



2019.071
Unidentified Artist
Peru, probably Cuzco
The Mystical Winepress
Eighteenth century
Oil on canvas, 48 9/16 x 43 5/16 inches

Inscriptions on the cross: *Dios es ave . . . porti . . . crvs preciosa . . .*

The Mystical Winepress (or *The Mystic Winepress*, or *Christ in the Winepress*) is earliest pictured in German woodcuts (figs. 1 and 2) and Early Netherlandish paintings. The later print by Hieronymus Wierix (fig. 3) was the model for a large number of painting created in colonial Peru like this example in the Thoma collection.



h German Master, ca. 1420-1430, Christ in the Winepress (Woodcut).

Fig. 1. South German Master, *Christ in the Winepress*, c. 1420-1430.



Breslau Master of 1486-1487, *Christ in the Winepress*. Breslau, Diözesanmuseum.

Fig. 2. Breslau Master of 1486-1487, *Christ in the Winepress*. Breslau, Diözesanmuseum.



Fig. 3. Hieronymus Wierix, *The Mystical Winepress*, before 1609.

“Christ in the Winepress” as a prefiguration of the Crucifixion of Jesus has its beginnings in Northern Europe around 1100, and became common in hymns and sermons of the late Medieval period, though less so in the visual arts.

The image is derived from scriptural texts including Isaiah 63:3 (“I have trodden the winepress alone.”) and Revelation 19:15 (“He treads the winepress of the fury of the wrath of God Almighty.”) Exegetes such as Saint Gregory the Great interpreted these sources to mean that “He has trodden the winepress alone in which he was himself pressed, for with his own strength he patiently overcame suffering.”ⁱ

The crossbeam of the winepress, as seen in fig. 1, became transformed over time into the cross, from metaphor to actuality. God the Father literally screws the crossbeam more tightly, emphasizing the purposefulness of Christ’s suffering and eventual death. In the distance at the left is the vineyard from which the apostles carry grapes to the winepress. To the right, the *Virgen Dolorosa* is witness to her son’s suffering. The Andean painter has added to the iconography illustrated by Hieronymus Wierix a small, white-robed figure representing a human soul that is accompanied by angels. The banderoles around this figure are not really legible, though some appropriate words can be understood (*calcaii=calcavit=trod*). This is not unusual in Andean paintings, created by artist who were not always literate and who did not understand the text they were required to copy. Also, in many instances, inscriptions were “touched up” over time and their original spelling was lost.

The inscription on the Wierix print cites Isaiah 63:3 as its textual source:
Why then is thy apparel red, and thy garments like theirs that trod in the winepress? I have trodden the winepress alone, and of the Gentiles there is not a man with me: I have trampled on them in my indignation, and have trodden them down in my wrath, and their blood is sprinkled upon my garments and I have stained all my apparel.

Suzanne Stratton-Pruitt

ⁱ Quoted in Gertrude Schiller, *Iconography of Christian Art*, vol. 2 (London: Lund Humphries, 1972), 228.