



2020.056  
Unidentified Artist  
Lima, Peru  
*Portrait of José Nieto de Lara*  
1769 or soon thereafter  
Oil on canvas and paper attached with adhesive, 201  
x 121 cm

According to the information inscribed on the cartouche at lower left, José Nieto de Lara was born in Valladolid, Spain. He was *prior*<sup>1</sup> and president of the Council of Commerce and Tribunal of Commerce of Peru, and he was General Director of the General Repository of Tobacco. Also, “[He]built this church of the [Sacred] Heart from its foundations at his own expense, at the same time adorning it with altars and other embellishments.” Nieto de Lara was buried in Lima in the Church of the Sacred Heart on April 5, 1769.



Fig. 1. Unidentified Artist, *Portrait of the Count of Lemos, Viceroy of Peru*, c. 1673. Palace of the Government, Lima. Photo Daniel Giannoni.

An important precedent for the portrait of the donor of a church in Lima is the portrait of the Count of Lemos, whose dedication to Our Lady of the Forsaken, reinforced by his wife Ana de Borja, inspired the building of a church in Lima dedicated to this devotion of Valencian origins. The portrait was originally in the church (since destroyed), where Lemos' heart was buried beneath the sculptured image of the titular devotion.<sup>ii</sup>

The original church of the Sacred Heart, which was dedicated to Our Lady of Atocha, served as the chapel to the adjacent hospice for orphans, so was always popularly called *Iglesia de los Huérfanos*.<sup>iii</sup> The church collapsed in the earthquake of October 20, 1687, and its rebuilding was not begun until 1742, when the property was reclaimed by pious citizens, including José Nieto de Lara and Fernando Carrillo de Córdoba y Quesada, who had served as mayor "of the second vote" of Lima 1737-1738.<sup>iv</sup> Work continued until the devastating earthquake of 1746, which flattened much of Lima, and work recommenced under the auspices of Nieto de Lara in 1758. The church that Nieto de Lara had piously underwritten was finally opened in 1766.

The orphanage that gave the church its popular name was moved to another location in 1930 and the church itself was again damaged by an earthquake in May of 1940. Although

there were calls for its demolition, the architect Emilio Harth-Terré consolidated the structure and the church stands today.



Fig. 2. Church of the Sacred Heart, Lima. Photo Paulo JC Noguera.

The portrait is unsigned. Although a stylistic similarity with portraits by Cristóbal de Aguilar has been noted, there is insufficient resemblance for an attribution to him. Overall, the portrait includes all the elements expected in a representation of a servant of the king of Spain: the family heraldry in the upper left corner, the swag of red drapery on the right, the books on the table whose titles reflect the sitter's faith, and the cartouche at lower left that attests to Nieto de Lara's work for the monarchy and support for the rebuilding and decoration of the Church of the Sacred Heart of Jesus.

The portrait is apparently unique in that the face was painted on paper and later glued to the canvas on which the full-length figure was painted (fig. 3). It is not impossible that the likeness, with its half-lidded expression and its pallor, was made of Nieto de Lara soon after his death to record his appearance for the planned portrait.<sup>v</sup> The rest of the painting could have been completed by another artist familiar with the iconography of portraits of distinguished servants of the Spanish Monarchy.

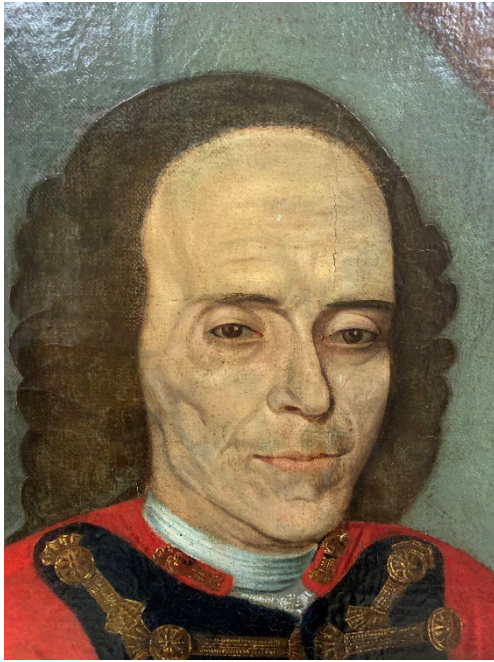


Fig. 3. Detail of face.  
Suzanne Stratton-Pruitt

<sup>i</sup>Prior might refer to his role as an arbiter in matters concerning trade. “José Nieto de Lara, natural de Valladolid (España) desempeñó altos cargos de Prior, Cónsul del Tribuna del Consulado en 1749-49 y 50. El año 1742 fué nombrado administrador de la renta de un impuesto que se estableció gobernando el Virrey Marqués de Villagarcía. El sucesor Manso, le nombró a Nieto Director General del Ramo de Estanco de Tabacos, con cuatro mil pesos de sueldo.” Rosa Paredes, “Iglesia de los Huérfanos,” in *Lima, precolombina y virreinal* (Lima: Artes Gráficas-Tipografía Peruana 1938), pp. 351-360 at p. 352.

<sup>ii</sup> See Suzanne Stratton-Pruitt “La Mare de Déu en l’art colonial des Andes,” in *Mare dels Desemparats*, 2 vols.) Valencia: Museu Valencià de la Il·lustració i de la Modernitat (VuMIM), 2:49-53 (Catalan) and 197-201 (Spanish).

<sup>iii</sup> For the history of the church and its architectural transformations, see the article by Samuel Amorós at <http://www.patrimonioculturalperu.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/11/LA-IGLESIA-DE-LOS-HUERFANOS-DE-LIMA.pdf>.

<sup>iv</sup> Paredes, “Iglesia,” 351.

<sup>v</sup> For some background on death portraits in the Spanish tradition, see Fernando Quiles García, “Varias imágenes y un pensamiento sobre los retratos de difuntos,” *Cuadernos de arte e iconografía* 15:30 (2006), 355-396. The death portrait of Saint Rose of Lima attributed to Angelino Medoro is illustrated on p. 370. I am grateful to Ricardo Kusunoki, Carlos Gálvez Peña, and Alejandra Osorio for our on-line conversations about the possible of use of a death mask for this portrait. The notion that the face seen in the painting was created postmortem is mine alone.