

THE BEATITUDES CASKET. A NEW RECONSTRUCTIVE HYPOTHESIS

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ABSTRACT

The following is a small ivory chest belonging to the Collegiate church of San Isidoro of León although it is located in the National Archaeological Museum of Spain in Madrid since 1869. It was made during the 11th century. Being hardly damaged, it needed from restoration works based on small pieces of ivory coming from the former independent Muslim-ruled principalities (*Taifas*) along with the artist's workroom of Ferdinand I of León and Castile and Sancha of León. Its original visual appearance is a mystery that we are trying to solve in the present work¹.

KEY WORDS

Casket, Beatitudes, Ivory, Reconstruction, Fernando I and Sancha.

CAPITALIA VERBA

Arcula, Beatitudines, Ebur, Reconstructio, Ferdinandus I et Sancia.

The Beatitudes Casket is a piece that has been traditionally identified as one of the gifts mentioned in the Donation of 1063, a list of precious objects offered by the King Ferdinand I and his wife Queen Sancha to the Church of San Isidoro of León². Thus, the chest dates back to the first half of the 11th century. It consists of a wooden core with embedded ivory plaques. Seven of them are decorated with the iconographical representation of the Beatitudes (Illustrations 1, 3 and 4). They are Romanesque in style, and are believed to be work of the ivory workshop that is thought to have been located in the city of León. Islamic ivory fragments were placed on the back. They appear to either come from the *taifa* ivory workshop of Cuenca, or those that existed in Seville under the rule of al-Mu'tadid (1042-1069).

This group of reliefs constitutes a complex puzzle, showcasing two different and more or less contemporary ivory traditions in the Iberian Peninsula, which make difficult to decipher. Its current appearance is far from the original, which was possibly closer to the Reliquary of Saint Pelagius and Saint John the Baptist kept in the Treasury of San Isidoro (Illustration 5). Originally, this piece would have had a silver work cover that gave it a more sumptuous look. In the 19th century, the French, lured by this richness, removed the goldsmithing causing a serious damage. A recomposition was imperative and it resulted in the curious object that is guarded in the National Archaeological Museum of Spain in Madrid since 1869³.

The chest is made of one of the most exotic, rich and difficult to get materials used in works of art. Its texture, hardness and attention to detail have attracted promoters and patrons, since prehistory: ivory⁴. Ivory is bone tissue formed by chemical compounds that make up the teeth, horns and tusks of animals such as the

1. This article is part of the research project: *El patronazgo artístico regio en el territorio castellano-leonés. El papel del clero (1055-1200)* (HAR2010-19480), directed by María Victoria Herráez and funded by the Ministry of Science and Innovation of Spain. Used abbreviation: ASIL, Archivo de San Isidoro de León.

2. Martín, M^a Encarnación. *Patrimonio cultural de San Isidoro de León, Documentos de los siglos X-XIII*. León: Universidad de León, 1995: 16-19 (doc. n. 6).

3. Rada y Delgado, Juan de Dios; Malibrán, Juan de. *Memoria que presentan al Exmo. Sr. Ministro de Fomento, dando cuenta de los trabajos practicados y adquisiciones hechas por el Museo Arqueológico Nacional*. Madrid: Imprenta nacional del Colegio de Sordo-Mudos y Ciegos, 1871: 35.

4. Teófilo, a medieval monk, wrote about the way of working the ivory in: *Theophilus: On divers arts. The foremost medieval treatise on painting, glassmaking and metalwork*, John G. Hawthorne, Stanley Smith, eds. New York: Dover Publications, 1979: 187. During the 20th century ivory was analyzed in various studies: Kunz, George Frederick. *Ivory and the elephant in art, in archaeology, and in science*. New York: Doubleday-Page and Company, 1916; previously, another work in which the ivory workers are the central topic: Cust, Ann M. *The ivory workers of Middle Age*. London: George Bell and Sons New York, 1902. More recently it is interesting to remark the study of: Cutler, Anthony. *The Hand of the Master. Craftsmanship, Ivory and Society in Byzantium (9th-11th centuries)*. New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1994; Cristoferi, Elena. *Gli avori, problema de restauro*. Florence: Nardini, 1992, who deals with conservational issues, and Clark Grahame. *Symbols of Excellence, Precious materials as expressions of status*. Cambridge (UK): Cambridge University Press, 1986; focused on the symbolic aspects of ivory. This material is also studied in different manuals of artistic techniques, some instances being: Barnett, Richard. "Arte dell'avorio", *Storia della tecnologia. Dai tempi primitivi alla caduta degli antichi imperi, fino al 500 a.C circa*, Charles Singer, Eric Holymard, Allastair Hall, Trevor Williams, eds. Turin: P. Boringhieri, 1981(1st ed. 1961): I, chap. 14; Hodges, Henry. *Artifacts. An introduction to early materials and technology*. London: John Baker, 1964: 153, chap. XII; Maltese, Corrado, coord. *Las técnicas artísticas*. Madrid: Electa, 1999.



walrus, the narwhal, the sperm whale, the rhinoceros and —most significantly— the elephant⁵. Nowadays, the trade of ivory is subjected to international agreements to prevent illegal practices that go against animal rights⁶.

In the Iberian Peninsula, various ivory traditions and workshops emerged at the end of the 10th century and were developed over the following hundred years. In the South, they were associated with the Muslim world and, above all, with the splendor of Córdoba and its continuation in Cuenca⁷. In the North, they were connected to the kingdom of Ferdinand I in León and the Monasteries of San Millán de la Cogolla in La Rioja⁸.

As stated before, the Beatitudes Casket is believed to be a work of the Leonesque ivory workshop. The monarchs Ferdinand I and Sancha play a relevant role in the conformation of this center in León. The main pieces attached to it are: the Cross of Ferdinand and Sancha —today at the National Archaeological Museum in Madrid—⁹, the Reliquary of Saint Pelagius and Saint John the Baptist¹⁰, the Carrizo

5. In fact, proper ivory is made from elephant tusks but throughout history artists had to use different materials with similar features for their works. Some anatomical questions related to the advantages of elephant tusk with regard to other materials are collected in: Maskell, William. *Ivories, ancient and mediaeval*. London: Published by the Committee of Council on Education by Scribner, Welford and Armstrong, 1875.

6. For further information: CITES, *The Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora*. 18 August 2011. International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) <<http://www.cites.org>>.

7. Some titles that can provide information about the Islamic ivory workshops are: Ferrandis, José. *Marfiles árabes de Occidente*. Madrid: Estanislao Maestre, 1935: I, and Madrid: Cuerpo Facultativo de Archiveros, Bibliotecarios y Arqueólogos, 1940: II and the catalogue of Kühnel, Ernst. *Die islamischen elfenbeinskulpturen, VIII-XIII Jahrhundert*. Berlin: Deutscher Verlag für Kunstwissenschaft, 1971: number 41. In 2008 Galán y Galindo publish: Galán, Ángel. *Marfiles Medievales del Islam*. Córdoba: Publicaciones Obra Social y Cultural Cajasur, 2005: I, 394; II, 81.

8. The basis for the study of the Romanesque ivories was set according to: Goldschmidt, Adolph. *Die Elfenbeinskulpturen aus der romanischen Zeit, XI-XIII*. Berlin: Deutscher Verlag für Kunstwissenschaft, 1972 (1st ed. 1926): 4, 94. Subsequently: Kingsley, Arthur. *Romanesque sculpture of the pilgrimage roads*. Boston: Marshall Jones, 1923 and later on with: Kingsley, Arthur. *Spanish Romanesque sculpture*. New York: Hacker art books, 1969 on Spanish ivory workshops. In Spain, it is worth mentioning the work of: Ferrandis, José. *Marfiles y azabaches españoles*. Barcelona: Labor, 1928 followed by: Martínez, Ricardo. *Marfiles españoles*. Barcelona: Argos, 1951. Since the eighties the topic has been studied by: Estella, Margarita M. *La escultura de marfil en España*. Madrid: Editora Nacional, 1984; Franco, Ángela. "Liturgia hispánica y marfiles. Talleres de León y San Millán de la Cogolla en el siglo XI". *Códex Aquilarensis*, 22 (2006): 97-144; Franco, Ángela. "La eboraria de los reinos hispánicos durante los siglos XI y XII". *Códex Aquilarensis*, 13 (1998): 145-166 and Gallego, Raquel. *La eboraria durante el reinado de Fernando I. La perspectiva de unas artes suntuarias europeas* (PhD Dissertation), 2010. Ivory is also part of some manuals: Lasko, Peter. *Arte Sacro 800-1200*. Madrid: Cátedra, 1999; Lozoya, Marqués de. *Historia del arte hispánico*. Barcelona: Salvat, 1931. I or: Yarza, Joaquín. *Historia del Arte Hispánico. La Edad Media*. Madrid: Alhambra, 1982: II; some compilations: Cook, Walter William; Gudiol, José. "Pintura e imaginería románicas", *Ars Hispaniae*. Madrid: Plus Ultra, 1950: VI, 281-294 and some exhibition catalogues: Bango, Isidro, coord. *Maravillas de la España Medieval. Tesoro sagrado y monarquía*. León: Junta de Castilla y León, 2001 and D. Dodds, Jerrilynn, coord. *Art of Medieval Spain A. D. 500-120*. New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1993.

9. An updated and wide bibliographical list about this piece: Gallego, Raquel. *La eboraria durante el reinado de Fernando I...: 65-66*.

10. See footnote 61.



Christ—in the Museum of León—, the *Pax*—guarded in Saint Isidore— and a Plaque with the topic of the *Traditio Legis*¹¹ in the Louvre.

The casket has been analyzed by several researchers, but their studies are usually associated with the León and San Millán de la Cogolla workshops¹², with the Islamic world¹³ or with the National Archaeological Museum in Madrid¹⁴. Some generic features are listed, but there is no thorough study into the aspects that could be crucial to determine its original state and function.

As explained before, the first documented testimony about the piece dates back to the year 1063 and it is a privilege granted by King Ferdinand I and Queen Sancha to the consecration of the Church of Saint Isidore¹⁵. There is no subsequent information about the object until the description of the altar by Ambrosio de Morales in 1572¹⁶. Given the brevity of the text, it is not possible to accurately determine whether or not the Beatitudes Casket could be one of the gifts that appear on the list. In that respect, the work of Quadrado is particularly relevant because it publishes a drawing of the object made by Parcerisa¹⁷.

Amador de los Ríos was the pioneer in elaborating an essay focused exclusively on the Beatitudes Casket¹⁸. He made a meticulous description of each plaque with its inscriptions and measurements, paying especial attention to the royal Document of 1063. He believes that this very chest and the one mentioned in the privilege bearing three boxes inside could be the same piece. He is interested in knowing its original function and thus, he tries to apply an archaeological study of the objects which could shed some light on the link established between Ferdinand I and the Toledo of al-Mamún.

An in-depth approach to the formal description around the Beatitudes Casket originally led by Amador de los Ríos is first found in the 20th century. Julie Ann Harris focuses on iconography, searching for similar examples¹⁹. Moreover,

11. There are index cards with relevant bibliography about these pieces in: *Maravillas de la España Medieval...*, and in: *Art of Medieval Spain...*

12. See footnote 8.

13. Galán, Ángel. *Marfiles Medievales del Islam...*; Kühnel, Ernst. *Die islamischen elfenbeinskulpturen...*; Leguina, Enrique de. *Arquetas hispano-árabes*. Madrid: Librero Fernando Fé, 1912: 46-76; Migeon, Gaston. *Manuel d'art musulman, Les Arts plastiques et industriels*. Paris: Auguste Picard, 1907.

14. Álvarez-Osorio, Francisco. *Una visita al Museo arqueológico Nacional*. Madrid: Imprenta Artística Española, 1910 and Franco, Ángela. "Eboraria en los reinos hispánicos en los siglos XI y XII y su reflejo en el museo arqueológico nacional", *Enciclopedia del Románico, Madrid*. Aguilar de Campoo: Centro de Estudios del Románico, 2008: 197-228.

15. ASIL. Archivo de San Isidoro de León, 125.

16. Morales, Ambrosio de. *Viage a los reynos de León, y Galicia, y Principado de Asturias para reconocer las reliquias de santos, sepulcros reales y libros manuscritos de las catedrales y monasterios*. Madrid: Antonio Marín, 1765 (Ed. Facsímil, Oviedo, 1977): 47-48.

17. Quadrado, José M^o; Parcerisa, Xavier. *España, sus monumentos y artes, su naturaleza e historia. Asturias y León*. Barcelona: Ed. de Daniel Cortez y Cia, 1885: 498.

18. Ríos, José Amador de los. "Arqueta de marfil de la Colegiata de San Isidoro de León hoy existente en el Museo Arqueológico Nacional". *Museo Español de Antigüedades*, 2 (1872): 545-559.

19. Harris, Julie. "The Beatitudes Casket in Madrid's Museo Arqueológico: its iconography in context". *Zeitschrift für kunstgeschichte*, 53 (1990): 134-139.



she connects the Casket with the Hispanic liturgy and particularly with the *Antiphonarium mozarabicum* of the Cathedral of León. She considers that the piece might have been used to worship certain saints, which could be the ones portrayed on it. This idea was later on reintroduced by Ángela Franco²⁰. Concepción Cosmen studies the sources that could have influenced the mentor of the iconographical program, probably a theologian, to portray such an unusual yet suitable topic as the beatitudes in a reliquary²¹.

The work of Ángela Franco Mata is also worth considering. She studies the casket in some of her works, being an article published in 2007 especially remarkable; in this piece of work, she suggests a reconstruction of the Casket that is our starting point for the development of this paper²². Our main aim is to set a new reconstructive hypothesis of the Beatitudes Casket following Dra. Franco's considerations, while adding some details that we deem helpful to determine what the object was originally like in the 11th century.

1. The Beatitudes Casket in its present state

It is difficult to describe the Beatitudes Casket as it is today, since it is made of an amalgam of fragments of both Christian and Muslim origin. The structure is not the original one. If it were, it would be a *unicum*, a strange element among a homogenous group of objects, such as the caskets from the workshops of León and San Millán de la Cogolla. Thanks to this basic principle of similarity, it is possible to bring forward some reconstructive hypothesis. In order to do so, it is imperative to carry out an approximation to the primitive casket, which must be as reliable as possible, while considering its current appearance, fruit of a reconstruction.

The authors who have studied the piece do not agree about the moment when the plaques were assembled the way they are today. Some of them —Amador de los Ríos or José Ferrandis for instance—, believe that the reconstruction would have happened in the 18th century given the ironwork in the piece²³. Others, as Concepción Cosmen, date its reconstruction in the 19th century, after the attack of the French Troops on the Royal Collegiate Church of Saint Isidore²⁴.

There could be an alternative to these two preponderant ideas. Joseph Manzano wrote about an episode from the period of Henry of Burgundy, Count of Portugal (1069-1112) who invaded León shortly after the decease of Alfonso VI. One of his soldiers witnessed a miracle. When he was about to steal the nowadays

20. Franco, Ángela. "Liturgia hispánica y marfiles...": 97-144.

21. Cosmen, María Concepción. "La arqueta de las Bienaventuranzas: fuentes iconográficas". *De Arte*, 1 (2002): 21-30.

22. Franco, Ángela. "La arqueta de las Bienaventuranzas". *Diario de León*. 12 July 2009.

23. Ríos, José Amador de los. "Arqueta de marfil...": 549; Ferrandis, José. *Marfiles y azabaches...*: 151.

24. Cosmen, María Concepción. "La arqueta de las Bienaventuranzas...": 21.



missing Christ offered to the Church by the infant Urraca²⁵, the statue raised its head intimidating the thief²⁶. This might have been the time when the casket was damaged and needed from restoration, sometime at the end of the 11th or beginning of the 12th century. The same situation could have happened in times of Alfonso I of Aragón, the Battler, married to infant Urraca in 1109. He also acted violently against Saint Isidore and he may have caused damage and taken some valuable pieces as he had previously done in Sahagún²⁷. Could the Beatitudes Casket possibly have been among those damaged pieces? Given that there is no recorded evidence to prove this theory, the doubt is still hanging in the air²⁸. The object we are focusing our attention on has been identified with one of the caskets listed in the Document of Donation of 1063, more specifically with one of the two ivory boxes with a silver cover that bore three little chests made of the same material²⁹. This identification is not fortuitous, but rather made regarding the current appearance of the casket. The ivory fragments on the back could belong to two small chests of Muslim origin that were associated with two of the *tres alie capselle in eodem opere facte* mentioned in the Document³⁰.

The object has a prismatic rectangular structure with a truncated lid with four slopes and an upper platform. In its origin, the chest is believed to have had different dimensions and the lid would be proportional to them. Given the resemblances with the ivory plaques portraying the Apostles in the Reliquary of Saint Pelagius (Illustration 5) —also from the Leonesque ivory workshop— it can be inferred that the structure of both caskets could have been similar. The present lid is suitable for the fragments joined later on.

The ivory plaques are inlaid on a wooden core. Seven of them bear Christian iconography and represent the Beatitudes. They are on the front and on both sides. The other seven fragments are of Muslim origin and are located on the back (Illustration 2).

25. For further information about the piece, see note 85 on this paper.

26. Manzano, Joseph. *Vida y portentosos milagros del glorioso San Isidoro, arzobispo de Sevilla*. Salamanca: Imprenta Real-Por Eugenio García de Honorato y San Miguel, 1732: 385.

27. Escalona, Fray Romualdo. *Historia del Real Monasterio de Sahagún*. Madrid: Joaquín Ibarra, 1782: II, 311; Herráez, María Victoria, coord. *El patrimonio artístico de San Benito de Sahagún. Esplendor y decadencia de un monasterio medieval*. León: Universidad de León, 2000: 83; Pérez, Maurilio, ed. *Chronica Adephonsi Imperatoris*. León: Universidad de León, 1997: 79.

28. We have gone through the *Actas Capitulares* in the Chapter about Saint Isidore of León (ASIL. Serie I, Caja 74, 1, a-n), but we could not find any references to a reconstruction. The documentation about the invasion of the French troops gives no clues about this issue either.

29. ASIL. 125 and 126: *et alias duas ebúrneas argento laboratas: in unna ex eis sedent intus tres alie capselle in eodem opere facte*.

30. Galán, Ángel. "Marfiles Medievales...": II, 84, has pointed out that the third box could be the one called "of the hares", kept in the Museum of Saint Isidore, while Estella, Margarita M. "La escultura de marfil...": 29, thinks that it could have been the little Scandinavian idol, also in the same institution.



The object is approximately 18 cm long, 10 to 12 cm wide and between 15 and 16 cm high without the lid³¹. The Beatitudes plaques are 15 cm high and 6 cm long. As previously stated, they do not differ too much from the ivory sheets of the Reliquary of Saint Pelagius, which measure 14x6 cm³². Besides the size, there are more paragon between both pieces, such as the expressions and clothing of the characters. However, although there is a common spirit in the representations, they were not made by the same author.

Only seven Beatitudes plaques have been preserved, but there used to be another one (Illustrations 1, 3 y 4). Occasionally, it has been considered that the last beatitude could have included the others, therefore there being a reiteration³³. Based on this idea, it could be thought that perhaps the eighth one never existed. However, as it is the fourth one which is missing: this hypothesis lacks foundation³⁴.

The Christian plaques follow very strong guidelines. All of them feature a composition dominated by two masculine figures in conversation, sheltered by arches supported by salomonic or helicoids columns. Above the arches there are buildings that emulate Paradise or Heavenly Jerusalem. On the haunches we can read inscriptions with the Beatitudes in caroline letters³⁵: *Beati qui lugent*, *Beati qui persecutionem*, *Beati pacifici*, *Beati Misericordes*, *Beati mundo corde*, *Beati papuperes spiritu*, *Beati mites*. Number four *Beati quie esuriunt et sitiunt justitiam quoniam ipsi saturabuntur* is missing, so it can be presumed that there were originally eight plaques instead of just seven.

The couples represented in the plaques are angels that transmit the divine message and characters that are listening attentively. The identity of these terrestrial figures is rather difficult to determine. They bear halos, are barefoot and wear tunics and cloaks with ornaments. They can be bearded or not. Except one, all of them have books decorated with a four-leaved flower.

31. Its dimensions have been recorded by different authors and they give the reader have an approximate idea of its size. There are discrepancies among researchers, but the variation of the proportions is not very significant. Even if we could have acces to study the casket directly, thanks to the Medieval Art curator at the National Archaeological Museum in Madrid (Ángela Franco) it is forbidden to measure it, and that this way we have into account the information given by other researchers.

32. Álvarez, Monserrat. *El arca de los marfiles de la Real Colegiata de San Isidoro de León*. Leon: Universidad de León (MPhil Dissertation), 1994.

33. Cosmen, M^a Concepción. "La arqueta de las Bienaventuranzas...": 25.

34. Cosmen, M^a Concepción. "La arqueta de las Bienaventuranzas...": 29.

35. This kind of writing comes from French and it is progressively introduced in the Iberian Peninsula from the North territories. Although it is characteristic of the 12th century, it could be found earlier in history, as it happens in the inscriptions of the beatitudes for instance. The features that allow its ascription are, among others, the A with a serif and the triangular stroke as union, the almond-shaped O —which is an eco of the rhomboidal Visigothic O—, and a module that tends to be squared. For further information, refer to: Favreau, Robert. *Les inscriptions médiévales*. Turnhout: Brepols, 1979; García, Vicente. *Las inscripciones de San Miguel de Escalada: estudio crítico*. Barcelona: el Albir, 1982; García, Vicente; Martín, Encarnación. *De epigrafía medieval: introducción y álbum*. Leon: Universidad de Leon, 1995. I would like to thank Natalia Rodríguez Suárez and Alejandro García Morilla, from the Area of Historiographical Sciences and Techniques within the Department of Artistic and Documental Heritage of the University of León, for their help in this field.



Although the scenes are quite similar and share some common features, such as the slim constitution of the characters, jet inlays for the pupils—typical characteristic from the Leonesque ivory workshop— or the draperies of the robes, each one of them has its own personality. Pijoán pointed out that the reliefs have not been fairly valued by the critics³⁶. The crudeness of the figures was generally emphasized, especially when compared to the Cross of Ferdinand I and Sancho³⁷. In fact, even though they do not achieve the level of perfection of the Crucifix, they are high quality pieces.

The most remarkable differences between the plaques are related to the treatment of the wings of the angels that turn, bend and sometimes break the frame or the inscriptions, and are not adapted to the anthropomorphic proportion. The expressions and attitudes are also differential features, and it is important to notice the index fingers of the angels that point at Heavenly Jerusalem. The objects that they hold in their hands are more varied than in the case of the Blessed. One of them carries a palm, another one a scepter and the last one what according to Amador de los Ríos is an instrument, a horn in Pijoán's interpretation and a scroll according to Harris³⁸.

The casket becomes an important document to show the expressions, a field where the most remarkable differences can be appreciated. Some of the figures hold the books with their veiled hand; they lean their chin on their closed fist or appear with their palms opened on the chest, a sign of astonishment, acceptance or even humility according to the specialists on the matter³⁹.

The angels point at Heavenly Jerusalem with large index fingers⁴⁰. All of them have similar robes, but the draperies create different shapes that render the scenes more realistic. The cloaks could be tied to the waist or on the shoulder. The feet seem to show a short break on the way in order to pay attention to what the divine character has to say, and reflect upon the message that they are being told.

A lock in the plaque located in the center of the front side of the casket, which was surely made during the recomposition, is noteworthy as a meaningful formal feature (Illustration 1).

36. Pijoán, José. "Arte románico", *Summa Artis*. Madrid: Espasa Calpe, 2000: IX, chapter VI, 138-139.

37. Gómez Moreno alluded to the minor perfection of figures (Gómez, Manuel. *El arte románico español. Esquema de un libro*. Madrid: Centro de Estudios Históricos, 1934: 24) an idea maintained at *Ars Hispaniae* (Spencer, José William; Gudiol, Josep. "Pintura e imaginería románicas...": 291) and also mentioned by: Beckwith, John. "Caskets from Córdoba...": 30.

38. Ríos, Amador de los. "Arqueta de marfil de la Colegiata de San Isidoro...": 550; Harris, Julie. "The Beatitudes Casket...": 137; Pijoán, José. "Arte románico...": 139.

39. The open palm was studied by: Garnier, François. *Le langage de l'image au Moyen Âge. Signification et symbolique*. París: Le Leopard d'Or, 1982: 174; Miguélez, Alicia. *Gesto y gestualidad en el arte románico de los reynos hispanos: lectura y valoración iconográfica*. Leon: Círculo Románico, 2009: 107-116; Ríos, Amador de los. "Arqueta de marfil de la Colegiata de San Isidoro...": 551, had already said that it was a gesture of resignation and innocence.

40. Miguélez, Alicia. "Gesto y gestualidad en el arte románico...": 116; Miguélez, Alicia. "El dedo índice como atributo regio de poder en la iconografía románica de la Península Ibérica", *Imágenes del poder en la Edad Media. Selección de Estudios del Prof. Dr. Fernando Galván Freile*. Leon: Universidad de León, 2011: II, 325-339.



As suitable as it is for a reliquary, the iconographic topic of the Beatitudes is not very common in the artistic medieval representations. These biblical statements are linked with the liturgy because they were read, recited or sang in different offices related to the saints and their relics. Therefore for a casket made to guard the remains of holy men from the past, it would be more than adequate to portray these divine teachings to the faithful. These reliefs with the beatitudes work as a role model for the Christians who venerated the holy relics held in the casket. It must be said that from 1063, when the Church of Saint Isidore was consecrated, and until 1572 at least, when Ambrosio de Morales mentioned and described this piece, the casket would have been located on the altar, next to the Reliquaries of Saint Isidore and Saint Pelagius—from 1065 on known as the Reliquary of Saint Vincent⁴¹.

In short, one of the iconographic codes of the piece could be associated with the Hispanic or Mozarab Liturgy. The most direct source to understand the work of the beatitudes can be found in the *Antiphonarium* of the Cathedral of León. This text compiles parts of these statements in the offices of the saints Acisclus, Romanus, Julian, Tirso, Engratia, Simon and Judas, Euphemia and Cosmas and Damian⁴². Franco Mata follows this idea and adds that the casket could have been used to contain the relics of the characters honored by the mozarab liturgy⁴³.

There is yet another text that could be linked to the chest because of a curious detail: in the manuscript 35.5 of the Library of the Chapter of Toledo, and as pointed by Ángela Franco⁴⁴, the beatitudes are said to be only seven⁴⁵. Thus, it could be considered that it was a source for the iconography of the piece, where there is the same number of reliefs. However, and as previously stated, originally, there should have been eight plaques, because the one that is missing is the fourth beatitude and not the last one.

Concepción Cosmen makes an in-depth research of other sources or texts that could have been an influence in the choice of the topic. She infers that Saint Augustine, with *De Sermone Domini in Monte*, could have been the starting point for a lot of theorists such as Paul the Deacon, Pope Leo I or the Venerable Bede who also studied the beatitudes, and whose texts were perhaps kept in the library of Saint Isidore in León. Moreover, in the *City of God*, there is a careful description of Heavenly Jerusalem, so it has a bearing on the Augustinian ideas⁴⁶.

41. For further information, refer to: Morales, Ambrosio de. "Viage a los reynos de León...": 47-48.

42. Harris, Julie. "The Beatitudes Casket...": 139.

43. Franco, Ángela. "Liturgia hispánica y marfiles...": 125.

44. Franco, Ángela. "Liturgia hispánica y marfiles...": 128.

45. Huglo, Michel. "Le chant des Beatitudes dans la liturgie hispanique". *Hispania Sacra*, 17 (1964): 137-138.

46. Santamarta del Río, Santo; Fuertes, Miguel, trads. *Obras de San Agustín. La ciudad de Dios*. Madrid: Biblioteca de Autores Cristianos, 1978: XVI-XVII.



The angels on the casket, identified as such thanks to the wings, have an important mission⁴⁷: they descend from Heavenly Jerusalem to transmit the Lord's message to the chosen ones, as well as to welcome the souls that arrive in Heaven⁴⁸.

But... what do the haloed figures represent? The researchers describe them as saints, "doctors" or witnesses, ultimately with the chosen ones for the afterlife⁴⁹. They could also be related to the pilgrim on Earth mentioned by Saint Augustine⁵⁰. We believe that they are role models, and represent "the good man". They would therefore be *exempla* carved in ivory, that could lure the observer and faithful who prayed before the relics of the casket. They could inspire them to behave in a good way in order to get the estate of good fortune.

The seven Muslim fragments are very different in size, as they came from two different boxes. They are organized in three horizontal friezes and they do not seem to follow a fixed organization (Illustration 2).

One of the chests, which reconstruction was suggested by Ferrandis, would be made of the two plaques that form the intermediate band on the back of the Casket, and the vertical inscription on the upper right corner. The three reliefs must be ascribed to the Cuenca ivory workshop because of the decoration, the composition with faced animals and the inscription bearing the same name that appears on the Casket of the Cathedrals of Palencia and Narbona: *Ismail ben Almamun*.

The other four fragments, including the little triangular one with the *ta marbuta*⁵¹, are probably from Seville and they are believed to belong to the same piece⁵², which could possibly be in León. In 1063, Ferdinand I sent a committee to make a pact with al-Mutalid (1042-1069). From these negotiations, the Christian king got the body of the Visigoth saint, Saint Isidore, and also booty with different pieces. It may have included this box, later on offered to the new Church⁵³.

47. Saint Augustine describes angels as ministers and messengers *que realizan, sin vacilación ni dificultad, lo que, de modos inefables, oyen debe ser realizado y debe llegar hasta estos seres visibles y sensibles*. ("Obras de San Agustín...": XVI, book X, chapter XV, 631).

48. Stierling, Henry. "Ivoires de l'Espagne. Une grande tradition d'art somptuaire". *L'oleil*, 317 (1981): 46: 42; Cosmen, M^a Concepción. "La arqueta de las Bienaventuranzas...": 27-28; Werckmeister, Otto Karl. "The first romanesque Beatus Manuscripts and the liturgy of death", *Actas del Simposio para el estudio de los códices del "Comentario al Apocalipsis" de Beato de Liébana I*. Madrid: Joyas Bibliográficas, 1980: II, 178.

49. Harris, Julie. "The Beatitudes Casket...": 137; Pijoán, José. "Arte románico...": 138; Franco, Ángela. "Liturgia hispánica y marfiles...": 119; Cosmen, M^a Concepción. "La arqueta de las Bienaventuranzas...": 29; *Obras de San Agustín. La ciudad de Dios...*: XVII, book XV, chapter I, 141.

50. *Obras de San Agustín. La ciudad de Dios...*: XVII, book XV, chapter I, 141.

51. It is a letter from the Arabic alphabet which designs as feminine the word which is located before it. I would like to thank Professor José Miguel Puerta Vilchez from the University of Granada for his help in the field of inscriptions and the interest shown in this piece of work.

52. Franco, Ángela. "Liturgia hispánica y marfiles...": 127; Galán, Ángel. "Marfiles Medievales...": II, 84.

53. The translation of the relics of Saint Isidore appears in: Pérez de Urbell, Justo; González Ruiz-Zorrilla, Atilano, eds. *Historia Silense*. Madrid: Aldecoa, 1959: 45, 198 and later, in the 13th century, in the text by: Tuy, Lucas de. *Milagros de San Isidoro*. Leon: Universidad de León, 1992. It was also studied during the 17th century: Manzano, Joseph. "Vida y portentosos milagros...", especially in chapters 12, 13, 14, 15 book I, 37, 38, 39 and 40, book II, 4, 5 and 30, book III and in *España Sagrada* (Risco, Manuel. *España Sagrada, Memorias de la Santa Iglesia esenta de León concernientes a los ultimos cinco siglos...* Madrid: B.



Five of the seven remains bear inscriptions, which are difficult to read and thus present a challenge for the experts. Different interpretations have been suggested and it is easy to conclude that they were made in court spheres. Their use would have been modified in Christian territories. The best revision so far about this reading was made by Galán y Galindo⁵⁴.

It is not difficult to get an idea of what the boxes could be like, taking into account their fragmentary state. The same thing happens with the Beatitudes Casket; thanks to the compiled information and the precedent studies, it is possible to suggest a hypothetical reconstruction of the primitive casket. Thus, we can create a mental image of what the monarchs Ferdinand I and Sancha saw the day of the consecration of the temple of Saint Isidore in December of 1063.

2. The Beatitudes Casket in its original estate

The primitive state of the piece will remain a mystery until new clues are unraveled, but meanwhile we will attempt to make an approximation to its original shape using analytic and comparative methods.

Although it has generally been considered that the Christian plaques would have been part of a casket, Raquel Gallego García suggests that they could belong to a different kind of object mentioned in the Donation of Ferdinand and Sancha such as, for instance, an altar or a frontal⁵⁵. In order to support this theory, she makes a comparison between the Beatitudes Casket and the Portable Altar of Namur dated around 1050⁵⁶. The researcher considers that they share some formal features, such as the evangelical scenes above the arches, or the book bearing characters⁵⁷.

We believe that the object was a casket for various reasons. First of all, it has always been identified as such and there are no signs of it being otherwise. It would be logical that whoever made the reconstruction did not want to modify its original function—to contain relics—but to keep it. Moreover, taking into account the fact that the iconographic program could have been conceived by a theologian who was familiar with Saint Augustine's texts, it is plausible that he chose a casket when he decided to represent Heavenly Jerusalem because, according to the saint: *la ciudad*

Román, 1736: XXXV, 86); Flórez, Enrique. "Actas de la traslación de S. Isidoro", *España Sagrada, de la provincia antigua de la Bética en común, y de la Santa Iglesia de Sevilla en particular*. Madrid: Real Academia de la Historia, 1860: IX, 406 and published in the 19th century. Antonio Viñayo studied this topic during the 20th century: Viñayo, Antonio. "La llegada de San Isidoro a León", *Archivos leoneses*, 33 (1963): 65-111; Viñayo, Antonio. "Cuestiones histórico-críticas en torno a la traslación del cuerpo de San Isidoro", *Isidoriana, colección de estudios sobre Isidoro de Sevilla, publicados con ocasión del XIV Centenario de su nacimiento*. Manuel Díaz y Díaz, ed. León: Centro de Estudios de San Isidoro, 1961: 285-297.

54. Galán y Galindo, Ángel. "Marfiles Medievales...": I, 393-395; II, 82-84.

55. Gallego, Raquel. "La eboraria durante el reinado de Fernando I...": 385.

56. Goldschmidt, Adolph. "Die Elfenbeinskulpturen...": v. IV n° 105, XXXVI, 31.

57. Gallego, Raquel. "La eboraria durante el reinado de Fernando I...": 359, 384 and 385.



*de Dios es la Iglesia fundada por Cristo, depositaria de sus tesoros, arca de salvación para los hombres*⁵⁸.

We take Angela Franco's studies as the starting point of our theory, particularly the two latest articles about the topic⁵⁹. She transmits her idea about the appearance of the casket in the 11th century and makes a visual scheme of it.

The author suggests that some plaques have been lost: two of the ones on the box and all of the plaques that used to decorate the lid. In order to make a reconstruction, she makes use of the comparison with the Reliquary of Saint Pelagius that Ferrandis had done before⁶⁰. It is one of the most important objects from the ivory workshop of León. It was offered to the Church of Saint John and Saint Pelagius by Ferdinand I and Sancha in 1059. Primarily, it used to guard the relics of the above-mentioned saints and subsequently the remains of Saint Vincent. Some researchers, such as Gómez Moreno, link it to one of the gold and ivory caskets cited in the Document of 1063: *capsam eburneam operatam cum aureo*. Today, it has lost its metallic cover, and only the ivory plaques nailed into the wooden core have been preserved. On the lid, the *Agnus Dei* and the Four Rivers of Paradise are represented, while the twelve Apostles appear on the box in different attitudes and under semicircular or horseshoe shaped arches. Nowadays it is on display in the Museum of the Royal Collegiate Church of Saint Isidore of León⁶¹ (Illustration 5).

It would not be surprising that the shape and even some iconographic details on both caskets were similar. But Ángela Franco considers that instead of having four plaques on each of the long sides, as the Reliquary of Saint Pelagius, the Beatitudes Casket used to have three on the largest surfaces and two on one of the sides. The other side would have been filled by a Christ in majesty that, according to Dr. Franco, was that in the Larcade collection of Paris in 1925⁶². This figure has some characteristics that allow us to relate it to the Beatitudes Casket's reliefs, such as its dimensions (13,1 x 6,6 cm) or the buildings located at the *suppedaneum*.

The elements shaped as tiny arches, which evoke the firmament, are also very similar to the motifs in some of the capitals supporting the arches framing the

58. "The City of God is the Church founded by Christ, the depository of its treasures, ark of salvation for men": "Obras de San Agustín. La ciudad de Dios...", XVI, book I, 29.

59. Franco, Ángela. "Liturgia hispánica y marfiles...": 117; Franco, Ángela. "La arqueta...".

60. Ferrandis, José. "Marfiles y azabaches...": 151.

61. Due to the big amount of publications that collect information about the piece, only some of the most relevant titles are mentioned here. The bibliography in note 8 is also useful. Valdés, Manuel. "Arca de los marfiles", *Las Edades del Hombre. El arte en la Iglesia de Castilla y León*. Valladolid: Fundación Edades del Hombre, 1988: 186-187; Franco, Ángela. "El Tesoro de San Isidoro y la monarquía leonesa". *Boletín del Museo Arqueológico Nacional*, 9/1-2 (1991): 42; Dods, Jerrilyn D. "Art of Medieval Spain...": 236; Álvarez, Monserrat. "El arca de los marfiles..."; Fernández, Etelvina. "Arca Relicario", *Obras maestras recuperadas*. Madrid: Fundación Santander Central Hispano, 1998: 72-74; Cosmen, M^a Concepción. "Arca de San Pelayo". *Maravillas de la España Medieval. Tesoro Sagrado y Monarquía*. Isidoro Bango, coord. Leon: Junta de Castilla y León, 2001: 229, n. 87. Gallego, Raquel. "La eboraria durante el reinado de Fernando I...": 293.

62. Goldschmidt, Adolph. "Die Elfenbeinskulpturen...": IV, 105, XXXVI.



couples portrayed on the plaques of the Beatitudes. The book and the facial shape and expression of this majesty could be directly related to the casket⁶³.

In order to support the idea of the presence of a Pantocrator, Dr. Franco builds up from this stylistic comparison, while establishing formal links between the Beatitudes and the Casket of San Millán de la Cogolla⁶⁴. The latter was the capital piece by the other 11th century Christian ivory workshop in the North of the Iberian Peninsula, situated in Navarre next to a Benedictine monastery. It was also damaged during the French Invasion. However, its reconstruction could have been made thanks to the descriptions of the casket provided by Yepes, Sandoval and Melcolaeta⁶⁵. Literary sources, such as the *Vita Aemilianensi*, written by Braulio de Zaragoza in the 7th century or *Estoria del Sennor Sant Millán*, by Gonzalo de Berceo, have also been a starting point for the researchers, as the ivory reliefs on the box could perfectly illustrate these stories. The inscriptions were taken from Braulio's original texts. A chest made in 1944 is preserved nowadays. It presents some mistakes compared to the original from the 11th century that is still today in the monastery. The holes made on the ivory plaques with the representation of the life of Saint Millán are still noticeable. These scenes had a very narrative sense, which is a detail of outmost importance, because there is yet no example of hagiography in ivory the artist could have been inspired from.

A Christ in Majesty, identified as the one in the Dumbarton Oaks Collection in Washington, is believed to have been represented on one of the short sides of the Casket of San Millán⁶⁶. Perhaps the carver had followed the model marked by the artist of the Beatitudes Casket when he placed a Pantocrator on one of the sides, as we have suggested.

Ángela Franco Mata believes that, once again imitating the Reliquary of Saint Pelagius, the lid the Beatitudes Casket would have had a representation of the *Agnus Dei* and the Tetramorph. If that were true, these topics would be a convention of the Leonese workshop. She also supports the possibility of the monarchs being represented on it, emulating the example of Justinian and Theodora in Saint Vitalis of Ravenna⁶⁷. On one side, a crowned Ferdinand would be accompanied by four angels, on the other one, Sancha with her royal entourage showing her importance

63. Franco, Ángela. "La arqueta..."; Franco, Ángela. *Arte leonés [siglos IV-XVI] fuera de León*. Leon: Edilesa, 2010: 160.

64. As with the Reliquary of Saint Pelagius, we refer to note number 8 of this study and show only the more recent and complete title about the piece: Bango, Isidro G. *Emiliano, un santo de la España visigoda, y el arca románica de sus reliquias*. Salamanca: Fundación San Millán de la Cogolla, 2007.

65. de Sandoval, Prudencio. *Primera parte de las fundaciones de los monasterios del glorioso Padre San Benito*. Madrid: Luis Sánchez, 1601; Yepes, Antonio. *Crónica General de la Orden de San Benito*. Madrid: Atlas, 1959: I, CXXIII; Melcolaeta, Diego de. *Desagravio de la verdad en la Historia de San Millán de la Cogolla, natural del reyno de Castilla, primer abad de la Orden de San Benito en España*. Madrid: Lorenzo Francisco Mojados, 1704.

66. Bango, Isidro G. "Emiliano, un santo de la España visigoda..." 142; Goldschmidt, Adolph. "Die Elfenbeinskulpturen...": IV, 85.

67. Franco, Ángela. "El tesoro de San Isidoro...": 52. That idea also comes up in: Fernández, Etelvina. "El *imago regis* y de la jerarquía eclesiástica", *Monarquía y sociedad en el Reino de León, de Alfonso III a Alfonso VII*, Centro de Estudios e Investigación "San Isidoro", ed. Leon: Guaflex, 2007: 59.



in the field of the artistic patronage⁶⁸. Gómez Moreno also suggests this iconography for the silver lid of the Reliquary of Saint Isidore⁶⁹. Finally, Franco Mata considers that the wooden core was covered by metalwork, but she does not specify if it was made of gold or silver.

Our reconstructive theory, illustrated by figures 8 and 9⁷⁰, starts from a premise stated by María Elena Gómez Moreno, who believed that the primitive composition of the Casket would have consisted of four plaques representing the Beatitudes on both the front and the back. The sides and the lid would have born another kind of representations⁷¹. If it were the case, it would be adjusted to the structure of one of its most clear precedents: the Reliquary of Saint Pelagius. Ángela Franco Mata, states that there could possibly have been three instead of four plaques on the front and back of the casket, based on the hole for the lock present on the current central plaque. Nevertheless, Galán y Galindo makes an interesting appreciation⁷². The keyhole seems to have been drilled by force on the relief, breaking the inscription, which makes it clear that originally none of the ivory fragments were perforated. We agree with this author and think that each of the long surfaces would have born four plaques, and that the space between them would have been sufficient for a piece of ironwork to be placed in the central part of the chest, with no need of altering any of the sheets with a hole.

Now a problem comes up; if we consider that the casket was structured in that way: what were the representations on the sides like? We suggest two possibilities for one of them: either a portrait of the royal couple or the Sermon of the Mount. The first option had already been suggested by Gómez Moreno for the Reliquary of Saint Isidore, and Ángela Franco had also applied it to the Beatitudes Casket. In that way, it would match the Casket of San Millán de la Cogolla. If all of the figures that

68. There is extensive bibliography related to the role of Queens and Princesses as promoters of art. It is relevant to refer to the work, associated with the Queens in Leon, of Antonio Viñayo: Viñayo, Antonio. "Reinas e infantas de León, abadesas y monjas del monasterio de San Pelayo y San Isidoro", *1 Semana de Historia del monacato cantabro-astur-leonés*. Oviedo: Monasterio de San Pelayo, 1982: 123-135 and also the studies by John Williams: Williams, John. "León and the beginnings of the spanish romanesque", *Art of Medieval Spain...*:167. His pupil, Therese Martin focuses on this topic too: *Queen as King, Politics and Architectural Propaganda in Twelfth-Century Spain*. Leiden-Boston: Brill, 2006. Regarding Sancha, it is relevant to mention an episode of the *Historia Silense...* (197-198) in which Sancha talks Fernando I into creating a Royal Pantheon in San Isidoro. Other important papers are: Havens, Susan. *Queen Sancha's "Persuasion": A Regenerated León Symbolized in San Isidoro's Pantheon and its Treasures*. Binghamton: Global Publications, Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies, 2000: 1-48; Prado, Francisco. "Lacrimae rerum: San Isidoro de León y la memoria del padre". *Goya*, 328 (2009): 195-221; Boto, Gerardo. "Las dueñas de la memoria. San Isidoro de León y sus Infantas". *Románico, revista de arte de amigos del Románico*, 10 (2010): 75-82.

69. Gómez, Manuel. "El arca de las reliquias de San Isidoro de León". *Archivo Español de Arte*, 48 (1940): 209.

70. Some of the elements in the reconstruction are fictional, because they could not be documented. They are neutral motifs that intend to create a mental image as similar as possible to the original appearance of the piece, back in the 11th century. In Illustration 9, gold has been used instead of a silver texture, for technical reasons.

71. Gómez, María Elena. "Mil joyas...": I, 163.

72. Galán, Ángel. "Marfiles Medievales...": II, 82.



had something to do with the patronage of the piece appeared on one of the sides, a truly Leonesque typology would have been created. The Master of San Millán would have later on used it in its own work⁷³.

This idea is not inappropriate if we observe other artistic samples in which Ferdinand I and Sancha are or were represented. It seems that they tried to leave their names in a visible and explicit way on the works of art that they promoted⁷⁴. Thereby they follow the medieval trend in which the patronage attended not only the personal pleasures of the patron, but also political and propagandistic interests. Moreover, as professor Moralejo said, Ferdinand I would go even further:

Ferdinand I may be the first Hispanic monarch whose art can be said to be his not only because he had sponsored it or that it carries his name or likeness, but because it seems also to have taken some of his body and his circumstances⁷⁵.

The artistic expression promoted by the Leonesque couple could be grouped in three big blocks: the illustrated manuscripts, the stone inscriptions and other artistic objects. The king and queen are alluded to on the different materials, either by an iconographical representation or by an inscription, being this last option far more common⁷⁶.

The Document of Donation of 1063 is perhaps the greatest evidence of the piety of the sovereigns. It could be considered as an inventory of the pieces that had generously been transferred to the Church of Saint Isidore. Actually, by doing so, they legitimized and consolidated their power. One detail that has been noticed by various authors is the importance Sancha —and women who belonged to the Leonesque monarchy in general— had in the artistic patronage through the

73. Álvarez, Noemi. "Sancho IV y el abad Blas como mentores del Arca de San Millán de la Cogolla", *Reyes y prelados. La creación artística en los reinos de León y Castilla (1050-1500)*, Dolores Teijeira, M^a Victoria Herráez, Concepción Cosmen, eds. Madrid: Sílex, 2014: 94-111.

74. For further information about the Leonesque royal patronage: Andrés, Salvador. "El tesoro de la monarquía leonesa". *Real Colegiata de San Isidoro de León. Relicario de la monarquía leonesa*. León: Edilesa, 2007; Bango, Isidro G. "La piedad de los reyes Fernando I y Sancha. Un tesoro sagrado que testimonia el proceso de la renovación de la cultura hispana del siglo XI", *Maravillas de la España Medieval...: 223*; Franco, Ángela. "El Tesoro de San Isidoro...": 35-67; Galván, Fernando. "Arte y monarquía en León". *Enciclopedia del Románico en Castilla y León*. José Manuel Rodríguez, ed. Aguilar de Campoo: Fundación Santa María la Real, 2002: 53-65; Rodríguez, José Manuel. "Los promotores de las obras románicas", *Los protagonistas de las obras románicas*. Aguilar de Campoo: Centro de Estudios del Románico, 2008: 68.

75. Moralejo, Serafín. "Artistas, patronos y público en el arte de camino de Santiago", *Compostellanum*, 30 (1985): 395-430; cited in: *Patrimonio Artístico de Galicia y otros estudios*. Santiago de Compostela: Xunta de Galicia, 2004: III, 29.

76. Álvarez, Noemi. "La inscripción como imagen de poder en la Edad Media. El caso de Fernando I de León y su esposa Doña Sancha", *Actas del XIX Congreso Internacional de Historia del Arte: Artes y Arquitectura del Poder*; Víctor Manuel Mínguez, coord. Castellón de la Plana: Universitat Jaume I, 2013: 1787-1803; Suárez, Ana, "Al pie de la letra. Inscripciones y manuscritos de los siglos X al XVI", *Real Colegiata de San Isidoro: relicario de la monarquía leonesa*, Constantino Robles, Fernando Llamazares, coords. León: Edilesa, 2007: 198.



Infantazgo or *Infantado*⁷⁷. In the privilege of 1063, her presence is noticeable both at the beginning *Nos indigni et exigui famuli Christi Fredenandus rex et Sancia regina* and in the signatures⁷⁸.

The illustrated manuscripts promoted by them are also an excellent example of the intentions of the royal couple, because miniature and monarchy are linked in a fine and effective way, transforming these works into a very efficient promotional tool. As Isidro Bango pointed out, the absence of these expressions in the document of 1063 is very remarkable, because they stood out by the sumptuousness through which they transmitted their political intentions⁷⁹. There are three preserved samples: *Commentary on the Apocalypse by Beatus of Liébana*, *Prayer book of Ferdinand and Sancha* and *Liber canticorum et horarum* of the queen⁸⁰. In all of them, the name and presence of at least one of the monarchs appear, allowing us to emphasize their intention to take part in the works they promoted. From the preserved testimonies, and as Fernando Galván said, Sancha's interest in the illustrated manuscripts would be bigger than Ferdinand's⁸¹. We would like to highlight the king and queen's portrayal on most of the pieces they supported, because thanks to these expressions, it is more likely to think that they would have also appeared on the Beatitudes Casket.

The monarchs are also mentioned on the second line of the commemorative inscription of the Church of Saint Isidore: *excellentissimus Fredenandus rex et Sancia regina*. Moreover, the queen appears once again on the last part: *Sancia regina deo dicata peregrit*⁸². The participation of the royal couple in the renovation of the Church built by Alfonso V is made clear by this carving on the stone, which shows both their devotion and their purchasing power.

Through the precedent examples, it can be noticed that the inscriptions and signatures are the most common method used by Ferdinand and Sancha to be present on the works they promoted. Furthermore, we can verify this procedure in the other two main pieces coming from the ivory workshop of León. We know the Reliquary of Saint Pelagius is dated in 1059, because of the inscription read by Ambrosio de Morales in the 16th century: *Arcula Sanctorum micat haec sub honore*

77. Pérez, Justo; González, Atilano. "Historia Silense...": 97-198 we learn that it was Sancha who decided to create a Royal Pantheon.

78. See: Robles, Constantino. "Monasterio de San Isidoro. Fundación e historia", *Real Colegiata de San Isidoro de León...*: 29 where a picture of the Monarchy anagrams appears.

79. Bango, Isidro G. "La piedad de los reyes Fernando I y Sancha...": 224.

80. Some interesting titles to analyse this illustrated manuscripts in depth are: Castiñeiras, Manuel Antonio. "Libro de Horas de Fernando y Sancha" and "*Liber canticorum et orarum* de Sancha", *Maravillas de la España Medieval...*, 90 and 91: 232; Fernández, Gloria. "Comentario al Apocalipsis de Fernando I y Sancha", *Maravillas de la España Medieval...*: 231; Franco, Ángela. "Arte leonés fuera de León...": 278; Williams, John W. "Commentary on the Apocalypse by Beatus" and "Prayer book of Ferdinand and Sancha", *Art of Medieval Spain...*: 289-290. It is also recommended to read the works of Dr. Fernando Galván Freile, compiled in the tribute book dedicated to him: *Imágenes del poder en la Edad Media. Selección de Estudios del Prof. Dr. Fernando Galván Freile*. León: Universidad de León, 2011, I: 127-153, 367-387, 451-467 and 499-523.

81. Galván, Fernando. *Imágenes del poder en la Edad Media...*: 454.

82. Suárez, Ana. "Al pie de la letra. Inscripciones y manuscritos de los siglos X al XVI", *Real Colegiata de San Isidoro de León...*: 198.



*duorum Baptistae Sancti Joannis, sive Pelagii. Ceu Rex Fernandus Reginaque Santia fieri iussit. Era millena septena seu nonagena*⁸³. The most charming object is the Ivory Cross guarded in the National Archaeological Museum in Madrid, in which a direct allusion to the ones who commissioned it can still be read today. It is an inscription placed at the bottom of the cross, just below the figure of a stooped Adam, which reads:

FREDINANDVS REX SANCIA REGINA⁸⁴. (*Illustrations 6 and 7*).

The silver casket, aimed at containing the relics of Saint Isidore, is also mentioned in the list of gifts offered by the king and queen in 1063⁸⁵. Although in this case there are no inscriptions, there are two figures that have been identified as representing Ferdinand I. As previously stated, Gómez Moreno considered that the King was the bearded man flanked by four men (his entourage) on the lid⁸⁶. Franco Mata suggests that a similar image would find place at the beginning devoted to the queen and her ladies⁸⁷. The bearded figure with an outstanding head on one of the largest sides of the casket has also been related to the monarch. This figure is believed to be at the same level as the divine characters of the Genesis in the other scenes⁸⁸.

The ideals of patronage of the royal couple were maintained even after their death: their achievements both in the political and in the artistic and devotional spheres of the Church of Saint Isidore, the focal point of their doctrine, can be read on their gravestones. Their wish for not being forgotten is also transmitted by their stone plaques⁸⁹.

83. Morales, Ambrosio de. *Viage a los reynos de León...*: 47.

84. Bango, Isidro G. "La piedad de los reyes Fernando I y Sancha...": 230.

85. A monograph study has been devoted to this casket: Astorga, María Jesús. *El arca de San Isidoro: historia de un relicario*. Leon: Diputación de León, 1990; and different catalogues have included its study: Andrés, Salvador. "El tesoro de la monarquía...": 179-181; Walker, Daniel; Williams, John W. "Reliquary of Saint Isidore", *Art of Medieval Spain...*: 239-244; Bango, Isidro G. "Relicario de San Isidoro", *Maravillas de la España Medieval. Tesoro Sagrado y Monarquía*, Isidro Bango, coord. Leon: Junta de Castilla y León, 2001: 228, 86.

86. Gómez, Manuel. "El arca de las reliquias de San Isidoro de León...": 209.

87. Franco, Ángela. "El tesoro de San Isidoro...": 52.

88. Etelvina Fernández notes that this figure is lacking royal attributes and she does not accept this hypothesis. Fernández, Etelvina. "Imagen, devoción y suntuosidad en las aportaciones de Fernando I y Sancha al tesoro de San Isidoro de León", *Monasterios y monarcas: fundación, presencia y memoria regia en monasterios hispanos medievales*. Aguilar de Campoo: Fundación Santa María la Real, 2012; Fernández, Etelvina. "Reflexiones sobre la evolución hacia el románico de las fórmulas artísticas altomedievales en el ámbito astur-leonés en la undécima centuria", *Hispaniens Nordem im 11. Jahrhundert Christliche Kunst im Umbruch. El Norte hispánico en el siglo XI. Un cambio radical en el arte cristiano. Jornadas internacionales, Göttingen, 27 bis 29, Februar, 2004*, Achim Arbeiter, Christian Kothe, Bettina Marten, eds. Petesberg: Imhof Verlag, 2009: 54-55.

89. Their text appears in different sources as: Yepes, Fray Antonio. "Crónica General...": II, 340; Manzano, Joseph. "Vida y portentosos milagros del glorioso San Isidoro...": book III, chapter 30: 347; Risco, Manuel. "España Sagrada...", XXXV: 149-150; de Assas, Manuel. "Crucifijo de marfil del rey Fernando I y su esposa Doña Sancha", *Museo Español de Antigüedades*. Madrid, 1872, I: 190-210; Quadrado, José M^o;



Along the same lines as these works of art, the actions of Urraca, daughter of Ferdinand and Sancha, are also worth considering, as they show how she followed her parents' steps in the field of patronage. On the chalice preserved until today in the Treasury of Saint Isidore there is an inscription, made with filigree: IN NOMINE D[OM]NI URRACA FREDINA[N]DI⁹⁰ and a Christ which is nowadays missing, but that was described by Risco and Manzano bearing the text: VRRACA FREDINANDI REGIS ET SANCIA REGINA FILIA⁹¹. Thus, the king and queen become protagonists again, in a certain way. The name of Urraca appears above her mother's in the *confessio* of the *Liber canticorum et orarum*. This fact displays the importance this piece had for both of them⁹². Likewise, Urraca would have promoted the representation of their parents kneeling under the Crucifix on the wall paintings of the Royal Pantheon in Saint Isidore⁹³.

All of the above mentioned examples are evidence of the pious actions of the sovereigns. The Beatitudes Casket, comparable for its value with the other main pieces of the Leonese ivory workshop—the Crucifix and the Reliquary of Saint Pelagius—must also have borne the presence of Ferdinand I and Sancha, for it not to be outdone. Instead of being represented on the lid with their entourages, according to the preceding observations and not dismissing the hypothesis of a figured representation of the royal couple, we consider that they could have been present through a sign or an inscription. The material used cannot be known for certain, because there are examples both in ivory and metal in pieces with similar features. In any way, they could be adapted to the Beatitudes Casket, because it originally had a metallic cover which complemented the ivory reliefs.

Should the monarchs truly have been represented on the lid, and not on the sides as in San Millán de la Cogolla, one of the minor sides would have been filled with a different representation, possibly the evangelic account of Matthew.

The mentor, as presented by Dr. Cosmen⁹⁴, could have been a cleric who knew the text and who would have chosen the moment when Jesus delivers his celebrated *Sermon of the Mount* to be represented on one side⁹⁵. This idea arose

Parcerisa, Xavier. "España, sus monumentos y artes...": 492; Pérez, Julio. *Historia de la Real Colegiata de San Isidoro de León*. León: Nebrija, 1982: 385.

90. Williams, John W. "Chalice of Urraca", *Art of Medieval Spain...*: 254; García, Antonio. "El Cáliz", *Maravillas de la España Medieval...*: 335; Suárez, Ana. "Al pie de la letra. Inscripciones y manuscritos...": 198.

91. Manzano, Joseph. "Vida y portentosos milagros del glorioso San Isidoro...": 385; Risco, Manuel. "España Sagrada...": XXXV, 357; Ferrandis, José. "Marfiles y azabaches...": 154-156; Estella, Margarita M. "La escultura del marfil...": 26.

92. Galván, Fernando. "El 'Liber canticorum et horarum...': I, 454.

93. Antonio Viñayo studied the wall paintings of San Isidoro in some publications. The most relevant is: Viñayo, Antonio. *Panteón de Reyes: pinturas románicas de San Isidoro de León*. León: Edilesa, 1995: 44. More information about them can be found in: Valdés, Manuel. "El Panteón Real de la Colegiata de San Isidoro de León...": 79; Cortés, Miguel. "Pinceladas bizantinas pintura románica en el Panteón Real...", chapter V: 151.

94. Cosmen, M^a Concepción. "La arqueta de las Bienaventuranzas...": 29.

95. Mt. 5, 3-12.



from Galán y Galindo's approach, who suggested that the missing plaque, with the fourth statement, could have portrayed Christ announcing the Beatitudes⁹⁶. From our point of view, it seems strange that precisely the missing sheet should have displayed a different structure, knowing how strict the composite diagram in the others plaques was. Applying the equality principle, we believe that the fourth beatitude could not have been very different from the seven preserved. We do not dismiss the existence of another plaque with the scene of the Sermon, which would suit the iconographical key of the Casket, allowing to close the cycle of the Beatitudes. Although it is not a very frequent topic in the Middle Ages⁹⁷, there are some illustrations of it. Perhaps the most relevant one for our research is the one on the Tragaltar of Namur, a piece that is formally related to the Casket.

Once having reflected upon the different topics that could be part of one of the sides, we need to find an answer to what the other one might have been like. We agree with other authors who stated that it could have showcased a Pantocrator, an idea supported by the sample in San Millán de la Cogolla. In this case, as the primitive wooden core is preserved, the space destined to the *mandorla* would still be visible. León was not so fortunate. However, there are some arguments in favor of this idea, as a lot of historians and theologians have compared reliquaries to churches, deeming the presence of the Lord in them completely necessary⁹⁸. Thanks to the identification between the symbolism of a Christian building and a sumptuary object, it could be considered that, in the casket, the semicircular arches acquire the same meaning as in the churches where they fulfill the function of pushing the faithful towards the apse⁹⁹. In this piece, they could drive the characters placed under the arches to the missing representation of the Majesty, and to Salvation.

However, the strongest piece of evidence that allows us to affirm that there used to be a Pantocrator on the casket could be extracted from one of the sources used by the person who created the iconographical program. We are once again referring to Saint Augustine, who in *City of God*, said that Christ in Majesty was the essential ingredient in Heavenly Jerusalem¹⁰⁰. Therefore, if the iconographical function of the casket was the illustration of the beatitudes linked with the divine city symbolized

96. Galán, Ángel. "Marfiles Medievales...": II, 82.

97. Schiller, Gertrud. *Iconography of Christian Art*. London: Lund Humphries, 1972: V. I: 156-215.

98. Some examples are: de Coussemaker, Edmond. "Chasse et croix de Bousbecque: orfèvrerie du XIIIe siècle" in: Leguina, Enrique. "Arquetas hispano-árabes...": 9, who said that: "the material church, the church on earth, is the image of the heavenly city of paradise. For this reason, in many alms boxes, Our Lord is represented at one end of the box, the East"; Peña, Joaquín. "Los marfiles de San Millán...": 21 also insists on this idea: "The ark shrine, according to the symbolism used in the Middle Ages resembled a church and that church was a symbol and image of the Heavenly City". For further information about the symbolism of the temples, which also applies to caskets understood as architecture: Hani, Jean. *El simbolismo del templo cristiano*. Palma de Mallorca: Sophia Perennis, 1983.

99. Liaño, Emma; Sureda, Joan. *El despertar de Europa. La pintura románica, primer lenguaje común europeo, siglos XI-XIII*. Madrid: Encuentro, 1998: 23.

100. Some fragments from *City of God* that support this idea: "All the pilgrimage of Christians, the launch toward the future world, comes from Christ, who is the Mediator of hope, because He is the way and the homeland, the force that causes us to walk and the end of the last rest. Children of the Resurrection and the aspirants and hoppers for the resurrection of the flesh are the pilgrims in this city" ("Obras de San



by the architectures above the arches, God had to be present, and the best way to do so was through a splendid image, just as it would look like in the promised Paradise: as a Pantocrator.

If we finally conclude that the *Maiestas Domini* was represented on the casket, we would have to find an appropriate plaque for it. One could think of the *pax* of Saint Isidore. Its 13 cm could have been adapted to one of the sides, but it comes from a later period¹⁰¹. Just as Franco Mata, we believe that the Christ in Majesty from the Larcade Collection mentioned before could be the Pantocrator on the Casket¹⁰².

In order to reach that conclusion, Dr. Franco made a comparison between the Majesty and the *Traditio Legis* plaque from the Louvre Museum and the Larcade Collection Christ. The master of this piece was also working on the Beatitudes Casket. The images of Christ on both plaques display some common features¹⁰³. On top of these characteristics, we can add some more.

They are framed by an almond shape and a circumference. The figures show an analogous disposition of the lower part of the body. On the one hand, their feet are located above a *suppedaneo* traversed by a diagonal double line, and on the other hand, the legs, bent in seated position, create a triangle that collects the draperies of the robes joint at the waist. The upper limbs, however, present different attitudes. Although both characters carry a book in their left hand, the disposition and also the motif on the book covers are not the same. The Christ from the Larcade Collection raises his right hand up to his head while holding a sphere. The one from the Louvre shows a two-finger blessing hand reaching out to Saint Peter. The heads are haloed. Their faces are quite elongated; the anatomical features of the figures on the missing plaque are better carved, and have more naturalistic hair and fleshier cheeks. This could be due to it being made by the main artists of the Beatitudes Casket, while the carver of *Tradition Legis* plaque has always been attributed to an author with minor skills.

In conclusion, in spite of the impossibility to directly observe the plaque from the Larcade collection, it is the sample that would best match the ivory reliefs of the Beatitudes and, consequently, it would probably be one of the missing pieces to complete the formal and iconographical puzzle of the Casket.

Another interesting aspect for the reconstruction would be determining the motifs that could have decorated the lid. Its structure could have been similar to that on the Reliquary of Saint Pelagius¹⁰⁴: several ivory plaques portraying the *Agnus Dei* and the Tetramorph¹⁰⁵ (Illustrations 5, 8 y 9), a convention for the Leoneseque

Agustín. La ciudad de Dios...": XVI, 63) and "If someone asks why some are blessed, this is the correct answer: because they are united to God" (Also: 753).

101. See note 11.

102. This piece is lost and the only way to approach it is through: Goldschmidt, Adolph. "Die Elfenbeinskulpturen...": IV, 105.

103. Franco, Ángela. "Arte leonés fuera de León...": 160-161.

104. Franco, Ángela. "Liturgia hispánica y marfiles...": 124.

105. Mariño, Xosé Ramón. "El simbolismo animal...": 24-25; Réau, Louis. *Iconografía del arte cristiano. Iconografía de la Biblia. Nuevo Testamento*. Barcelona: Serbal, 2008: II, 710; Liaño, Emma; Sureda, Joan. "El



ivory workshop, as it is also present on the reverse of the Cross of Ferdinand I and Sancha, and on the *Traditio Legis* plaque. In fact, Manuel Valdés, when talking about the Reliquary of Saint Pelagius of 1059, said that the Romanesque image of the lamb could have been one of the most divulged ones in Leonesque territories¹⁰⁶. Moreover, if this animal had been in the center of the lid, next to the Rivers of Paradise and the Tetramorph, this topic could be assimilated to the heavenly cities represented in some manuscripts¹⁰⁷.

It is important to clarify the position of the reliefs of the beatitudes, which from left to right are 1, 2, 7, 5, 6, 3, 8¹⁰⁸. It seems that the person who did the recomposition was based on aesthetic features instead of taking into account the iconographical program. It is interesting to discover how the three ivory plaques with more similar architectures are placed in the front, while the buildings portrayed on the ones on the sides are more complex and varied. Also the similarities regarding the composition are more evident between the couples on the sheets on the main face of the casket.

In this paper, we suggest that originally, the plaques would have been organized according to the evangelic text and their disposition would have been: *Beati papuperes spiritu, Beati qui lugent, Beati mites, Beati qui esuriunt et sitiunt justitiam quoniam ipsi saturabuntur, Beati Misericordes, Beati mundo corde, Beati pacifici, Beati qui persecutionem*¹⁰⁹.

In order to make the reconstruction as complete as possible, it is important to think about the metallic cover the casket originally presented, following precedent models. Nowadays, it is composed of ivory plaques inlaid in the wooden core with no spaces between them that make it possible to display a decorative and ornamental program in other materials. It is difficult to determine whether it was covered in gold, silver or both.

Based on the privilege of 1063, and relating the casket to one of the *alie duas eburneas argento laboratas* as it has been said, we would accept that the box could have been covered in silver. However, in 1572, Ambrosio de Morales, wrote a description of the altar in the Church of Saint Isidore, which reads:

*The other Ark of the side of the Gospel has the Relics of S. Pelayo, and other Saints, and is of gold and silver, as is also another smaller that is with this, and has many minor Relics*¹¹⁰.

If we identify the Beatitudes casket as one of the above-mentioned boxes, it is necessary to say that it was made both of gold and silver. In our opinion, it

despertar de Europa...": 72.

106. Valdés, Manuel. "Arca de los marfiles...": 186-187.

107. Yarza, Joaquín. "Historia del Arte Hispánico...": II, 105.

108. Franco, Ángela. "Liturgia hispánica y marfiles...": 122.

109. This order is based on this version of the Bible: *La Biblia*. ed. Serafín de Ausejo. Barcelona: Herder, 1987: 1007. There are other interpretations that locate *Beati mites* in the second place, followed by *Beati qui lugent* in the third position.

110. Morales, Ambrosio de. *Viage a los reynos de León...*: 47-48.



could have been made of silver, but have some details in gold. In this manner both testimonies, the document and the description of Morales, would be right.

Whatever the metal used for the setting was, it is interesting to suggest what kind of designs could have been represented on it and if they could serve a function beyond just being ornamental. Once more, it is relevant to take the Reliquary of Saint Pelagius and the Casket of San Millán de la Cogolla as precedents.

In the case of the first one, some arches were represented on the metallic cover, as the traces on the wood surface, which still remain visible reveal. In the casket from Navarre made in 1944, the decoration is made of vegetal friezes, a motif that would not be very far from the primitive example.

From our point of view, it would be logical that the ornamentation in the Beatitudes casket consisted in bands of vegetation instead of arches because there are architectural elements to cover the figures. Although in the Reliquary of Saint Pelagius the Apostles are located under ivory arches and the traces on the wooden core show that there used to be bigger ones, we believe that, as the piece we are focusing on has buildings above the haunches, it would be too reiterative to turn the arches over the architectures again. The friezes could allude to the gardens of paradise related to Heavenly Jerusalem, represented by these buildings.

Moreover, it could be possible to make yet another Augustinian association around the naturalistic motifs. They would not only symbolize the divine gardens of the celestial city, but they could also be assimilated to the good Christian who, as a plant which weed was sown by the Lord to wish the eternal happiness, starts growing thanks to the good deeds, until it finally achieves the promised goal: the City of God¹¹¹.

This subject matter about Paradise would not be surprising in an object with a clear function: guarding the holy remains. In this manner, it would stress the program of salvation and forgiveness of sins linked to the phenomenon of the relics, that could be read both on the Reliquary of Saint Pelagius and the Cross of Ferdinand I and Sancha. Consequently, the pieces from the Leonese ivory workshop would not only share formal features but also a thematic content related to Redemption. This is a constant worry in the figure of the monarch, as show the celebrations and rituals he made around his own death, during which he was consciously put at the same level as the figure of Saint Isidore¹¹².

111. "Christ put men in march towards God, and sowed in their hearts the desire for the blissful immortality in the celestial city, that moves the Christians upwards, like a celestial plant, that spreads its branches to the sky, seeking the warmth of the sun" ("Obras de San Agustín. La ciudad de Dios...": XVI, book: 29).

112. The biographies of Fernando I deal with his death: Sánchez, Alfonso. *Castilla y León en el siglo XI. Estudio del reinado de Fernando I*. Madrid: Real Academia de la Historia, 1999: 234; Viñayo, Antonio. *Fernando I (1035-1065)*. Burgos: La Olmeda, 1999: 209. However, the most relevant studies about the death of Fernando I are: Bishko, Charles. "The liturgical context of Fernando I's last days according to the so-called *Historia Silense*". *Hispania Sacra*, 33-34/17 (1964): 47-59; Werckmeister, Otto Karl. "The first romanesque Beatus Manuscripts and the liturgy of death", *Actas del Simposio para el estudio de los códices del "Comentario al Apocalipsis" de Beato de Liébana I*. Madrid: Joyas Bibliográficas, 1980, 2: 170. More interesting works are: Isla, Amancio. *Memoria, culto y monarquía hispánica entre los siglos X y XII*. Jaen: Universidad de Jaén, 2006: 41; Valdés, Manuel. "El Panteón Real de la Colegiata...": 75-76.





ILLUSTRATION 1.



ILLUSTRATION 2.





ILLUSTRATION 3.



ILLUSTRATION 4.





ILLUSTRATION 5.



ILLUSTRATION 6.



ILLUSTRATION 7.





ILLUSTRATION 8.



ILLUSTRATION 9.

