132-151.

“Do not be afraid. I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. Today in the town of David a Saviour has been born to you; he is Christ the Lord” (Luke 2:10-11).



Fig. 8. Atri (Te) - Cathedral of S. Maria Assunta (interior). *Crib scene*, detail of the fresco by Andrea Delitio. Reproduced from: *Dalla Valle del Piomba alla valle del basso Pescara*, Documenti dell’Abruzzo Teramano, V,1, Fondazione Cassa di Risparmio della Provincia di Teramo-Tercas Spa, Teramo 2001. By permission of Fondazione Cassa di Risparmio della Provincia di Teramo-Tercas Spa.



Fig. 9. Teramo - Cathedral of S. Maria Assunta (interior). *Crib scene*, silver tile by Nicola da Guardiagrele. Reproduced from: Maria Antonietta Adorante, *Il duomo di Teramo e i suoi tesori d'arte*, Carsa, Pescara 1993. By permission of Carsa Editor.



Fig. 10. Teramo - Cathedral of S. Maria Assunta (interior). *Crib scene*, detail of the silver tile by Nicola da Guardiagrele. Reproduced from: Maria Antonietta Adorante, *Il duomo di Teramo e i suoi tesori d'arte*, Carsa, Pescara 1993. By permission of Carsa Editor.

Both these representations of the mystery of Incarnation, even though they both affirm the centrality of such a prodigious event, do not express an aesthetically timeless contemplation, they are rather “ritual ‘actuazioni’ of the sacred event”¹⁵ just like the Christmas sacred dramas of the Middle Ages. In all these representations, the inhabitants of Abruzzo are the main characters: portrayed in their geographical places, especially in the mountains, dressed in

¹⁵ “rituali ‘attuazioni’ dell’evento sacro”. N. Staiti, *Identificazione degli strumenti musicali...cit.*, p.80.

their typical clothes such as the cloak wrapping the shepherd (another symbol of that vital “continuity” already highlighted, represented here by the garment which has no sections or seamings whatsoever), gladdened by the sound of their typical musical instruments and the dances animating the festive days portrayed, they willingly and happily welcome the grace of the Good News. The universally spread Christian values are affirmed here, in very well identified individuals and social communities: the free will which proclaims the Renaissance man the maker of his own fortune, leads him to choose, also through the artistic channels, the values he decides to base his existence on. Namely, “the representation does not only help us see and watch, but also *identify* in what one sees represented, through a self-recognition process in the figures. The representation starts an identification process – allowed and indeed caused by analogies – and helps the viewer enter into the scene, be a main character, *contemplate* and *participate*”.¹⁶

One may now wonder: which aspects of this religious sensitivity reached the New World, discovered in 1492 as a new source of knowledge and a way of expanding the political, economic and cultural borders of the Western dynasties?

The Christian message, fully absorbed and interiorized by the Western modern man, needed to be transferred *ex novo* to the native American populations. The evangelization work undertaken by several religious families such as the Jesuit and the Franciscan orders, led to taking into account all the occasions in which the artistic channels had played a basic role in the transmission of faith. Limiting the observation to some figurative and plastic

¹⁶ “la rappresentazione consente non soltanto di vedere e guardare, ma anche di *immedesimarsi*, in quanto si vede rappresentato, attraverso un *riconoscersi* nelle figure. La rappresentazione mette in moto un procedimento di immedesimazione – consentito e anzi provocato da analogie – e permette a chi guarda di entrare per così dire nella scena, di essere attore e protagonista, di *contemplare* e di *partecipare*”. F. e G. Lanzi, *Il Presepe e i suoi personaggi...*cit, p.13. It is worth noting what Nico Staiti says observing that “iconography and animated representation have not documented a pre-existing situation, but rather have determined a new ritual context to use the musical instrument; the path [...] then goes from the represented to the facts happened, and not vice versa”. This means that the belonging of some aerophones to the local pastoral communities ended up causing the identification of these instruments with the celebration of Christmas. N. Staiti, *Identificazione degli strumenti musicali...*cit., p.103.

examples from Peru, Paraguay and Ecuador, I would now like to examine the assimilation of the figurative manners typical of Western cultures, in order to identify autochthonous identity elements which may give evidence, as we have been analysing so far, to a process of actuation and territorial assimilation of the Christian message.

Strengthened by the affirmation of the *artistic representation* as a vehicle of persuasion and identity, the first missionaries did not only bring their faculty of speech, but also the communicative strength of music and images through which they tried to superimpose new identities to those already in possession of the native Americans. The images and sounds strike the eyes and the ears before striking the intellect, so that the former can explain to the latter the meanings that words, in the diversity of the linguistic codes adopted, is not able to convey with the same immediacy.

Deculturation and counter-culturation are the dimensions against which the possibility to establish a contact between highly different civilization is challenged: “Syncretism is one of the possible results of the process of acculturation, together with deculturation and counter-culturation. If, in the case of contact between different ethnicities, some selective processes take place, both in the ‘giving’ culture and in the ‘receiving’ one [...] every time a national ethnicity [...] meets an empire undergoing a consolidation phase, [...] the weaknesses of the Government [...] add up to the weaknesses of the tribes”.¹⁷

Many artists devoted their art to their apostolate. Among them, I would like to remember the Jesuit Bernardo Bitti (from central Italy), who was responsible for the establishment of the famous cuzqueña painting school in Peru, along with Matteo Perez de Alessio from Lecce and Angelino Medoro from Rome. This black and white reproduction of Bitti’s *Asunción y Coronación de Nuestra Señora* [Fig. 11], kept in the Monastery de La Merced in Cuzco, is only

¹⁷ “El sincretismo es uno de los posibles resultados de los procesos aculturativos, junto a la deculturación y a la contraculturación. Si bien durante el contacto entre etnias diversas se pueden verificar procesos selectivos, tanto en la cultura que da como en la que recibe [...] quando una etnia nacional [...] se encuentra con un imperio en proceso de consolidación, [...] a las debilidades del Estado [...] se suman aquéllas que son propias de las etnias tribales”. Enzo Segre, *Las máscaras de lo sagrado*, Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia, Córdoba – Mexico 1987, p.20.

one example of several paintings with religious subjects and interesting iconographic and musical contents.¹⁸ This piece of art is characterized by two significant elements: the Virgin and the musical instruments portrayed.

The Virgin Mary has been a widely represented subject in the so called “missionary painting”: an image of fecundity and a source of salvation, she represents the Mother Earth worshipped by the natives, a giver of life and subsistence. In her womanly role of giver of life, she is another example of the aforementioned vital “continuity”, the *leit motif* which unifies all the main iconographical subjects analysed in the present study.¹⁹ The musical instruments represented belong to the Western tradition of that time (lute, harp, vielle, organ, crumhorn, dulcian); the natives got to know them not only thanks to the images in which they were portrayed but especially because they were used by the missionaries in their apostolate. Painters, sculptors and architects devoted their artistic talent to the evangelization; similarly, musicians devoted their art to the preaching of the Gospel.²⁰ Another painting, located inside a cell in the same Monastery de la Merced, seems to be extremely meaningful, too. This work represents the *Worship of the Three Kings* [Fig. 12] and leads us to consider again the topic of the Incarnation of God.

¹⁸ The image is taken from Jose de Mesa & Teresa Gisbert, *Historia de la pintura cuzqueña*, Fundacion Augusto N. Wiese Ltda, Lima 1982, vol.I. Interesting references to the Jesuit art in Latin-American missions can be also found in Gauvin Alexander Bailey, *Art on the Jesuit Missions in Asia and Latin America, 1542-1773*, University of Toronto Press, Toronto-Buffalo-London 1999.

¹⁹ Some paintings typical of the Andean Baroque are particularly interesting from this point of view: the image of the Madonna, at the centre of the representation, is overlooked by a mountain, in a relationship of mutual assimilation. Also the tendency to represent the Madonna in sumptuous and valuable clothes outlining a triangular figure, aims at associating the Virgin to the Andean mountains, whose peaks stand out against the sky, creating triangular shapes.

²⁰ On the subject, see T. Frank Kennedy S.I., *I Gesuiti e la musica*, in Giovanni Sale S.I., *Ignazio e l'arte dei Gesuiti*, Jaka Book 2003, pp. 299-308. Among the most important missionary musicians in Latin America, the Jesuit Domenico Zippoli is worth-remembering.



Fig. 11. Cuzco - Convent of La Merced. *Asunción y Coronación de Nuestra Señora* by Bernardo Bitti. Reproduced from: José de Mesa & Teresa Gisbert, *Historia de la pintura cuzcuena*, Fundación Augusto N. Wiese Ltda, Lima 1982, vol.I.

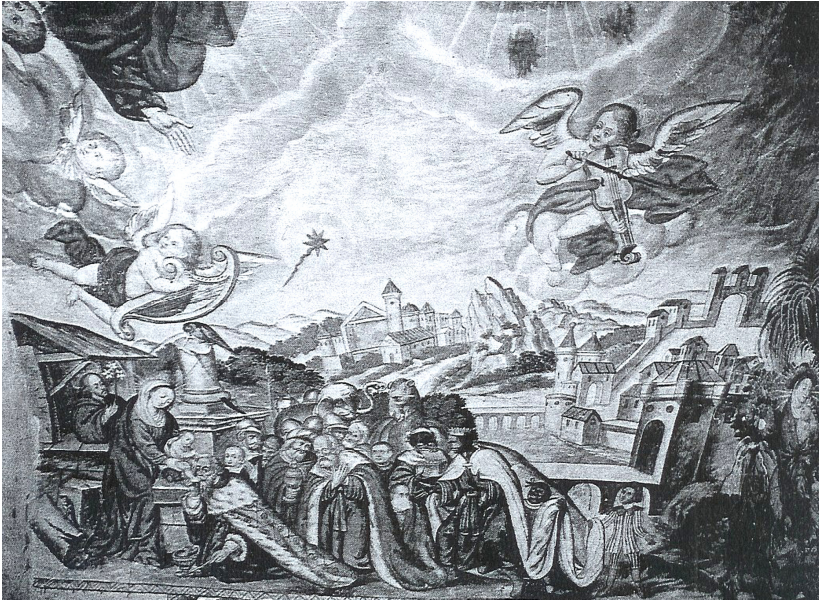


Fig. 12. Cuzco - Convent of La Merced. *Worship of the Three Kings* (anonymous cuzqueño author). Reproduced from: José de Mesa & Teresa Gisbert, *Historia de la pintura cuzqueña*, Fundación Augusto N. Wiese Ltda, Lima 1982, vol.I.

Realised by an anonymous cuzqueño author, it shows a precise reception of the Western artistic mannerism. The rejoicing of the music-making angels (one playing the harp, the other one the viola) is due to the solemn moment of the *epiphany* of Jesus Christ, his manifestation as true God, true man and king of the universe to the gentiles who, not being part of the elected people of Israel, symbolically represent all the peoples of the world called to have faith in Christ. The Virgin, holding Baby Jesus on her knees, shows the saving fruit of her womb to the public worship.²¹

²¹ The feast of the Epiphany, which associates, just as all the main liturgical feasts, its theological meaning to the Redemption fulfilled in Easter, is often defined as “Epiphany Easter”. The term Easter, originally meaning passage, indicates a change bringing life from non-life. Note how, in Spanish, Christmas is often indicated with the

The quality of the didactical path of the missionaries, a way of transmitting and spreading the Christian values over a territory not completely neutral, is of utmost importance: the “universal categories” of Good and prosperity that the Latin-American natives identified with the surrounding Nature, are gradually assimilated with the Christian God. As far as I can see, the magnificent ruins of the *Jesuit reduction* of the Holy Trinity of Paraná in Paraguay, dating around the first years of the XVIII century, show the fruits of a positive reception.²²

The Frieze decorating the inner part of the church shows an amazing gallery of music-making angels in high-relief, sculpted on the red and rough *itaquí* stone «with very well defined autochthonous features: long and large noses, big lips, cheeks not separated from the cheekbones».²³ “The sculptural art of Reduction developed away from any kind of scheme or school, were they Italian, Spanish, from Quito, Cuzco or Bogotá!”²⁴ The natives expressing themselves in a new relationship with the Christian sacredness inspired by the Jesuit catechesis is evident in these so called “Nativity angels” [Fig. 13-14]: according to the interpretation proposed for the aforementioned works, the Virgin with the Baby shows the true God and the Guaraní angels worship him offering him incense like the Three Kings.

expression “Pascua de Navidad” (Easter of Nativity). See F. e G. Lanzi, *Il Presepe e i suoi personaggi...*cit, p.56.

²² About the musical activity of the Jesuits in Paraguay and their didactical and musical behaviour in the missions, see the monograph by Johann Herczog, *Orfeo nelle Indie. I gesuiti e la musica in Paraguay (1609-1767)*, Congedo 2001 and the paper by Cristina Santarelli, *Il fregio con angeli musicanti di Trinidad e la musica nelle missioni gesuitiche del Paraguay*, “Music in Art. International Journal for Music Iconography” XXVIII/1-2 (2003), Research Center for Music Iconography – The Graduate Center of the City University of New York, pp. 119-125.

²³ “con il carattere autoctono molto ben definito: nasi lunghi e grossi, labbra pronunciate, guance tutt’uno con gli zigomi”. Gianni Baldotto, *Angeli perduti nell’Arcadia Guaraní*, Tintoretto, Treviso 2006, p. 40.

²⁴ “l’arte scultorea delle Riduzioni, si era sviluppata lontana da schemi e scuole di ogni genere, sia che esse provenissero dall’Italia o dalla Spagna, dalla scuola di Quito, di Cuzco, o Bogotá!”. Ivi, p.78.



Fig. 13. Trinidad (Paraguay) - Jesuit Reduction of the Holy Trinity of Paranà. Detail of the Frieze: *Nativity angels*. Reproduced from: Gianni Baldotto, *Angeli perduti nell'Arcadia Guarani*, Tintoretto, Treviso 2006. By permission of Tintoretto Editor.



Fig. 14. Trinidad (Paraguay) - Jesuit Reduction of the Holy Trinity of Paranà. Detail of the Frieze: *Nativity angels*. Reproduced from: Gianni Baldotto, *Angeli perduti nell'Arcadia Guarani*, Tintoretto, Treviso 2006. By permission of Tintoretto Editor.

The assimilation of Christian faith seems to be proportional to the assimilation of Western music which, in the depicted instruments, shows a mixture between native tradition, with the introduction in the “missionary music”

of the use of maracas [Fig. 15-16], and Western tradition, thanks to a wide gallery of models representing the musical conventions of the time.²⁵ [Fig. 17-18-19-20]

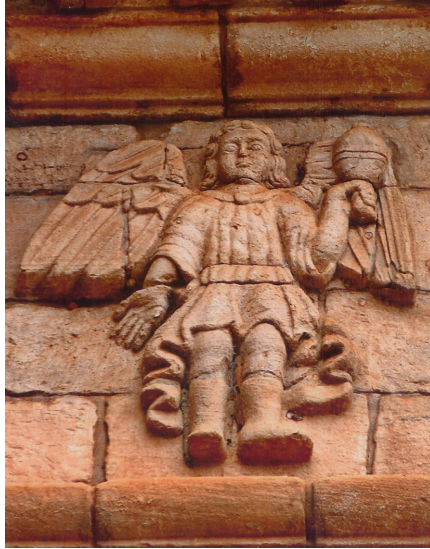


Fig. 15. Trinidad (Paraguay) - Jesuit Reduction of the Holy Trinity of Paranà. Detail of the Frieze: *Nativity angels*. Reproduced from: Gianni Baldotto, *Angeli perduti nell'Arcadia Guarani*, Tintoretto, Treviso 2006. By permission of Tintoretto Editor.

²⁵ Harp, vielle, organ, harpsichord, natural trumpet, flute, dulcian, oboe are the instruments introduced by the missionaries; thanks to their amazing musical talent, the natives quickly learned how to play and skilfully build them. “In vocal and instrumental music they show a higher ease of learning and perfection than the Europeans [...] They learn quickly how to play every single instrument, the trumpet, the organ, the harp, the guitar, the lute, the theorbo, the psaltery [...] the piffaro, the flute, the cialamello, the bassoon or the horn, [...] the viola contralto, tenor or bass” (these words were uttered by the Jesuite Anton Sepp in one of his letters included in C. Santarelli, *Il fregio con angeli musicanti di Trinidad...*cit., pp. 121-22). The historian Ludovico Antonio Muratori observed «And now they are not only able to play these instruments in a beautiful way, many of them are also able to build them» (Ivi, p.123).



Fig. 16. Trinidad (Paraguay) - Jesuit Reduction of the Holy Trinity of Paranà. Detail of the Frieze: *Nativity angels*. Reproduced from: Gianni Baldotto, *Angeli perduti nell'Arcadia Guarani*, Tintoretto, Treviso 2006. By permission of Tintoretto Editor.



Fig. 17. Trinidad (Paraguay) - Jesuit Reduction of the Holy Trinity of Paranà. Detail of the Frieze: *Nativity angels*. Reproduced from: Gianni Baldotto, *Angeli perduti nell'Arcadia Guarani*, Tintoretto, Treviso 2006. By permission of Tintoretto Editor.



Fig. 18. Trinidad (Paraguay) - Jesuit Reduction of the Holy Trinity of Paranà. Detail of the Frieze: *Nativity angels*. Reproduced from: Gianni Baldotto, *Angeli perduti nell'Arcadia Guarani*, Tintoretto, Treviso 2006. By permission of Tintoretto Editor.



Fig. 19. Trinidad (Paraguay) - Jesuit Reduction of the Holy Trinity of Paranà. Detail of the Frieze: *Nativity angels*. Reproduced from: Gianni Baldotto, *Angeli perduti nell'Arcadia Guarani*, Tintoretto, Treviso 2006. By permission of Tintoretto Editor.



Fig. 20. Trinidad (Paraguay) - Jesuit Reduction of the Holy Trinity of Paranà. Detail of the Frieze: *Nativity angels*. Reproduced from: Gianni Baldotto, *Angeli perduti nell’Arcadia Guarani*, Tintoretto, Treviso 2006. By permission of Tintoretto Editor.

Similarly, in the architectural ornaments of this monumental complex, zoomorphic and floral elements of native taste are mixed in harmony with the subjects of the new Creed. The “territorial categories” then started taking their place in the assimilation process, showing an evident syncretic dimension.²⁶ The content of this work of art is no longer “imposed” from the outside but it “tells” directly the actions and situations acted by the Guarani in the Jesuit Reduction.

²⁶ On the same topic, see also Guillermo Wilde, *Toward a Political Anthropology of Mission Sound: Paraguay in the 17th and 18th Centuries*, trad. Eric Erder, “Music and Politics” peer-reviewed electronic journal, I/2 (2007).

Also here, the fact that people found and recognised themselves in this new faith dimension gradually led to the affirmation of the Christian values inside a process of secularization of the sacred image. As already pointed out in the many references to popular tradition in Central-Southern Italy, “the popular musical instruments are highly characterising; they are music tools (again, daily and familiar), they are known and used”²⁷ in the same geographical area where the works of art portraying them come from. [Fig. 21]



Fig. 21. Cerqueto (Te) - Ethnographic Museum. Little statues of the Crib scene: typical players from Abruzzo. Reproduced from: *Tradizione a Cerqueto-Cultura materiale*, Teramo 1983. By permission of Don Nicola Iobbi.

The tradition of the Crib scene, the highest expression of the popular participation to the mystery of the Incarnation of God in History, affirmed itself also in Latin America, where the images of several characters playing musical instruments typical of their places of origin, give evidence to the ultimate

²⁷ “lo strumento musicale popolare è fortemente caratterizzante, è supporto sonoro (ancora una volta quotidiano e familiare), è, evidentemente conosciuto e utilizzato”. N. Staiti, *Identificazione degli strumenti musicali...cit.*, p.83.

assimilation of the Christian message, finally in its own cultural dimension.²⁸
[Fig. 22-23-24]



Fig. 22. Santiago (Paraguay) - Jesuit Museum of Santiago. Wooden statue of the Crib scene. Reproduced from: Gianni Baldotto - Antonio Paolillo, *Il Barocco nelle Missioni Guaranì*, Tintoretto, Treviso 2004. By permission of Tintoretto Editor.



Fig. 23. Bogotá - Colonial Art Museum. Group of musicians from the Crib scene (anonymous craftsman from Quito) - sec. XVIII. Reproduced from: PILAR JARAMILLO DE ZULETA, *El pesebre del Museo Colonial. Mirada a una iconografía social*, “Boletín Cultural y Bibliográfico”, 11/XXIV (1987), from: www.banrepcultural.org/blaavirtual/publicacionesbanrep/boletin/boleti3/bol11/pesebre.htm

²⁸ On the topic of the Crib scene in the Colonial art, refer to Pilar Jaramillo de Zuleta, *El pesebre del Museo Colonial. Mirada a una iconografía social*, “Boletín Cultural y Bibliográfico”, 11/XXIV (1987), read online at <http://www.banrepcultural.org/blaavirtual/publicacionesbanrep/boletin/boleti3/bol11/pesebre.htm> on July, 15th 2011.



Fig. 24. The *cacique* Floriano with large Guaraní family, playing the musical instruments typical of their culture. Reproduced from Gianni Baldotto, *Angeli perduti nell'Arcadia Guaraní*, Tintoretto, Treviso 2006. By permission of Tintoretto Editor.

Translated by Francesca Cascetti