



JAIME EGUIGUREN

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Luis Lezana (attributed)

Cuzco, final quarter of the 17th century.

**PORTABLE
MONSTRANCE**



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Portable Monstrance

Partially silver gilt with enamels. Molded, cast, chiseled and openwork silver.

Height: 80 cm, sun's diameter 31.5 cm and stand 28 x 28 cm. Weight: 8.730 kg.

Provenance: Former Apelles collection (Chile).

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It has a square-plan stand but with semicircular projections on the fronts that make it cross-shaped. Its central area has a convex profile and is equipped with an openwork trim with ovals, and legs shaped like phytoanthropomorphic mermaids; it is ornamented by enamel floral appliqués and figurative small handles representing mermaids and cherubs attached to the various surfaces and profiles. The shaft or stem is rigid, comprising five bodies among which both the cubic knot and the egg-shaped one below stand out because of their volume and excellence. The former resembles a small architectonic temple with vaulted niches, its fronts flanked by Solomonic pillars, which are repeated at the corners; they hold sculptures of four saints with painted flesh tones and clothes, which are recognizable by their attributes: Saint Joseph (with the Child in his arms)¹ and Saint Anthony of Padua (with a book and the Child Jesus in his arms),² whereas the two others, judging by their habits, are Mercedarians: Saint Peter Nolasco (bearing a standard and a church scale model)³ and Saint Raymond Nonnatus (holding a chalice with the host in the right hand and a palm in the left hand);⁴ cast C- and S-shaped handles, palmettes, cherubs' heads and plant appliqués besides enameled compositions decorate the stem. The sun is made up of eleven rays finished off by rosettes with pear-shaped finials at the ends, interlaced by openwork vegetable cartouches to which partially enameled cherubs' heads are appliquéd in white silver, and the geometrically ornamented ring of the *viril* (small case placed inside the monstrance) is also covered by enamel. Some of the ornamental details of the piece have *champlevé* enameling, and the colors used are ultramarine (prevalent), intense honey yellow and turquoise.

From the formal point of view, it falls within the type of ostensoriums that became widespread as from the late 16th and early 17th centuries, when portable monstrances imitating a small architectonic temple are left behind in favor of a sunburst format exhibiting the consecrated Host. In structure it totally imitates the model created in Cuzco during the rule of Bishop Manuel de Mollinedo y Angulo (1673-1699), clearly expressed by the planimetric solution of the base, as well as by the configuration of the shaft and of the sunburst, which render the Cuzco origin of the piece unquestionable. If we pay attention to the stand design, we will see that, for example, the openwork trim with ovals bordering it as if it were a skirt is similar to the one used by Cuzco silversmith *Francisco de Soria Hurtado* (1651-1692) in a monstrance from the former Apelles collection (Chile)⁶ and it also matches another one kept in the church of Saint John, in Gordexola (Biscay, Spain), a work signed by *Luis de Lezana*,⁷ a master silversmith from Cuzco who worked mostly in the late 17th century. (Fig. 1)



Fig. 1 Luis de Lezana, *Monstrance*, 17th century, Cuzco, silver gilt, Church of the Beheading of Saint John the Baptist, Gordexola (Spain).

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Fig. 2 Luis de Lezama, *Monstrance*, 17th century, Cuzco, silver gilt with enamels, Barbosa Collection, Lima (Peru).

As regards the shaft, in its composition and overlap of bodies involved (cylindrical pedestal, egg-shaped knot followed by a cubic small temple and a neck ending in a truncated cone), it could be associated with that in the two monstrances signed by *Luis de Lezana*: the one kept in the church of Gordexola (mentioned above) and the one held in the Barbosa collection (Lima) (Fig. 2)⁸ and also with the one in the church of Saint Anthony the Great, in Bilbao (Spain).⁹ But it is with two other monstrances that it is more closely connected: one, “the big one”, belonging to the Franciscan convent in Cuzco (unpublished) and the other, owned by the church of Urquillos, Urubamba province, in the Cuzco region (though coming from the church of Saint John of God in Cuzco, lost today).¹⁰

And in the shaft, the knot that most stands out because of its volume and structural and decorative significance is the architectonic cube with Solomonic columns and with vaulted niches on its four fronts, showing the figures of Saint Joseph, Saint Anthony of Padua (Franciscan), Saint Peter Nolasco (Mercedarian) and Saint Raymond Nonnatus (Mercedarian), some of these images referring to the church to which the monstrance belonged and was dedicated, possibly one of the Order of Mercy, given the presence of its Founder (Saint Peter Nolasco), and another Mercedarian (Saint Raymond Nonnatus), who was one of the first to join the Order for the purpose of redeeming captives. It is true that among the many monstrances made in Cuzco in the last third of the 17th and the first decades of the 18th centuries, the use of the cubic knot was very common, with or without Solomonic pillars (substituted by cast handles),¹¹ and with or without applied figures (replaced by enameled appliques). Among the most remarkable monstrances with either full-length or half-length figures (painted, enameled or in silver), we could mention the one from the town of Urquillos, the “big one” in the convent of Saint Francis, the one in the monastery of Saint Teresa¹² (both in Cuzco), or the unpublished one kept in the Apelles collection (Chile),¹³ most notably the splendid example once belonging to the Enrico Poli collection in Lima.¹⁴

Concerning the sunburst design, it similarly follows the common guidelines among Cuzco silversmiths, treating it as a work of abstract, geometric layout, which can be compared with many examples, some known and others unpublished. And, as in other cases, this sun is enriched by the use of enamel applied both to the *viril* and to the heads of the little angels appliquéd to the rays, thereby favoring chromaticism and making the core piece in the monstrance more attractive.

However, what is most striking, to the extent that it differs from the traditional figurations of legs, is the change in their design. The common support used in Cuzco, shaped like a winged cherub head with a chubby face and a foliate body, is abandoned, and a winged mermaid pattern with a vegetable tail is used instead. And while not many examples following this type of fantastic figuration are known so far, we can certainly see them in the monstrance held by the Franciscan Recollects in Cuzco (unpublished). On the contrary, the small cast handles shaped like cherubs and mermaids with vegetable bodies are the traditional ones, both because of their naturalistic features and the typical hairstyle with a highly raised pompadour.

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The enamels in this piece play a key role as to ornamentation, with their color palette being consistent with the usual one in Cuzco silverwork (ultramarine, turquoise and honey yellow), as well as with the floral patterns outlined, which are repeated in the monstrances in Gordexola (by *Luis de Lezana*), in the Santander cathedral (attributed to the same silversmith (Fig. 3)) and in the former Poli collection cited above.



Fig. 3 Luis de Lezana, *Monstrance*, 17th century, Cuzco, silver gilt, Cathedral of Saint Mary of the Assumption, Santander (Spain).

Therefore, based on all the structural and decorative characteristics discussed above, we believe that this piece may well have been wrought in Cuzco in the last quarter of the 17th century, and it can be perfectly classified within the catalog of the works made by master silversmith *Luis de Lezana*. It is undoubtedly a very expensive piece of great opulence (since it is fire-gilded and covered by enameled appliqués), and one of the best baroque monstrances from the workshops of the Andean city. Its extraordinary weight, its excellent state of preservation and the effective management of chromaticism, with a remarkable play of color between the gilding of the surfaces and the details in silver color, besides the use of *champlevé* enamels, make this an example of an exceptional class.

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Notes

1. He wears an ankle-length tunic and robe. After the Renaissance he started being portrayed holding the Child in his arms or holding Him by the hand.
2. He is represented as a beardless young man, wearing the Franciscan habit.
3. Since he is the Founder of the Order of our Lady of Mercy, he carries the standard and the church. He wears a tunic and robe, and on his chest he bears the coat of arms of the Mercedarians. These are not his most common attributes, but we are certainly acquainted with representations using this same iconography (see an oil on canvas at the *Museo de América* in Madrid, probably dated 1650-1700, coming from the Viceroyalty of Peru [inv. No. 00097]).
4. He is dressed identically, with the chalice and the host suggesting that he received Communion from an angel at the time of his death and the palm (even though he was not a martyr) because of the imprisonment and torment inflicted on him.
5. This technique involves carving hollows, cells or troughs out of the surface to be decorated and later filling them with enamel paste.
6. Made known by Cristina Esteras Martín in *Platería del Perú Virreinal. 1535-1825*. Madrid-Lima, Grupo BBV and Banco Continental, 1997, No. 15, pp. 108-109.
7. See Cristina Esteras Martín: *Orfebrería hispanoamericana. Siglos XVI-XIX*, Madrid, Instituto de Cooperación Iberoamericana, 1986, No. 15, pp. 44-46. On this silversmith and his artistic catalog, refer to Cristina Esteras Martín: "Luis de Lezana, platero del Cuzco (1713-1665)". *Boletín del Museo e Instituto Camón Aznar*, No. XLVIII-IL (1992), pp. 31-60. There were probably two silversmiths with the same name, father and son, which makes it difficult to separate their individual careers over time, since the chronology identified covers a long period from 1630 (a year by which one appears as the owner of a house in the square, so he must have been already of legal age) to 1713 (when a namesake is mentioned upon making a will).
8. It is photographically reproduced in *Plata y plateros del Perú*. Lima, 1997, Fig. II-84.
9. We believe that it is a work by silversmith *Sebastián Villegas*, an attribution we published in *Platería del Perú Virreinal ...*, op. cit., p. 108.
10. It is studied and photographically reproduced in "Luis de Lezana, platero...", op. cit, p. 36, Fig. 11.
11. For instance, the aforementioned monstrances in Gordexola, Santander cathedral, Bilbao cathedral and Barbosa collection, besides those in Bielsa (Cantabria, Spain), Yucay (Cuzco), Saint Anthony Abbot (Cuzco), convent of Saint Clare (Cuzco), the "small one" in the Franciscan convent in Cuzco, or the one in the Cuzco cathedral given by Bishop Mollinedo, among many others we could mention.
12. In Cristina Esteras Martín: "La segunda edad dorada de la platería cuzqueña (1770-1700): Gregorio Gallegos y sus contemporáneos", *Ophir de las Indias. Estudios sobre la plata americana Siglos XVI-XIX*. León, 2010, p. 348, Fig. 12.
13. On the cubic knot it shows the appliquéd reliefs of the four Evangelists, finishing the shaft off with the sculpture of an angel on his knees. It is made of gilt silver, it contains precious stones and it is 62.5 cm high, the sun's diameter is 25 cm and the quadriform stand is 21.5 x 21.5 cm. We personally studied this monstrance as well as the other pieces in this Collection in 1996 and 1998, preparing a catalog which was unfortunately never published.
14. Reproduced in José Antonio del Busto Duthurburu: *Platería en el Perú. Dos mil años de arte e historia. Colección Enrico Poli*. Lima, MCMXCVI, Fig. 153, p. 204.

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