



2013.046

Unidentified Artist

Peru, Cuzco

Our Lady of the Rosary of Chiquinquirá with a Female Donor

Late 17th or early 18th century

Oil on canvas, 35 x 69 2/3 inches

The earliest history of “Our Lady of Chiquinquirá” was published in Madrid by Friar Pedro Tobar y Buendía, the prior of the monastery that housed the painting, in 1694.ⁱ According to the story that was already well known by the time Tobar’s book was published, the painting was commissioned by the *encomendero* (landowner) Antonio de Santana of the artist Alonso de Narváez who was working in nearby Tunja, then an important crossroads town. Santana provided the artist with a length of cotton fabric (*manta*) that was wider than it was long. Our Lady of the Rosary would be in the center of the fabric and, so that there would not be blank space to either side, Narváez was instructed to add Saints Andrew (with his cross) and Anthony of Padua (holding a book with the figure of the Christ Child standing on it).ⁱⁱ The artist was paid 20 pesos for his work.

Santana installed the painting on an altar in a chapel whose thatched roof did not keep out the rain, and the painting was damaged by moisture. Around 1565 a priest, seeing the condition of the painting, ordered an image of Christ Crucified from New Spain to replace it. After Santana’s death his wife took the damaged painting with her when she moved to Chiquinquirá. A local woman became devoted to the painting and prayed for its restoration. Her prayers were answered in 1586 when the painting miraculously appeared in its original bright colors. A series of prelates visited the site, declared the transformation miraculous, and so began pilgrimages to Chiquinquirá where the painting is now at home in a vast basilica.



Fig. 1. Alonso de Narváez, *Our Lady of the Rosary of Chiquinquirá*, ca. 1555.

The devotion spread rapidly throughout South America, probably in part through the dissemination of prints like the one illustrating a manuscript dating from the mid-seventeenth century. Pedro de Solís y Valenzuela's *El desierto prodigioso y prodigio del desierto* (fig. 2) is possibly the first novel written in the Spanish Americas, dating from about 1650 though not published until the twentieth century. Solís y Valenzuela, writing in Bogotá, included reference to Chiquinquirá, "patrona del Nuevo Reyno de Granada."



Fig. 2 Pedro de Solís y Valenzuela, *El desierto prodigioso*, c. 1650.

This engraving is a rare example of locally made prints that must have carried local devotional images throughout the colonial world. The Cuzco painter who created the Thoma Collection painting may have worked from this very image when a donor asked for a painting of Our Lady of the Rosary of Chiquinquirá with her portrait in it. Or, perhaps her husband ordered the painting with his wife's portrait included.

The costume and jewelry of the sitter evince styles of the late seventeenth century, but other aspects of painting, with its scattering of birds and flowers in the landscape, are typical of Cuzco paintings from the early eighteenth century onward. This makes it difficult to date the Thoma painting precisely.

The original painting of Our Lady of Chiquinquirá was said to be wider than high because it was painted on a *manta*, a cotton poncho worn by indigenes. This canvas, however, is even wider, allowing space in the composition for the landscape setting on the left and the portrait at lower right, which is larger than usual with donor portraits. While the portrait is of a generically

pretty, dark-haired woman, her jewelry and laces are painted with exquisite attention to their particular details.

There is another painting of Our Lady of Chiquinquirá in the Thoma collection (2014.020), a small painting on copper that has the distinction of having been touched to the original canvas.

Suzanne Stratton-Pruitt

ⁱ Pedro Tobar y Buendía, *Verdadera histórica relación del origen, manifestación y prodigiosa renovación por sí misma y milagros de la Santísima Virgen María, Madre de Dios, Ntar. Sra. Del Rosario de Chiquinquirá, que está en el Nuevo Reino de Granada de la Indias . . .* (Madrid: por Juan García Infanzon, 1694).

ⁱⁱ For a summary of Tobar's history, see Rubén Vargas Ugarte, *Historia del culto de María en Iberoamérica y de sus imágenes y santuarios más celebrados*, 2nd ed. (Buenos Aires: Editoriales Huarpes, 1947), 340-55.