



Unidentified artist

Portrait of Bishop Juan Bravo de Rivero

Arequipa, Perú

1743-1752

Mid-eighteenth century

Oil on canvas, 25 x 19 ½ inches

Inscription: “*El Yllmo Sr. Dn Juan Bravo de Rivero, Colegial que fue del Colegio R.l de S.n Martin de Lima, su Patria, fundor de la Audiencia de Charcas, Maestrescuela, Tesorero y Chantre de aquella Yglesia Metropolitana, Obispo de Santiago de Chile y despues de Arequipa, en donde falleció el año de 1752.*”

[His excellency Señor Don Juan Bravo de Rivero, student at the Royal College of San Martín in Lima, where he was born, judge of the Audiencia (supreme court) of Charcas, schoolmaster, treasurer and presenter of the Cathedral (of Chuquisaca, now Sucre), Bishop of Santiago de Chile and then of Arequipa, where he died in 1752]

Juan Bravo de Rivero was born in 1685 in Lima to a noble family with roots in Extremadura. As the inscription reflects, he was educated in the Jesuit college of San Martín and then received a degree in canon law from the University of San Marcos. He did not work as an attorney for long, however. Following a “donation” of 3,000 pesos to the Monarchy, Bravo del Rivero became a judge of the Audiencia of Charcas in 1708.¹ He served a term of fifteen years, leaving shortly after the death of his wife, when he decided to become a priest. Before he actually took orders, he assured his future distinction by requesting a position as *maestrescuela* of the Cathedral of Charcas, which was granted. He went from *maestrescuela* to treasurer to *chantre*, all positions of dignity within the church hierarchy. Bravo de Rivera’s future as a man of the church continued with his appointment as Bishop of Santiago de Chile in 1736 and as Bishop of Arequipa in 1743. He died in 1752.

The Thoma portrait is smaller than Andean ecclesiastical portraits generally are. These were intended to hang in the cathedral where the sitter had his seat, which was probably the original intention of another portrait of Bravo de Rivera (fig. 1), whose style contrasts sharply with the Thoma portrait. Shown full-length, with his family crest in the upper left corner of the canvas, he is elegantly garbed, framed by a curtain whose rich red reflects his dignity of lineage and position, with the two mitres of his two bishoprics nearby. A cartellino at lower right spells out his achievements.

In contrast, the Thoma portrait seems to depict Juan Bravo de Ribero as he wished to be seen. The palette is subdued throughout. The dark curtain is pulled back to reveal a considerable library of weighty tomes. He stands near his desk like a scholar in his study. The bishop’s mitres are not a gaudy presence, but lightly sketched in the shadows. He holds a portrait of Saint Rose of Lima with the Christ Child. He was present when the convent in Arequipa dedicated to Saint Rose was completed in 1747 and he probably chose that religious house as his burial place.

Suzanne Stratton-Pruitt

¹ For more information about Bravo de Rivera, see: <https://dbe.rah.es/biografias/47707/juan-bravo-del-rivero-y-correa>



Fig. 1. Unidentified Artist, *Juan Bravo de Rivero y Correa*, 1743-1752, oil on canvas, dimensions unknown. Arequipa, Convent of Santa Rosa.²

² The dimensions of this painting are not known, but similar ecclesiastical portraits in the Andes are about 75 inches high.