

The Creole Politics of Memory and the Ambivalent Nativism of Lucas

Fernández de Piedrahita's *Historia general de las conquistas del Nuevo Reyno de Granada* (1688)¹

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In 1663, the vicar general of the Archbishop of New Granada, Lucas Fernández de Piedrahita (Santafé de Bogotá 1624-Panamá 1688), had to travel to Spain to defend himself against the accusations of the *visitador* (royal inspector) don Juan Cornejo. The indictment touched a sensitive point for colonial Spanish American society: Piedrahita's mother was a *mestiza*, granddaughter of Inca Princess Francisca Coya, and his father was reportedly a carpenter. Could this accusation damage irreparably the reputation of an otherwise highly successful ecclesiastical official?²

Throughout Spanish America, preoccupations for purity of blood and a contempt for manual labor made part of a code of social differentiation that placed Iberian-born Spaniards at the apex of colonial society and most often barred someone like Piedrahita from achieving any high post. *Mestizos* were, for the most part, considered troublemakers and inferior to Spaniards and *criollos*. But still, a small

¹ I would like to thank Alvaro Félix Bolaños for his careful reading of this article. All errors, however, are my own responsibility. My work is greatly indebted to Joanne Rappaport's seminal work on the politics of memory in Colombia and José Rabasa's suggestive essay "Pre-Columbian Pasts and Indian Presents in Mexican History" included in *Colonialism Past and Present* edited by Alvaro Félix Bolaños and Gustavo Verdesio (Albany, 2002).

² The *visitador* resented the President of New Granada's request to attend the funeral of Piedrahita's mother: "hizo ir (al real acuerdo) al entierro y honras de Catalina de Collantes, madre del doctor Piedrahita, provisor que era 'in sede vacante', siendo la dicha difunta mujer humilde y mestiza, y mujer de un oficial de carpintería". (cited in Gustavo Otero Muñoz' edition of the *Historia general de las conquistas del Nuevo Reino de Granada* (Bogotá, 1942 p.vii) [He made (the Royal council) attend the funeral of Catalina Collantes, mother of doctor Piedrahita, vicar general 'in sede vacante' even though she was a humble *mestiza* woman, married to a carpenter].

number of *mestizos* like Piedrahita were able to move up the social ladder in numerous ways and achieve the same status as *criollos*, through marriage, military service, religious orders, education, and even the legal purchase of official posts or nobility titles. Upper mobility was not impossible, as Piedrahita's case illustrates. However, for Indians, Blacks, and poor *mestizos*, the opportunities were clearly limited. *Mestizos* with some affluence gained social recognition by concealing their mixed origin and stressing their Peninsular heritage, articulating their social status through a relation of continuity with Spanish society. In this case, the *mestizos'* and *criollos'* social standing depended on the Spanish symbolic economy.³

There was, however, an emerging space first claimed by the Conquistadors and later by their *criollo* and *mestizo* heirs that expressed an identity based on a relationship of rupture with Spanish society. Their social recognition depended on the value of their experiences in the Indies. In other words, it was a matter of extracting symbolic capital (*honra*) from their American exploits or origin. As we will see, to sustain their hegemonic position in colonial society and to claim a space for themselves in History, the seventeenth century New Granadine elite had to juggle continuously between these two poles, a *Peninsularism* and a nativism. Piedrahita's case suggests that the Neogranadine elite, excluded from high administrative positions

³ The Spanish words *español*, *criollo*, *mestizo*, *zambo*, *indio*, and *cholo* are used in the sense they conveyed in seventeenth century New Granada. They were legal and social categories based on the Castilian notion of purity of blood. A classic study on the topic is Magnus Mörner, *Race Mixture in Latin America*, (Boston, 1967); Two recent studies on *criollos* and *mestizos* in the Viceroyalty of Peru, of which New Granada was part of until the eighteenth century, are Bernard Lavallé, *Las promesas ambiguas* (Lima, 1993) and Berta Ares Queija, "El papel de los mediadores y la construcción de un discurso sobre la identidad de los mestizos peruanos", *Entre dos mundos: fronteras culturales y agentes mediadores*, edited by Berta Ares Queija and Serge Gruzinski (Sevilla, 1997, 37-59). For the particularities of Neogranadine society see: Jaime Jaramillo Uribe, *La sociedad neogranadina*, 2 vols. (Bogotá, 1989), Guiomar Dueñas Vargas, *Los hijos del pecado* (Bogotá, 1997) and Virginia Gutiérrez de Pineda and Roberto Pineda Giraldo, *Miscegenación y cultura en la Colombia colonial*, 2 vols. (Bogotá, 1999).

in the colonial bureaucracy, sought alternative pockets of power and prestige, such as the religious orders and the intellectual field. However, to fully see the dimensions of what that process involved, it is not that some preconceived *criollo* subject occupies a position in certain colonial institution. Rather, it is a discourse-mediated process, as Anthony Higgins suggests: “the *criollo* subject-in-process unfolds in, and between, the spaces of educational institutions and civil society, in both written culture and economic production”(6).⁴

Under indictment, Piedrahita had to defend himself. It was precisely during the six-year period that he had to remain in Spain, clearing up his record, that he wrote the *Historia general de las conquistas del Nuevo Reyno de Granada*, published in 1688 in Antwerp. The *Historia* could be thus considered as part of Piedrahita’s defense in a debate that although it touched him personally, it had broader dimensions, and for this reason it is a debate that sheds light on the cultural politics of the seventeenth century Neogranadine elite.⁵

It is important to note that it was far from a homogeneous elite, as it was composed of Spaniards, *criollos*, and *mestizos*. There were also significant regional

⁴ Anthony Higgins, *Constructing the Criollo Archive* (West Lafayette, 2000).

⁵ All references to Piedrahita’s text will come from a 1986 two volume facsimile edition of Lucas Fernández de Piedrahita, *Historia general de las conquistas del Nuevo Reyno de Granada*, published in Amsterdam by Juan Bautista Verdussen in 1688. The facsimile edition comes from one of the copies held by the Biblioteca Nacional de Colombia, Bogotá, and was published by Carvajal S.A.(Santander del Quilchao, Cauca, 1986). There are three additional editions of Piedrahita’s text. The most recent one, edited by Sergio Elías Ortiz (Bogotá 1973) gives a wrong title and date to Piedrahita’s text. He renames it as *Noticia historial de las conquistas del Nuevo Reino de Granada* and gives as publication date the year 1668, reproducing the error of the previous edition. Gustavo Otero Muñoz’s four volume edition of Piedrahita’s text was published in Bogotá in 1942. Both of these two modern editions omit the notes in the margin that appear in the princeps and facsimile editions. There is also a nineteenth century edition by Medrardo Rivas (Bogotá 1881). The facsimile edition comes from a copy that has three engraved plates depicting Muisca lords and conquistadors, one of which is reproduced in this article. Of the three princeps editions that I consulted in the Biblioteca Nacional de Colombia, only one had the three plates.

differences within the district of the *Audiencia del Nuevo Reino de Granada*, which included, in the seventeenth century, the provinces of Santa Marta, Cartagena, Popayán, and Antioquia. In the mining regions of Antioquia and Zaragoza, for example, the hegemonic group was much more *mestizo* than the one in Santafé or Tunja. Although far from being an egalitarian society, the mining districts of New Granada were for the most part precarious small towns where poor Whites, African slaves, runaway Amerindians lived and worked side by side. Throughout the region, however, the Neogranadine elite most often kept their *mestizo* origin in the closet and were frequently described as “whites” in most censuses. It is crucial, then, to pay attention to the processes by which a heterogeneous elite constructs a common culture, of which Piedrahita’s *Historia* is a part. His educational and ecclesiastical experiences also reveal the role of colonial institutions in producing a corporate identity that delimited and founded a *criollo* consciousness that more than a political project and a territorial concern—as was the case of the nineteenth century *criollo* national movements—expressed a sense of pride for their American homeland. This sense of pride, however, is not necessarily an anti colonial sentiment. It could be quite the opposite. Piedrahita’s case is illustrative in this respect. His text is a univocal affirmation of New Granada as part of the Spanish empire. The explicit addressee of his *Historia* are Spaniards who have not heard or know about the wonders and the history of New Granada.

In this article I will discuss Piedrahita’s exaltation of the culture of his place of origin, understood here as a nativism. I will start by briefly discussing Piedrahita’s embellished image of New Granada. Second, I will examine how Piedrahita draws from previous histories of the region in a narrative that revamps the image of the Muisca and rearranges Andean and Spanish histories into one continuous chronology. Third, I

will discuss how Piedrahita's effort to preserve the status quo is expressed through a preoccupation with purity of blood. In the final section, based on Piedrahita's lifelong relationship with the Jesuits, I highlight the importance of the schooling process in forging an elitist *criollo* consciousness. My interest in Piedrahita is part of a larger project on the Muisca experience of modernity under colonialism and the ethnopolitics of memory in present-day Colombia.

Written almost two centuries after Columbus' first voyage, Piedrahita's *Historia* is part of a long tradition of writings about American landscape as a land of abundance. The *Historia* begins with a bird's-eye view of New Granada with the typical laudatory tone, describing the climate, rivers, mines, and wealth of the region. Thus from the beginning, Piedrahita's text validates the colonial appropriation of the land and the exploitation of Amerindian communities. Turning the American territories into awe-inspiring landscapes, however, suppresses the violence of everyday colonialism from view.⁶

In his prologue to the reader of his *Historia*, Piedrahita noted that because most histories of the Indies had paid so little attention to New Granada, he decided to write a clear, well-ordered, more readable and useful history of the region. Thus, Piedrahita's *Historia* places a local history next to other American histories. But, as we will see, the *Historia* is also integrated into the universal Christian history. All these different elements are apparently well integrated. Looking closer, however, the *Historia* is much more ambiguous if we consider who writes the story, the sources it employs, where it is written, and to whom it addresses.

⁶ As Raymond Williams argues in *The Country and the City*, landscapes are artistic representations that tend to erase the social relationships of a given land (Oxford 1973).

Let us start by looking at one of the most significant features of Piedrahita's *Historia*, its organization of the historical narrative. The *Historia* recounts the history of the region occupied today by the Republic of Colombia from roughly a century before the Spanish invasion until 1564. The text is divided in twelve "books," each divided in five to eleven chapters. At the end of the *Historia*, Piedrahita promised a second part covering the history of the region until 1630, which he never wrote. The first two books are dedicated to the "first inhabitants." Piedrahita describes briefly several indigenous groups that are found in the region. The main focus of these first two books, however, is the Muisca (also known as the Chibcha). For Piedrahita, the Muisca were the most civilized indigenous group in the region: "Son los naturales mas politicos, y andan todos vestidos" (15). [The natives most civilized and well-dressed] Muisca people are handsome and well proportionate: "Son todos estos naturales, assi hombres, como mugeres, por la mayor parte de hermosos rostros, y buena disposicion" (15). [All these natives, men and women alike, have, for the most part, beautiful faces and good disposition].

Piedrahita is the first historian of the region that places the Muisca as the origin of New Granada. His historical project even includes reorganizing Muisca past, as he affirms in the "Prologue":

[M]as viendo, que los acaecimientos Politicos y Militares, que avian tenido los Reyes Indios entre si, corrian mezclados con los que despues tuvieron con los Españoles, con la nota de no asignar tiempo a sus operaciones, y que la relacion de las costumbres, ritos, y ceremonias de su gentilidad, confundia muchas vezes la de los progressos de la conquista [...] me resolví a poner separadamente aquellas noticias, que mezcladas quitaban la claridad de la Historia.

[But noticing that the military and political actions of the Indian kings before the Spaniards were mixed with those that happened afterwards, because the natives did not assign a specific time to the events in question and also because the accounts of their pagan costumes, rites, and ceremonies were often confused with events that happened after the Conquest ... I decided to put separately those mixed events that diminished the clearness of History.]

Piedrahita's reworking of Muisca memory involved making Andean cosmology compatible with the Christian Bible. First he tackled the issue of how could there be people and animals in the Indies that Antiquity had not heard of. He briefly commented what others had written on the topic, including fray Antonio Calancha, fray Pedro Simón, and Joseph Acosta (2). They discussed how Noah could not have transported so many beasts in one ship and how the people from Antiquity could not have reached the Indies without a compass. Piedrahita did not take much time to cut through the debate in a dogmatic way: If God needed to transport people and animals to the Indies, he had the means and people to do it (3). So, in chapter two Piedrahita affirmed as a matter of fact that the people of the Indies are descendants of Noah's son Japhet (8).

Piedrahita's project involved more than imposing a foreign story over a *tabula rasa*. He also sought to transform Muisca memory from within. Piedrahita claimed that a civilizing Muisca deity known as Nemquetheba or Bochica was in fact the Apostle Saint Bartholomew (19). For a doctor in Theology and a well-reputed orator, Piedrahita does not put much effort in supporting his claims. He mentions that Bochica was dressed in a Nazarene tunic and that in Ubaque there was a footprint left by the Apostle. Piedrahita affirms that Bochica was a white man because the Muisca referred

to him with the same epithet that they used to call the Spaniards, *Zuhé* (sun, in Muisca).

The main proof that Piedrahita offered, however, was that Muisca beliefs were somehow similar to the Christian dogma. According to Piedrahita, the Muisca believed in the immortality of the soul, the Final Judgment, and resurrection. Their notions of Good and Evil were similar to the Christian beliefs, and they venerated the cross (19). However, Piedrahita notes that these beliefs were accompanied by numerous errors.

In a few strokes, Piedrahita had integrated Muisca past to a universal Christian narrative. This was not completely new in the historiography of the Indies. What seems important here is not the originality of any particular author but rather that in contexts of colonization where multiple temporalities collided, the unity and continuity of Christian teleology had to be continuously reaffirmed. Including Muisca past into the universal Christian narrative justified the subordination of post-conquest Amerindian societies. This integration of Muisca and Spanish histories had inherent tensions that could not be ironed out. Whereas the nativist project highlighted the Muisca's ethnic specificity, the universal narrative emptied it. In the end, the *Historia's* narrative continuity of Muisca past and colonial order ruptures in the references to the contemporary Muisca, who are referred to as *indios*. Paradoxically, Piedrahita's nativist project needed both, the culturally specific Muisca and the generic Indians, as we will see below.

If one compares the previous colonial texts about the Muisca and the *Historia*, in the latter there is a noticeable boost of the Muisca's positive image. Writing almost a century and a half after the invasion, Piedrahita does not offer much new information on the Muisca. However, I contend that there is a significant recasting of that image. As a result, Piedrahita turned Muisca memory into a useful past for the Neogranadine

elite. However, in order to convert Muisca past into symbolic capital of New Granada's hegemonic society, he had to face two tasks. First, Piedrahita had to doctor the image of the Muisca from savage to hero. The freely-composed illustrations added to the 1688 edition of the *Historia* by the Flemish editor seem to strengthen Piedrahita's project. If the purpose was to produce a visually captivating edition, Antwerp was not a random choice. Flemish printers were highly regarded by Spanish authors, and the Verdussens in particular published well known titles such as an edition Antonio de Herrera y Tordesilla's *Decadas* as well as two illustrated editions of *El Quixote* (1697, 1716), and also illustrated editions of Spanish kings such as *Corona Gothica Castellana Austriaca* (1678). In Piedrahita's *Historia*, two plates depict several grandiose Muisca lords and some battles with the Spaniards. Another plate depicts some of the Conquistadors of New Granada in a similar manner. The symmetry of the plates suggests that both camps have heroes of equal stature.

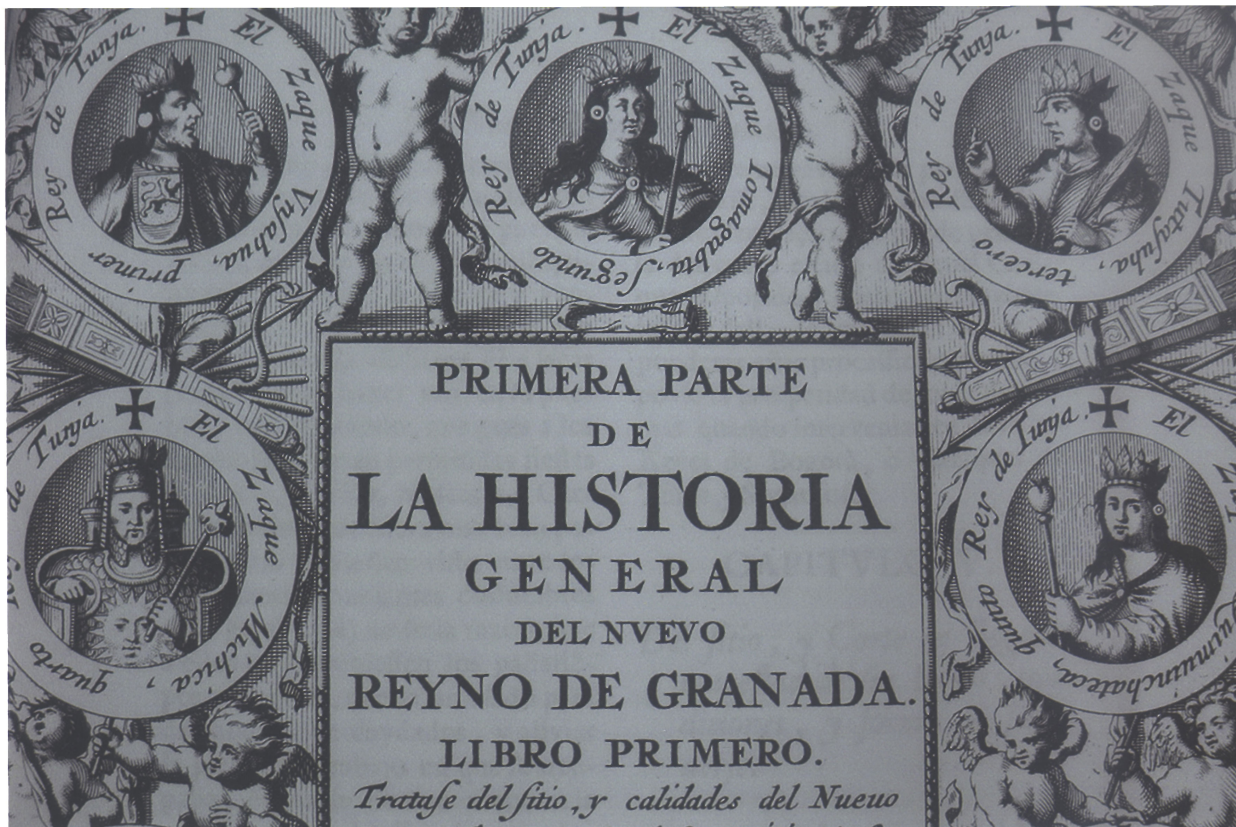


ILLUSTRATION 13.1: Muisca lords. Detail of one of the three plates added to the first edition of the *Historia general de las conquistas del Nuevo Reyno de Granada* (Biblioteca Nacional de Colombia, Bogotá]

In New Granada, Franciscan historians provided the most ample corpus of knowledge on Muisca culture. Fray Pedro de Aguado's *Recopilación historial* (c. 1570) and fray Pedro Simón's *Noticias historiales de las conquistas de Tierra Firme en las Indias Occidentales* (1627) were two sources that Piedrahita consulted. By far, the

Franciscan histories offer a much more detailed and comprehensive view of the Muisca than Piedrahita's text. In the Franciscan texts, however, the Muisca did not occupy the same symbolic space as in Piedrahita's *Historia*, the beginning of the narrative. In both Aguado and Simón, the Muisca are described among numerous native groups. Aguado, for example, dedicates book five to the Muisca. This book was completely suppressed by the censors, but, based on the table of contents (which survived), it discussed Muisca culture in detail. Simón discussed Muisca culture in the second part of his *Noticias historiales*. The main thread of the second part, however, is the narrative of conquest, which Simón tries not to interrupt with information on native practices. In the first chapter of the second *noticia*, Simón explains "why the myths and costumes of these Indians are not discussed here" (III:155). Therefore, in the first three *noticias* or books, Simón narrates the Spaniards arrival to Muisca territory, and it is only in the fourth *noticia* that he starts discussing Muisca culture.⁷

Both Franciscan historians are focused mainly on idolatry, cannibalism, sodomy, and other practices that inscribed the Muisca and other indigenous groups such as the Pijao and the Panches as savages, as Alvaro Félix Bolaños and Jaime Humberto Borja have argued. For example, in the first chapters to his *Noticias* Simón described the Indians as cannibals, drunks, traitors, lazy, sorcerers, vengeful, liars, thieves, adulterers, etc. (I:113).⁸

Another important history of the region is Juan de Castellanos' epic poem *Elegías de varones ilustres de Indias* (1589-1601), a text cited often by Piedrahita.

⁷ Fray Pedro de Aguado, *Recopilación historial*, edited by Juan Friede (Bogotá, 1957); Fray Pedro Simón, *Noticias historiales de las conquistas de Tierra Firme en las Indias Occidentales*, edited by Juan Friede (Bogotá, 1981).

⁸ Alvaro Félix Bolaños, *Barbarie y canibalismo en la retórica colonial: Los indios Pijaos de Fray Pedro Simón* (Bogotá, 1994); Jaime Humberto Borja Gómez, *Los indios medievales de Fray Pedro de Aguado* (Bogotá, 2002).

Castellanos dedicated the fourth part of the *Elegías* to New Granada, the *Historia del Nuevo Reino de Granada*. In Castellanos' *Historia*, the Muisca are given considerable attention, but the main focus of this epic text is the military achievements of the Conquistadors. To a lesser extent, Castellanos narrates a few heroic deeds of some Muisca lords. But in the end, in Castellanos' *Historia* Muisca warriors are included precisely because they were defeated by his "illustrious" Spanish men, dutifully individualized by name and title, in a narrative that celebrates the massacring of numerous, nameless Amerindian warriors. For Castellanos, the wars against the Indians were legitimate, and the Conquistadors and their heirs deserved to occupy a privileged place in society, as I have argued in my work on the *Elegías*. To some extent, Piedrahita distances from Castellanos' vision. He condones the violence of the colonization, expressly inscribing himself within a century-old critical tradition that began with figures like fray Bartolomé de las Casas. Like Las Casas, Piedrahita advocated for a gentler, Christian colonialism. Piedrahita, for example, condemns Fernán Pérez de Quesada's public execution of the Tunja lord Aquiminzaque: "¡Lastimoso espectáculo!, donde mas se necesitaba de halagos para imponer el yugo suave del Evangelio, que de rigores, para que por tantos años se aya dudado, si fue verdadera la conversion de aquellas almas" (347). [A painful spectacle! It would have been better gentler ways to impose the soft yoke of the Gospel, instead of rigid measures that never proved that those souls truly converted.]⁹

There is an empathy for Muisca culture that is absent in Castellanos as well as in the first *criollo* chronicler of New Granada, Juan Rodríguez Freyle. In *El carnero* (1639) Freyle dedicated some of the initial chapters to Muisca culture (II-VI). Freyle's contempt

⁹ Juan de Castellanos, *Elegías de varones ilustres de Indias* (Bogotá, 1997); Luis Fernando Restrepo, *Un nuevo reino imaginado: Las Elegías de varones ilustres de In dias de Juan de Castellanos* (Bogotá, 1999).

for the indigenous peoples, however, is impossible to miss, as Alvaro Félix Bolaños has pointed out: the Indians are described as thieves, drunks, murderers, and the like. In chapter V, for example, Freyle suggests that Muisca people are stupid. Freyle tells the story of a native priest that was easily tricked by a Spanish cleric. The Spaniard robs the native priest the gold he kept in his secret Muisca shrine (38-40).¹⁰

Freyle's interest in Muisca past muddles up with his preoccupations for economic gain from Muisca labor. Recounting the battle between the Muisca lords Bogotá and Guatavita, Freyle laments the death of more than ten thousand Indians whose harvest "la tomara yo este año de 1636 de fanegas de trigo, y aun el que viene también"(31). [those bushels of wheat would have been mine this year of 1636, and also next year's crop]. Although not expressing any personal interest, Piedrahita is also concerned with Muisca labor. In book eleven, Piedrahita regrets the abuse of the Indians in the mines, the *obrajes* (textile mills), and the fields (457-461). He states that the New Laws (1542) were ineffective because the well-being of New Granada depended upon gold and silver (460). Piedrahita eventually suggests that a moderate work is just and necessary, and that it should be well compensated, not turned into the compulsory and "tyrannical" personal services that the crown had outlawed in the sixteenth century.

This common preoccupation of Freyle and Piedrahita (also present in Castellanos) is due, in part, to the Spanish and Creole dependence on Muisca labor in the cities, mines, food supply, transportation, firewood, and other services that sustained colonial society. Through the *encomienda* system (tribute system), the *mita*

¹⁰ Juan Rodríguez Freyle, *El carnero*, Edited by Dario Achury Valenzuela, second edition (Caracas, 1992); Alvaro Félix Bolaños, "History and Plunder in *El carnero*," in *Colonialism Past and Present*, edited by Alvaro Félix Bolaños and Gustavo Verdesio (Albany, 2002, 215-237).

(rotating, compulsory work in the mines or cities), and later with the *concertaje* (work for hire) the Muisca territory had become the breadbasket of New Granada, producing wheat and corn for the interior cities, the gold mines in Antioquia, and even feeding the Caribbean port of Cartagena de Indias. In this context, Piedrahita's revalorization of Muisca culture may not be as spontaneous as it appears at first hand but may have to do with the continuous exploitation of Muisca communities under colonial rule.

Colombian historiography has documented well how Indians were turned into peasants. From a cultural perspective, the process is much more complex and less unidirectional: Indians, Muiscas, laborers. These three words are articulated in various ways and given different content during the colonial period itself in a process that continued after Independence until today. The point I am trying to stress is that there is a significant discursive production that would give the Muisca its central, symbolic place in the memory of the region. A process that involves doctoring that image to fit the different politics of memory.¹¹

The first accounts describing Muisca culture were primarily concerned with the territorial colonization: access to precious metals and 'natural' wealth. In the *relación* (official report) of Juan de San Martín and Antonio Nebrija, as well as the anonymous *Epítome de la conquista del Nuevo Reino de Granada* (c.1550), Muisca culture appears within the narrative of exploration and colonization, providing an inventory of Muisca 'wealth'(gold, emeralds, salt), military practices, beliefs and other tactical "information." In contrast, in the seventeenth century that information was not as crucial as the labor that made possible the extraction of natural wealth. In this context,

¹¹ Germán Colmenares, *Historia económica y social de Colombia, 1537-1719* (Bogotá, 1975); Silvia Broadbent, "The Formation of Peasant Society in Central Colombia." *Ethnohistory* 28.3 (1981): 259-277; and Bejarano, Jesús Antonio. "Campesinado, luchas agrarias e historia social en Colombia", *Historia política de os campesinos latinoamericanos*. Vol. 3. Edited by Pablo González Casanova (México, 1985, 9-72).

Las Casas critique of the colonization and the abuses of the *encomenderos* becomes a key sub-text of the *Historia*. However, the Lascasian critique tended to grasp the Muisca mainly through the universalizing discourse that emerged in the laws of the Indies: Indians were rational beings, 'free' vassals of the crown, whose property rights and right over their own bodies (*dominium*) were inalienable as Anthony Pagden has shown. As a result, there is an overlapping construction of the Muisca in Piedrahita's *Historia* as ethnic subjects and as modern-colonial subjects. Historically, the colonization turned the Muisca and other indigenous groups into generic *indios*, in a process that tended to erase their particularities. Nonetheless, Piedrahita's *Historia* did not let go of the cultural specificity of the Muisca. Why? Perhaps because he needed something to define his homeland in a sense that generic Indians could not. The *Historia* was, after all, a project Piedrahita initiated far from his homeland, inspired by reading the histories of Joseph Acosta, Antonio de Herrera y Tordesilla, El Inca Garcilaso and other histories that spoke wonders about Andean and Mesoamerican cultures. In this context, Piedrahita was not inventing a new historiographic model, but rather he was basically adapting the organizing scheme of other histories of the Indies. One of such models was the *Comentarios reales*, a text that provided a rich and awe-inspiring history of past Amerindian societies before the invasion. In other words, Piedrahita seems to be stating that the Muisca were as great as the Aztecs and the Incas.

The production of the *Historia* reveals the contexts that frame historiographic writing about America: Piedrahita's case illustrates how the colonial archive produced by the metropolis makes possible to write local American histories. The key question is if, ultimately, local histories such as Piedrahita's fragment the homogenizing imperial narrative we find in texts such as Herrera y Tordesillas' multi-volume work *Historia*

general de los hechos de los castellanos en las islas y Tierra Firme del mar océano (1601-1615). It seems that the metropolis itself, with its material accumulation of knowledge, created the conditions of possibility of a generative transatlantic ‘dialogue’ that ultimately produced a *criollo* sense of homeland. However, access to that metropolitan archive was clearly restricted to a privileged elite. A *criollo*’s way to such archive was literally paid with the wealth derived from colonial plunder and exploitation.¹²

Piedrahita’s nativist project is crisscrossed by ambivalences originating from numerous factors including his own *mestizo* background and his privileged position in colonial society. To examine these ambivalences it is important to recount some aspects of Piedrahita’s life, although there is no updated, well research biography of this colonial official and most of the information we have was provided in 1674 by Juan Flórez de Ocariz in his *Genealogías del Nuevo Reino de Granada* (I:141) and nineteenth century historians such as Joaquín Acosta, José María Vergara y Vergara and Vicente Restrepo.¹³

Piedrahita was born in Santafé de Bogotá in 1624. He was the legitimate son of Domingo Hernández de Soto Piedrahita and Catalina de Collantes. Catalina was the granddaughter of Juan Muñoz de Collantes, one of the Conquistadors of Santa Marta

¹² Joan de Sanct Martín y Antonio de Lebrija, “Relación,” reproduced in Gonzalo Fernández de Oviedo, *Historia general y natural de las Indias* (Madrid); Anonymous, *Epítome de la conquista del Nuevo Reyno de Granada*, edited by Carmen Millán de Benavides (Bogotá, 2001); Anthony Pagden, “Dispossessin the Barbarian,” in *The Languages of Political Theory in Early-Modern Europe*, (Cambridge, 1987, 79-98); El Inca Garcilaso, *Comentarios Reales* (Lima, 1991); Antonio Herrera y Tordesilla, *Historia general de los hechos de los castellanos en las islas y Tierra Firme del mar océano*, 14 vols. (Madrid, 1934).

¹³ Juan Flórez de Ocariz, *Genealogías del Nuevo Reino de Granada*, fascimile edition (Bogotá, 1990); Joaquín Acosta, *Historia de la Nueva Granada* (Medellin, 1971); José María Vergara y Vergara, *Historia de la literatura en la Nueva Granada* (Bogotá, 1958); Vicente Restrepo, “Vida del Ilustrísimo Señor doctor D. Lucas Fernández de Piedrahita”, in *Apuntes para la biografía del fundador del Nuevo Reino de Granada y vidas de dos ilustres prelados* (Bogotá, 1897, 185-210).

and Perú, and doña Francisca Coya, an Inca Princess from Cuzco. This information is also provided by Piedrahita himself in the *Historia*: “y el Juan Muñoz fuera de matrimonio, y estando en Cusco, tuvo por hija en Doña Francisca Coya a doña Menzia de Collantes, que casó con el Capitán Alonso de Soto, natural de Valladolid [...] de quienes por línea materna descende el Autor de esta historia” (210-211). [In Cuzco Juan Muñoz and doña Francisca Coya had a daughter out of wedlock named doña Mencia de Collantes, who married Captain Alonso de Soto, born in Valladolid. from this maternal lineage descends the author of this history]. Far from admitting he is a *mestizo*, this disclosure of Andean origins is ambiguous. If Piedrahita wanted to stress his noble Andean lineage, as El Inca Garcilaso did, why reveal that he was born out of wedlock? I still have no answer to this question. The comparison to the writer of the *Comentarios reales* is important because in the first edition of Piedrahita’s *Historia* there is a note (omitted in the modern editions) in the margin in which the Neogranadine writer cites El Inca Garcilaso to document his own lineage (210). As it is well known, Garcilaso who was born of a Conquistador and an Inca Princess, stated that his noble status came from both sides of his family. However, in New Granada, it seems that such identity politics was not common perhaps because, as Piedrahita notes in the last chapter of the *Historia*, there were not as many marriages between Muisca nobles and Spaniards. In his comments, there is a tacit desire that such integration had happened:

[A]viendo en el Nuevo Reyno tantas mugeres nobles, hijas, y hermanas de Reyes, Caziques y Vzaques, que sin menoscabo de su lustre pudieran recibir por esposas los mas nobles, que passaron a su conquista, como se practicó en las demás partes de la America, no se hallará que alguno de todos ellos casasse con India, por más calificada que fuesse. (599)

[Even though there are many noble Indian women, daughters and sisters of Kings, lords and nobles, that those Spaniards of noble origin could married without losing status, as it happened in other parts of America, none of them has married any Indian woman, even if she was highly qualified]

According to Piedrahita, it is not that the Neogranadine elite did not accept that there were noble Andean women. He states that in New Granada, the Spaniards did not marry noble Muisca women because they already had the means to abuse them “en la sujeción de prisioneras”(816).[held as prisoners]. As Piedrahita suggests, there were in fact many unions considered illicit, a point that is corroborated by Dueñas Vargas in *Los hijos del pecado*, a well-documented history of interracial sexual relationships in New Granada (54-59).

There is a recurrent preoccupation for chastity and purity of blood in Piedrahita. Although it is not unusual to find such concern in a religious historian, it is important to examine how it affects his nativist project. In a chapter that discusses the exploitation of the Indians in the mines, fields, and the textile mills, Piedrahita singles out the main cause for the diminishing Indian population, unrestraint sexual desire:

[A]unque la principal, y que sobresale entre todas, nace del desenfrenamiento, con que los Españoles, mestizos, y negros, se han mezclado con las Indias, sacandolas muchas vezes de sus pueblos, de que se sigue, y ha seguido la muchedumbre de mestizos, zambos y cholos que ay. (459) [Even though the main cause, which exceeds all the others, is due to the unrestrained relationships of the Spaniards, *mestizos*, and Blacks with Indian women, often taking them away from their Indian towns, from which a multitude of *mestizos*, *zambos* and *cholos* has resulted]

Here Piedrahita refers despectively to the *castas* or “impure” and “vulgar” people (*muchedumbre*), from which he seems to distance himself. As a result, Piedrahita states that, “regrettably,” there are only a few “indios apurados” [pure Indians] left (459). Comparing the few remaining pure Moors in Granada, Spain, after the Reconquista, Piedrahita asks in a tone that echoes Las Casas: “¿qué podrá esperarse brevemente, sino la total destrucción de los indios puros, en quienes carga todo el peso de los tributos?”(459) [What can we expect in the near future but the total destruction of the pure Indians, who must bear all the burden of tribute?]. The Crown’s ethnopolitics sought to maintain separate the Indians from the rest of colonial society. Spaniards, *criollos*, *mestizos* and other *castas* were forbidden from living in Indian towns, although over the years numerous non-Indians moved into native towns displacing the indigenous residents, a process that geographer Martha Angel Herrera has studied in detail in New Granada. Piedrahita raises a concern that also preoccupied many New Granada officials in the seventeenth century. Under unbearable demands, Indians defected from their native towns and mixed with the general population to avoid paying tribute. This created a shortage of labor. Therefore, for the Neogranadine elite, a Muiscaless New Granada seemed unbearable. It is in the fear of this absence that Piedrahita’s nativism emerges. His preoccupation for pure Indians reveals other concern: The emerging heterogeneous social groups (*castas*) were a threat to a colonial order based on the subordination of an identifiable, fixed Other.¹⁴

Denouncing others’ unrestrained sexual and economic desires--luxury and

¹⁴ Martha Angel Herrera, *Poder local, población y ordenamiento territorial en la Nueva Granada, siglo XVIII* (Bogotá, 1996).

greed to put it in more contemporary terms--the narrator of the *Historia* appears as a moral authority detached from the violent colonial order. This distanced subject is quite problematic. The *Historia* has numerous moral and philosophical reflections that frame the events narrated, making the *Historia* a manual of virtues and prudence in personal and public matters. This edifying element is quite common in the historiography of the period. The histories as manual of virtues may have quite specific goals in terms of the elite's projects of social engineering. Examining the Jesuit manuals of virtues in New Granada and Quito, Valeria Coronel suggests that these manuals sought to regulate and maintain control over subaltern populations in the context of an expanding colonial market. The manuals defining obligations and social conduct can be seen as the fundamental codes of an emerging contractual society. In this context, the subaltern groups' access to the money economy and thus to social mobility was quite troubling for the Neogranadinean elite. For this elite, conceiving the subaltern groups as undisciplined and unruly justified placing them under their tutelage and restricting their access to the market as well as regulating the accumulation and redistribution of wealth.¹⁵

Piedrahita's view of colonial society is molded in part by his affiliation to the Church and to the Jesuits in particular. Bernard Lavallé and Solange Alberro have argued that the different religious orders were a catalyst for an emerging *criollo* conscience in Perú and New Spain. At varying degrees, some orders placed restrictions on *criollos* and *mestizos*. The Jesuits, in particular, sought to limit the number and

¹⁵ Valeria Coronel "Santuarios y mercados coloniales: lecciones jesuíticas de contrato y subordinación para el colonialismo interno criollo," Unpublished manuscript. The philosophical foundations of this contractual society come from the scholastic tradition of Salamanca, including the works of Jesuit Francisco Suárez, read and studied at the Jesuit Colegio de San Bartolomé in New Granada. Based on Thomas Aquinas and Aristotle, Suárez conceived society as a voluntary association of free wills.

power of the American born members of the order, according to Lavallé (198-201). Piedrahita's case may not be the most representative of what occurred in New Granada. His is a successful story of integration into the establishment where we don't find the tension between Creole and peninsular priests described by Lavallé and Alberro. The important issue that problematically tends to be occluded in this debate is the relationship of both the Peninsular and Creole clerical elite to the subaltern colonial populations. From this point of view the wedge between Creole and peninsular members of the religious orders seems to provide no significant alternative structural conceptions of the colonial social order.¹⁶

Let us look at Piedrahita's long and close relationship with the Jesuits. Piedrahita studied in the Jesuit Seminario de San Bartolomé in Santafé de Bogotá, from which he graduated as *maestro en artes*. Afterwards he pursued a doctorate in theology at the Universidad de Santo Tomás also in Santafé. Throughout his life, Piedrahita kept close contacts with the Society of Jesus, not surprisingly, considering the strong corporate identity that the Jesuits instilled. In 1662, for example, he donated a house for the order's *noviciado* (seminary), together with a "miraculous cross" that had belonged to San Francisco de Borja, as noted by Piedrahita himself in the *Historia* (217). When he had to travel to Spain to defend himself against the charges of the *visitador* Cornejo, Piedrahita was also accompanied by the *provisor* (head) of the Jesuit order in New Granada. Piedrahita died in Panamá in 1688 and was buried in the church of the Jesuit school, as he had instructed.

It is not clear how Piedrahita got the initial support of the Jesuits.

¹⁶ Bernard Lavallé, *Las promesas ambiguas*; Solange Alberro, *El águila y la cruz: orígenes religiosos de la conciencia criolla. México, siglos XVI-XVII* (Mexico, 1999).

Apparently, he received partial support from Cristóbal de Araque throughout his studies, according to Elias Ortiz in the prologue to the 1973 edition of the *Historia*, although Elias Ortiz does not provide any specific documentation to confirm Araque's support (11). Piedrahita may have been one of the ten to twelve students of San Bartolomé who received financial aid (*beca*). These scholarships were generally given to the *criollos* from Santafé and the provinces, a process that Renán Silva has studied in detail. Silva tells us that the applicant to San Bartolomé and other schools in the city like El Colegio del Rosario had to submit sworn testimonies attesting the purity of blood and high social standing of their families, known as *el procesillo* (background check) which was similar to the petitions for nobility (175). The applicant had to come from a legitimate family and prove the purity of blood of at least three generations. The occupation of the father was also crucial. Applicants whose parents had jobs considered low or vile ("oficios viles y mecánicos") were rejected (208). Taking into consideration the discriminative admission policies discussed by Silva, one wonders how Piedrahita, a *mestizo* and son of a carpenter, entered the Jesuit school? In fact, some *mestizos* did enter the school, especially in the early years, according to Silva, because there was of a limited number of qualified applicants. However, these *mestizos*, who were called *donatarios*, often ended up as "brothers," occupying low positions in the hierarchy of the order (62). The *criollos* too had limited possibilities of occupying high posts in the Catholic Church in general. Silva notes that out of the 475 ecclesiastical officials that studied in San Bartolomé between 1605 and 1719, only six became bishops. In this context, Piedrahita, who became bishop of Santa Marta and later Panamá, is an exceptional case. Many of San Bartolomé students pursued a doctorate, as Piedrahita did, but achieving a higher degree in itself did not open the doors to the highest posts. About 15% of the 475 students were able to secure middle

range ecclesiastical offices such as *prebendados* (prebendary). A large number of them (300 of 475) would become parish priests (*párrocos*) (294). Not surprisingly, Piedrahita started as parish priest of Fusagasugá and then Paipa before being transferred to the Metropolitan Cathedral in Bogotá where he rapidly escalated several posts that included *racionero*, *canónigo*, *tesorero*, *maestrescuela* and *chantre* (1653-1658). My main concern here, however, is not to stress the personal success story, nor to deny it. More important is how this *mestizo* elaborated a local history that made sense only from a point of view of an emerging sector in colonial society, the *criollos*.¹⁷

Piedrahita's identification with the *criollo* elite is evident in his description of Santafé de Bogotá, as Rodolfo Guzmán has shown. Piedrahita proudly describes his native city. Guzmán highlights how Piedrahita draws attention to the impressive altars, chapels, and convents in the city. Neogranadinean space is codified through the religious discourse. Guzmán points out that in Piedrahita these architectural forms are the embodiments of a virtuous Christian Creole elite that rightfully and diligently rules over the land.

The grandiose city that Piedrahita describes, is the product of forced Amerindian labor and it is sustained by Amerindian workers: There are three thousand Spaniards living in the city and ten thousand Indians in the surrounding area. Piedrahita

¹⁷ Renán Silva, *Universidad y sociedad en el Nuevo Reino de Granada* (Bogotá, 1993). Doctor Cristóbal de Araque y Ponce de León (Pamplona, New Granada –Madrid 1667) was also implicated in the charges raised by the *visitador* Cornejo. Araque traveled to Spain with Piedrahita. He was also a student of San Bartolomé where he earned a doctorate in Theology in 1639, according to José Restrepo Posada, *Arquidiósis de Bogota*, vol.4 (Bogotá, 1971, 59-60). Although *mestizos* were barred from being ordained, in the sixteenth century New Granada there were numerous mestizo priests who worked mainly in the encomiendas, because a high number of them spoke Muisca. Among the mestizo priests were Juan de Figueredo, Juan García de Matamoros, Martín Gaytán, Hernán Gómez de la Cruz, Sebastián López, and Gonzalo García Zorro, according to Alberto Lee-López, *Clero indígena en Santa Fé de Bogotá, siglo XVI* (Bogotá, 1986). Although Lee-López documents which priests were Spanish, *criollos* or *mestizos*, he uses the term *indígena* to designate any resident of New Granada. There were, however, no indigenous Catholic priests.

dedicates a few lines to proudly characterize the people of Santafé, their intelligence, language, religious fervor, bravery, and festive spirit:

Y los que vulgarmente se llaman Criollos son de vivos ingenios: hablan el idioma español con mas pureza castellana que todos los demás de las Indias; inclínanse poco al estudio de las leyes y medicina, que sobresale en Lima y Méjico; y mucho al de la Sagrada Theología, filosofía y letras humanas; extrémanse en la celebración ostentosa del culto divino, y en agasajar forasteros; son generalmente famosos hombres de a caballos, buenos toreadores y diestros en la esgrima y la danza. (214)¹⁸

[And those regularly called *criollos* are quite intelligent. They speak pure Castillian Spanish better than the rest of the Indies. They do not prefer to study Law or Medicine as in Lima and Mexico. They prefer Theology, Philosophy and literature. Their Christian celebrations are passionate and pompous. They are also great hosts. They are famous horse riders, good bullfighters, and skillful fencers and dancers]

This description presents the *criollos* of Santafé as a homogenous group with a set of positive, common characteristics. They are “good”, civil subjects, a fact that is also suggested by Piedrahita when he notes that the city was given the title of most noble and loyal in 1565 (220). Here we have a *criollo* consciousness that is quite different than the antagonist, political and territorial Creole texts of the Independence movements. In Piedrahita’s *Historia*, Santafé and its people are compared favorable to the cities and the people of Spain. This description seems to emphasize that Santafé is one important city among the

¹⁸ Rodolfo Guzmán, “La representación de la ciudad en Lucas Fernández de Piedrahita como expresión de identidad y transformación sociocultural en el criollo preilustrado de la Nueva Granada” *Cuadernos de literatura* 6.12(2000-2001):42-70.

other Spanish cities. This transatlantic bond is stressed by Piedrahita himself who says that he offers the description of Santafé for those Spaniards interested in going to New Granada (214).

Piedrahita's description of Santafé, however, only mentions briefly the Muisca. The contemporary Andean people are denied the thick ethnic specificity granted in the first parts of the *Historia*: the contemporary Muisca are only described as Indians. There is no pride here. In addition, no *mestizos*, *zambos*, nor *cholos* are mentioned. Therefore, Piedrahita's nativism was composed of a strategic process of inclusion and exclusion of Andean elements. The description of the subaltern groups as unruly and undisciplined is suppressed here providing an image of a peaceful colonial order.

I have shown that in the *Historia* Piedrahita's inscription of the Muisca as the origin of New Granada created an imagined community different from other regions in the Indies and from Peninsular society, but where the region was still conceived as an integral part of the Spanish empire. This local history assumed a paternalistic view of Andean society. The writer of the *Historia* presented himself as the preserver of Muisca memory and the benevolent protector of contemporary Andean workers, when in fact his privileges rested upon the exploitation of the Amerindians. This paternalistic view attempted to legitimize the violent social order that made possible Piedrahita's own success. In the first place, Silva reminds us that the schools were sustained in part by Indian labor and tribute, as was the case of the scholarships of San Bartolomé (55). In the Jesuit Annual Letters we see that the order soon was assigned important *encomiendas* like Cajicá and Fontibón to support the school in Santafé. The school's restrictions on admissions made possible the concentration of

knowledge and power of only a few like Piedrahita in a process parallel to the persecution of native priests (*chuques*) and the suppression of Muisca knowledge, a topic that has been well-documented by Carl Langebaek. Thus we come to see the limits and contradictions of Piedrahita's nativism. It incorporated Muisca past, but it did not give contemporary Andean societies the same recognition. In the history of New Granada, Piedrahita's adherence to the Neogranadine elite contrasts with the story of another well-known *mestizo*, don Diego de Torres, the *cacique* of Turmequé. Don Diego, the son of a Conquistador and a Muisca princess, put his life on the line defending Indian rights. For this reason, he was persecuted, incarcerated, and eventually banned from New Granada. Almost one century later, Piedrahita's text provided a nostalgic and tamed view of the Muisca that exalted the criollos' pride of their native land. Don Diego, in contrast, inspired fear. There were numerous rumours of a Muisca revolt commanded by don Diego.¹⁹

However, the comparison of Piedrahita and don Diego de Torres is somehow unfair to the story of uprootedness of Piedrahita's Andean family. Was Francisca Coya's relationship with don Diego Muñoz de Collantes consensual? Was it their daughter's will (doña Mencia Collantes), to relocate to New Granada after marrying Alonso de Soto? How much quechua did Piedrahita's mother, Catalina Collantes, speak? What links did she have with her Cuzco relatives? We know that most of what Piedrahita mentions about Inca culture (Tawantinsuyo)

¹⁹ Archivum Romanum Societatis Iesu, Novi Regni et Quitensis, vols. 12-15; Carl Langebaek, "Resistencia indígena y transformaciones ideológicas entre los muisca del los siglos XVI y XVII", *Concepciones de la Conquista*, edited by Felipe Castañeda and Matthias Vollet (Bogotá, 2001: 281-328). Luis Fernando Restrepo, "Narrating Colonial Interventions: El cacique de Turmeque in the New Kingdom of Granada," *Colonialism Past and Present*, edited by Alvaro Felix Bolaños and Gustavo Verdesio (Albany, 2002, 97-117).

comes from El Inca Garcilaso's *Comentarios reales*. Clearly Piedrahita did not have the experience nor the contacts to elaborate a history comparable to Garcilaso's. In relation to the Andean peoples in New Granada, Piedrahita did not have the family ties to Muisca communities as don Diego did. After all, Piedrahita, according to Vicente Restrepo, did not even know Muisca (194).

Nonetheless, the opportunities to learn about and dialogue with the Muisca were there. The Jesuits in New Granada produced Muisca grammars, vocabularies, confession books and regularly taught Muisca in San Bartolomé. In addition, Piedrahita's first assignments were in two small towns, Fusagasugá and Paipa, where Muisca most likely was still the predominant language. Piedrahita's nativist project, however, did not originate from a dialogue with Andean communities. As he declares in his prologue, while in Spain, Piedrahita decided to write the *Historia* after noticing that most historians of the Indies had paid so little attention to New Granada. It is precisely in 'dialogue' with this transatlantic intellectual tradition that his project takes form. In this dialogue, the Muisca were a passive referent that could be remembered, praised, and protected. This tamed image of the Muisca would prove to be quite useful to the *criollos* in the following centuries and is still being showcased by the Republic of Colombia in its ostentatious Gold Museum in Bogotá.

The story of the Muisca is still unfolding today and their struggles with the now transnational hegemonic society and the neoliberal state are far from settled. In this process, I am not a distant, detached observer, since I come from a relatively well-to-do Colombian family who for generations thought of themselves mostly as whites, despite the fact that my national identity card (*cédula*) seems to tell another story: color: *trigueño* (tan). Mestizo or Criollo, for

me as an intellectual there are two important points here 1) the recognition that the privileged position I have is related to the colonial history of exclusions and repression of the Muisca and other indigenous groups. In one way or another my family's preoccupations to be part of 'good' and 'decent' society were in fact exclusionary practices that justified exploitation and allowed the accumulation and reproduction of material and symbolic capital from one generation to another that ultimately gave me access to higher education and a position at a research institution. 2) My intellectual project is ultimately an act that seeks to break with such history and to create the conditions for solidarity work with the indigenous intellectuals and peoples to salvage a country torn by violence, where the state itself has been an agent of terror. Ultimately this is a struggle to create a postcolonial space for all or for no one, where the multicultural policies of liberal democracy may prove to be insufficient to radically break with the colonial legacies.

Thus, unraveling the ambivalent nativism of Piedrahita's *Historia* confronts me with my own privileged position in the teaching machine as well as the multi-layered implications of my own intellectual project on the Muisca developed from the U.S. academia. A reflexive approach allows me to question the epistemological, institutional, and geopolitical frameworks that inform my own work but it does not cancel them. The fundamental question remains open: how to work through the violence ingrained in the academic reading and writing about Amerindian peoples? This question may be problematic if it assumes that the centrality of academic knowledge is due not to its historically produced hegemony but as a purportedly intrinsic, scientific value, and if it conceives indigenous intellectuals as outsiders of the academic field. Thus, as heirs of a

brutal epistemic machine can we academics engage in a substantial dialogue with the indigenous intellectuals and peoples of today inside/outside of academia?

A starting point could be a settling of accounts with the past that was repressed by the Creole-*mestizo* clerical intellectuals like Piedrahita. Such opening to the past allows us to return to a forbidden dialogue whose ethical dimensions and epistemological possibilities were shut down too soon, as revealed by this seventeenth century Muisca confession manual question: *Suetyba chequy bohza umcubunuoa nga ys acubun ocasac umguaquyoa?*²⁰ [Have you spoken with any shaman giving credit to what he said?]

²⁰ *Diccionario y gramática chibcha*. Edited by María Stella González de Pérez (Bogotá, 1987), 351.