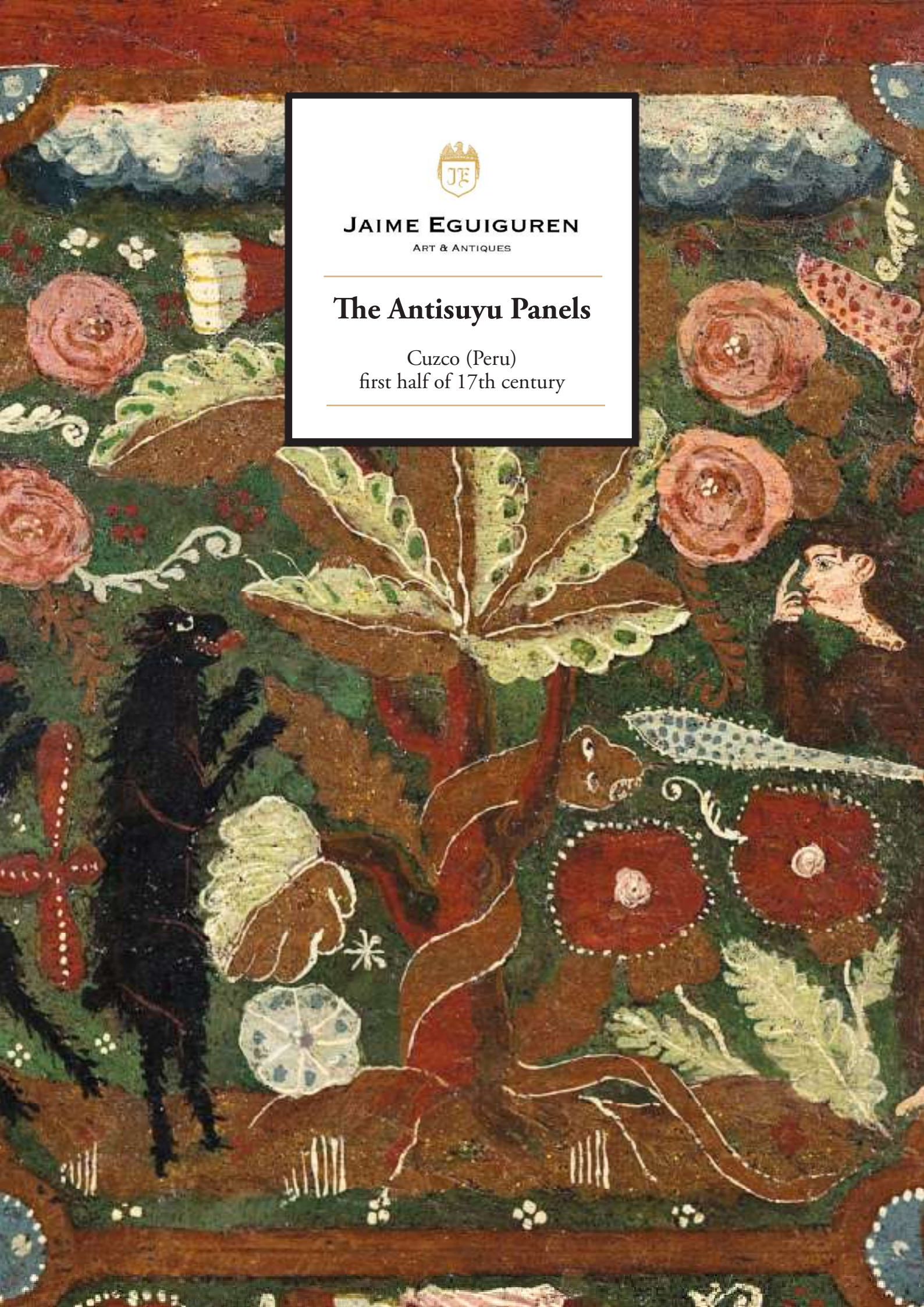

JAIME EGUIGUREN

ART & ANTIQUES

The Antisuyu Panels

Cuzco (Peru)
first half of 17th century

The Antisuyu Panels

Anonymous artist
Cuzco (Peru), first half of 17th century
Polychromed wood, Andean cedar (Cedrela angustifolia)
53×96 cm; 48×96 cm
Provenance: Private collection

PAIR OF ANDEAN PANELS, A PAINTED NARRATIVE

Elizabeth Kuon Arce / Cesar Roberto Samanez Argumedo

These two exceptional painted panels were part of a wooden chest from the region of Cuzco in the Viceroyalty of Peru (Fig. 1), as we will show later. Over time, the piece was disassembled and only the front and top panels survive today. The polychromed scenes they present display symbolic narratives through several compositions that we will try to read and interpret. Art history and contemporary ethnography will help us in our efforts.

The process of cultural change that took place following the encounter between the original, autonomous civilisation rooted in the Andes and the incoming European culture, beginning in this area at the start of the 16th century, involved a complex interaction of concurrent cultural processes known as acculturation.[484]

Acculturation is a specific form of socio-cultural change within a general process of change.[485] In this meeting of cultures, its structure was determined by the political and social inequalities that channelled the flow between the cultural elements arriving from overseas and those that already existed on American soil. The result was a range of adjustments,

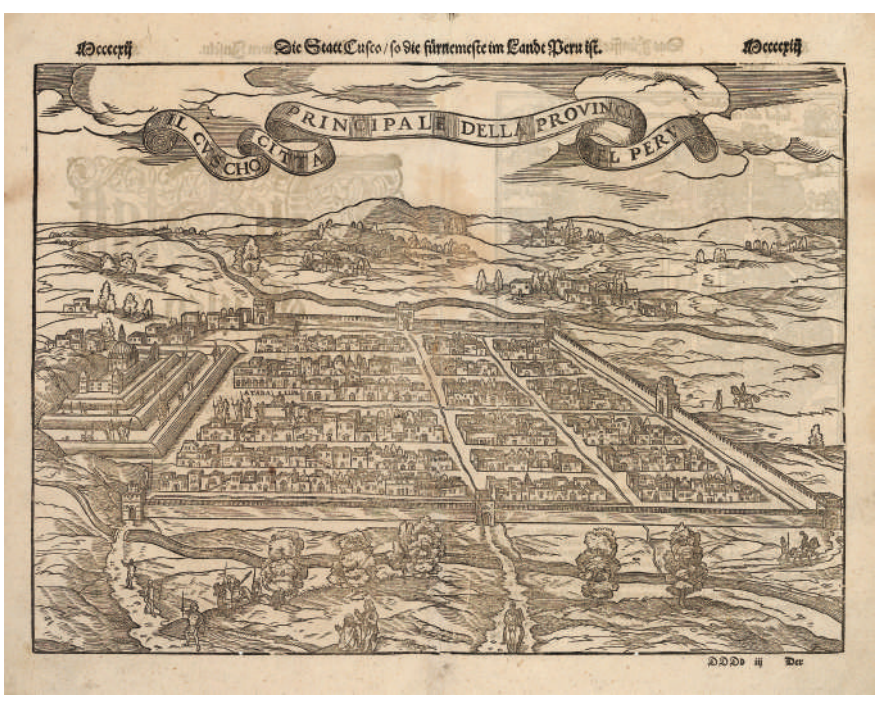

Fig. 1 *Il Cuscho Citta Principale della Provincia del Peru*, 1574, Sebastian Munster (Published) Basel; engraving

including the assimilation of the dominated group by the more powerful party with which it came into contact. This led to an exchange of elements which, over time, gave rise to a later culture that was different.[486]

In this context, among the different cultural elements arriving in Peru from Europe (Italy, Flanders, Germany, Spain) and Asia we find furniture in all its varied expressions, and which decisively influenced the new day-to-day life of those arriving from the Iberian peninsula to the recently-created Viceroyalty of Peru. It also influenced the ways and customs of the native population, which had to adapt to a new lifestyle and all that entailed. This new lifestyle would become established at the end of 16th century, once the conflicts that arose between the Spanish *conquistadors* at the start of this period had subsided.

It is worth noting that the contact between these two worlds, which took place more than five hundred years ago, meant that the original peoples have now inherited a countless number of items of material cultural heritage, whose origins can be traced back to the "age of discovery". Many factors accumulated over time, however, have led to others being lost forever. One way of contributing to the rescue and preservation of cultural heritage is research, which adds to our understanding of it. In the case of the creative expressions executed by the natives of the southern Andean region of the Viceroyalty of Peru in the field of architecture, research into church archives and interpretations made on site afford us some understanding and explanation following years of heated debate.

Gaubin A. Bailey, one of the most prominent researchers of the so-called *Mestizo* Style or "Andean Baroque", which characterised architecture in the southern Andes in the 17th and 18th centuries, argues that this style constituted one of the most original and vigorous manifestations of the meeting of two cultures.[487]

Native and *mestizo* artists skilfully and wisely mixed European Renaissance and Baroque forms with sacred and secular Andean symbols. They presented local flowers, birds, animals and plants on the façades of churches, later extending this to domestic architecture and the functional arts. In *Códice Trujillo del Perú*, Baltazar Martínez de Compañón, the bishop of Trujillo, splendidly illustrates "the amazing animals of the New World" (Fig. 2).

The indigenous contribution to the style can be seen in the sculptural incorporation of figurative and astral symbols, plants and

Fig. 2 Baltazar Jaime Martínez de Compañón (1782–1785), *Códice Trujillo del Perú (detail).* Biblioteca del Palacio Real de Madrid

animals, as well as Andean ways of life and rituals. In this social, ethnic and religious context, altarpieces, paintings and images were also conceived and executed with very similar convictions and symbolism, even if they have little formal affinity with the stone carvings from the same one religious repository.

The Andean art we are referring to follows certain guidelines with regard to symmetry; propositions linked to the duality *Hanan/Urin* (up and down), which can also be found in wooden ceremonial cups and textiles. These are frequently divided into parts in order to group different topics together or to highlight certain parts over others.

This is why we postulate that the conception and execution of these painted chests, of which we sadly have very few examples, was very close to all other applied arts executed in this social context and in Cuzco in particular, which became a great hub for artistic production.

ARTISTIC WOODWORK: A BACKGROUND

Created in 1543, the Peruvian Viceroyalty, was the largest and wealthiest territory under the Spanish crown for over 200 years. It initially covered extensive regions of South America that are now part of ten independent republics. Its cultural dominance is clear from the universities, royal colleges and printworks that existed in that area of the continent.

Many prominent master builders and artists arrived in the Americas from Spain and Italy, settling in the "City of the Kings", the viceregal capital that would later be known as Lima. There, they trained apprentices and skilled workers, most of whom were *mestizos* and natives, as well as young black men, who spread artistic techniques and knowledge across the Viceroyalty. In this city, the headquarters of the Viceregal Court and the administrative centre for Catholic doctrine, cabinet-makers and specialised carpenters created altarpieces, chests of drawers, pulpits, choir stalls, gateways, coffered ceilings and other accessories required for Catholic mass and worship.

Between the 16th and 18th centuries, Spain spread artistic traditions across the viceroyalties in the New World, through the work of specialists, such as joiners, sculptors, engravers and other craftsmen, who made the stunning liturgical furniture of viceregal churches possible.[488]

After an initial period of wars with the resisting natives, followed by civil wars among the *conquistadores,* viceregal authorities promoted the building of cathedrals and buildings representing the Spanish government. At the start of the 17th century, artists from the circle of Juan Martínez Montañés travelled from Seville to the City of the Kings, charged with executing the cathedral choir stalls.[489]

Similar stalls, altarpieces and religious furniture were also executed in Cuzco, Huamanga, Chuquisaca and other important cities throughout the vast viceroyalty. Master carpenters, joiners and *estofado* experts arriving from Spain to build religious furniture and decorations passed on the skills of the craft to their apprentices, and artistic woodwork spread as civil society began to demand it. Many items of furniture were executed resembling pieces brought from Europe. Others, however, were executed under the artistic interpretation and tastes of *criollos* and *mestizos,* who commissioned the work from local craftsmen.

Over time, native and *mestizo* artists acquired enough skills and independence to make a name for themselves with their own work, executing their own creations, linked to their own surroundings and traditions. From the mid-18th century onwards, general tastes swung towards canvas paintings produced by members of the Cuzco School and other regional schools, substituting works that were considered European. Similarly in applied arts, preferences shifted towards creations associated with local traditions and Andean imagery.

Fig. 3 *Painted chest*, Cuzco, 17th century. Hotel Monasterio, Cuzco (Peru)

Spanish furniture, which had initially served as a model for the requirements of the Spanish, *criollos* and *mestizos*, gradually transformed. Benches, tables or wardrobes initially destined for churches and convents were adapted to the tastes of these new clients. The same can be said for cabinets, chests, writing desks and other furniture, which were initially executed based on Spanish models, and now gave way to interesting and eye-catching local variations. At the Monasterio Hotel in Cuzco we find a fine chest that was painted on the inside in the 17th century, a true example of the Cuzco artists' technique and imagination (Fig. 3).

In terms of their meticulous execution and artistic quality, it is worth highlighting *bargueño* travelling desks. Used to store valuable items, they had small doors at the front and drawers of different sizes inside. They were generally rectangular in shape and of a medium size, making them easy to carry with handles on the sides.[490]

Some portable writing desks and cabinets with drawers featured surfaces covered with marquetry or intarsia inlay. They stand out for their refined representation of urban scenes and buildings in perspective. One of these is housed at the Museo de Charcas in Sucre (Bolivia), which has been analysed in detail by a paper on the Baroque.[491] This

Fig. 4 *Chest,* Cuzco, 18th century; repoussé leather and polychromed wood. Private collection, Peru

type of *bargueño* was re-interpreted by carpenters in the Viceroyalty of Peru using the *taracea* inlay technique, producing outstanding pieces with a localised slant.

The use of functional containers to store or carry goods was quite widespread. Those embarking on long sea journeys to the New World would take chests, trunks and portmanteaux (Fig. 4) built using a wooden structure and external leather covers. This outside material could be *repoussé* or polychromed. The *bargueño* exhibited at the Museo de Osma in Lima is a clear example of painted Cuzco furniture (Fig. 5).

Fig. 5 *Bargueño*, Cuzco, 18th century; polychromed and gilt wood. Museo Pedro de Osma, Lima

BACKGROUND HISTORY OF PAINTED WOODEN CEREMONIAL DRINKING VESSELS: THE *QEROS*

It is pertinent for us now to explain the artform used in wooden drinking vessels, or *qeros,* because the way in which they address topics and represent figures is very similar to what we find on our chest panels.

Centuries-old documents referred to these ceremonial objects as *bebedores de palo* (wooden drinking vessels), *vasos de palo* (wooden cups), *cálices de madera* (wooden chalices) and *vasos pintados de colores* (colour-painted cups). According to Inca specialists, they were executed in pairs following Andean principles of duality: man/woman or up/down, along with complementary opposites implied by that duality, and were intended to be used in rituals. *Qero* is a word meaning wooden cup in the *Quechua* and *Aymara* languages, which were the two most-common native languages in the Inca empire. The term appears in an important vocabulary list of the Quechua language that dates from as far back as 1608. (Fig. 6)

Fig. 6 *Pair of qeros*. Cuzco, early 16th century. Museo Inka, Universidad Nacional de Cuzco, Peru

Qeros are the most significant precursors of the use of paint on wood in the Inca territory, the origins of which go back to the early pre-Inca periods of the *Pukara* (500 BC – 400 AD) and *Tiawanaku* (1500 BC – 1187 BC) cultures in the Andean south, continuing through coastal Peruvian cultures, and then in the *Wari* culture (600 BC – 1000 AD) north of Cuzco, and was a technique later adopted by the Incas in the 14th century.

These vessels were sacred objects for religious "ceremonial toasts" during that period, as well as special gifts that the Inca and the nobility offered to the lords of the conquered lands incorporated into their territories. The sacred nature of these objects was noted by the *mestizo* Cuzco chronicler, Inca Garcilaso de la Vega: "[…] *because the Sapa Inca had touched them with his hand and lips, the kurakas had them in great esteem, as something sacred* […]."[492]

These pieces with highly symbolic content were executed in the 15th and 16th centuries, just before the encounter with the Europeans, and they comprised a skill that was fully developed during the viceregal period in the 17th and 18th centuries, with Cuzco at the centre of the production and use of these objects.[493]

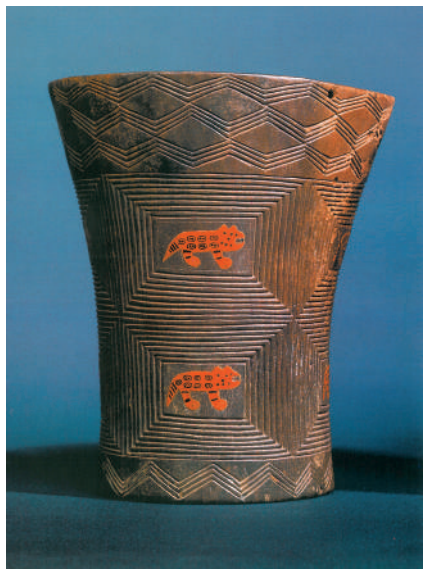

Fig. 7 *Inca qero,* Archaeological site of Ollantaytambo, Cuzco, ca. 1530; wood with incisions and polychromed mountain bears. Museo Inka, Universidad Nacional del Cuzco, Peru

The first wooden *qeros* (there were others executed using clay, gold, silver and stone) had incised geometric decoration, with a predominance of squares, rectangles, rhombuses and zig-zag patterns, with discreet touches of colour. The Inca *qero* that is housed at the Universidad Nacional de Cuzco presents the earliest use of varnish. It was found in an archaeological site in Ollantaytambo, Cuzco, in 1934 (Fig. 7). They are mainly cylindrical with an enlarged diameter at the mouth, adopting a bell-like shape. Others are feline heads carved in wood and similarly painted, with an opening to be used as a cup.

The polychromed vessels that include figurative scenes were first painted after the arrival of the European settlers. Horizontal compositions abound, dividing the external space into two or three levels with differently-coloured lines. The main scene presents a variety of subjects, including figures of people, animals, plants and other decorative elements. The central section has geometric designs and *tocapus,*[494] while the lower section generally includes native flowers and birds and, in some cases, human heads.

Materials and Technique

Seventeenth and 18th-century ceremonial cups were usually executed in ligneous material. The Andean woods used for carving were the *chachacoma* (*Escallonia resinosa*), occasionally *Andean cedar* (*Cedrela lilloi*) and, less frequently, the *lambrán* (*Almus jorullensis*) of European origin, better known as the white alder tree.

As regards the painting techniques used, there is 400-year-old information from the Jesuit chronicler Bernabé Cobo, who pointed out, while referring to wooden ceremonial vessels, that: *They paint them on the outside with some sort of shiny varnish in different colours.*[495] Vegetable resin made it possible to affix colour to the surface of these polychromed vessels. On this subject, the use of chemical analysis means we can say that:

> […] *the resin was obtained from the Elaeagia pastoensis plant from the Rubiaceae family (Mopa Mopa). The resin was prepared by using heat and mixing it with saliva, as shown by the sophisticated analyses carried out […]. The Mopa Mopa plant currently grows in the region of the Putumayo river in Colombia, and craftsmen nowadays use it to polish decorative objects made with wood. This varnishing technique from Pasto (Colombia) was highly appreciated from the 16th century onwards to execute chests, trunks, bargueños and even on wooden frames used for paintings on copper panels or canvases* […].[496]

Some of the pigments used are mineral-based, such as the red colour obtained from a neutral mercury sulphide; others come from leguminous plants, and there are some whose stems and leaves provide colours defined as shades of blue and green. The use of colour increased after the Spanish conquest, when polychrome techniques in incised drawings and the representation of multi-coloured scenes became more diverse, because indigenous painters were banned from painting

murals, panels and fabrics in the 17th century.[497] Although their original function was ceremonial, after the Spanish conquest these cups became the custodians of Inca nationalist traditions in the 18th century, as a form of resistance art against the newly-arrived foreigners.

The valuable iconographies featured on these vessels continue to offer ways of understanding the ideology and mentality of Andean cultures, especially if we consider the written documents now available to help us interpret the messages painted on them.

There is a very rare wooden chest in the Museo *Casa de Murillo* in La Paz (Bolivia)[498] executed using the same technique as the one used for *qeros*. The characteristic way that human figures are presented in Cuzco vessels, with their bodies, arms and legs painted frontally and their faces either in profile or from the front, but without either foreshortening or perspective, is the same as we see in this piece. This item of furniture measures 47 cm long, 24 cm wide and 20.5 cm deep. Motifs include dragons, Incas, Spaniards and cherubs in amongst a wide range of decorative elements. (Fig. 8) Its decorative subject is linked to the conquest of Antisuyu, in the upper rainforest known as *Yungas*, with five scenes represented on the four sides and lid. It should be pointed out that the scenes on both our chest and the one housed in La Paz include a crane, a snake coiled around a palm tree and a mythical forest character, naked and holding a club. Similarly, the lid includes a dragon with a feline head showing its fangs, its tail long and coiled. It has a snake-like body, webbed wings and only two legs. Teresa Gisbert, a researcher who has studied this chest, posits that a chronological approximation can be made based on the clothes used by the three hunters that appear on the front panel: they are dressed according to 16th-century fashion, wearing Philip II-style ruffs and hats.[499]

Fig. 8 *Casket*, Cuzco, 18th century; polychromed and gilt wood. Museo Casa de Murillo, La Paz (Bolivia)

PAIR OF ANDEAN PANELS

The pair of Andean panels, motive of our study, were part of a wonderful chest from the first half of the 17th century in the south Andean region, executed in the Cuzco area, which at the time was the most important hub of artistic and manufacturing production in the southern Andes, meeting the demands of the Viceroyalties of Peru and The Río de la Plata. Relatively recently, the chest was disassembled to display its front panel and lid, allowing us to admire the wealth of its decoration. This item of furniture from the Viceroyalty of Peru is undoubtedly an outstanding example of *mestizo* imagery, on which the artist was able to showcase his skill.

The central figure of the front panel is a Crucifixion (Fig. 9) and the top panel, which was the lid, features a narrative divided into eight rectangular scenes (Fig. 10). The original chest was medium-sized and of rectangular proportions, with an approximate height of 50 cm, a length of 100 cm and a depth of 50 cm. It was executed in *Andean cedar* (*Cedrela angustifolia*) wood, a native species from the Cuzco area, belonging to the mahogany family and growing in areas located between 2,000 and 3,500 metres above sea level. The smooth cover that remains suggests a simple chest with smooth sides, following the models of some of the Spanish chests of the same period.

As might be expected, the front panel shows there was a metal lock, as used on this type of furniture at the time. Similarly, it must have included hinges at the back. The side panels may have had iron handles to transport it more easily.

A laboratory study would be required to reliably determine the wood of the frame, the painting technique and pigments used and other material features. We would venture a guess, however, that the paint used was an oil paint used directly on the wood, with vegetable pigments, coloured soils and minerals, materials that are easily found in the southern Andean territory, and which were used in other artworks.

The presence in the Cuzco region of artists and craftsmen dedicated to the visual and applied arts led to a continuous and prolific production of these cultural elements. The city established itself as the most important hub for easel painting, beyond the borders of the Viceroyalty of Peru. Thanks to the presence of outstanding Italian and Spanish masters there since the end of the 16th century, many native and *mestizo* painters were trained, executing the large numbers of artworks required for spreading and imposing the new faith.

We would submit the hypothesis that the painting of this chest was commissioned by its unknown owner in the most important production centre, where the most experienced artists were working; that is to say, Cuzco. We also believe that he must have owned inherited lands on the eastern side of the Andes, and that along with his wife he wished to own painted furniture that reflected their everyday life, hopes and fears in scenes that narrated those parts of their reality. It is highly likely that, with help from a member of the clergy, the symbolic-religious scheme was arranged alongside the narration the owner wanted to convey on his own chest.

General description of the panels

Both panels, of equal size, contain painted scenes separated by borders that meet at spheres at the centre and hemispheres at the sides, thereby dividing the composition into quadrants. To describe the scenes, we have allocated Roman numerals to them, counting clockwise from the top left, for both the front and top panel.

The panels are framed on all sides by a continuous frieze border decorated with volutes and foliage with red edging along both sides. This type of volute is an element that appears frequently in Spanish silverwork from the early 17th century.

Fig. 9 Front panel with central image of the Crucifixion

Fig. 10 Top panel with eight narrative scenes

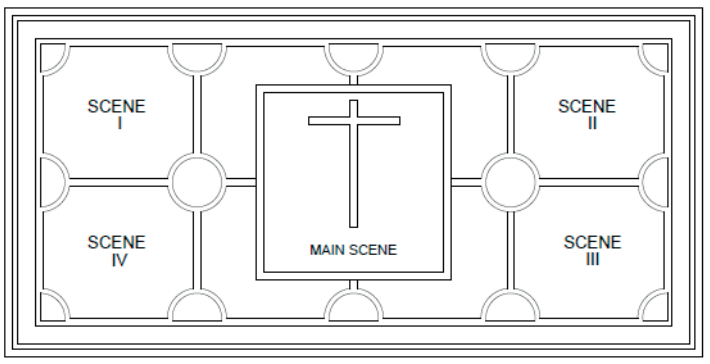

Fig. 11 Layout of the scenes in the front panel

Scenes on the front panel (Fig. 11)

A crucified Christ dominates the central scene, presiding over the composition. Mary is standing to his left and Mary Magdalene is kneeling, her arms around the cross. Behind her, we observe a crane. Trees can be seen on both sides in the foreground, as well as brambles (*Rubus ulmifolius*). Given its prominent position, this is clearly the most important scene in the entire piece, which means it will be the most easily seen. At the foot of the cross, we see a skull and crossbones. At the top we see a dark sky with agitated clouds, warning us of a storm. The main scene is framed by a red border that is mainly surrounded by floral decoration. At the base of this section, we see a vase at each side and two trees with thick branches (Fig. 12).

Fig. 12 Front panel, Main Scene

I) A symmetrical scene with a palm tree (*Arecaceae*) at the centre. On the left side, a rampant lion with a light-brown coat. The top and bottom are decorated with leaves and flowers, the latter being predominantly red. To the right, there is a man wearing a hat that is crowned with feathers. On his left hand he is holding a round shield with radial decorations, while his right hand is attacking the lion's head with a spear. A dog, located beneath him, is jumping towards the same prey (Fig. 13).

II) The central element is some sort of palm tree, its leaves arranged radially, dividing the scene in two. On the left side, a saddled horse in profile, its reins tied to the tree, but no rider. On the right, we see the rider leaning back, pointing to the top of the palm tree with a weapon. He is wearing knee-length baggy trousers and stockings, a dress coat with a belt, a ruff around his neck and embroidered cuffs on his shirt. His hat, hanging from a branch, has a ribbon around the crown, and red and white feathers in a plume. Behind it, we see a hunting dog, poised to capture the same prey. Both the horse and the hunter are surrounded by dense plant decoration, with disproportionately-sized foliage and flowers (Fig. 14).

III) There is a river represented along the bottom part of the scene that extends to scene IV on the same panel. It includes fishes and ducks. To the left at the top, there is a man wearing baggy trousers and a dress coat, carrying a sling in his right hand. At his feet, a shepherd dog is taking care of a flock of sheep we can see in the bottom right-hand corner. The flock is inside a pen, but outside the pen, at the top, we see a big wild cat carrying the prey it has captured on its back, the shepherd and his dog looking on helplessly. Beyond the pen we see a dark, cloudy sky. On the shepherd's side we see the façade of a stone church, with a straw vegetable roof made of Peruvian feather grass or *ichu* (*Stipa ichu*), with steps leading to the atrium, a gable roof with round windows, and a house at the back (Fig. 15).

IV) At the bottom of this scene, the aforementioned river we could see in scene III, with the same animals. Two buildings stand out: from left to right, a church with a gable roof over a stone atrium with stairs, and at the back we see what looks like a chapel. Close to the river and opposite the church we see a square building with a courtyard at the centre. The gaps between the stonework have been painted on the outside walls. In the background we can see a huge viscacha, a rodent typical of the Andean mountains that feeds on *ichu*. Between the temple and the square building, we see a Spanish man wearing a hat and covered in a cloak. White birds can be seen behind him, flying towards the religious buildings. There is sparse vegetation, with large flowers and leaves (Fig. 16).

Fig. 13 Front panel, Scene I

Fig. 14 Front panel, Scene II

Fig. 15 Front panel, Scene III

Fig. 16 Front panel, Scene IV

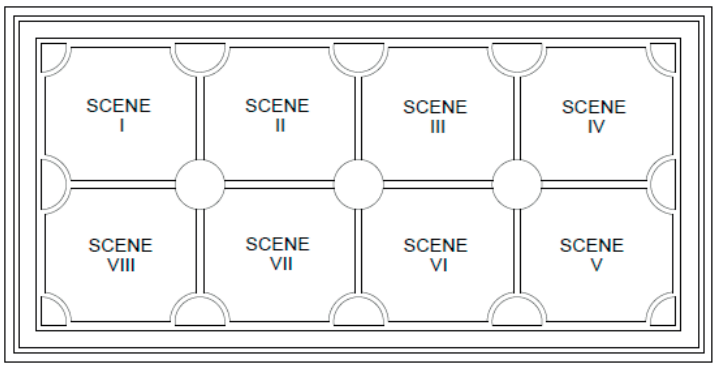

Fig. 17 Layout of the scenes in the top panel or cover

Scenes on the top panel or cover (Fig. 17)

I) At the centre of the first scene, we see a palm tree with large leaves at the top. Four large roses stick out among the foliage. There is a red bird over the tree, looking down. A snake coils around the trunk, its head to the right and its tail extending towards the border of the scene. To the left, two black creatures stand out, standing next to each other on their hind legs, their tongues out, looking to the right where we find a wild man with a club in his right hand, ready to fight them. Towards the top, we see stormy clouds looming (Fig. 18).

II) The centre of this composition features a hillock on which there is a religious building with stone walls, gable roof and a tower rising above it to one side. On the right, there is a man wearing knee-length trousers and stockings, and a helmet on his head. In his left hand he is leaning a weapon over his shoulder, followed by a black dog. The background is covered in vegetation, and, to the left, there is a large flower on which a bird with coloured plumage is perched. Under the flower, a viscacha has its head turned completely to the right side of the scene (Fig. 19).

III) There are three people in this scene. The one at the centre is carrying a shield in his arm and a sword in his right hand; he is dressed in Spanish fashion and is fighting an Amazon native who is barefooted, his face painted, dressed typically, wearing a feathered headdress. He is carrying a weapon in the shape of a paddle, threateningly, to defend himself from the Spaniard and the dog behind him. There is a bird perched on one side of the flag. On the far left of the scene, there is another man dressed like the one in the previous scene (II), with whom he seems to be communicating in sign language. Behind him, we see a house, apparently made of wood, for domestic use (Fig. 20).

IV) This scene is linked to the previous one (III), with two Amazon natives holding bows and arrows ready to shoot, dressed like the native described in the previous scene. The three natives have eye-catching tattoos on their legs, arms, necks and faces. A bird with coloured feathers flies above them. A palm tree divides the scene into two, a large bird perched on its branches. To the right, we see a wooden house on irregular terrain. Over the roof we see a coiled snake, next to which there is a big crouching cat. The sky, covered in clouds, is threatening a storm (Fig. 21).

V) A tree with large branches dominates the composition at the centre of the scene. Over it, there is another black creature trying to escape a hunter, a dog and a native man holding a club threatening to catch it. The hunter is dressed in European fashion and is holding a firearm, poised to shoot the wildcat. Over the hunter, we see a simple adobe house, with clay tiles over a gable roof. In the foreground, to the left, in front of the hunter and his dog, we see a fantastical animal, aggressively poised. On both sides of the scene, we see pineapple trees (*Ananas comosus*) (Fig. 22).

VI) This scene is dominated by a carved stone fountain with two bowls and water flowing down. This decorative element has been idealised, placing it on top of a stone building with arched doors. A crane and a dog are close by, ready to drink from it. To the right, there is an elegant man dressed in Spanish fashion, wearing an embroidered cloak and hat adorned with feathers, feeding a bird by hand, while a dog with a studded collar is waiting for food. To the left, a woman in a long dress, her head covered in a veil, is also feeding a bird with a long tail. The cloud-covered sky is threatening a storm (Fig. 23).

VII) A rider on a white horse, accompanied by his dog, is hunting some sort of deer that is running towards a hillside with a tiered slope, up which another antlered animal is seen climbing. At the top, to the right, there is a house with a gable roof. There is a big cat that looks like a striped tiger also wanting to reach the deer being hunted by the man on horseback. Like in the other scenes, the sky looks stormy (Fig. 24).

VIII) A palm tree in the foreground and at the centre divides the composition into two. A bird is perched on it. On the right side, there is a lion attacking a goat, while it is itself being attacked by a man dressed in Spanish fashion, carrying a sword in his right hand, a shield in the other. A hunting dog, located behind the tree, is also attacking the beast. We find a viscacha (*Lagidium peruvianum),* resting on two gigantic flowers, behind the lion. On the opposite side, behind the man, there is a single-floor adobe house with gable roof (Fig. 25).

Fig. 18 Top panel, Scene I

Fig. 19 Top panel, Scene II

Fig. 20 Top panel, Scene III

Fig. 21 Top panel, Scene IV

Fig. 22 Top panel, Scene V

Fig. 23 Top panel, Scene VI

Fig. 24 Top panel, Scene VII

Fig. 25 Top panel, Scene VIII

ICONOGRAPHIC READING AND APPROXIMATIONS TO INTERPRETING THE PAINTED SCENES

Based on the study of time and place presented above, we will now attempt to make sense of the not-always-apparent symbolic dimension of the representations in these extraordinary and singular panels, as far as possible.[500]

Territory and landscape

The land that these panels depict is located in the eastern mountain range of the Andes (Fig. 26), which descends towards the Amazon basin in the southern Andes and includes part of the Cuzco region, with altitudes varying between 6,364 and 500 metres above sea level. On this descent, we pass through natural regions, forming part of the vertical landscape and its eco-levels, with varying climates, flora and fauna, along with different human settlements. These eco-levels are the *Quechua,* at approximately 3,000 metres above sea level, the Peruvian *Yungas* at 2,000, and the Amazon basin, at an average altitude of 500 metres above sea level. The variety of bush and tree flora increases as we descend, thanks to increased temperatures, humidity and more abundant rainfall.[501]

There are several references to this territory known by the Inca (14th-15th century): for instance, they describe *Antisuyo* as a fertile

Fig. 26 Panoramic view of Machu Picchu, Cuzco

but wild region, with abundant flora and fauna. The evangelical brothers spreading the Christian faith equated this territory with paradise, as described in the Bible, and referred to it as "the garden", with the sole purpose of converting the natives.

The tropical forests with dense vegetation (rainforests) in the *Yungas,* along with the horizontal nature of the Amazon, with no mountains to be used as reference, always made the Andean natives wary and apprehensive, preferring not to occupy the region. The number of insects, reptiles, ophidians and aggressive animals gave rise to fear and a feeling of insecurity. Furthermore, there was the warring nature of the Amazon natives, who over time started to attack and raid the Spanish colonisers, *mestizos* and natives during the viceregal period.

We believe that, in order to understand the narrative of our painted chest, we must understand the nature of these regions, locally known as "the mountain and the rainforest".

Given the cultural landscape that appears in the painted scenes and the appearance of a single couple (the elegantly dressed lady and bearded man with embroidered cloak) (Fig. 23 Top panel, Scene VI), we can infer they must have owned land inherited from their forebears who, in turn, had received the land by Royal dispensation, as "land gifts" granted to those who contributed to consolidating the Conquest. The crane drinking water from the fountain represents the wife's virtue: spirituality, femininity, wisdom and cunning. They are both feeding birds, alluding to their generosity with their fellow beings.

Prominent in the visual conception of both of these panels is the main scene on the front panel which, portraying the Crucifixion (Fig. 12), stands in contrast with all the other scenes, which bear no direct link to the Catholic faith. We interpret this as a way for the owner of the piece to reassert his Catholicism at a time when the actions of the Inquisition against heresy were particularly severe. This scene is of great historic and symbolic value, displaying cultural syncretism in the interpretation the *mestizo* artist made or, rather, a process of transculturation and *mestizaje* between the two cultures.

Underneath this scene, the eye is drawn to a river flowing along the bottom of this panel, as it also does in the top panel, a course of water that must have existed as a border to their property. The artist includes fish and ducks to heighten this representation. The allusion to water, as a source of life and Divine energy, the fertility of the land and all living beings, is highly suggestive.

The scattered houses are built using *adobe* and are covered in tiles, which means they are located in the eco-level known as the *"sierra"* ("mountains") or *Quechua.* This is clear because in the *Yungas* and the Amazon basin, buildings did not feature these materials due to the intense rainfall. Similarly, the religious buildings with stone masonry and tiled roofs (front panel IV and top panel II) are located in the *"sierra"*.

The scene that includes a prominent building with a fountain in the courtyard suggests we may be looking at the property belonging to the couple who owned the chest (Fig. 23 Top panel, Scene VI).

Symbolism of the Fauna and Flora

A lion is represented twice in this composition. This animal, which was introduced into the indigenous Andean world by means of prints and paintings, represented a beast that was feared by both native and Spanish people. Oddly, in both sequences where this animal appears, they are confronting the Spanish characters, who use weapons and hunting dogs to attack them – clearly, Spanish people were more capable of defending themselves from such a feared beast. The terror felt for this animal by the natives is symbolised in a print by Guamán Poma de Ayala in his *Nueva crónica y buen gobierno* (ca. 1615) (Fig. 27), the text of which reads: "POBRE DE LOS IN[DI] OS: DE SEIS ANIMALES Q[VE] COME QUE TEMEMEN LOS POBRES DE LOS YNDIOS EN ESTE RREYNO" [sic] ("POOR INDIANS: THE SIX ANIMALS FEARED BY THE POOR INDIANS IN THIS KINGDOM"). This drawing also contains a plethora of animals, each with its name linked to a political position in the viceregal administration: the snake, the mayor appointed by the king; the tiger, the Spaniards who owned the tavern; the lion, the messenger; the fox, the father of doctrine, etc. In scene I of the front panel, the Spanish man holding a sword and a *rodela* (a small 16th-century iron shield like a buckler) is valiantly defending a goat that is being attacked by a lion. (Fig. 28)

Fig. 27 *Nueva crónica y buen gobierno*, ca. 1615, Guamán Poma de Ayala (San Cristóbal de Suntuntu, 1534 - Lima, 1615); print

Appearing in both representations that contain lions, we have a palm tree dividing the scene in two. The palm tree is a symbol of growth and success, and represents the victory of the spirit, attributes which the owner considers he possesses.

Fig. 28 A man defending a goat (front panel)

The owners of the farmhouse are constantly under threat, either from the imaginary big black cats described earlier, the coiled snake, the wild man, the lions or the *chunchu* natives. Most of the scenes are set in the *Yungas* or upper rainforest, on the eastern side of the Peruvian Andes, that boast a large variety of palm trees, flowers and vegetation.

As regard the presence of hunting dogs, which are Spanish bulldogs -a bull-mastiff and Spanish mastiff mix- (Fig. 29), they are generally presented next to a Spanish man. The native population feared these fierce dogs more than a regiment of arquebusiers. There are period chronicles describing the atrocities committed by these fierce animals on the unprotected locals of the new continent.

For the ancient native peoples, viscachas are messengers of the Andean gods, and mediators between them and humans. On the topic of the appeasement of the *chunchus,* the presence of the viscacha indicates that said peace was achieved through the mediation of the Andean gods. There is an ideological background to the viscacha portrayed over the house with a courtyard, close to the church with an atrium, referencing the co-existence of two beliefs: the Catholic faith and the traditional native religion (Fig. 16 Front panel, Scene IV).

The shepherd protecting his flock next to the loyal shepherd dog is a metaphor that suggests that he defends his flock against any danger, and the proximity of the church behind him reminds us of Jesus Christ, guiding and caring for his flock. The person commissioning this work, represented as the heroic shepherd and landowner, carries a sling in his right hand to protect his sheep, who symbolise the believers of the Church (Fig. 15 Front panel, Scene III).

A mythological being from the collective Andean imagination

In the foreground of scene V on the top panel, we see a fabulous being from Roman antiquity, which then spread across the Americas during the Renaissance and Mannerist periods. The legendary snake called *Amaru* (Fig. 30), synonymous with the dragon, was part of Inca religious imagery, and there was a temple devoted to it in Cuzco, the *Amaru-cancha,* on which the Jesuits built a church. This was a fabulous creature, with two bird's legs, dragon wings, a coiled snake's tail, feline face and pointy ears. A *qero* from a later date, from the 18th century, features a similar *Amaru.* (Fig. 31) This mythological Andean creature was included in some woodenceremonial vessels. In the narrative of the time, these beings represented evil and the enemy. The fact that this *mestizo* artist, creator of our wonderful panels, should place this feared mythological being co-existing in harmony with the Spanish hunter is quite intriguing.

In the same scene, behind the *Amaru*, we see the wild man holding a club. This character is derived from the wild men represented in the European Renaissance, and symbolises beings that were completely removed from civilisation. Their bodies are covered in hair and their gaze express ignorance and barbarity. (Fig. 32)

We would suggest that whoever came up with these scenes and composed the narrative, included in them a number of elements from their own existence in the Andean regions, far from the *Yungas.*

Fig. 29 Hunting dog (front panel)

Fig. 30 *Amaru* (The legendary snake, part of Inca religious imagery) (top panel)

Fig. 31 *Qero*, with the Amaru and a central section decorated with tocapus, 18th century; polychromed wood. Museo Inka, Universidad Nacional del Cuzco, Peru

Fig. 32 The wild man (top panel)

Shunchus of Antisuyu

From pre-Hispanic times, ethnic Amazonian groups were given the name *chunchus*. The word means wild, uncivilised and clumsy. They were also known for their extreme aggressiveness. They are represented in ceremonial *qeros* with their traditional clothing, a short tunic known as a *cushma*. They are crowned with plumage and have face paint, tattooed legs, and are armed with bows and arrows, as represented in consecutive scenes (III and IV) on the top panel. (Fig. 33) The *Museo Inka* in the *Universidad Nacional del Cuzco* has an image on display that represents the *chunchu* dancers, who are headed by the standard bearer, carrying the *wifala.* (Fig. 34) Viceregal *qeros* depicted Amazon natives dancing with colourful feathered headdresses, carrying a flag known as a *wifala.* This was the idealised image that could be found in the staging of their rituals in the 17th century. This scene most likely recalls an older peace agreement whereby the Amazon natives symbolically handed their flag, the *wifala,* to the Spanish people.

Fig. 33 The Chunchus with bows and arrows (top panel)

Fig. 34 *Painted representation of the chunchus dancers,* ahead of the dancers, the standard bearer carries the *wifala*. Museo Inka, Universidad Nacional del Cuzco, Peru


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