



2016.048.  
Unidentified Artist  
Peru, Lima  
*Our Lady of the Rosary of Lima*  
c. 1800  
Oil and gold on canvas, 63 3/8 x 43 1/4 inches

This painting depicts a dressed sculpture of Our Lady of the Rosary and the Christ Child under a canopy supported by four Solomonic columns, a structure suggesting a grand processional float. Their costumes are “embroidered” with roses and gilding is added to enhance certain details such as the anagram of the name of Mary, their crowns, and the jeweled ruff around the face of the Virgin Mary called a *rostrillo*. The columns and other elements of the architectural setting are painted in *grisaille*, tones of grey, in imitation of silver. The identification of this image with Our Lady of the Rosary of Lima has been suggested in part by what it is stylistically not (from Bogotá, Cuzco, Quito, Potosí, or the art workshops of any other South American city) and partly based on the important historical role played by that devotional image in Lima, the “City of the Kings.”

The cult image is a polychromed sculpture from the early sixteenth century attributed to Roque de Balduque, a Flemish artist working in Seville (fig. 1). All the early chroniclers of Peru

(Bernabé Cobo, Reginaldo de Lizárraga, Juan Menéndez) mention the sculpture and the fervent and widespread dedication to it, later enhanced by the devotion of local Saints Martín de Porres and Rose of Lima. The city of Lima was founded in 1535, and devotion to this the image was established as early as 1541. Like other cult sculptures that made their way to the Americas early on, this was said to have been a gift to the Dominican order from Carlos I of Spain (Charles V of the Holy Roman Empire).<sup>i</sup> As we will see, the sculpture continued to be linked to the Spanish Monarchy.



Fig. 1. Attributed to Roque de Balduque, *Our Lady of the Rosary of Lima*, early 16<sup>th</sup> century. Monastery of Santo Domingo, Lima, Peru.

The confraternity called “Archicofradía de Nuestra Señora del Rosario de Españoles” was formed in 1562 to care for the sculpture and underwrite the expense of the ostentatious processions that would mark an annual feast day as well as responses to occasional military victories, epidemics, and natural disasters. The most distinguished families of Lima were represented in the confraternity; when the victory over the English in Panama was celebrated with a procession of Our Lady of the Rosary, her float was carried by none other than the viceroy, Conde de Lemos, and the members of the Real Audiencia, a powerful judicial body. And, the members of the confraternity were generous. The treasure they accumulated—crowns and scepters, jeweled gowns, silver candelabums and torchères—was valued in 1645 at two million pesos. (In 1818 the confraternity computed the total valuation of its holdings at 12,575 *marcos de plata*. As happened throughout Spanish America, these valuables were appropriated for the War of Independence.<sup>ii</sup>)

During the sixteenth century, Christian Europe was threatened by the Islamist Turks, who conquered Constantinople and occupied Cyprus. Pope Pius V, with the support of the Spanish King Philip II and forces from Genoa, Venice, and the Kingdom of Naples, defeated the Turks at

the Battle of Lepanto in October of 1571. The Catholic troops were aided in their victory by a vision of the Virgin Mary, an intervention that was commemorated by adding the invocation of “Aid of Christians” to the Lauretan Litany and celebrated on the feast day of Our Lady of the Rosary. In 1645, Philip IV established the first Sunday in Lent as a celebration of the “Patronage of his Catholic arms.” The king wrote to the viceroy of Peru, then Pedro Toledo de Leyva, marquis of Mancera, ordering him to formally name the Virgin Mary as patroness and protector of his realms. The viceroy selected Our Lady of the Rosary in the Dominican church and monastery of Lima, for this honor. A second great celebration was ordered by Philip IV in 1647 in honor of the “Sweet Name of Mary (“Dulcísimo nombre de María”) to be celebrated on the second Sunday of October.<sup>iii</sup> This was to mark an octave (an eight-day celebration) recalling the naval victory at Lepanto. The Dominican chronicler Juan Menéndez wrote a detailed description of the procession that departed from Santo Domingo “con grandes ostentaciones.”<sup>iv</sup>

The aristocracy of Lima, both peninsular and creole, was initially resistant to increasing calls for independence throughout Spanish America in the late eighteenth century. Their reasons were somewhat venal as they depended on the scaffolding of governance afforded by the Monarchy for employment, as well as to the official church for other positions of power. Added to the fear of the unknown that independence from Spain might bring were the more honorable virtues of loyalty to king, fatherland, and faith. In the late eighteenth century, Our Lady of the Rosary of Lima continued to hold an emblematic position in Lima, perhaps especially among the 24 distinguished citizens who belonged to the Archconfraternity of Our Lady of the Rosary of the Spaniards. In May of 1796 the brotherhood purchased from the Dominican community the chapel and altar of the Rosary and promised to pay for all celebrations related to her cult. In October of that year they sponsored the procession celebrating the “Sweet Name of Mary” with “an image of Our Lady of the Rosary, different from the titular one, on a rich float that boasted silver adornments valued at more than a thousand marks of weight [marcos de peso].”<sup>v</sup> In 1798 the Sevillian artist José de Pozo decorated the *camerín* of the image with oil paintings on canvas that cover the walls of the small room depicting scenes from the lives of Christ and the Virgin Mary.<sup>vi</sup>

In 1808 France invaded Spain, and loyalty to the Catholic faith, fatherland, and the king was fiercely defended both on the peninsula and by royalists in the colonies. The archbishop of Lima called on all congregations to offer alms to support the defense of Spain, based on fraternal ties. Though “we are divided by an ocean, we are one nation.” A petition published in 1809 was addressed to “españoles americanos” and the “Indians who so love their king” (“indios que tanto aman a su rey”). This passionate defense of religion, fatherland and King Ferdinand VII was similarly reflected all over Spanish America.<sup>vii</sup> In Lima, the clergyman Justo Figuerola was among those in the church who clamored for the restoration of the Old Regime in Europe and the Americas. A member of the Archconfraternity of Our Lady of the Rosary of Lima, Figuerola wrote a rallying cry to the people of Lima in which he describes the enthusiasm with which Limeños celebrated the procession of Our Lady of the Rosary of Lima in 1808 (fig. 2).

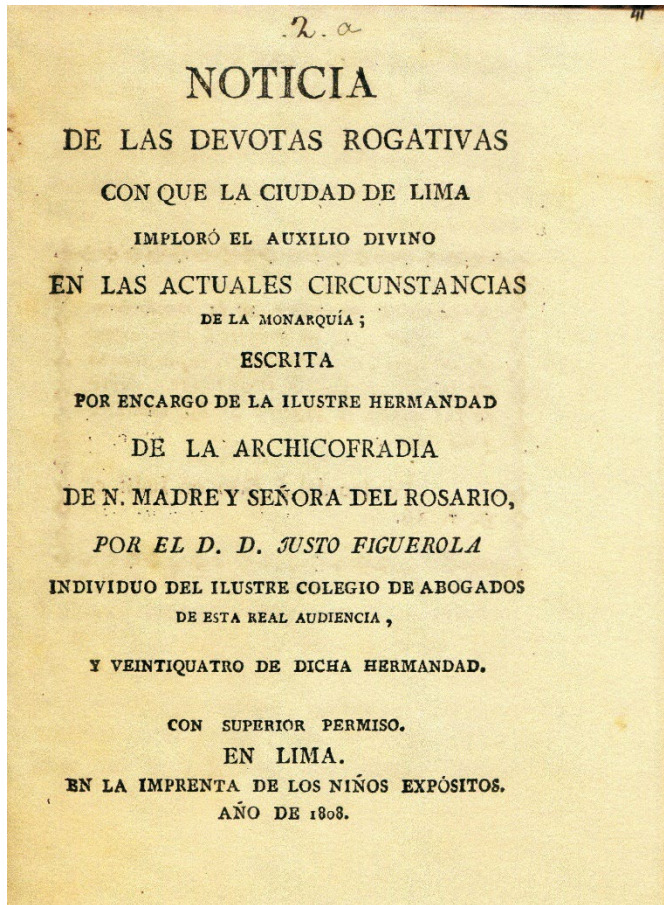


Fig. 2. Title page. Justo Figuerola, *Noticia de las devotas rogativas con que la ciudad de Lima imploró en auxilio divino en las actuales circunstancias de la monarquía* (Lima: Imprenta de los Niños Expósitos, 1808).

The author reminds the reader of the history of the devotion in Lima, beginning with its origins as a gift of Emperor Charles V and through the many years that Our Lady of the Rosary had given aid and

comfort to the community, as when the earthquake of 1759 nearly destroyed Lima, followed by a tsunami that laid waste to the nearby port of El Callao. Figuerola's detailed description of the decorations along the route of the procession from Santo Domingo to the cathedral, including the many distinguished participants, is in the tradition of such *relaciones* as Juan Meléndez's description of the celebration of the Sweet Name of Mary in 1647, which was a response to orders from Philip IV.<sup>viii</sup> Further back in history was the Battle of Lepanto under Philip II, recalled by Figuerola in a verse written for this occasion:

Recuerda de Lepanto  
Ese glorioso día,  
En que tu claro Nombre  
Dexó la Media luna escurecida

(Remember Lepanto, that glorious day when your bright name obscured the Half Moon [Islam])

Figuerola's text is a call to defend the faith, the Spanish monarchy, and the fatherland. Whatever the actual virtues of Ferdinand, his image was one of near sacredness to his supporters, and Napoleon, Joseph Bonaparte, the French, and the French Revolution were pictured as enemies of the faith and the Spanish monarchy.

It is possible that the Thoma painting was created in the late eighteenth century when the archconfraternity was spending generously on the cult of Our Lady of the Rosary, including the decoration of the *camerín* by José del Pozo. Or, it could have been created around 1808 when enthusiasm was so high. It certainly responds to an aristocratic taste quite different from the painting of Our Lady of the Rosary by Cuzco artists dating from the eighteenth century. The Thoma painting represents a dressed sculpture like the one used in processions in Lima in the stead of the Roque Balduque sculpture, but it is not based on an engraving of the cult image as were other such representations in the Thoma collection. This cult image is known today to have been engraved only once (fig. 3) and in such a generic composition that the subject could not be identified without the inscription.<sup>ix</sup> The unidentified painter who created this painting for a devotee of the cult of Our Lady of the Rosary of Lima instead created a lifelike image of Mary and the Christ Child, pictured in the theatrical setting of a processional float. As art-historical research on the period around 1800 continues, we may eventually be able to identify this very skilled painter.



Fig. 3. *Nuestra Señora del Rosario de Lima*. Lima: Casa de Aliaga. Photo: Francisco Yábar.

Following its creation, the painting underwent an intervention: red and green “curtains” were painted across the top of the canvas, and a white band (with a couple of roses placed on it) was added along the bottom. When Peruvian historians Francisco Yábar and María Clara Monge saw the image, they immediately recalled the flag of the Estado Sud-Peruano (fig. 4).



Fig. 4. Flag of the Estado Sud-Peruano, 1836-39.

In the unstable period following independence from Spain, Andrés de Santa Cruz, president of the Republic of Bolivia, intervened in Peruvian politics, reorganizing the country as part of a new Confederación Peru-Boliviana. It was comprised of three states: the Republic of Bolivia, the Estado Nor-Peruano, and the Estado Sud-Peruano, and lasted from 1836-1839. The addition of the red, green and white of the flag of the Estado Sud-Peruano must have been made during that brief period when the Peruvian owner of the painting, perhaps recalling the links of Our Lady of the Rosary to the time of the conquest of South America under Charles V, to the Battle of Lepanto, the support of the arms of Philip IV, to the calls for the restoration of Ferdinand VII, now prayed for her support of the Confederation, which he must have dearly hoped would bring peace to the region.

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<sup>i</sup> See Rubén Vargas Ugarte, *Historia del culto de María en Hispanoamérica y de sus imágenes y santuarios más celebrados* (Lima: Imprenta “La Providencia,” 1931), 498-513.

<sup>ii</sup> Alfonso J. Rospigliosi, *Recopilación de Hechos Históricos de la Archicofradía de Nuestra Sra. del Rosario de Españoles “Hermanos 24”* (Lima: Salas e Hijos, 1945), 42. I am grateful to Francisco Yábar for facilitating a visit behind the scenes at the Dominican monastery where we discovered that nothing of the former grandeur of the treasury of the confraternity exists and that the confraternity, formally always limited to 24 members, is in the hands of a single individual who seems determined to dissolve it completely. The paintings in the *camerín* of the Virgin mentioned farther along in this essay, are in sad condition, and the room, with glass missing from the windows of the cupola, has become the nesting place of pigeons, with the expected results. The polychromed wood sculpture of the Virgin that is dressed and carried in processions, which is kept in a safer space, is scheduled for restoration in the near future. I am grateful to Father Enrique Ramírez, OP for his time and to the prior of the order for permission to visit these spaces.

<sup>iii</sup> *Ibid.*, 31 et seq.

<sup>iv</sup> *Ibid.*, 33.

<sup>v</sup> Vargas Ugarte, *Historia*, 501.

<sup>vi</sup> José del Pozo joined the Malaspina expedition to South America as a draftsman and painter. When Malaspina arrived in Lima in 1790, the artist pled ill health as a reason for not returning to Spain. Viceroy Gil granted him permission to stay in Lima, where he established a drawing school in 1791. Later, Viceroy Fernando de Abascal (r. 1806-1816) appointed del Pozo to plan a school of painting for Lima. The artist died in 1821, leaving a considerable

body of work in his adopted home. Unfortunately, his work and career have received little attention from art historians.

<sup>vii</sup> See, for example, José David Cortés Guerrero, “La lealtad al monarca español en el discurso política religioso en el Nuevo Reino de Granada,” *Anuario Colombiano de Historia Social y de la Cultura* 8, no. 37 (2010): 43-83.

<sup>viii</sup> The description was published in Juan Meléndez, *Tesoros verdaderos de las Indias en la historia de la gran Provincia de San Juan Bautists del Perú de el Orden de Predicadores* (Rome: en el imprenta de Nicolas Angel Tinossio, 1681-1682).

<sup>ix</sup> I am grateful to Leticia de Aliaga for a tour of her historic home and for allowing the print to be photographed.