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Unidentified artist

Santiago Mataincas, or Santiago Mataindios

Peru, Cuzco

Seventeenth or 18th century

Oil on canvas, 15 1/2 x 11 3/4 inches

Saint James the Greater (San Diego in Spanish, called Santiago) was a patron saint of Spain, where he was believed to have come directly to the aid of the Christians in their “Reconquest” of the Iberian Peninsula from the Moors. At the Battle of Clavijo in 824 the Christian King Ramiro I led his forces to victory over the forces of Abderraman, the caliph of Cordoba, inspired by the appearance of Santiago riding a white steed. Paintings of Santiago on his horse trampling the enemy beneath its hooves depict “Santiago Matamoros,” Saint James the Moor-Slayer.

When Francisco Pizarro and his men rode triumphantly through Cuzco, the ancient capital of the Inca empire, they reportedly carried two banners, one representing the Virgin Mary and the other an image of Santiago on his white horse, with a red cross on his breast, and a sword in hand. It is likely that the indigenous population interpreted these images as representing supernatural forces aiding the Spanish troops in suppression of the Incas, and so the Santiago Matamoros of Galicia became the Santiago Mataincas (or Mataindios) of the conquest of Peru.ⁱ

The support of Saint James for the Spanish became legendary after the battle at which a rebellion led by Manco Inca in 1535 was quelled at the Inca fortress of Sacsahuamán, where the Spanish, who were totally surrounded, had taken refuge. Several Indians reported seeing the saint appear on his white horse, sending a rain of thunder and lightning down onto the fortress, and so they called him “Illapa,” their god of lightening who could bring rain, hail, and cause

storms. The legend of Illapa/Santiago's appearance at Sacsahuamán was told by El Inca Garcilaso de la Vega (1539-1616) in his *Royal Commentaries of the Incas*.ⁱⁱ The Inca uprising occurred in 1535 and was suppressed in 1536. Garcilaso was born in 1539, only a few years later. He therefore could later claim that "...I knew many Indians and Spaniards who participated in that war and who saw the miracles that I have described, and I heard about it from them, and I jousting for five years in the *fiestas* of Santiago."ⁱⁱⁱ

Only a few years after the suppression of the uprising, then, the authorities of Cuzco drew its varied citizenry into a general celebration of Santiago. Garcilaso reported that on the feast day, there was a procession and solemn mass in the morning and the afternoon celebrations included bull fights and jousting (in which Garcilaso himself participated). On that occasion a painting installed on the façade of the cathedral represented Santiago on a white horse, with his shield and sword, "with many Indians at [the horse's] feet, dead and wounded. The Indians, seeing the painting, said: 'A Viracocha like this was the one that destroyed us in this plaza.'"^{iv}

Clearly, the painting described by Garcilaso was installed as a public and constant reminder of the power of Saint James and his alliance with the Spanish, and it was probably the visual source for the smaller, much later paintings of the subject such as one in the Museo Regional de Cuzco and this painting in the Thoma collection in which Santiago, sword raised, tramples three Incas.

Despite this unpropitious beginning, the indigenous people of Peru eventually developed a fondness for Santiago, and there are many colonial-period sculptures of him in South American rural churches. William B. Taylor has written that:

... he was enormously popular in many colonial Indian communities as more than a symbol of their defeat and humiliation. As Christian subjects, Indians were invited to believe that they shared in Santiago's formidable protection, and his patronage and power began to be harnessed to local purposes. Indian communities and individuals appealed to him for rain, to ensure a safe birth, to heal the sick and injured, and to guard against their enemies of the moment.^v

In most of the appearances of Saint James in Spanish colonial art, he is a vanquisher of heretics of a generic sort wearing turbans and brandishing scimitars, descendants of the Moors traditionally pictured in Spanish paintings of the saint (2008.002 and 1997.018). More rarely is the saint's role as vanquisher of the Incas recalled in paintings like this one.

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ⁱEmilio Choy, "De Santiago Matamoros a Santiago Mata-Indios," *Antropología e historia 1* (Lima: UNMSM, 1979), especially 333-427.

ⁱⁱGarcilaso de la Vega, called "el Inca" to differentiate him from the Spanish author of the same name, was the son of a Spanish aristocrat and a royal Inca mother in Cuzco. He lived with his mother for the first ten years of his life, so learned both Spanish and Quechua. In 1560 he decided to travel to Spain, where he was educated and, recalling stories he had been told by his relatives in Cuzco, wrote the *Comentarios Reales* in two parts, the first about Inca history and customs, the second, published in 1617, about the Spanish conquest of Peru. Garcilaso's description of the appearance of Santiago to the Indians was probably promoted by the religious authorities, but in the latter eighteenth century was banned by King Charles II for its "dangerous" content at a time of indigenous uprisings: "A esta hora y en tal necesidad, fui Nuestro Señor servido favorecer a sus fieles con la presencia del bienaventurado Apóstol Santiago, patron de España. Que apareció visiblemente delante los españoles, que lo vieron

ellos y los indios encima de un hermoso cavallo blanco, embraçada una adarga, y en ella su divisa de la orden militar, y en la mano derecha una espada que parecia relámpago, según el resplandor que echava de sí. Los indios se espantaron de ver el nuevo cavallero, y unos a otras dezían: ‘¿Quién es aquel Viracocha que tiene la *illapa* en la mano (que significa relámpago, trueno y rayo)?’ Dondequiera que el sancto acometía, huían los infieles como perdidos, y desatinados ahogávanse unos a otros, huyendo de aquella maravilla.” Garcilaso de la Vega, *Historia general del Perú. Segunda parte de los comentarios Reales de los Incas*, vol. 1, Ángel Rosenblatt, ed. (Buenos Aires: Emecé Editores S.A., 1943), 177.

ⁱⁱⁱ “...y assí conocí muchos indios y españoles que se hallaron en aquella guerra y vieron las maravillas que hemos dicho, y a ellos se las oí, y yo jugué cañas cinco años a las fiestas de Santiago.” *Ibid.*, 182.

^{iv} “En el hastial de aquel temple que sale a la plaza pintaron al Señor Santiago encima de un cavallo blanco, con su adarga embraçada y la espada en la mano, y la espada era culeabrada; tenía muchos indios a sus pies, muertos y heridos. Los indios, viendo la pintura, dezían: ‘Un Viracocha como este era el que nos destruía en esta plaça.’” *Ibidem.*

^v William B. Taylor, “Introduction” in *Contested Visions in the Spanish Colonial World*, exh. cat., Ilona Katzew, ed. (Los Angeles County Museum of Art/Yale University Press, 2011), 24.