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Civilized Indian, Wild Indian: Incongruities in the Visual Representation of *Indígena* in Colonial
Latin America

Spanish and Creole individuals struggled to understand and categorize the Amerindian population, also known as *indígena*, in Latin America during the colonial period (1492-1810). My paper spotlights a series of untitled paintings that contain various portrayals of Indians in colonial *Quiteño* society, located in present-day Quito, Ecuador. Created in 1783 by Vicente Albán, an artist known for his skill in painting biblical subjects, this untitled series presents incongruous representations of the Amerindian as both *civilized* and *wild*, both able to assimilate to European ideologies and also unable to relinquish his/her traditional modes of life. Albán's choice to represent his *indígena* subjects as diametric tropes provides valuable information about the conception of Amerindians in both *Quiteño* society and peninsular Spain.

Albán's series is unique in that it is composed of secular images in a time when the *oeuvres* of most *Quiteño* artists included only Christian, religious-themed works. His paintings also present a striking combination of text and image in that the visual depictions of people, flora, and fauna have corresponding titles that explain each aspect of the painting. Using literature on scientific exploration during the 18th century and Mexican *casta* paintings as well as archival documents, I argue that Albán's compositions were influenced by the Bourbon reforms taking place in Spain and also by the widespread scientific expeditions occurring throughout the Americas with the goal being to catalogue this newfound, natural world. In this series, Albán presents the Indian as a dichotomy; both noble savage and civilized citizen. I argue that Albán's series promotes a positive image of *Quiteño* society showcasing the bounty of the land and the 'reformed' Christian Indian of New World society while simultaneously reinforcing long-held conceptions about the inherently wild nature of indigenous individuals.