



2012.019

Unidentified artist

*Our Lady of the Rosary as a Pilgrim*

Second half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century.

Peru, Cuzco

Oil on canvas, 36 <sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub> x 28 <sup>7</sup>/<sub>8</sub> inches.



2016.033

Unidentified Artist

*Our Lady of the Rosary as a Pilgrim, with Saints Dominic and Francis*

Second half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century

Peru, Cuzco

Oil on canvas, 37 3/8 x 57 1/4 inches.

There are a number of paintings representing Our Lady of the Rosary enthroned, on a processional cart that might have carried the image from village to village, in the manner of the better-known “Pilgrim of Quito.” The cart is lit by lanterns, and small bells along the top of the baldaquin would announce the presence of the image on its way. The number of paintings with this same composition suggests that they share a print source, though no example has yet surfaced. Héctor Schenone, the outstanding scholar of Spanish colonial iconography, noted in his book on images of the Virgin Mary, that this subject was evidently inspired by paintings of the “Pilgrim of Quito,” but that none of the extant paintings offers an inscription that might guide us to the precise source of this subject.<sup>i</sup>

The presentation of the Virgin Mary and the Christ Child as pilgrims in black velvet traveling hats is evidently based on depictions of the Mercedarian “Pilgrim of Quito.” However, the latter is well documented for its travel throughout Spanish America and even to Spain in the course of collecting alms for the church of the Mercedarians in Quito, and, later for the construction of a retreat and other buildings there, through decades of the eighteenth century.<sup>ii</sup> A

search for a “*Virgen Peregrina del Rosario*,” on the other hand, turns up no background story at all.

“Our Lady of the Rosary” was an important devotion in colonial Lima, but there is no official reference to the image taking part a pilgrimage.<sup>iii</sup> Perhaps there was a popular devotion that has gone unrecorded, as there were many such local pilgrimages of statues of the Virgin Mary in Spain and the Americas. However, most of these local cults have not been “lost” at all. It may be that the paintings were simply inspired by an engraving that altered the composition of those representing the “Pilgrim of Quito,” an invention that proved popular with the multitude of Peruvian Catholics who practiced Rosarian prayers.

The lush treatment of the textiles, brilliant color, and remarkable sense of energy and movement, as though the Virgin and Child are being jostled along their way, suggest a date in the second half of the eighteenth century. The incipient sense of movement, however, is quickly grounded by, in one painting, the objects in the foreground that anchor the figures on an altar rather than a processional cart, and, in the other, by the static figures of Saints Dominic and Francis, who impede forward movement.

Suzanne Stratton-Pruitt

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<sup>i</sup> Héctor Schenone, *Iconografía del arte colonial: Santa María* (Buenos Aires: Editorial de la Universidad Católica Argentina, 2008), 500. I am grateful to Francisco Yábar for unearthing this sole brief reference to the pictorial type in all the literature on Spanish colonial art.

<sup>ii</sup> See Suzanne Stratton-Pruitt, “Our Lady of Mercy, Called the ‘Pilgrim of Quito:’ Travels of a Devotion and its Image in Art,” *Hispanic Research Journal* 20:5 (2019): 433-450.

<sup>iii</sup> There is nothing, for example, in the *Recopilación de hechos históricos de la Archicofradía de Nuestra Sra. del Rosario de los Españoles “Hermanos 2”*, a compendium of written sources about the sculpture of “Our Lady of the Rosary” of the Dominican convent in Lima dating from the mid-sixteenth century (Lima, 1945).