Introduction

In the parish church of Cómbita, in what is now the Department of Boyacá, Colombia, hangs a large canvas completed in 1656 by the Neogranadian painter Gaspar de Figueroa (Figure I.1). It depicts, in a series of overlapping and interconnected scenes, the imagined interplay between the Catholic Church of this corner of the Andes and its conception of the sacred. The painting portrays a well-known Catholic subject, the Mass of Saint Gregory, showing the miracle of the apparition of Christ as the 'Man of Sorrows' during the mass, as Pope Gregory I utters the words of consecration – a visual statement of the Catholic doctrine of the real presence of Christ in the Eucharist, reaffirmed at the Council of Trent.[1] In the background is a depiction of Purgatory, and above it, presiding over the entire painting, are the two remaining persons of the Christian Trinity and the Virgin Mary in Heaven. They are surrounded by angels, some of whom are helping a select few souls escape their torment by pulling them out with black leather belts, associated with the devotion to Saint Monica, to whom the parish church was dedicated.[2] A final

[1] On the theme of the Mass of Saint Gregory in Catholic art in this period, see, for example, Lee Wandel, 'The Reformation and the Visual Arts'. In *The Cambridge History of Christianity. Vol. 4: Reform and Expansion, 1500–1660*. Edited by R. Po-Chia Hsia, 343–370 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007).

[2] Depictions of purgatory are common in Neogranadian churches in this period, as Natalia Lozada Mendieta notes in *La incorporación del indígena en el Purgatorio cristiano: estudio de los lienzos de ánimas de la Nueva Granada de los siglos XVI y XVII* (Bogotá: Ediciones Uniandes, Universidad de los Andes, 2012), 80. A common theme is the rescue of souls in torment using an object associated with a particular devotion, often the rosary. For other examples, see María del Rosario Leal del Castillo, 'El purgatorio en la plástica neogranadina'. *Alarife: Revista de arquitectura*, no. 18 (2009): 85–95. The

FIGURE 1.1 Gaspar de Figueroa, San Nicolás de Tolentino y las Ánimas, 1656. Parroquia de la Inmaculada Concepción, Cómbita, Boyacá. Photograph by Santiago Medina

element further unites the two scenes, and gives the painting its name: the inclusion of Saint Nicholas of Tolentino, the figure in the black Augustinian habit towards the centre of the painting, associated both

parish church of Cómbita is now dedicated to a different devotion, the Immaculate Conception.

with the souls of Purgatory and with the Augustinian order that ran the parish. At first sight, this seems largely to reflect the interests and priorities of the European missionaries charged with Christianising the Indigenous peoples of this region, then known as the New Kingdom of Granada.

A closer look, however, reveals additional elements that reflect the hopes and concerns – both spiritual and material – of the Indigenous people of the town, whose painting, and church, this was. Most striking of all is the inclusion of members of the Indigenous laity among the figures portrayed behind Saint Nicholas, who appear to have processed into the frame. Their depictions are individualised, and we know that they are the leaders of the Confraternity of the Souls of Purgatory of the parish of Cómbita, which commissioned and funded the painting. The confraternity was, in one sense, an entirely local institution, and the painting responded to very local concerns. The town of Cómbita had been created in 1601 by forcibly bringing together three different communities – Cómbita, Motavita, and Suta. The confraternity depicted here was associated with the community of Cómbita, which was making a visible claim to an important position within the life of the town with this painting, in the face of the other two groups with which it shared it, and their rival confraternity.[3] As Mercedes López Rodríguez has shown, the individuals depicted here are don Pedro Tabaco, the *cacique*, or Indigenous ruler, of Cómbita, and his family. Tabaco was using the institution of the confraternity as a means to reassert his position of leadership within his community, which was facing unprecedented pressures as a result of colonial impositions – a generalised phenomenon afflicting Indigenous authorities throughout the region in the early seventeenth century.[4] At the same time, this confraternity was only a local instance of a cult integrating Saint Monica, the Souls of Purgatory, and Saint Nicholas of Tolentino that the Augustinians had promoted in many contexts since the fifteenth century, making this isolated parish in the Neogranadian highlands part of a far-reaching, global devotion.[5]

[3] The resettlement and confraternities of Cómbita are discussed in Chapter 6.

[4] Mercedes López Rodríguez traces the situation faced by don Pedro in relation to the increasing relative wealth and importance and his former subordinates in 'La memoria de las imágenes: Donantes indígenas en el Lienzo de las Ánimas de San Nicolás de Tolentino'. In *Historia e imágenes: Los agustinos en Colombia, 400 años*. Edited by José Antonio Carbonell Blanco (Bogotá: Museo Nacional de Colombia, 2002), 29–32.

[5] The Archconfraternity of Our Lady of Consolation and Cincture, or of the Black Leathern Belt of Saint Monica, Saint Augustine, and Saint Nicholas of Tolentino. On the role of such local-global devotions in this period, such as the Madonna of the Snows, see Simon

The painting is catechetical, and the ideas it depicts – the Trinity, the mechanics of the afterlife, the immortality of the soul, the value and role of the sacraments – were all, like the model and style of the painting itself, introduced by the European invaders of the New Kingdom of Granada and the missionaries who followed them. Some of the ideas and practices it promotes – the centrality of the Eucharist, the efficacy of the cult of saints, the procession of the confraternity – reflect the priorities of Catholic reformers in the aftermath of the Council of Trent, including those who, in its train, sought to implement crucial reforms to the missionary project of the New Kingdom. However, here, all these features have also been appropriated by the parish laity, who used not only the iconographic language of the painting but also the institutions and practices of this Tridentine Catholicism for their own purposes. The painting provides a lens on the incorporation of the Indigenous peoples of the New Kingdom of Granada into Christianity, the subject of this book.

The chapters that follow trace the experience of the peoples today known as the Muisca – a number of groups characterised, before the European invasion, by their great linguistic, political, and religious diversity – over the course of the century or so after the Spanish invasion of the Northern Andes, from the foundation of the city of Santafé de Bogotá in 1538 to the final years of the archiepiscopate of Cristóbal de Torres (d. 1654), the last in a series of reforming archbishops of Santafé. In this period, successive generations of priests and administrators sought to incorporate the Muisca into Catholicism and transform them into Christian subjects of the Spanish monarchy. By preparing Indigenous people for the coming of the kingdom of God, missionaries and officials sought to realise a colonial normative, political, and religious order, the New Kingdom of Granada, whose self-declared justification and purpose, and the basis of its Indigenous tributary and extractive economy, was – like that of the rest of the Spanish empire – Christianisation.

On both sides of the Atlantic, and in Southeast Asia, the Spanish monarchy placed a special emphasis on the incorporation of its subjects into its vision of Christianity, a position that was broadly derived from two interconnected lines of historical development. The first was the consolidation of the identity of 'Spain' and Spanishness that accompanied the political unification of Castile and Aragon. Especially after the capture

Ditchfield, 'Romanus and Catholicus: Counter-Reformation Rome as Caput Mundi'. In *A Companion to Early Modern Rome, 1492–1692*. Edited by Pamela M. Jones, Barbara Wisch, and Simon Ditchfield, 131–147 (Leiden: Brill, 2019).

of Granada in 1492, this identity became increasingly characterised by ideas of cultural unity, most often expressed in religious terms, eventually leading to a growing obsession with 'purity' of blood (*limpieza de sangre*). The second was the development of a justification for the conquest and possession of the New World based initially on the need for Christian evangelisation, from the *Inter caetera* bulls onwards,[6] and later on the preservation of orthodoxy. As a result, Christianisation, ultimately, was rooted in coercion: incorporation into Christianity, all theological niceties aside, was an unavoidable imperative for people under Spanish rule.

Time and time again, these designs were tempered by local conditions, the shortcomings of colonial administrators, and, most importantly, the contestations of Indigenous people as they navigated profound changes, dramatic demographic collapse, and ever-growing colonial impositions. However, by the middle of the seventeenth century, despite complaints to the contrary of some contemporary observers and modern scholars, Catholicism had spread widely and taken root among the Indigenous inhabitants of the highlands of the New Kingdom of Granada. What I mean by this is not the fulfilment of a predefined strategy that simply unfolded over this period, or indeed the crossing of some watershed in a linear process of conversion involving the progressive abandonment of one 'religion' and the adoption of another. Instead, what the chapters that follow trace are a series of interconnected processes – contingent, faltering, contested, and subject to reversals – that fundamentally transformed the lives of Indigenous people across the region, and created the space and conditions that allowed them to engage with Christianity in diverse ways. Indigenous people adapted and adopted what Christianity had to offer them, incorporating many of its features into their lives for multiple reasons and purposes, of which only a few are visible to us in the historical record. Those processes, and these interactions, created and sustained the New Kingdom of Granada. Like the scenes in Figueroa's painting, the story is partly one of missionaries and settlers, but also, and at its heart, it is an Indigenous story, involving a diverse cast of actors firmly rooted in local contexts and dynamics while connected to, and shaped by, global trends.

[6] *Inter caetera*, 3 and 4 May 1493, in Josef Metzler, ed., *America Pontificia: Primi saeculi evangelizationis, 1493–1592. Documenta Pontificia ex registris et minutis praesertim in Archivo Secreto Vaticano existentibus*, vol. 1 (Vatican: Libreria editrice vaticana, 1991), 71–75 and 79–83.

The focus of this book is the highland region of the eastern range of what are now the Colombian Andes. This is a territory of roughly 10,000 square miles broadly corresponding to the highlands of the modern-day Colombian *departamentos* of Cundinamarca and Boyacá, composed of the high plateau known as the *altiplano cundiboyacense*, located at an average altitude of about 2,500 metres above sea level, and its surrounding highland valleys. Its inhabitants, first encountered by Europeans in 1536, lived across a multitude of settlements of different sizes, were organised in a variety of political groupings of various configurations, and spoke a range of languages. They are known to us as the Muisca. In the years that followed the European invasion, this region was organised into two colonial provinces: Santafé and Tunja. These became the focus of Spanish settlement in the Northern Andes and eventually the core of a Spanish colonial realm known as the New Kingdom of Granada, which covered – at least on paper – much of the region of northern South America that is now the Republic of Colombia. Over the period with which this book is concerned, the Muisca peoples – like so many other Indigenous groups – suffered catastrophic demographic collapse as a result of colonial impositions and the ravages of successive waves of epidemics. Estimates of the size of their population before the invasion remain largely informed guesses, but figures for the colonial period – although inexact and based on patchy documentation – suggest that the population crashed from about 280,000 individuals around 1560 to tens of thousands by the 1630s, a collapse of around 80 per cent by some measures.[7]

This New Kingdom of Granada was at the margins of Spanish power in America. It lacked the status and resources of the two viceregal centres, New Spain and Peru. It attracted far fewer European immigrants, it received much less attention from the Spanish crown, and its civil and ecclesiastical institutions developed at a slower pace. European explorers and missionaries had been active in the region's Caribbean coast from the first decade of the sixteenth century, but their exploration and settlement of the interior and the establishment of the institutions of government and the church lagged behind similar developments in New Spain and Peru.

[7] Figures derived from this and every other colonial visitation in this period are discussed in the chapters that follow. For a survey of the long history of human occupation of this region, see Marta Herrera Ángel, 'Milenios de ocupación en Cundinamarca'. *In Los muiscas en los siglos XVI y XVII: Miradas desde la arqueología, la antropología y la historia*. Edited by Jorge Augusto Gamboa (Bogotá: Universidad de los Andes, 2008), 1–39.

Europeans only ventured inland in the late 1530s, when news of the invasion of Peru prompted expeditions to find an overland route to connect it with the Caribbean. The city of Santafé was not founded until 1538, and the region then remained a Caribbean hinterland, governed from Santa Marta and Santo Domingo, until the arrival of its own *Audiencia* (royal court and chancery) in 1550. Its first bishop, for his part, would not reach the highlands until 1553, and the region only became its own ecclesiastical province in 1564. Indeed, it even had to wait until the eighteenth century for its own printing press. These events occurred years, decades, and in the latter case centuries, after similar developments in Mexico and Peru. As a result, scholars of colonial Latin America, and even of 'the Andes', especially those writing in English, have tended to overlook the New Kingdom's early colonial history. For too long, the region has been assumed to have followed a similar trajectory to the viceregal centres, if more slowly and at a smaller scale, with little to add to our understanding of broader trends.[8]

These assumptions have a long history and are, in fact, rooted in the distinctive ways in which writing about the New Kingdom and its peoples took shape from the sixteenth century. From early explorers to chroniclers, missionaries, and officials, successive generations of authors – writing across different genres and registers, in works of history, legislation, linguistic observation, and bureaucratic documentation, occasionally in collaboration with Indigenous informers – applied models and assumptions derived from more central regions to understand conditions on the ground and to explain them to foreign audiences. This framing continued

[8] This is beginning to change, and the history of the New Kingdom of Granada in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries is beginning to enjoy significant interest in English-language scholarship. In the last two decades, Kris Lane highlighted the region's connectedness to early modern global networks of exchange in *Colour of Paradise: The Emerald in the Age of Gunpowder Empires* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2010). J. Michael Francis examined the Spanish invasion in *Invading Colombia: Spanish Accounts of the Gonzalo Jiménez de Quesada Expedition of Conquest* (University Park: Penn State University Press, 2007), alongside translations of key sources. Joanne Rappaport and Tom Cummins set their study of Indigenous literacy, *Beyond the Lettered City: Indigenous Literacies in the Andes* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2012), in the Northern Andes, noting the historiographical relevance of exploring colonial Andean culture in a non-Incaic setting. Rappaport has also examined the emergence, development, and ambiguities of *mestizaje* in colonial Santafé and Tunja in multiple works, most notably *The Disappearing Mestizo: Configuring Difference in the Colonial New Kingdom of Granada* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2014). All these works coincide in highlighting the distinctive perspective of this region to explore broader questions usually considered from the perspective of the viceregal centres.

in scholarly writing about the region long after Colombian independence: rather than exploring the historical, for decades much of the historiography took part in perpetuating the categories, perspectives, and fictions in which colonial authors were invested.

There were certainly important commonalities with central regions. In Mexico and Peru, as elsewhere in Spanish America, missionaries and administrators faced the common task of Christianising Indigenous peoples. They struggled with the problems posed by Indigenous languages and the settlement patterns of the people under their jurisdiction. They faced common challenges regarding how best to employ limited manpower and resources in religious instruction, which methods to use to impart the mysteries of the Christian faith, which devotions and practices to promote among their catechumens – and how to determine whether the message they sought to impart was being received in the way they intended. All of this intensified when, in 1564, Philip II accepted the decrees of the Council of Trent in the Crown of Castile and ordered their implementation across its dominions, and civil and ecclesiastical authorities across the monarchy had to face the common task of reforming the churches under their care along Tridentine lines – and more immediately of trying figure out what it was exactly that these were supposed to be. The details and contours of these problems were, of course, always local, but some broad features were universal, so that these shared experiences need not be a distorting influence. Indeed, the contributions and perspectives of scholars who have examined the Christianisation of Indigenous peoples in those regions and elsewhere around the early modern world offer important insights that frame the questions this book explores.

In fact, the New Kingdom of Granada occupied a distinctive place in the Spanish empire. It was marginal and received little attention from the Spanish crown, and yet it was firmly embedded in the networks of exchange and movement of people, goods, ideas, and knowledge that spanned the early modern world. Deposits of gold, emeralds, and other precious resources attracted significant numbers of immigrants. Between 1550 and 1650, New Granada produced over 55 per cent of all the gold extracted in Spanish America.[9] Neogranadian emeralds, originating primarily in the mines of the region of Muzo in the province of Tunja,

[9] 55.58 per cent (85.914 kg, of 154.557 kg) between 1550 and 1650. For these figures, and more information about Neogranadian gold production, see John J. TePaske, *A New World of Gold and Silver*. Edited by Kendall W. Brown (Leiden: Brill, 2010), 37–40, 56, and 261–270.

quickly became a global commodity traded as far afield as South Asia.[10] The discovery and extraction of these and other resources resulted in the establishment of significant administrative and commercial centres in the interior of New Granada from the 1530s, which in turn prompted the creation and development of other industries to sustain the growing colonial population. Moreover, the region was at the geographic centre of the Spanish presence in America, and its Caribbean port of Cartagena de Indias was an important nexus in the network of trade and communication on which it depended, not least through its status as the principal Spanish American port in the trans-Atlantic slave trade in this period.[11]

Ambitious priests and administrators may have had their sights on more distinguished regions, but many passed through New Granada on their way to higher office in the colonial administration or church, where they often discovered that they had a greater freedom of action and were further removed from royal supervision than their contemporaries elsewhere. The New Kingdom's dearth of resources and manpower, the weakness of its institutions in the face of personal ambition and private interest, and its limited oversight often resulted in catastrophe, especially in the sixteenth century. At the same time, the lack of resources and supervision opened possibilities for experimentation and innovation, forcing local actors to find creative solutions to issues that in other regions could be approached with greater financial, technical, or human resources.

One such experiment, an ambitious reform programme inaugurated at the beginning of the seventeenth century, is the pivotal moment of this book. Partly as a response to multiple crises and failures of governance of the sixteenth century, and partly as a result of the changing priorities and preoccupations of religious reformers, an ambitious archbishop, a determined president, and an exiled cohort of Jesuits, with the broad support of the kingdom's leading settlers, came together to concoct a plan to overhaul the missionary project. The plan focused on the introduction of the most current devotions, practices, and institutions in Catholicism at a global level, creating new avenues for Indigenous people to engage with Christianity and setting the New Kingdom on a distinctive course. This book explores this experiment from a variety of perspectives, focusing on

[10] These are the subject of Lane, *Colour of Paradise*.

[11] See David Wheat, 'The First Great Waves: African Provenance Zones for the Transatlantic Slave Trade to Cartagena de Indias, 1570–1640'. *Journal of African History* 52, no. 1 (2011): 1–22.

how the Indigenous inhabitants of the region experienced, negotiated, and participated in these efforts. It shows how collaboration among Indigenous people, priests, administrators, and the Spanish laity, albeit uneven and asymmetrical, both consolidated and assured the very survival of the colonial project. As a result, the coming of Christianity to this region, and the coming of the New Kingdom of Granada, were complex, collective, and negotiated processes.

This book also advances several methodological arguments. The first concerns the use of sources. This is a region whose sixteenth- and seventeenth-century history is not as well documented as others in Spanish America. It lacks the vast Indigenous-language archives of regions of Mesoamerica, and a few petitions aside – crucial and revealing though these certainly are – there is no surviving body of Indigenous writing in Spanish of the sort that scholars of the Central Andes and other regions have studied so fruitfully. Even more mundane colonial records are comparatively scarce for a number of reasons, including the relative inefficacy of the institutions of its colonial administration, which this book explores; the destruction by fire of significant portions of what was by then the viceregal palace of Santafé in 1785 and with them large sections of the *Audiencia*'s archive; and the unavailability to researchers – and possible loss – of key ecclesiastical archives, such as those of the now Archdiocese of Bogotá.[12] One genre of documentation central to this book, visitations, provides a good illustration. For a start, it is clear that these were never carried out as often or as thoroughly as they were supposed to be. Most of the records of those that were completed by the civil authorities – as far as we can tell from summaries and excerpts sent to Spain or held in other archives – have been lost, leaving just a fraction. And an entire body of sources, the records of ecclesiastical visitations, with the exception of the handful considered in this book, have never been available to researchers. Like historians everywhere, we know that there are questions that we simply cannot answer with the sources available to us, but in the context of the New Kingdom – whose history and historiography developed in the shadow of better documented regions – this limit has overdetermined what and how we can know.

[12] On the destruction of the viceregal palace, Robert Ojeda Pérez, Adriana Castellanos Alfonso, and Sebastián Torres. 'Incendio del palacio virreinal en Santafé: Resonancia histórica y patrimonial'. *Módulo Arquitectura CUC* 12 (2013): 163–181. To this we might add the loss of additional materials held in other collections in central Bogotá on 9 April 1948 and the days that followed.

We also need to tread carefully in using a significant set of the sources we do have: the works of colonial chroniclers and other such authors. Historians of the New Kingdom do not have a convincing answer to how to read these sources judiciously, with the appropriate criticism, carefully, or however else different scholars, who recognise some or most of their limitations, have proposed. This book shows how this register of colonial writing developed for the consumption of foreign audiences for a broad range of purposes, including immediate personal gain, spiritual edification and promotion, even the advancement of what, in a different period, might be described as 'patriotic' projects, and many more besides. In doing so, these authors appropriated the histories, languages, and other features of Indigenous peoples, erasing or overlooking their specificity and diversity, and repackaged them according to foreign models and expectations in pursuit of their objectives. As Chapters 1 and 2 explore, their descriptions of Indigenous peoples and their politics, social structures, ritual practices and ideas, and cultural features before the European invasion and in the early years that followed are deeply problematic, and have had a profoundly distorting effect. The same is also the case with the early history of Spanish colonial rule and missionary activity, which underwent a similar refashioning in the minds and pens of successive colonial authors for similar reasons. As a result, in this book, I treat these texts – in common with all other sources – as reflective of the historical present in which they were written, and not as privileged insights into a pre-Hispanic or early colonial past.

In response to the difficulty and paucity of sources, I have tried to be as exhaustive as possible with what does exist. The chapters that follow are the result of my reading of many hundreds of individual items held in archives and libraries in Colombia, Spain, Rome, the United Kingdom, and the United States. These range from scores of letters, reports, petitions, and rescripts, to dozens of extensive files, such as visitation reports, each comprised of multiple witness interviews, descriptions, charges, appeals, sentences, and supporting information. Out of the same concern I have sought to understand, and to explain, how it was that these materials came to be. My contention is that only by understanding the shape of the archive can we really understand the mechanics of colonisation and Christianisation. For this reason, in this book, I reflect on the workings of petitions, rescript, royal and local legislation, synods and provincial councils, civil and pastoral visitations, resettlement, land and *encomienda* titling, tribute collection and taxation, *corregidores* and other local officials, the creation and staffing of parishes, Indigenous

political and social structures, and all the other elements of the normative ordering and reordering of the kingdom studied in the pages that follow. Reading across these diverse archival objects has necessitated a fuller and deeper reckoning with the internal instability, contingency, and anxiety at the heart of the creation of the New Kingdom of Granada and its missionary project. These anxieties are all too easily ignored if we assume an already complete, singular, uniform, colonial state that simply unfolds from 1538 until it begins to come undone in the late eighteenth century. Only by unpacking and narrating the granular, quotidian, and ever-shifting experience of colonial rule can we understand the coming of the New Kingdom of Granada and processes like it. A granular approach must be a methodological imperative in these archives and others like them.

These arguments unfold over six chapters, arranged into two chronological parts. The first three chapters focus on the sixteenth century, from the establishment of the Spanish cities of Santafé and Tunja in the 1530s and the arrival, in the 1550s, of the principal institutions of colonial government – the *Audiencia* and the secular church – through to the long period of *sede vacante* that followed the death of the New Kingdom's first reforming archbishop, fray Luis Zapata de Cárdenas, in 1590. This section has a double focus. The first is unpacking the misunderstandings and mischaracterisations about Indigenous people, and particularly their religious practices, that have had a long hold on scholarship, and which have their roots in colonial visions and assumptions. The second is the distance between the claims and aspirations – the fictions – of colonial officials and other observers about the state and development of the kingdom and reality on the ground, a distance that colonial authorities ignored at their peril.

The first chapter explores the contours of the religious practices of the Muisca in the early decades after the European invasion. To do so unravels a series of overlapping fictions, stereotypes, and assumptions about the functioning of 'religion', social organisation, and political economy among these groups. Even as recent scholars have debunked the traditional portrayal of the Muisca as a relatively homogenous and centralised Indigenous 'nation' governed by a handful of despotic leaders, much of the historiography continues to take for granted that these people constituted a pagan laity led in the worship of a transcendental religion by a hierarchy of priests who performed sacrifices in temples. This chapter reveals these long-held narratives as fictions originating in the earliest descriptions of the region, later embellished and developed by seventeenth-century chroniclers for multiple reasons. Instead, drawing on the latest work on the Muisca, key recent contributions on the

anthropology and sociology of religion, and a large corpus of colonial observations, it reassesses what we know about Indigenous peoples in this region. The picture that emerges is of highly localised immanentist religious practices, centred on the maintenance of lineage deities that Spaniards called *santuarios* and a sophisticated ritual economy of reciprocal exchange, that were intimately connected to the workings of political power and economic production.

Chapter 2 explores the early history of colonial rule in the New Kingdom of Granada, and of the priests and officials first tasked with introducing Christianity to the Indigenous peoples of the region. This too involves unravelling a series of powerful assumptions and stereotypes entrenched in the historiography that insist on the dominance and efficacy colonial officials and institutions. Instead, by carefully examining the workings and limitations of the procedures and praxis of early modern Spanish colonial governance, and by drawing on a broad range of often-overlooked sources, this chapter shows that the ability of colonial officials, missionaries, and institutions on both sides of the Atlantic to effect change on the ground remained fleeting, contingent, and inconstant. To do so, the chapter explores the participatory nature of the royal administration and judiciary, both at an imperial and a local level, and its reliance on petitioners, supplicants and rescript; reassesses the role of the legislative projects of local officials, whose efficacy is so often taken for granted; and tests the real impact of these institutions and their claims on the lives of Indigenous people through a careful re-reading of all surviving records of early visitations, showing that for decades royal control remained an illusion and that in practice power remained far from the hands of its officials in the New Kingdom, and instead rested, ultimately, on the all too fragile foundations of the authority of Indigenous rulers.

Far from the established story of a gradual and triumphant consolidation of colonial institutions by the final decades of the sixteenth century, Chapter 3 shows that this was instead a period of deep, overlapping, and abiding crisis for the New Kingdom as a result of the limitations and failures of colonial governance. At its core was the unravelling of the authority of Indigenous rulers, who found themselves pulled in two unreconcilable directions. They remained reliant on maintaining the Indigenous ritual economy that sustained their authority, at the same time as they were pressured to participate in its dismantling. This is because colonial authorities understood and interpreted Indigenous politics by drawing on European concepts, particularly natural law, and thus felt free to try to conscript and transform Indigenous rulers into intermediaries for

governing, taxing, and Christianising the people that they ruled. Engrossed in increasing competition over the leadership of the colonial project, the second archbishop of Santafé, Luis Zapata de Cárdenas, and his civil counterparts tried to pursue increasingly belligerent policies to reform the lives of Indigenous people in the final decades of the century. Their rivalries, venality, and misunderstanding of local conditions and of the limitations of their own power spilled out of the realm of correspondence and unleashed a brutal campaign of violence and dispossession on Indigenous communities in the late 1570s, with harrowing results. The blow they struck to Indigenous political structures, and through them to the colonial tributary and extractive economy, brought the kingdom to its knees.

The second half of the book focuses on the seventeenth century, when a dramatic ideological change transformed the priorities and methods of the missionary project. Chapter 4 focuses on this pivotal moment, when religious policy in the kingdom came to be in the hands of a determined new *Audiencia* president, Juan de Borja y Armendía, and an ambitious archbishop, Bartolomé Lobo Guerrero. With the support of an influential group of Jesuits effectively exiled from the Central Andes, headed by Diego de Torres Bollo and Martín de Funes, and the backing of a broad coalition of the kingdom's *encomenderos*, these authorities took Christianisation in a different direction. Better known as an advocate of a forceful approach to evangelisation, as one of the architects of the first systematic campaigns of extirpation of Indigenous 'idolatry' of the Archdiocese of Lima, Lobo Guerrero's earlier career in New Granada was in fact marked by an entirely different approach. Here, he and his allies moved decidedly away from the failed punitive policies of their predecessors, and instead promoted the regular and frequent participation in a range of quotidian Catholic practices and institutions that had generally been discouraged or withheld from Indigenous people, particularly popular celebrations, confraternities, and public ceremony. This began in a handful of parishes entrusted to these Jesuit reformers, who had a very particular understanding of the role of 'external' manifestations of piety, and who used these sites as testing grounds for new approaches to Christianisation. These ultimately had the effect of affording Indigenous people space and opportunities to engage with Christianity in new – if, for the reformers, not always desirable – ways, laying the foundations for the reformation of the kingdom.

Chapter 5 focuses on the history of language policy and the treatment of Indigenous languages. In addition to refocusing Christianisation on to everyday practice, the reformers of the early seventeenth century laid to

rest a long-running dispute among missionaries and administrators in the region concerning the role that Indigenous languages should play in religious instruction. In the sixteenth century, the Spanish crown had twice sought to impose a universal solution to the challenges posed by linguistic heterogeneity across its American territories, based on the petitions and feedback of actors in the two viceregal centres: first to suppress Indigenous languages and teach Castilian, and later to focus on the 'general language' of each region, such as Quechua in Peru and Nahuatl in Central Mexico. These imperial ambitions were defeated in the New Kingdom, where the linguistic landscape even among Muisca groups was overwhelmingly heterogeneous, and where the power of the crown and its officials was limited and fleeting. Nevertheless, the authorities of the *Audiencia* and secular church, eager to employ the disciplinary mechanisms of the imperial language legislation for their own purposes, created and maintained the fiction that a single Muisca language existed and could be used for religious instruction. By the end of the century, this manoeuvring had resulted in the emergence and entrenchment of a bitter opposition to the use of Indigenous languages in Christianisation. A key contribution of the seventeenth-century reformers, therefore, was to overcome this division and establish a consensus around Indigenous language instruction. How they did so, in practice, had the opposite effect to what royal legislation had intended – serving to reinforce, and not overcome, linguistic heterogeneity – but still contributed to bring Christianity to the diverse multilingual environments that were the parishes of the New Kingdom.

These parishes are crucial sites to understand the transformation of religious life on the ground in the first half of the seventeenth century. Chapter 6 traces how, in the aftermath of these reforms, the Neogranadian church, at the parish level, became an Indigenous and grassroots organisation. One aspect of this transformation was institutional, as it came to be better staffed, organised, and equipped. Another was ideological, as the lessons of the Jesuit experiments with missionary methods were extended across the archdiocese, centring everyday practice, popular devotion, and social institutions. But the most significant aspect was led by Indigenous people themselves, as the shift away from punitive policies and towards a more inclusive Christianisation, coupled with the implementation of a more effective language policy, created space and opportunities for people in rural parishes to interact with Christianity in new ways. Many Indigenous authorities who survived the crises of the sixteenth century, like don Pedro Tabaco, found in participation in religious confraternities and in the sponsorship of

Christian art, artefacts, and public celebrations new ways to maintain their positions of leadership and to offer support to their subjects. In other communities, where traditional hierarchies had collapsed, these same mechanisms allowed commoners to step in when new leadership was most needed. Through a meticulous analysis of surviving civil and ecclesiastical visitation records, and the information they provide about the financing and provision of parish churches, the chapter shows how the voluntary fees, donations, and alms paid by Indigenous people engaged in these voluntary activities came to constitute a large part of the funding of parishes and their priests, fundamentally altering the relationship between the church, at a local level, and its Indigenous stakeholders. This went much further than the authorities had intended, as they learned when they sought to rein in and control the activities of confraternities, only to discover that these changes had long since outrun them.

Together, these chapters address a number of historiographical trends. The first is the position that religious questions have occupied in the historiography of the New Kingdom of Granada. Reflecting on the historiography of the church and religion in Spanish America, and especially Guatemala, Adriaan van Oss concluded that the perspective of most scholarship 'has served to isolate the Church from the historiographic mainstream', and called for 'a more holistic view of Catholicism in colonial society'.[13] The intervening years since his 1986 observation have indeed seen the publication of important studies that have transformed our understanding of the role of religion in colonial Latin America, and, within this, the role of religion in the consolidation and maintenance of colonial rule. This has not, however, been the case in the historiography of the New Kingdom of Granada. Generations of historians of the church of this region largely wrote it into a historiographic cul-de-sac, where it remained for decades.[14]

The authors of the earliest histories of the New Kingdom of Granada were concerned with presenting the church and religion as the antithesis

[13] Adriaan C. van Oss, *Catholic Colonialism: A Parish History of Guatemala, 1524–1821* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), xiv.

[14] A relatively recent survey of the historiography of New Granada is further testimony to this neglect. Published in the 1990s and reflecting on the major trends that had marked the historiography of the colonial period over the previous century and a half, it devoted a total of two paragraphs in its 114 pages to the historiography of the church and religion. Bernardo Tovar Zambrano, 'La historiografía colonial'. In *La historia al final del milenio: ensayos de historiografía colombiana y latinoamericana* (Bogotá: Editorial Universidad Nacional, 1994), 42–43.

of a colonial state, as the moderator of the evils of the crown and its agents, the rival of the conquerors, and the defender of Indigenous people. In these depictions, the church was not – or, at most, was only reluctantly – an arm of Spanish power, a key ingredient in colonialism, or an agent of the transformation of the Indigenous peoples of the New World into Christian subjects of the Spanish monarchy. This perspective emerged in nineteenth-century efforts to reposition the Catholic Church in the new Colombian republic by distancing it from the colonial past, as in the work of José Manuel Groot, but has had a long legacy: not only among the multitude of later studies that perpetuated the image of the church as the counterweight to the excesses of the colonial regime, without problematising what was in fact a much more complex history, but also the works that took the diametrically opposite perspective, with equally unhelpful results.[15]

These trends contributed to isolate this field from the historiographical mainstream. For example, when the first generation of university-trained professional historians began to emerge in Colombia in the mid-twentieth century, they left religious issues aside almost completely. Even social histories that explored the origins of the social and racial divisions of Colombian society and of economic inequality, including those that examined the treatment of Indigenous people, treated the church largely from an economic perspective, as a landowner and landlord. When in 1978 Jaime Jaramillo Uribe edited the *Manual de Historia de Colombia*, a three-volume work meant to bring together the work of this first cohort, it lacked a single chapter devoted to religious issues.[16] There were, of course, some exceptions to this general trend, such as the pioneering work of Juan Friede, and the tide has begun to turn in recent years with exciting new works, cited in the pages that follow, nourished by the work of scholars of Spanish America and beyond.

Against the disinterest of historians of the New Kingdom of Granada in religious issues, this book argues that it is not just anachronistic but impossible to separate ecclesiastical and civil affairs – or, worse still, a colonial church and a colonial state. We cannot make sense of the

[15] For a striking statement of Groot's perspective on these issues see *Historia eclesiástica y civil de Nueva Granada* (Bogotá: Ministerio de Educación Nacional, Ediciones de la Revista Bolívar, 1953), xi.

[16] The closest was a chapter in volume 2, devoted to the nineteenth century, by Fernando Díaz Díaz devoted to the expropriation of church property by the new republican regime. Jaime Jaramillo Uribe, *Manual de historia de Colombia* (Bogotá: Instituto Colombiano de Cultura, 1976).

development and consolidation of the New Kingdom of Granada without centring Christianisation, and the relentless challenges it posed, as a generative site of contention and negotiation integral to the coming of the kingdom. Equally, the concern here is not the success or failure of a missionary project. I do not read the stories of successive archbishops of Santafé, Jesuit reformers, or myriad lesser-known actors to assess their success or failure in conversion, a process whose core definitions, goalposts, and priorities were in any case never fixed. I read them instead to trace their role in shaping conditions that made it possible for Indigenous people to engage with Christianity, even within deeply unequal circumstances ultimately rooted in coercion.

Studies of religious change and of the imposition of colonial rule in Latin America, with a few exceptions, have tended to focus on imperial centres, or on a handful of other regions that for different reasons received significant attention from colonial authorities. These were sites where Spanish institutions were better staffed, had greater resources, and where – to different degrees – they were better able to realise their claims and designs. Most of colonial Latin America and the Philippines, however, looked a great deal more like the provinces of Santafé and Tunja than Mexico City and Lima: little places, with small Spanish populations, few resources, weak institutions, patchy governance, and perpetual crisis, reliant on creative solutions by local actors and the participation of broad groups to function. The story of the coming of the New Kingdom of Granada, in other words, resonates with those other peripheral spaces, and contributes to the work of provincialising imperial centres. In the same vein, if we are truly to decentre the Catholic Reformation – as recent scholars have urged – then we not only need to look at contexts beyond Europe, but also shift the object of our study: to see that the story of the people of places like Cómbita can shed valuable light on what it was to be an early modern Catholic. The portraits of don Pedro Tabaco and his family, looking out to us from Figueroa's striking canvas, invite us into a process and a history that was diverse, uneven, adaptive, and global.