Abstract

The Church constantly put to doubt the validity of its evangelisation of Peru, accusing the Indians of being just as idolatrous as they had been in the past and of practicing a hypocritical superficial form of Catholicism. Historians have accepted this justification of colonial power (which permitted it to impose its symbolic monopoly) to be an absolute truth and consider that the attitude of the indigenous population towards European presence was one of permanent religious resistance. However, if we take a closer look at the religious phenomena which the Church branded as manifestations of idolatry, we discover that many of them not only are strongly inspired by Catholic ritual but that they are the expression of a conscious desire to reenact this ritual. In the impossibility of accepting an indigenous Catholic religious autonomy, the Church was obliged to consider these phenomena to be parodies inspired by the demon and thus reinvent the indigenous past.