

Describing Aboriginal people of Colombia in Augustinian Latin writings

Andrés de San Nicolás was an Augustinian monk who authored several Spanish, and Neo-Latin works that stand at the genesis of Colombia's literary tradition. Born in the New Kingdom of *Granada* in 1617, he became a member of the Augustinian order and had the chance to leave his country from a very young age to travel to Europe. There, he attained fame on account of his vast Classical knowledge and his asceticism. However, despite the opportunity that he had there to print many of his writings, many of his works are now lost to us or hidden away in some obscure European library (Rivas, 1977). Nevertheless, time spared two of his biggest literary contributions: *the Planctus Passerculi solitarii* (1654) and the *De Proventus messis Dominicae Excalceatorum Ordinis Eremitarum Sancti Augustini* (1656). Both works are completely written in Latin, and they are a testament to the author's Classical erudition. In *De Proventus messis Dominicae*, Andrés wrote a summary of his order's feats and accomplishments across the globe. Of the ten books in which his work is divided, the last one is dedicated to his homeland. In it, the author describes the landscapes, the peoples, and the traditions of regions like *Tunja*, *Cartagena* and *Urabá*.

In my paper, I focus on book 10, especially on the accounts De San Nicolás gives of *Urabá* and its peoples. Specially, I analyze how the author adapted passages from the *De Bello Gallico* in order to describe the aboriginal peoples who inhabited *Urabá*. Particular attention will be given to a passage in which Caesar gives a negative account of the *Nervii*'s customs (*BG*, 2.15.4-5), and how Andrés used it to describe *Urabá*'s aboriginal peoples in a more positive light. At the same time, my paper also explores how American writers used the Latin patrimony and their classical knowledge to explain the New World's reality. Moreover, we will analyze how

the different European nations that arrived o America saw a reflection of their own barbarian ancestors in the aboriginal tribes, and of the Romans in themselves. Thus, Europeans believed that just as the Romans had brought civilization to their barbarian ancestors through faith and sword, they had the right to tame the fierce aboriginal tribes of the New World in the same manner (Luper, 2021). Indeed, upon their arrival to the Americas, different European nations constructed ethnicity upon ancient constructs, seeing a reflection of the “barbarians” in the aboriginal tribes, and of the “Romans” in themselves.

Bibliography

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