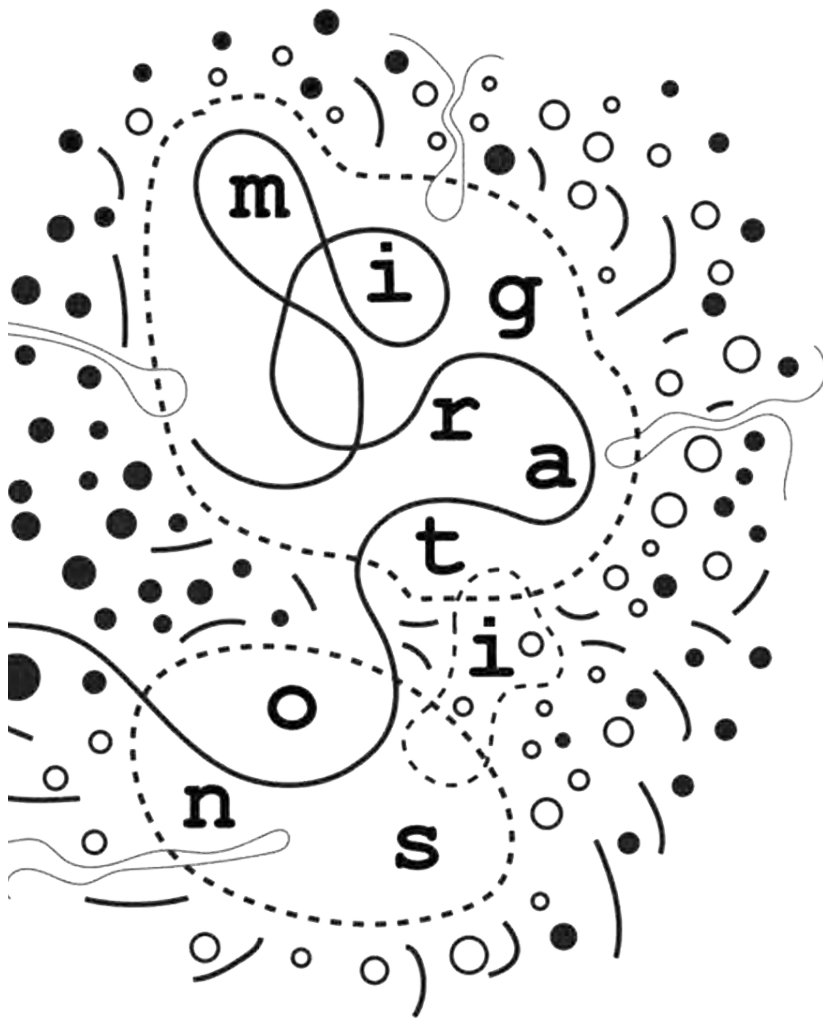


# Migration of Objects

---

## Session 12



# Session 12

## Migrations of Objects

---

**Pedro Luengo**  
Universidad de Sevilla

**Angela Brandão**  
Universidade Federal de São Paulo

This session focused on the material base of art, and on its real or symbolic transformation within the multiple processes of migration through time and space. Artistic processes create and charge objects with symbolic meaning, but also with political, social, and economic significance. Academics have proposed many approaches in the last decades through this perspective. History of Things has become a common field encompassing Art History, Archaeology, Anthropology, History and Geography. Benefited by such interdisciplinary views, it now requires a redefinition inside our discipline. This session understood the historic-artistic object as three-dimensional artifacts filled with meaning/s from aesthetical tools, being those visual, acoustic, any other sensorial or mixed. From the political rhetoric of a diplomatic gift to the religious meaning of African cabanas, through Mandarin stones, devotional figures or maps, all were charged with an intention, by the patrons, the artists, the owners or even those who finally wrote about them. Even more recent proposals rejecting the role of art as a communication tool can be analyzed from this point of view. This panel sought to address this wide problem from specific questions, closely linked with the general aim of the conference and CIHA:

1. Propose an analytical framework for the migration of objects. Alterable features of objects allow us to analyze them as an inbetween case. After being exported some changed their meaning or characteristics, such as the Asian fans, screens or silks, devotions such as the Santo Niño in the Philippines, the Virgin of Guadalupe, or the Central Asian Buddhism along China, Korea or Japan, just to cite some examples. Others changed their meaning

after a chronological migration, such as the copies of antiquities that can be found both in Asia and Europe, or the current artistic tendency of appropriations.

2. Define the possibilities of contribution from Art History to the object, compared with other historical current approaches. Is there a clear difference between the concept of artefact and artistic objects nowadays? Is there a conflict between the historical material turn and the social art history? How can digital art history help to obtain sharper responses from the part of our discipline?

3. Propose a new paradigm to better understand how the migration of objects allowed the diffusion of artistic techniques or models. From oil painting to Asian silver filigree through different attempts to obtain porcelain secrets, all show a cultural dialogue in different artistic cases that must be explained from the theoretical framework of the discipline, and not mainly from cultural history.

# Image and Presence: Circulation and Reemployment of Objects in the Cult of Teresa de Ávila's Relics

---

**Agathe Bonnin**

CY Cergy Paris Université / Universidad Autónoma de Madrid

## **ABSTRACT**

In July of 1583, nine months after her death, Teresa de Ávila's body was disinterred, and deemed miraculously preserved. The scattering of her relics in Europe and the Americas was part of several historical dynamics: the defense and increased control of the cult of saints' relics during the Catholic Reformation, the fight of the Discalced Carmelites for the beatification of their founder and their expansion out of the Spanish peninsula, and the colonization of America by the Hispanic Monarchy. We propose to study three of Teresa de Ávila's relics which migrated, at the turn of the XVIth century, to the royal convent of Las Descalzas Reales in Madrid and to the Discalced Carmelite convent of San José in Puebla de los Ángeles. We will focus on their circulation through aristocratic and religious networks, and their reemployment in various geographical, social, and institutional contexts, to try and understand how legitimacy and presence travel through those objects.

## **KEYWORDS**

Relics; Hispanic Monarchy; Mysticism; Teresa de Ávila; Catholic Reformation.

### **Introduction**

When Teresa de Ávila's body was taken out of her grave in the convent of Alba de Tormes in July of 1583, nine months after her death, its scent and state of preservation were deemed miraculous. So much so that in 1585 it was secretly taken to Ávila, her native town, with the approbation of the Carmelite Council and of the archbishop; meanwhile, the left arm was illegally cut for the nuns of Alba de Tormes to keep, and the left hand taken by a Carmelite father to Lisboa. The body was displayed in Avila in 1586 and examined by physicians and religious. The duke of Alba, one of Spain's most powerful noblemen subsequently wrote a letter to the Pope, asking for the return of the body to the convent of his town: the pope complied and forbade any further moving of the body. The fame of Teresa's relics and the miracles they accomplished were a key argument in favor of starting a procedure of beatification in 1591, when a second examination of the body was performed, and the heart was removed to be studied as well'.

Her canonization and the subsequent recognition of her relics was mainly sponsored by the Discalced Carmelites, founded by Teresa de Ávila, who needed to support their expansion in Europe and America, and to assert their orthodoxy and relevance as a new order in a time of suspicion<sup>2</sup>. The Hispanic Monarchy also had interest in the sanctification of Teresa de Ávila and of her relics, as she had become a national symbol in a context of colonization of America and war in the Netherlands, both presented as holy initiatives to defend Roman Catholicism in a time of crisis<sup>3</sup>. Indeed, the process of canonization and the early circulation of Teresa de Ávila's relics took place during the Catholic Reformation, only decades after the Council of Trent, whose last session (in 1563) was dedicated to "the invocation, veneration and relics of saints, and the sacred images"<sup>4</sup>. The Catholic Reformation aimed to reassert the role of saints as intercessors, the veneration due to their relics, and the importance of sacred images; but it also sought to supervise and control very tightly the making of these saints, relics and images, and the associated devotional practices. That led to the creation of new saints, contemporary figures who embodied the ideals of the Roman Catholic Church. Consequently, Teresa de Avila was beatified in 1614

and canonized in 1622 alongside three other saints, two of them XVI<sup>th</sup> century founders of religious orders, and two of them Spanish<sup>5</sup>: her canonization and the official recognition of her relics was a political decision beneficial to the Catholic Reformation, the rise of the Discalced Carmelites and the imperialism of the Hispanic Monarchy. Bearing in mind this complex political and religious context, I will try and understand the way the migration of relics allowed for a migration of the saint's legitimacy and presence, through the case of two relics kept in the royal convent of Discalced Franciscans of *Las Descalzas Reales*, and of a relic kept in the first Discalced Carmelite convent of America, the convent of San José in Puebla de los Ángeles.

#### **Multiplication and migration of presence**

A cloth soaked with Teresa's blood arrived to *Las Descalzas Reales* in 1599, with a letter from María de San Jerónimo, prioress of the convent San José de Ávila, where the body stayed for two years<sup>6</sup>. The letter relates the miraculous episode in which this cloth became a relic: when Teresa's body was disinterred, a cloth that had been applied to stop her bleeding at the time of her death was found half rotten, only intact in the part where it had been soaked by Teresa's blood. The piece of fabric, which remained in Avila's convent when the body was brought back to Alba, stayed wet, and María de San Jerónimo writes that fourteen years later, in 1599, another cloth was pressed against the original one, and soaked with blood as well: the relic seems to have a power of magical duplication that allows the miraculous presence to travel even as the body stays in the same place.

Generally, a distinction is made between relics that are part of a saint's body and secondary relics, or contact relics, which are objects touched by it before or after death. However, in one of the saint's first hagiographies by Jusepe de Ribera, the author classified the miracles accomplished by her relics in three chapters: first the body and cloths, then the pieces of clothing she wore while alive, and finally, the portraits and letters<sup>7</sup>. Thus, in Ribera's classification, the cloths soaked with Teresa's blood seemed to be relics in their own right, and not only contact relics: because they carried Teresa's blood, they became an extension of her body.

The transmission of Teresa's holy presence from one cloth to the other was not only theoretical: the new relic gained the same powers, and even the same sensory characteristics as the original one. Numerous witnesses mention the scent emanating from all of Teresa de Ávila's relics<sup>8</sup>, and in *Las Descalzas*, the cloth was used to cure illnesses by applying it onto the part of the body causing pain, as it was thought to carry the same healing qualities as the body of the saint.

The letter of María de San Jerónimo gives the impression that this multiplication of relics was a rare and special occurrence. In fact, there was a very large number of cloths that had been touched to Teresa's arm for instance, which was also said to produce continuously a kind of liquid halfway between blood and oil<sup>9</sup>. The cloths are even the most cited relics in the process of beatification, because they were the most common, the ones that travelled most freely all over the Hispanic Monarchy and beyond, helping spread the fame of her sanctity.

#### **Mutual legitimation of aristocratic and religious networks**

Another relic of Teresa de Ávila arrived in *Las Descalzas* before her canonization: the sleeve of the habit she wore while sick, accompanied by a certificate of authenticity dated of 1618<sup>10</sup>. This type of official document was made compulsory by the new tridentine policy on relics. It states that the relic was sent by Carmelite father José de Santa María to Margarita de Austria, a nun of *Las Descalzas* who was the daughter of emperor Maximilian II and empress Mary of Habsburg. It was a way for the House of Habsburg to associate themselves with a popular Spanish saint; but it was also for the Discalced Carmelites who gifted the relic a way to guarantee the prestige of their founder's relics. Indeed, various witnesses in the process of beatification allude to the quality of the relics' owners as an argument that proves Teresa's holiness, such as Isabel de Santo Domingo:

the relics of the blessed virgin Teresa are and have always been regarded and venerated as relics of great holiness by many prominent people, especially the archduke of Austria Alberto, who, when he was governor of the kingdom of Portugal and

paying a visit to the Netherlands, went through Zaragoza, [...] and while staying in the home of the viceroy, who was the duke of Albuquerque, said Archduke said to the viceroy that he was travelling with a great certainty that Our Lord would give him a propitious journey, because he was carrying with him a relic which he regarded very highly, and in which he had great faith, which was a hand of the saint mother Teresa de Jesús, that the nuns of her Order from the convent of Lisboa had lent him to take with him on the way."

Mentioning the archduke and the viceroy in a testimony was not casual, just as it was not casual to mention José de Santa María and Margarita de Austria in a certificate of authenticity: the aristocratic and religious networks through which the relics travelled were part of their relevance. The object didn't only migrate because of its power, it gained power from its migration. In a way, the piece of clothing, by contact, retained not only the presence of the holy woman, but that of its owners.

#### **Relics in court culture**

The relics also took different meanings and had different functions depending on the type of place they were sent to. In *Las Descalzas*, home to many women of the royal family and central space of the Spanish court, the relics participated in court culture, which was not in contradiction with their devotional use<sup>12</sup>. The room where the relics are stored resembles a Renaissance *Wunderkammer*, with relics and reliquaries brought by nuns or sent to the convent from a variety of places: it is a typical example of the court practice of collection. In fact, the chest in which the two relics under study are stored is a nambam chest (fig.1), probably given by the empress María when she entered the convent<sup>13</sup>. The nambam style, literally meaning "southern barbarian" in Japanese, is a style designed for Portuguese and Spanish exportation in XVI<sup>th</sup> century Japan, using traditional lacquer technique, and a combination of Japanese and European iconographies. This is not an isolated case: in another royal convent of Madrid, *La Encarnación*, two of Teresa's relics are stored in nambam chests, and one in a case made of tortoise shell, typical of the workshops of New Spain<sup>14</sup>. Those reliquaries

underwent migration from one continent to another, but also from a lay to a religious space: this type of cases could be used as reliquaries from the start, but also as travel or jewelry boxes for young noblewomen. When they entered the convent, they brought with them those aristocratic objects, which were then reemployed in a religious context.



**Fig. 1.** Arqueta nambam, late XVI<sup>th</sup> – early XVII<sup>th</sup> century, Las Descalzas Reales, Madrid. Published in García Sanz, “*Via Orientalis*”, 26.

### **Legitimacy of a new convent**

In the case of the Discalced Carmelite Convent of San José in Puebla, relics take yet another significance. A small fragment of Teresa’s body was brought to the convent in 1618, four years after her beatification, by the General Father of the order, Juan de Jesús María, as a way to show that the order supported the young community<sup>15</sup>. The relic also served as protection and comfort for

the nuns in a place thought of as hostile: as Rosalva Loreto López points out<sup>6</sup>, at the time the convent was relatively isolated from the center of Puebla. Moreover, the relic, bearer of a sacred presence, was a way to sanctify a new land that the Christ hadn't touched, just like Europe was sanctified by the relics brought back from the Crusades during the Middle Ages. In a relation of the miraculous apparitions the nuns of the convent witnessed on the surface of the relic early after its arrival, their frustration about their geographical situation is obvious:

Our Holy Mother had never done in this house one of the wonders that she does in Spain. Thinking it was due to their lack of merit, since they were not her true daughters, some of them said to look at the saint's relic to see if by chance Our Lord would do her the same grace as in Spain.<sup>17</sup>

Interestingly, a XVIII<sup>th</sup> century chronicle dedicated to the convent interprets the apparitions which occurred in Puebla as a sign that the migration of the relic was Teresa's will, and that the General father was merely an instrument in a divine plan for the convent: "I have reasons to think that the angelic mother sent this holy relic to this convent through the General Father, as a show of her kindness and love to these, her beloved daughters."<sup>18</sup> The miraculous nature of the relic bestows on the community a celestial legitimacy that goes beyond the earthly legitimacy granted by the order.

#### **Relics as a space of exchanges between two worlds**

The relic's miracles are also a way to materialize the presence of Teresa de Ávila among her daughters: indeed, the first apparition witnessed on the relic is that of Teresa's portrait<sup>9</sup>. It is important to point out that Teresa's printed and painted images, widely distributed from the end of the XVI<sup>th</sup> century, were copied from an original portrait painted from life: the *vera effigies*. Because it was painted in the presence of the living saint, it was in itself a kind of relic by contact. As we have pointed out, Ribera devotes a chapter to the miracles accomplished by Teresa's portraits, most of them prints, and

many testimonies from the trial for beatification report that these images were considered as relics<sup>20</sup>.

But the relic didn't simply carry the presence of Teresa; it also allowed the nuns to see the holy beings with whom Teresa communicated. To identify the beings from their visions, the nuns of Puebla widely resort to artistic references. For instance, Magdalena de San Pedro has a vision of Juan de la Cruz, and the report written in 1618 by sub-prioress Melchora de la Asunción states that "she knows it to be this saint because it is very true to those that they bring nowadays pictured in prints from Spain"<sup>21</sup>. This way of focusing on likeness, recognition, more than representation, is very characteristic of the tridentine conception of image, as historians like Pierre-Antoine Fabre have pointed out<sup>22</sup>.

However, the relic itself is not a neutral support for apparitions: the shape, size and nature of this fragment of body are crucial to understand the way it produced images in the minds of the nuns. The first chronicle of the Discalced Carmelites in Mexico, written between 1646 and 1653 by Agustín de la Madre de Dios, draws from the 1618 report of Melchora de la Asunción, with some changes: interestingly, while the subprioress suggests the relic was part of Teresa's arm, Agustín de la Madre de Dios presents it as a fragment of her heart, and it was rebranded as such by the later tradition<sup>23</sup>. This change may seem trivial, but it must be understood within the baroque and mystical conception of the heart. Indeed, it was thought to be the source of will, the seat of the soul, and the place where Christ went to visit mystics. Agustín de la Madre de Dios plays strongly into the mystical tradition and baroque imagery by assimilating Teresa's heart, and by metonymy, this relic, to a surface where the image of Christ appears, as well as a space in which he stays: "In her pure heart Teresa saw the Lord when she was alive, and now the Lord wants others to see him in it so that the world knows how good he found himself in this heart, since he left his figure painted there as in a mirror"<sup>24</sup>. Teresa's relic is assimilated to her heart because both are an interface, a threshold that allows the mundane and celestial worlds to communicate – without it being clear if they are spaces or surfaces.

**Artistic metaphors and living images**

Moreover, in the case of Teresa de Ávila, the heart was not only a symbolic, theoretical area: her actual heart became a prestigious relic after it was examined in 1591 and said to present physical scars of the *Transverberación* – one of her most important mystical experience, mentioned in the papal edict of her canonization, when an angel pierced her heart with an arrow<sup>25</sup>. Indeed, a XVII<sup>th</sup> century print of Teresa’s heart (fig.2) highlights the scar, captioned both in Latin and Spanish. It is inhabited by a figure of the Infant Jesus reciting verses from the Song of Songs in his sleep, and prolonged by two lines or arteries towards the coat-of arms of the male and female branches of the Discalced Carmelites, evidencing a complex anatomical-mystical conception of the heart.



**Fig. 2.** *Medida del corazón de Teresa*, XVII<sup>th</sup> century, Teresianum, Rome. Published in Moreno Cuadro, “Medida del corazón teresiano”, 234.

To complicate further the relation between reliquaries, relics and the divine presence they enclose, Teresa herself compares Christ's presence in the soul (thus in the heart) to "a gem enclosed in a gold reliquary"<sup>26</sup>, while the XVIII<sup>th</sup> century chronicle of San José de Puebla describes a heart-shaped reliquary made of pearls which "serves as an amorous shell for a spine from Christ's crown"<sup>27</sup>. In fact, the relation between Teresa's heart and the divine presence it holds is often described in artistic terms by the nuns of Puebla, just like in other contemporary sources<sup>28</sup>. As the XVIII<sup>th</sup> century chronicle points out, the figures presented themselves: "sometimes in the same way as in the wax of the Agnus, other times as if they were painted with a brush, so that the colors were distinct"<sup>29</sup>. The artistic technique of wax, just like print which was also a common metaphor for mystic visions and memory<sup>30</sup>, is a way of producing an image by contact, the same way the sacred presence travels by contact through the relics. But the chronicle continues with another comparison:

sometimes they saw the holy relic grow, expanding in the way that bread leavens in the oven, seeing other times that the blood was liquefied like when something frozen melts, seeing it boil, so that one time the crack that runs up and down the relic merged, and the image of Christ, our Lord, appeared, with his face full of blood, and his lips so swollen that his mouth was opening<sup>31</sup>

When witnessing this phenomenon, the nun Francisca de la Natividad, "her heart pierced with grief, lost her sight"<sup>32</sup> – an obvious reference to the *Transverberación*. The description of the relic leavening like bread, taken directly from the 1618 report, also shows that the nuns believed this object to be capable of metamorphosis, and that the metamorphosis of the object was no more than a sign of the metamorphosis it operated in the one who looked at it. Just like a Host – which is, on the contrary, bread that hasn't leavened –, the relic is made of a sacred substance which retains a presence greater than itself, and which has the power to transform what it touches. The images printed on the relic, on Teresa's heart, are then printed in the nuns' hearts: the nuns themselves, by their visionary experience, become more like Teresa,

truer to her image. Still in the XVIII<sup>th</sup> century chronicle, a chapter is devoted to one of the first nuns of the convent born in New Spain, who was called, like the saint, Teresa de Jesús. She was one of those who experienced visions, and after her death, according to this text, her own possessions became relics<sup>33</sup>.

Luis de León introduced the first edition of Teresa's writings this way: "I didn't meet, nor saw, mother Theresa of Jesus while she was on earth, but now that she lives in the sky I meet her and see her almost constantly in the two living images she left us of herself, which are her daughters and her books."<sup>34</sup> The perfect image is a living image, capable of bleeding and changing like the face of Christ that appeared on Teresa's relic – it is, therefore, an image that can multiple, migrate and change. Teresa de Ávila's presence and image migrated through the relics we have studied: those performative objects reshaped themselves according to the place where they arrived, and reshaped the souls of the people devoted to it in the likeness of the saint.

#### **BIBLIOGRAPHY**

Agustín de la Madre de Dios. *Tesoro escondido en el Monte Carmelo Mexicano: mina rica de exemplos y virtudes en la historia de los Carmelitas Descalzos de la Provincia de la Nueva España*. Mexico: UNAM, 1986.

Bataillon, Marcel. *Erasme et l'Espagne : recherches sur l'histoire spirituelle du XVI<sup>e</sup> siècle*. Geneva: Droz, 1998.

Checa, Fernando. *La otra corte: mujeres de la Casa de Austria en los Monasterios Reales de las Descalzas y la Encarnación*. Madrid: Patrimonio Nacional, 2019.

*Compendio de Las Solenes Fiestas Que En Toda España Se Hicieron En La Beatificacion de N.M.S. Teresa de Jesus Fundadora de La Reformation de Descalzos y Descalzas de N.S. Del Carmen*. Madrid: viuda de Alonso Martin, 1615.

Fabre, Pierre-Antoine. *Décréter l'image ? : la XXVe session du Concile de Trente*. Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 2013.

De Ribera, Francisco. *La vida de la madre Teresa de Jesus*. Madrid: Francisco Lopes, 1590.

García Sanz, Ana, and Annemarie Jordan Gschwend. "Via Orientalis: objetos del lejano oriente en el Monasterio de las Descalzas Reales." *Reales Sitios: Revista del Patrimonio Nacional*, no. 138 (1998): 25–39.

García Sanz, Ana. "Arte y religiosidad en los conventos reales: huellas del carmelo en los patronatos regios." *Libros de la Corte*, no. 9 (December 2014): 101–4.

- Gómez de la Parra, José. *Fundación y primero siglo: crónica de primer convento de carmelitas descalzas en Puebla, 1604-1704*. Mexico: Universidad Iberoamericana, 1992.
- Jiménez Pablo, Esther. "Cultura material en 'clausura': las reliquias del Monasterio de las Descalzas Reales en los siglos XVI y XVII." *Antíteses* 10, no. 20 (2017): 613–30.
- Kawamura, Yayoi. "Las lacas Namban y el cristianismo. Un estudio sobre las obras enviadas a España." *Estudios de arte español y latinoamericano*, no. 18 (2017): 1–14.
- Lavrin, Asunción. "Santa Teresa En Los Conventos de Monjas de Nueva España." *Hispania Sacra* 67 (December 2015): 505–29.
- Loreto López, Rosalva. "Del tamaño de una uña: Reliquias, devociones y mística en una ciudad novohispana. Puebla de los Ángeles, siglo XVII." *Relaciones. Estudios de historia y sociedad* 38, no. 150 (2017): 47–92.
- MacGregor, William. "The Authority of Prints: An Early Modern Perspective." *Art History* 22 (December 2003): 389–420.
- Moreno Cuadro, Fernando. "Medida del corazón teresiano." In *Valor discursivo del cuerpo en el barroco hispánico*, 227–46. Valencia: Universitat de València, 2015.
- Moreno Cuadro, Fernando. *Iconografía de Santa Teresa de Jesús*, Burgos: El Monte Carmelo, 2018.
- Portús, Javier, and Jesusa Vega. *La estampa religiosa en la España del Antiguo Régimen*. Madrid: Fundación Universitaria Española, 1998.
- Rowe, Erin Kathleen. *Saint and Nation: Santiago, Teresa of Avila, and Plural Identities in Early Modern Spain*. University Park, Pa.: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2011.
- Sánchez Hernández, María Leticia et. al. *El relicario del Real Monasterio de la Encarnación de Madrid*. Madrid: Patrimonio Nacional, 2015.
- Sánchez Reyes, Gabriela. "La santidad fragmentada: las reliquias carmelitas del Convento de San José de Puebla" In *Cuerpo y religión en el México barroco*, 87-108. México: Escuela Nacional de Antropología e Historia, 2011.
- Silverio de Santa Teresa. *Procesos de beatificación y canonización de Sta. Teresa de Jesús*. Burgos: El Monte Carmelo, 1934.
- Tenorio, Martha Lilia. *De Panes y Sermones: El Milagro de Los "Panecitos" de Santa Teresa*. Mexico: El Colegio de Mexico, 2001.
- Teresa de Ávila, *Los libros de la Madre Teresa de Iesus, fundadora de los monesterios de monjas y frayles Carmelitas descalços de la primera regla*, Salamanca: Guillelmo Foquel, 1588.

---

## Endnotes

1. Chronology based on Sánchez Reyes, "La santidad fragmentada", 93-95.
2. Bataillon, *Erasme et l'Espagne*, 793. The mental form of prayer promoted by Teresa de Ávila was considered a risk, especially for women, because of its proximity to the practices of the *alumbrados*, Spanish illuminates accused of spreading reformist ideas.

3. Teresa de Ávila was briefly declared co-patron of Spain in 1626, and there was a conflict between Rome and the Hispanic Monarchy to control the order she had founded. See Rowe, *Saint and nation*.
4. “De invocatione, veneratione, et reliquiis sanctorum, et sacris imaginibus”. Latin text and French translation in Fabre, *Décréter l’image*.
5. Ignacio de Loyola, Felipe Neri and Isidro Labrador.
6. García Sanz, “Arte y religiosidad en los conventos reales”. Jiménez Pablo, “Cultura material en ‘clausura’”, 622.
7. Ribera, *La vida de la Madre Teresa*, 456-477 (Book 5, chapter 5-7).
8. See for instance Silverio de Santa Teresa, *Procesos*, v.1, 3, 89, 118...
9. *Ibid.*, 78, 142, 361...
10. García Sanz, “Arte y religiosidad en los conventos reales”.
11. Silverio de Santa Teresa, *Procesos*, v.2, 517. “Y asimismo sabe que las reliquias de la bienaventurada virgen Teresa- son y han sido siempre estimadas y veneradas, como reliquias de grande santidad de muchas personas graves, en especial del Archiduque de Austria, Alberto, el cual siendo gobernador del reino de Portugal y ofreciéndosele una jornada a Flandes, pasó por Zaragoza [...] y aposentándose el dicho Archiduque en casa del Virrey de aquel reino y ciudad, que era el Duque de Albuquerque, dijo el dicho Archiduque al Virrey, que iba con gran seguridad de que Nuestro Señor le había de dar muy próspero viaje, porque llevaba consigo una reliquia que estimaba mucho, con quien tenía grande fe, que era una mano de la santa madre Teresa de Jesús, que las monjas de su Orden del convento de Lisboa le habían prestado para llevar consigo en aquel camino”
12. Checa, *La otra corte*.
13. García Sanz, “*Via Orientalis*”, 27-28. See also Kawamura, “Las lacas Namban y el cristianismo”.
14. Sánchez Hernández, *El relicario del Real Monasterio de la Encarnación de Madrid*, 121.
15. Loreto López, “Del tamaño de una uña”, 48-52.
16. *Ibid.*, 86.
17. Quoted by Loreto López, *Ibid.*, 53. “Nunca su Santa Madre había en esta casa obrado algunas de las maravillas que [hace] en España. Atribuyendo esto a sus deméritos ya que no eran verdaderas hijas suyas. Hubo algunas que dijeron que mirasen la reliquia de la santa para ver si por ventura les hacía Nuestro Señor la [misma] merced que en España.”
18. Gómez de la Parra, *Fundación y primero siglo*, 156. “tengo fundamento para pensar que la envió la seráfica madre a este convento por medio del Reverendísimo padre General, para crédito de su fineza y amor a éstas, sus queridas hijas”
19. *Ibid.*, 157.
20. On the *vera efigies*, see Moreno Cuadro, *Iconografía de Santa Teresa de Jesús*, 301-326. On healing prints, see Portús, *La estampa religiosa*.
21. Quoted by Loreto López, “Del tamaño de una uña”, 63. “Conoce que es este santo porque es muy conforme a los que traen ahora pintados en estampas de España”
22. Fabre, *Décréter l’image*.
23. Agustín de la Madre de Dios, *Tesoro escondido*, 316.
24. *Ibid.* “En su puro corazón le veía santa Teresa cuando estaba en esta vida y agora quiere el Señor que en él le vean otros para que conozca el mundo cuán bien se hallaba en este corazón, pues dejó retratada su figura en él como en espejo”
25. Teresa de Ávila, *Los libros de la Madre Teresa*, 355. Her heart was carried in procession on the last day of her beatification’s celebration in Alba de Tormes: *Compendio*, 26. The relevance of her heart is studied by Moreno Cuadro, “Medida del corazón teresiano”.
26. Teresa de Ávila, *Morada sexta*, 9-2. “como una piedra preciosa encerrada en un relicario de oro”
27. Agustín de la Madre de Dios, *Tesoro escondido*, 82. “sirve de amorosa concha a una espina de la corona de Cristo”

28. See for instance *Compendio*, 35.

29. The *Agnus dei* were wax medals taken from Saint Peter's basilic's pascual candles, stamped with the symbol of Christ as a lamb, and blessed by the pope in Rome. Gómez de la Parra, *Fundación y primero siglo*, 155. "unas veces al modo que en la cera de Agnus, y otras veces como pintados de pincel, distinguiéndose los colores"

30. MacGregor, "The Authority of Print".

31. Gómez de la Parra, *Fundación y primero siglo*, 155. "algunas veces veían que crecía la santa reliquia, esponjándose al modo que se levanta el pan en el horno, viendo otras veces que se licuaba la sangre como cuando se derrite lo que está helado, viéndola hervir, de calidad que en una ocasión se llegó a unir y soldarse una partidura que tiene de alto a bajo esta reliquia, representándose entonces la imagen de Cristo, Señor nuestro, con el rostro lleno de sangre, con los labios tan hinchados que se le abría la boca" Another miraculous episode in XVII<sup>th</sup> century Puebla links the relic to bread: see Tenorio, *De Panes y Sermones*.

32. *Ibid.* "atravesado su corazón con el sentimiento, perdió la vista"

33. Gómez de la Parra, *Fundación y primero siglo*, 193. See also Lavrin, "Santa Teresa en los conventos de monjas de Nueva España."

34. Teresa de Ávila, *Los libros de la Madre Teresa*, 1. "Yo no conocí, ni vi, a la madre Teresa de lesus mientras estuvo en la tierra, mas agora que vive en el cielo la conozco y veo cas siempre en dos imagenes vivas que nos dexo de si, que son sus hijas, y sus libros"

# **Begum alias Madonna: A Study of the Trans-continental Monument Commissioned by the Anglo-Indian ‘Lunatic’ Heir of Sardhana**

---

**Ankita Srivastava**

Jawaharlal Nehru University

## **ABSTRACT**

This paper discusses the transcontinental, grand Carrara Marble tableau commissioned by David Ochterlony Dyce Sombre—in memory of his late benefactress, Begum Samru of Sardhana—in 1839. He was an Anglo-Indian, adopted heir of the converted Catholic Begum, who had had an intriguing professional trajectory—from being a teenage courtesan in Delhi to a major power broker in the Indian subcontinent with her formidable army of European mercenaries and the prosperous principality of Sardhana (in the North-Indian Doab). The multi-figural, theatrical marble tableau sits in a church built by the Begum in Sardhana in 1822, serving as a cenotaph over her grave. The paper begins from the intentional value inscribed to the marble tableau by its ‘Makers’; a category which encompasses the immediate patron Dyce Sombre and the Roman sculptor, Adamo Tadolini (a student of Antonio Canova) who portray a commercial relationship of client and studio-sculptor. It sits in sharp contrast to the patron-artist relationship that the memorialized Begum Samru shared with her chief Architect, Anton Reghelini, an Italian who joined the Begum’s military service in 1810. In addition, this paper interrogates how one marble tableau interacts with ‘Indian’ histories of art through reproduction of paintings in its bas relief panels.

## **KEYWORDS**

Neoclassical Sculpture; Transculturality; Allegory; Intermediality.

### Introduction

The 19<sup>th</sup>-century Neoclassical grand Carrara marble tableau, was made in Rome, but intended for and installed in ‘Sardhana’, a small principality of North India where it stands till date. It was commissioned by David Ochterlony Dyce Sombre (b.1808 – d.1851), an Anglo-Indian, adopted heir<sup>4</sup> of Begum Samru (b. 1750 – d. 1836), the 18<sup>th</sup> century enigmatic powerbroker with humble beginnings as a teenage courtesan in the lanes of Old Delhi. She was the ruler of a small North-Indian principality, Sardhana after the death of her husband, the mercenary Austrian Walter Reinhardt ‘Sombre’ (b. 1725 – d. 1778). She had converted to Catholicism (ca. 1781) a few years after his death (Keay, 2013). Her conversion, and mediation between European officers, the East India Company, and the Mughal King in Delhi, made her a key player in the late 18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> century Indian subcontinent. After the death of Begum Samru in 1836, Dyce Sombre inherited a vast fortune of money, jewels, objects and built property.

Dyce Sombre lost political control over Sardhana, the *pargana* of Badshahpur-Jharsa, and the ammunition of the army defected to the British East India Company. He approached the courts in Calcutta, travelled around Awadh, Bengal, and East Asia, after which he emigrated to England in 1838. He left behind the Begum's loyal officers and his two brothers-in-law and sisters to manage the property in Sardhana. In England, David married the Honourable Mary Anne Jervis (b. 1812–d. 1893), the daughter of Viscount, St. Vincent, in 1840. In 1841, Dyce Sombre bribed his way to become an M.P. from Sudbury in the British Parliament, making him the first Asian and second non-white member to hold that office. After investigations provoked by disgruntled opposers, Sudbury as a constituency was disenfranchised, and their elections controverted, making Dyce Sombre lose office. In 1843, Dyce Sombre was certified a "lunatic" following extremely erratic behaviour in public. It included accusations against his wife of repeated adultery and incest, challenging other men to duels, public indecency, amongst others. He escaped confinement and travelled to Paris, from where he kept collecting evidence and testimonials of his sanity. However, due to a suppurated

blistered foot infection, he died on 01st July 1851 in London, waiting to present his defence (Fisher, 2010).

### **The Commission**

While he was still engaged in 1839, Dyce Sombre travelled to Rome to commemorate the third death anniversary of Begum Samru. The event ended with a Funeral Oration delivered by Rev. N. Wiseman, Rector of the English College in Rome. He then commissioned Adamo Tadolini, a student of Antonio Canova, to build a large marble monument as a memorial for the late Begum (Fig. 1). Dyce Sombre furnished the design and reproductions of all the key portraits and paintings reproduced in the final monument. He even provided the writings inscribed on the memorial—in Latin, Persian and English. The memorial is housed in a Church in Sardhana, where it has stood since 1848. The Begum's remains were interred under it, followed by Dyce Sombre's remains after his death in 1851<sup>2</sup>.



**Fig. 1.** Adamo Tadolini, *Monument to Begum Samru*, 1839–42, Sardhana, Author's Photograph

The intentional values imbibed in the tableau are added to it by its patron, who attempts to build upon and break away from the Neoclassical architectural patronage of his benefactress, Begum Samru of Sardhana. Her architectural projects rested on the shoulders of her Vicenza-born architect, Anton Reghelini who joined the Begum's military service in 1810. For her, he built her mansion or 'kothi' in Delhi around 1820, her palatial residence in Sardhana in 1834, and the Church to Mother Mary in 1822. The site of the church is where the monument from Rome was installed in 1848. One explores the possibilities of interpretation of an intended narrative, that comes with the employment of Neoclassical sculptural vocabulary, an inferred principle of Neoclassical ideal and what purpose the creation of the 'ideal' might serve for the patron. There is a double-commemoration and a doubled 'ideal' veneration for the person being remembered, and the patron who also wishes to be remembered. In the *monument*, decisive paintings commissioned by Begum Samru were reproduced and reconfigured for stone, firmly tethering the foreign *monument* to its current space and the person it commemorates. The sculptural idealization of Begum Samru, David Dyce Sombre, and others differ from the naturalistic turn seen in the painted portraits of the aged Begum. Such portraits of a regally dressed, aged woman in public, alone in the company of men as a ruler, were a novelty and symbolic of a unique life and a particular form of self-fashioning.

The change in physical features and the Neoclassical assimilation of "Indian" bodies align with the aims of Neoclassical funerary art. The *monument* can be perceived as an extension of Begum Samru's patronage legacy, which was already taking a Neoclassical turn in her building projects. However, it is more appropriate to see it as a breaking point from the earlier patronage of the "Samru" family. It attempts to transform the *body* of its patron into that of an aristocrat of European stock. The social aspiration comes not just in the monument's colour but also in the idealization of the bodies and their juxtaposition with several icons of Neoclassical allegory. The tableau is also an architectural tower, a cenotaph that charges the church at Sardhana like a tomb. The tableau vivant displays a theatricality in its environs, adjacent to the altar.

Sculpture was important as an object of posterity, and the two most important materials of this longevity were decidedly bronze and marble. The importance of marble in the making of sculptures is tied to the Neoclassical's relation to historicity and the uniformity of colour — in its several shades of white. The sculpture studios of Rome, in particular, provided the ability to the young aristocratic tourist to commission and possess a piece of Classical ideals of beauty and intellect. Art that looked back to the Classical standards was favoured and perpetuated by the elite of the entire continent. This demand of the Neoclassical was fulfilled by the competitive studios and sculptors who were making art by the commission of travellers and not solely dependent on the court and royal patronage. Neoclassicism in the late 18<sup>th</sup>-century split into two currents: severe or moralist and pleasant or symbolist. While both drew upon Winckelmann's archaeological and art historical work, the moralistic strand tied itself to the glory of Rome, and the rhythmic, more elegant strand flowed towards the beauty of Athens. The digs at Pompeii and Herculaneum were defining moments of the century and Europe's obsession with the ancient Greeks and Romans (Rheims, 1972).

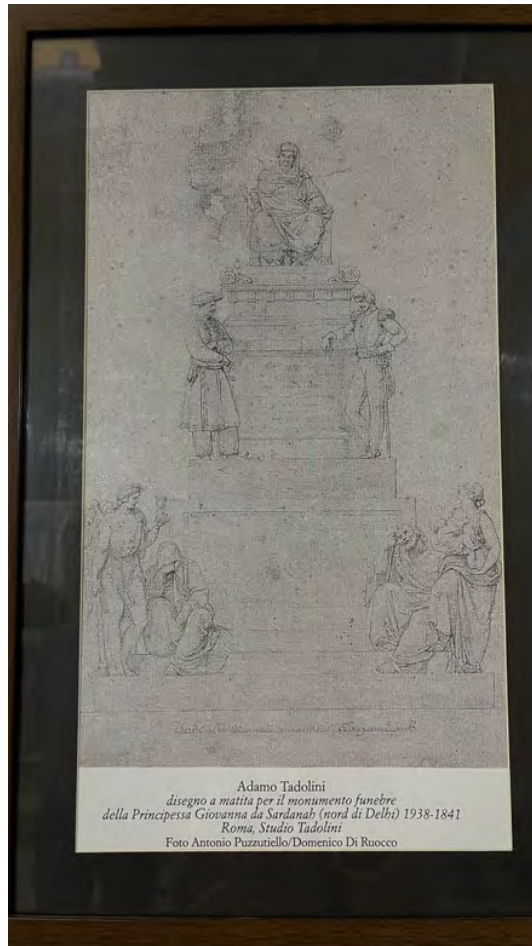
Mercenary soldiers in India came to be part of the continually warring armies of Indian princes and Dutch, French and English colonies in India. For many, this was a way to gain riches quickly. Many travellers and artists also came along because India's landscape and people provided a scale of incomparable subjects and what the market at the time was poised to receive. Great patrons of Anglo-Indian art were the Nawabs of Arcot and Awadh before the East India Company wholly annexed their territories (Archer 1979, 1980). But the attractions of riches and adventure were tied up with novelty and the lure of the New. Travels to Italy as part of the Grand Tour were, in contrast, an appeal of the Classical in the Neoclassical form. The Classical temples and Palladian architecture were famous amongst the Grand Tourists, who perpetuated that style even in Britain. They collected antiques, copies of famous statues, and paintings (Lord, 2010).

In India, the sculptures of Neoclassical Britain (and Europe) were primarily found in Presidencies of Madras, Bombay and Calcutta. The funerary monuments were often associated with newly erected churches.

Barbara Groseclose's work on sculpture in Presidency towns until 1858 demonstrates how iconography in these monuments was molded by imperial ideology. Some monuments further advertised the legitimacy of the colonial enterprise by presenting the "riches of the east" as a welcome gift for European traders. Others suggested the Englishmen as the rightful, moralistic and superior rulers on a civilizing mission. Statues also contained images of natives of India, however as allegories, such as the ones made for Charles Cornwallis by Charles Felix Rossi in 1807–1811 (Groseclose, 1995). Images of natives were usually represented as subjugated and benign, while the Englishmen were presented as paternalistic statesmen. The *monument* to Begum Samru marks a shift by turning representational convention on its head. With a native ruler at the apex position in a Neoclassical monument, that too a woman, the *monument* challenges the notion of belatedness in natives and the patriarchal and paternal myth of the English colonial rule. It also makes the audience see the adaptability of the cosmopolitan Begum's memorialization.

### **The Neoclassical Sarcophagus**

The market for sculpture expanded to Europe and beyond Europe to the Americas and various colonies. Competing sculptors bid for commissions. Colonial commissions came with a particular set of problems, especially the inability to exhibit. Sculptors had to find new ways of circulation and preservation, which led to reproductions in different media and scales. In the later 19<sup>th</sup> century, photographs, drawings, medallions, and statuettes were used to preserve a constructed model<sup>2</sup>. Tadolini prepared an illustration of the *monument* to Begum Samru (Fig. 2) which was different from the object itself, with places of some figures laterally exchanged and drawn physiognomies following separate European and 'Indian' conventions of illustration.



**Fig. 2.** Sketch of the Monument to Begum Samru. Photograph in the Sardhana Church

Dyce Sombre, the primary patron of this *monument* had a personal utility in the commission. It was a memorial for Begum Samru, but it was also his portrait in marble and, after his untimely death in 1851, his shared commemoration with the Begum. The ostentatious dress of Dyce Sombre with military dress, a cloak and a feathered helmet added grandeur to his individual sculpture. It is also uncharacteristically lean, following the Neoclassical convention of idealization of the body. It also gives a glimpse into the possibility of what Maurice Rheims described as a fear of revealing the "scrawny or pudgy" natural body behind the ideal prince, general or other wealthy sitters.

Since sculptors, especially someone as famous as Adamo Tadolini, were well-versed in canons of the ideal naturalistic form, a change of body type was available to patrons to transcend any physical traits or 'flaws' — like costumes. The *monument* to Begum Samru walks a fine line between veneration and agnostic taste of the Neoclassical era. As a funerary monument, it indeed fell into the conventions of the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century where symbolism (such as the allegorical figures at the bottom tier of the *monument*) substituted a subtle divinity or enigma. The monument composed of 12 life-size statues placed strategically at three different levels around a marble trunk. The first or top-level is for the solitary seated statue of Begum Samru, the figure of memorialization. She is separated from the 'realm of the living' or the middle level by a pedestal of sienna marble. The intermediate level consists of a cylindrical trunk with a white marble square slab on top. The three visible sides of the cylindrical trunk possess inscriptions in 3 languages. Persian for the front, English on the side behind the statue of Dyce Sombre (viewer's left) and Latin for the side adjacent to the Bishop Fr. Julius Caesar Scotti (Viewer's Right).

Persian is in the frontal view. This helps us understand the intended audience of the *monument*. It ties itself to the location of its installation and viewing not just by the statue of the Begum but also through language and script carved into the body of the Italian marble. The other two figures around the trunk, are statues of Diwan Rae Singh, the Prime Minister of Begum Samru and the Priest, Fr. Julius Caesar Scotti. The statue behind that of Dyce Sombre on the left side is that of Inayatullah Khan, the general of Begum's armies at the time of her death. The bottom level or the 'Realm of Allegory' is composed of 11 life-size statues of allegories placed around a cuboidal marble block, with three bas reliefs carved onto each visible side. Going from left (English inscription side) to the right (Latin inscription side), they are Young Woman with a Club and her foot over a submissive lion, Shrouded Figure holding a snake, Angel of Time holding up an hourglass, Forlorn Old Man or *Vecchio*, *Abundantia* with an ever-flowing *Cornucopia*, Small Child kneeling and offering up a fruit, Breastfeeding Woman with infant.

The allegorical figures are borrowed from existing sculptures and illustrations and have socially accepted meanings attached. A collage of such symbols with historical sculptures presents a diffused image between two geographical regions, separated not just by land and sea but by all kinds of cultural markers—especially art. Within this diffused logic, iconology presents a way to confront the dissonance between these images. Devotees, the priests and caretakers of the Sardhana Church have their own understanding of the tableau of figures placed around the central block of the monument. They associate the figures as persons dwelling in the kingdom of heaven. In other cases, the female figures of the fierce protector and the nurturing mother are personifications of the Begum's different qualities, while the angel, old man, shrouded figure are messengers of death and an ending. Allegorization is a constant, cognitive process of structuring or constituting a representation of ideas that can happen with or without access to detailed knowledge about the history of icons and iconography.

#### **Molding an Aristocratic Body in Neoclassical Sculpture**

According to Hans Belting, the *medium* is the agent by which images are transmitted, and the *body* is the performing or perceiving body on which images depend. He points out that any present iconology must represent the unity and diversion between the image and its medium. Any image cannot be perceived without its media. The visibility of the image rests on its particular mediality, and while physical images are perceived, they cannot be perceived without the physicality of their medium (Belting, 2005). Even material and form possess within them an ideology of the medium. In the case of white marble used in Neoclassical sculptures, there is a clear preference indicated to identify at the level of colour and texture, a civilizational ideal of the body. Its antecedents lie in Greek sculpture, re-reinscribed in the 19<sup>th</sup> century as an "Ideal", fueled by developments in dated scientific conceptions of race and the ongoing colonial enterprise. Materiality forms an integral component of the idea of the *medium*.

Media — here, sculpture — then becomes a symbolic substitute of the body itself. Then what happens when the body changes from historically

'accurate' form to conform to the Western Ideal, by the active desire and agency of the subject and patron, however conditioned? An important function of the monument was to construct an identity of the racial and cultural difference of the patron from the subject of commemoration. By commissioning this memorial, Dyce Sombre memorialized himself as belonging to a European gentility in garb and grace. His sentimental posture, ostentatious military costume and graceful refinement as a sensitive and grateful gentleman were ways to ensure his place in English society. In the homogeneity of white marble lay an opportunity to declare what could not be declared in painting—his claim to a complete European ancestry that was often denied to him with terms such as "Copper-coloured", "Othello", etc (Fisher, 2010).

In Neoclassical sculpture, it was rare for racialized bodies to appear as subjects of veneration. Within the colonial logic of trans-Atlantic slavery, black bodies were often shown with chains, shackles, in kneeling and subservient positions. In British sculpture, which had representations of "Indian" people, the sculptures were of subservient or stereotypical "mystical" bodies such as those of ascetics and distressed women, which were brought together in harmony under the paternalistic leadership of the British statesman. Perhaps such an attempt is possible for Dyce Sombre also because of his gender. Sartorially speaking, his dress is ostentatiously European. The sculpture fits within the idiom of Neoclassical memorialization. On the other hand, Begum Samru is immediately recognizable because of her garb — because of her turban, overhead shawl, tunic and *pyjamas*.

It becomes necessary to discuss sculpture at the level of the *body*. This is where medium requires unpacking and unveiling at the level of its visibility. In intentionality of racial and social aspirations, Dyce Sombre, through sculpture, ushered himself into a substitutive process of physically *becoming* a Eurasian aristocrat— as a Knight, Gentleman, or even a non-"oriental" Prince. Identity construction is a tedious negotiation in which representation plays a key role. In representation of his *self* in a certain vocabulary of the Neoclassical, Dyce Sombre's *ideal* and *aspirational* identity are made possible

for posterity. His Eurasian identity *occurs* in the fiction of the sculpture and the entirety of the monument, as it could not happen in his lifetime.

Begum Samru's face and posture attempt to assimilate her legacy within the Neoclassical, which improvises to create the dress typical to Begum's portraits. Dyce Sombre, on the other hand, is left unrecognizable if compared with any of his surviving portraits. His ostentatious clothing did not distract from a lean physique and smooth face. The dissonance between Dyce Sombre's sculpture, paintings, and descriptions further make us aware that the image of Dyce Sombre was a social, political and cultural investment in the construction of his identity that could not be neatly assigned. Such differences between the 'real' and 'represented' bodies were not uncommon. Dyce Sombre's mixed-race identity did not qualify him to be part of English gentile society. Such exclusion did not depend on how he looked but on the genealogical history of racial and sexual 'transgression' in his family. In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, several racial terminologies existed to quantify race within a body. It did not matter even if a person was 'dominantly' of white ancestry. They were automatically rejected from racial identification of whiteness because of a history of sexual transgression across race that their ancestors 'committed'.

Sculpture in India has been studied in the coastal epicentres of Calcutta, Bombay, and Madras. The grand monument's import to Sardhana points to a more kinetic exchange of aesthetics. Locating transculturality<sup>4</sup> within this object allows us to see a direction to this process of transculturation. The flow of colonialism and colonizing agents were also responsible for a flow of aesthetics—Neoclassicism in this case—that had traces of an interface. Still, they ultimately fell short of changing or challenging the power imbalance behind the return to the Western Classical. Any "counterflows" or transcultural aberrations were carefully subsumed and absorbed within the vocabulary of colonial society. Back in the Indian subcontinent, travelling artists such as Johann Zoffany, the Daniells, John Smart, Tilly Kettle etc., were producing sights of India at a scale that did not go unnoticed. The intrigue of Indian society gave rise to the Company School's paintings, wherein painters made portraits and studies of Indian

people, occupations, and dress. The Begum Samru was an enigmatic figure, eventually becoming the inspiration behind Jules Verne's *The Begum's Millions*. This interest in India was maintained by literary journals, especially in Calcutta, where the news and stories around the Begum, her husband (known as the "Butcher of Patna") and Dyce Sombre's lunacy trial were given coverage.

### **Intermediality in the Monument**

In the monument, the relief panels are intermediaries between the monument's local context in Sardhana and its place in the history of grand Neoclassical funerary monuments. Their presence mimics Neoclassical sculpture's preference for historical reminiscing, but it replaces the historicity of Greek and Roman myths and persons with the historicity of the place of Sardhana, tied to its deceased Begum. Begum Samru then becomes the object of veneration by the charged intermediality of the panels (Figs. 3 and 4). In these reproductions, Dyce Sombre is also carefully represented in the central locations of the monument and panels. Tadolini, in his *Autobiografici*, mentions that he modelled the Begum Samru *monument* after a model he made for the monument of Count Demidoff, the Russian ambassador who was also a Florentine philanthropist (Tadolini, 1900) <sup>5</sup>. The monument to Begum Samru, because of the political potential of its historicity and the person being commemorated, problematizes the carefully constructed exclusivity of the Neoclassical. If the essence of Neoclassical is to reminisce historical greatness of the "Classical period" in order to aesthetically attribute a contemporaneous identity, the Begum Samru monument achieves exactly this. Dyce Sombre manages to use the logic of the Neoclassical but replaces the greatness of Greece, Rome, Britannia or even his aspirational European self with the legacy of Begum Samru — a Catholic, a woman, a native ruler of a cosmopolitan oasis in North India. The monumentality of the marble tableau at once demonstrates the instability of colonial power and shows the permeability of its aesthetics in the larger South Asian political environment.



**Fig. 3.** Adamo Tadolini, *Monument*, 1839–42, Detail



**Fig. 4.** Adamo Tadolini, *Monument*, 1839–42, Detail

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Archer, Mildred. *India and British Portraiture, 1770–1825*. Sotheby Parke Bernet, London and New York: Oxford University Press (1979)
- Archer, Mildred. *Early Views of India. The Picturesque Journeys of Thomas and William Daniell, 1786–1794*. London: Thames and Hudson (1980).
- Belting, Hans. "Image, Medium, Body: A New Approach to Iconology." In *Critical Inquiry*, 31, 2 (Winter 2005): 302–319.
- Chand, Lala Gokul and Shreeve, Nicholas. *The History of Zeb-ul Nissa, The Begum Samru of Sardhana*. Arundel, West Sussex: Bookwright (1994).
- Fisher, Michael H. *The Inordinately Strange Life of Dyce Sombre: Victorian Anglo-Indian MP and "Chancery Lunatic"*. New York: Columbia University Press (2010).
- Groseclose, Barbara. *British Sculpture and the Company Raj: Church Monuments and Public Statuary in Madras, Calcutta, and Bombay to 1838*. Newark: University of Delaware Press (1995).
- Keay, Julia. *Farzana: The Woman Who Saved an Empire*, Noida: Harper Collins (2013).
- Lall, John S. *Begam Samru: Fading Portrait in a Gilded Frame*. New Delhi: Roli Books (1997).
- Lord, Evelyn. 'Interlude Abroad: The Grand Tour, Dilettanti, and Divans'. *Hellfire Clubs: Sex, Satanism and Secret Societies*, New Haven & London: Yale University Press (2010).
- Pisano, Libero C. 'Lo Studio di Adamo Tadolini: Scultore a Roma'. *Ricerche di Storia dell'arte*. (January, 2000): 51–63.
- Rheims, Maurice. *19th Century Sculpture*, tr. by Robert E. Wolf, New York: Harry N. Abrams (1972).

---

## Endnotes

1. David Ochterlony Dyce Sombre (b. 1808 – d. 1851) was born to Colonel George Alexander Dyce and Julia Anne, the granddaughter of Zafaryab Khan or Louis Balthazar, the son of Walter Reinhardt. For a detailed biography, See: Michael Fisher, *The Inordinately Strange Life of Dyce Sombre: Victorian Anglo-Indian MP and "Chancery Lunatic"*, 2010.
2. The facts of Dyce Sombre's life have been researched and written about extensively by Michael H. Fisher in his 2010 book *The Inordinately Strange Life of Dyce Sombre: Victorian Anglo-Indian and Chancery Lunatic*, New York: Columbia University Press. Sources on Begum Samru are many, but I have mainly used Julia Keay's 2013 book *Farzana: The Tempestuous Life and Times of Begum Samru*; John Lall's 1997 book *Begum Samru: Fading Portrait in a Gilded Frame*, and Nicholas Shreeve's extensively researched 1996 book *Dark Legacy* for their detailed use of archival sources; in addition to articles and books quoted otherwise.
3. This need for preservation, advertising, circulation and creating a 'record' has been emphasized in several works such as those of Sarah Burnage (2010), 'Commemorating Cornwallis: Sculpture in India', *Visual Culture in Britain*, 11: 173–94; Jason Edwards (2010), 'From the East India Company to the West Indies and Beyond: The World of British Sculpture', c.

1757–1947’, *Visual Culture in Britain*, II: 147–72; Barbara Groseclose (1995), *British Sculpture and the Company Raj: Church Monuments and Public Statuary in Madras, Calcutta, and Bombay to 1858*, Newark: University of Delaware Press; Partha Mitter (1994), *Art and Nationalism in Colonial India, 1850–1922*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

4. “Transculturality – or transculturation (as it was termed in 1941 by the anthropologist Fernando Ortiz) denotes in our understanding a process of transformation that unfolds through extended contacts and relationships between cultures. The concept can be used to refer both to a concrete object of investigation as well as an analytical method. The discursive category of “culture“, as it emerged in the social sciences in tandem with the modern nation, was premised on the notion that life worlds of identifiable groups were ethnically bounded, internally cohesive and linguistically homogeneous spheres...The terms “transculture / transculturality” are an explicit critique of this notion, for the prefix “trans-” enables emancipation from the concept. Transculturality is about spatial mobility, circulation or flows but is neither synonymous with nor reducible to these.” Monica Juneja in an interview. <https://trafo.hypotheses.org/567>

5. That particular commission was attempted by another Italian sculptor named Lorenzo Bartolini (b. 1777 – d. 1850), which was also left unrealized until the 1870s, two decades after the sculptor’s death. Source: Maurice Rheims (1972), *19<sup>th</sup> Century Sculpture*: 335

# The Migration of Benin Artefacts and the Quest for Restitution

---

**Harrison Adewale Idowu**

Adekunle Ajasin University

## **ABSTRACT**

Over the years, the Ancient City of Benin, Nigeria and its people have been known for their unique works of art which require luxurious materials and quite laborious efforts to put together. In 1897 when the British soldiers invaded the Ancient Kingdom, there was a forceful migration of the work of arts by the British soldiers. This paper feels the pulse of the people of the Ancient Benin Kingdom to empirically ascertain what and how the people feel about the migration of the Artefacts and their quest for restitution. The paper adopts primary and secondary data and explanatory and descriptive designs, using the mixed research method. Data were sourced via semi-structured interviews and structured questionnaires. While the qualitative data were analyzed using thematic analysis, quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistical techniques of percentages and frequencies. Secondary data were sourced from relevant literature. Among others, findings show that the Binis have so much attachment with the migrated artifacts so much so that they now feel a part of them, their wealth and culture had been taken when the artifacts were migrated; that the Binis feel cheated over the migration and they still feel that legal actions should be taken against Britain to facilitate the return of the artifacts. The study concludes that the Binis' quest for restitution is still very much on course and that even after several decades, they still feel aggrieved over the forcefully migrated Artefacts.

## **KEYWORDS**

Migration; Artefacts; Benin; Benin Artefact; Restitution.

### **Introduction**

This paper feels the pulse of the Binis (the people of the ancient Benin kingdom in present day Nigeria) over the forceful migration of the Benin artefacts by British soldiers in 1897. The Benin artefact is associated with the people of the ancient Benin kingdom which existed long before colonial exploits in the West African state of present day Nigeria. In what had begun as a siege on the ancient Benin kingdom in 1897, the British soldiers who had invaded the kingdom found the Benin artefacts in the Oba's (king) palace as highly enticing. Like the biblical precedents of victors carting away able bodied men and other treasures, the British soldiers took the treasures of the Binis in their artefacts.

The Benin art makers were highly gifted in the art, so much so that the Benin artefacts were treasures to behold, and they drew the admiration of neighbouring states and beyond. Little wonder then that as far back as 1983, Geary had posited that among other African arts and traditions, the Benin arts arguably held the most and widest popular appeal for America and Europe. The Benin artefacts had thus, made the Benin kingdom popular in the world (Irabor 2019; Jones 2003). The Binis had prided in their artefacts for years because of its uniqueness, and how it symbolizes and help to preserve their cultural heritage and traditions – they were an important part of their ceremonies and rituals (Irabor 2019). In fact, Irabor (2019, 951) emphasized that “To the Binis, the art was Benin and Benin was the art.” Oba Ewuare II (in Channels Television December 13, 2021) also noted that the Benin works of arts hold “religious, spiritual and aesthetic significance to Benin.” These had therefore made the looting of the artefacts a tragic event in the history of the Binis.

According to Ananwa (2014), the Benin arts have been in existence since 500 BCE, even though they only became popular during and after the 1897 invasion by British soldiers. Since that invasion, Benin artefacts are being used to decorate British and American museums, including others around Europe (Ananwa 2014; Gundu 2020; Irabor 2019). Over 4000 of the Benin artefacts were reportedly migrated to Europe during the period (Layiwola 2010). Recently, there has been calls on the UK and indeed, others in

possession of the artefacts to do a restitution of the artefacts. This call has yielded some positive results, as some museums in the UK and others have begun the process of restitution, while some of the artefacts are already being returned.

While previous studies have dwelt more on the looted artefacts, and the situation surrounding the event, others have merely documented the quantity of artefacts that were looted. There has not been any study known to the author, which empirically feels the pulse of the Benin people on how they feel about the looting of their prided artefacts in 1897. Furthermore, it has been decades since the artefacts were migrated from Benin Kingdom, while the general assumption is that the Binis want restitution of the artefacts, the opinions, feelings and expectations of the Binis remain to be empirically examined in this regard. This is why this paper is important, and novel. What is the impression of the Binis over the migrated artefacts? What is the position of the Binis concerning the quest for the restitution of the migrated artefacts? These are some of the questions that the paper provides answers. Following this introduction, the next section presents a literature review on migrated artefacts; while section three is on the theoretical framework upon which the study is built. Sections four and five are on the research methods adopted, and data presentation and analysis respectively. The last two sections present the discussion of findings and conclusion.

### **Literature Review**

Migration refers to the movement of people and objects across national borders, while an artefact refers to a piece of art work made of bronze, clay, wood, or metal, which is usually symbolic and representative. According to Friendman (2007, 6), the word artefacts originated from the two Latin words ‘arte’ (which means skill), and ‘factum’ (which means to do or to make). Artefacts are artificial products or anything made by human art and labor (Oxford English Dictionary 1993, 129). Ananwa (2014, 42) defines artefacts as “An object made by human being especially one with archaeological, historical and or cultural values.”

The Benin artefacts were art works made through intense human labor by the Binis in the ancient Benin kingdom in present day Nigeria, usually from wood, clay, brass, bronze, leather, and coral. The Benin artefacts symbolizes their history, religion, customs, traditions, and rituals. The Benin arts was referred to as the 'Royal Court Art of Benin' because the Oba (king) of Benin was the only one who has authority and right of ownership over the arts (Ananwa 2014, 43). While the Benin artisans were previously prohibited from producing the artefacts for commercial purposes, but to produce strictly for the Oba, Ananwa (2014) posits that Oba Eweka II lifted this restriction in 1914, allowing the sales of the artefacts to the general public who so desired to own the art work. The Benin artefacts historicized the Binis, and served as their archives.

The literature is replete with the migration of artefacts from Africa and Asia, to Europe and America, which was part of colonial expansionist agenda during the colonial periods, nonetheless, records of the restitution of these artefacts to date has been few (Lunden 2016). What appears to be rampant is a transfer between Europe and America, rather than a return to Third world countries, most of who are the legal owners of the art works. Lunden (2016) however cites some notable returns made to Africa from British museums. According to her, Britain had in 1873 returned a manuscript to Ethiopia, and some plaques to Benin in the 1950s.

With respect to Africa, a notable name in the plundering of Africa's art works is Leo Frobenius, who had between 1904 and 1907, led expeditions and plundered Congo and Kassai, Egypt, South Africa, Morocco, Libya, Central Sahara, and Sudan, among others (Kohl 2010, 11; Kuba 2010). Most of the art works had been taken into German museums. Using tactics such as unfair purchase, threats, altered translations, and bribes, when Leo Frobenius got to Nigeria, he made away with over 5,670 treasures (Kuba 2010). Given the large scale of plundering of African cultural materials by the West, African culture was by so doing, commonized, insulted, weakened, and decontextualized, opening up the space for European doctrines to spread rapidly (Ogbechie 2016). To date, there has been a continuous push for the repatriation and restitution of African artefacts which are spread across Europe, America, and

elsewhere, while only a little progress and successes have been recorded thus far (Gundu 2020).

In his study, Gundu (2020) explored the magnitude of plundering and forceful migration of art works across Nigeria by Western powers. Most of the art works remain in the West. Among these art works are the Benin Corpus, the Nok and baked clay sculptures of Sokoto, Ife, Katsina, Funtua, Zaria, Kwatarkwashi (Gundu 2020; Jemkur 1992). Also, Agbedeh (2011) asserts that ancestral drums, Ife sculptures, masks, traditional door posts, and Igbo Ukwu materials were also among those art works carted from Nigeria. The monetary estimates of these art works are humongous; and according to the estimates given by Appiah (2012), they amount to the tune of over several hundreds of millions of the United States dollars. In the 1990s alone, Gundu (2020) posits that the looted artefacts from Nigeria were estimated at 429 across various museums and institutions in the country. For the fact that most Nigerian heritage resources, including the Benin artefacts were plundered, stolen, and collected by force and violence, Gundu (2020) is of the opinion that the migration of these resources outside the borders of Nigeria is unjust and illegal.

In terms of attempts made to repatriate and push for the restitution of looted artefacts from Nigeria, the 1979 National Commission for Museums and Monuments (NCMM) Decree No.77, the 1970 UNESCO Convention, the 1995 UNIDRIOT Convention, and other such efforts have been used to pursue the repatriation of Nigerian artefacts, many of which have not been quite successful (Gundu 2020, 56). Albeit, some successes include the return of ten terracotta statues in 2010 (ICE 2012); the return of two terracotta heads by the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston (Dokolo 2018); and the return of five terracotta statues in 2010 by France (BBC 2013). Recently, there has been quite some positive signs over the repatriation of the forcefully migrated Benin artefacts from France and the UK, as pacts have been signed to seal the return of some, while some are already being returned to Benin kingdom (Amadi 2021; Are 2021; Enoghlease & Aliu 2021).

The great potentials which the African continent holds when it comes to art work and love for aesthetic has never been disputed, as it is found in

the everyday living and existence of the people (Meryer 1995, 8). Among the African art works, the Benin art takes a distinctive appeal among foreigners and locales alike (Geary 1983; Nevadomsky 2005). The Benin arts was a reflection of one of the greatest kingdoms in the entire West African sub-region (Nevadomsky 2005). Compared to its counterparts, the Benin art represents what the Pyramids of Egypt is to the sub-region – it was Africa’s highest cultural achievements at the time (Irabor 2019). According to Nevadomsky (2005), the Benin art became an African achievement that could be compared to the best casting traditions of Europe.

While the Benin artefacts had been in existence as far back as 500 BCE, Europeans only came to discover the treasures after the 1879 invasion of the kingdom by the British Empire. Jones (2003) avers that that 1879 looting actually brought the Benin arts into limelight, as the looted artefacts were sold to museums and private individuals in Europe, America, and elsewhere. According to Nevadomsky (2005), the Benin artefacts were sold off to offset the costs expended on the punitive expedition of Benin kingdom by the British Empire. The greater parts of the Benin artefacts went into British and German museums. As a result of the forceful migration of the Benin artefacts, Irabor (2019, 955) avers that “everything of value had been carted off, Benin’s technology eviscerated, its artistic inspiration anesthetized. The exercise undoubtedly destroyed the dreams and aspirations of a people later admired for their artistic creativity, originality and ingenuity.”

The table 1 below shows the magnitude of loots and illegal migration of the Benin artefacts, and their spread across museums in Europe and America.

**Table 1: Magnitude of Loots and Illegal Migration of Benin Artefacts and their Spread across Europe and America**

<b>/N</b>	<b>Holding Country</b>	<b>Museum Name</b>	<b>City of Museum</b>	<b>Number of Benin Artefacts Held</b>
.	Britain	British Museum	London	700
.	Britain	Pitt Rivers Museum	Oxford	327
.	Britain	Museum of Religious Life	Glasgow	22

.	Germany	Museum of Ethnology	Berlin	580
.	Germany	Rautenstrauch-Joest Museum	Cologne	73
.	Germany	Museum fur Volkerkunde	Hamburg	196
.	Germany	Museum fur Volkerkunde	Leipzig	87
.	Germany	Staatliches Museum fur Volkerkunde	Dresden	182
.	Germany	Linden Museum Staatliches fur Volkerkunde	Stuttgart	80
0.	Netherlands	Rijks Museum voor Volkerkunde	Leiden	98
1.	Austria	Museum of Ethnology	Vienna	167
2.	United States	Art Institute	Chicago	20
3.	United States	Field Museum	Chicago	400
4.	United States	Metropolitan Museum of Fine Arts	New York	163
5.	United States	Museum of Fine Arts	Boston	32
6.	United States	University of Pennsylvania Museum of Archaeology	Philadelphia	100

Source: Opoku (2009)

### **Theoretical framework**

There has been different postulations, debates and laws as touching restitution – the act of returning what was previously taken illegally, or stolen. With respect to the looted treasures from African states, and indeed Benin kingdom, there has been several calls for restitution. Kiwara-Wilson (2013) argues that the sort of restitution that African states seek goes beyond the mere return of the looted treasures, rather it is a call to reclaim their culture that has been bastardized by European domination.

There has been two prominent schools of thought over the subject matter of restitution, namely; the cultural internationalists, and the cultural nationalists (Kiwara-Wilson 2013). According to the cultural nationalists, cultural properties such as artefacts should belong to the people of the culture from which they originated. This implies that where cultural properties are found in a place where they did not originate, they must be

returned to their root of origin. Merryman (2007), one of the main proponents of cultural nationalism, posits that culture is very important, and a people deprived of their cultural property are pauperized. Therefore, the looting of the Benin artefacts resulted in cultural disintegration and degradation for the Binis. This accounts for the continuous quest for the restitution of the looted artefacts (Agorsah 1977), so that the Benin cultural heritage and pride could be restored. For the cultural nationalists therefore, cultural properties equate the cultural pride of the people – when taken from them, it dents their culture. Furthermore, cultural properties looted do not belong in that destination where it is taken, rather, it belongs to the people from where they originated, hence the need for restitution. This school of thought rests on morality, legality and nationality (Merryman 2010), all of which provide justification for restitution of looted or illegally migrated cultural properties.

On the contrary, the cultural internationalists present the idea that “everyone has an interest in the preservation and enjoyment of cultural property wherever it is situated, from whatever cultural or geographic source it derives” (Merryman 2010, 12). This simply suggests that irrespective of where cultural properties such as artefacts are found, the most important thing is that they are preserved wherever they may be taken. The cultural internationalists therefore, do not buttress restitution, provided the cultural properties are well taken care of, and preserved wherever they find themselves. This school of thought buttresses truth, preservation and access, rather than restitution (Merryman 2010, 12). In a nutshell, the cultural internationalists strongly advocate that cultural objects and artefacts are “better protected and preserved in Western museums” (Kiwara-Wilson 2013, 398). Thus, MacGregor (2012, 44) avers that the location of African cultural properties is irrelevant, provided they are reposit in international museums. MacGregor (2012) and his cultural internationalist counterparts thus, play down the cultural significance of cultural properties, and provide justification for the loot and illegal migration of cultural artefacts of Benin kingdom. They oppose any quest for restitution, as according to them, the cultural properties are able to reach wider audience, are better preserved and protected in the West – as long as this was case, the location of origin was immaterial.

### Methodology

The paper adopts primary and secondary data and the explanatory and descriptive designs, using the mixed (qualitative and quantitative) methods. Qualitative data were sourced via semi-structured interviews with six (6) purposively selected key informants, while quantitative data were sourced via the distribution of structured questionnaire among 362 randomly selected indigenes of Benin Kingdom. The Research Advisors Sample Size Table (2006) was used to determine the sample size for the over 1.4 million population of Benin City, using a confidence level of 95 percent, and a margin of error of 5 percent. A sample size of 384 was derived, and questionnaire administered to them, while 362 responses representing 94.3 percent of the actual sample size, was retrieved for onward analysis.

While the qualitative data were analyzed using thematic analysis, quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistical techniques of percentages and frequencies. Secondary data were sourced from relevant literature.

### Data presentation and analysis

The table 2 below shows the biographic information of respondents to the quantitative questionnaire.

**Table 2: Biographic Information of Respondents**

	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
<b>What is your gender?</b>		
Male	225	62.2
Female	137	37.8
Total	362	100
<b>What best describes your engagement?</b>		
Student	49	13.5
Civil servant	111	30.7
Self employed	111	30.7
Employed with a private firm	64	17.7
Unemployed	27	7.5
Total	362	100

<b>What is your highest level of qualification?</b>		
Secondary education or lower	20	5.5
Certificate/Diploma	69	19.1
B.Sc./BA	184	50.8
Masters	75	20.7
PhD	14	3.9
<b>Total</b>	<b>362</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: Field Work, 2021

The table 3 below shows the profile of key informant interviewees who responded to the semi-structured interviews.

**Table 3: Profile of Interviewees**

<b>/N</b>	<b>Profession of Key Informant Interviewee</b>	<b>Date of Interview</b>
1.	Medical Doctor	July 20, 2021
2.	Artisan	July 21, 2021
3.	Trader	July 27, 2021
4.	Benin Chief	July 27, 2021
5.	Benin Chief	July 27, 2021
6.	Benin Art maker	July 30, 2021

Source: Field Work, 2021

The table 4 below shows the responses of the sampled respondents to the structured questionnaire designed to feel the pulse of the Binis concerning the forcefully migrated Bini artefacts.

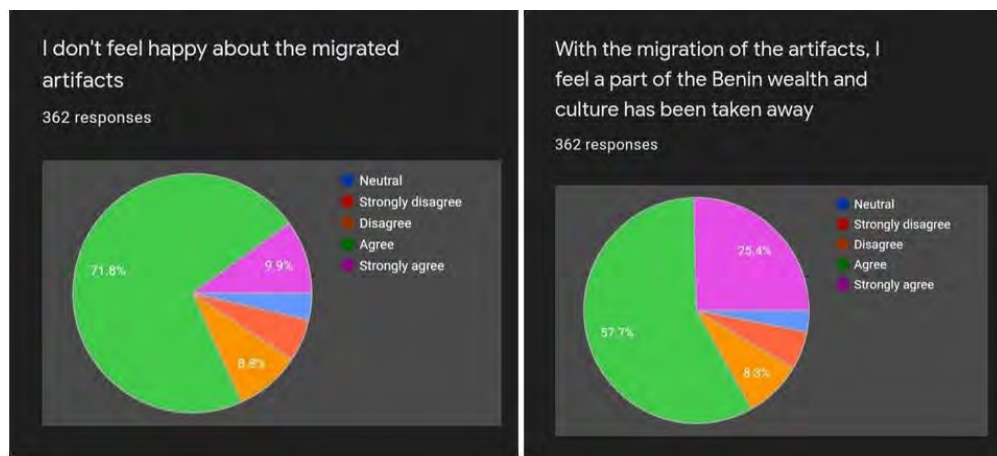
**Table 4: The Pulse of the Binis over the Forcefully Migrated Artefacts**

<b>Pulse of the Binis</b>					
Indices	Neutral n(%)	Strongly disagree n(%)	Disagree n(%)	Agree N(%)	Strongly agree N(%)
I do not feel happy about the migrated artefacts	12(3.5)	22(6)	32(8.8)	260(71.8)	36(9.9)
With the migration of the artefacts, I feel a part of the Bini wealth and culture has been taken away	7(2)	24(6.6)	30(8.3)	209(57.7)	92(25.4)

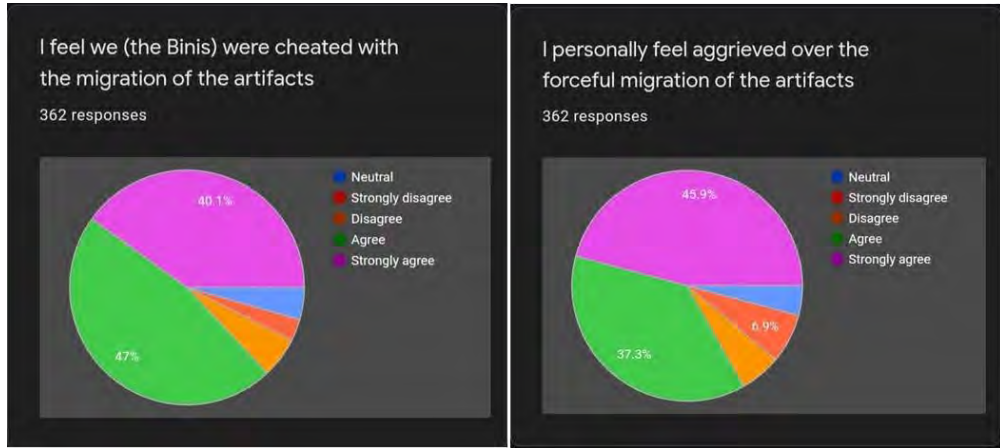
I feel we (the Binis) were cheated with the migration of the artefacts	20(5.4)	7(2)	20(5.5)	170(47)	145(40.1)
I personally feel aggrieved over the forceful migration of the artefacts	15(4)	25(6.9)	21(5.9)	135(37.3)	166(45.9)
I am very keen to see the complete return/restitution of all the migrated artefacts	26(7.2)	4(1)	16(4.5)	176(48.6)	140(38.7)
Legal action should be taken against Britain to facilitate the quick return of the artefacts	22(6.1)	4(1)	18(5)	183(50.6)	135(37.3)

Source: Field Work, 2021

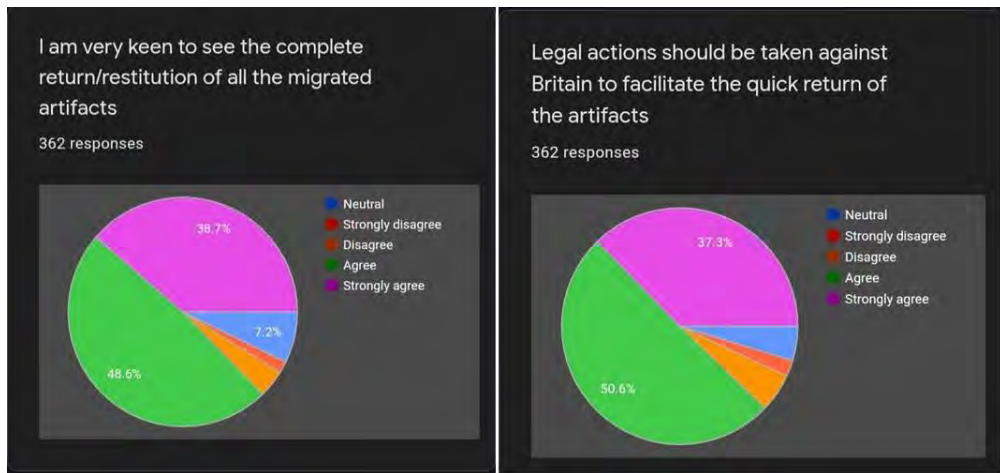
The figure 1 below shows that most Binis are very unhappy with the forcefully migrated artefacts, and that they feel a part of their wealth and culture has been taken away with the migrated artefacts.



The figure 2 below shows that most Binis feel cheated with the migration of the artefacts, and that they feel personally aggrieved over the forceful migration.



The figure 3 below shows that most Binis are very keen to see the complete return/restitution of the forcefully migrated artefacts, and that they feel that legal actions be taken against Britain in order to facilitate the quick return of the artefacts.



From the interviews conducted with key informant interviewees, the views and opinion of all the interviewees align significantly with those of the questionnaire respondents. With respect to how they feel concerning the forcefully migrated artefacts, all the respondents feel very unhappy with the

incident. For instance, while describing his feeling over the incident, a Benin traditional chief averred “That incident [the forceful migration of the artefacts] has left not only me, but the entire [Benin] kingdom in a mourning mood, as such, there is no way that we can be happy.”<sup>1</sup> Similarly, some of the interviewees alluded that they feel very sad over the forceful migration because those artefacts were the hard labor of their forefathers, as such, they feel a part of their wealth and culture has been forcefully migrated to an alien country.<sup>2</sup>

The respondents also alluded that the Binis were cheated by Britain when it forcefully migrated the Bini artefacts. A trader who was interviewed on this asserted that “It was cheating, the type [of cheating] that I have never seen all my life...for some people to labor so hard to earn such honor and prestige, and then for some persons who knew nothing about this labor to come from nowhere and forcefully take them away, it is the highest level of cheating.”<sup>3</sup> Also responding, some interviewees agreed that if cheating is taking what does not belong to one, then the British invasion and forcefully carting away the Bini artefacts was cheating on the Binis.<sup>4</sup> Also, responses from the interviewees show that the Binis are generally aggrieved over the forceful migration of the artefacts. According to a respondent, “I feel very aggrieved, and in fact, that is an understatement.”<sup>5</sup> A Benin art maker interviewed averred that he is so aggrieved that if he was opportune to avenge the forceful migration of the artefacts, he will take the chance.<sup>6</sup>

Furthermore, all of the interviewees are very keen to see the complete return/restitution of all the migrated artefacts as soon as possible. Interviewees asserted that except the Benin artefacts were completely returned, the Binis will not forgive Britain for the forceful migration.<sup>7</sup> As touching whether or not legal actions be taken against Britain to facilitate the quick return of the artefacts, interviewees alluded that that will be a welcome development. According to some interviewees, only legal actions can facilitate the quick return of the forcefully migrated Benin artefacts, therefore, as a matter of exigency, legal actions must be taken against Britain in order to see to the quick and unconditional return of the artefacts.<sup>8</sup>

### **Discussion of findings**

The study finds that the Binis are still very unhappy with the forceful migration of the Benin artefacts decades of years ago. This is, as larger percentage of the respondents to the questionnaire alluded to being unhappy with the incident, while all the interviewees also showed their displeasure over the incident. It also reveals that with the migration of the artefacts, the Binis feel that a part of their wealth and culture had been taken away. The Binis particularly feel cheated over the forceful migration of the artefacts by the British invaders in 1897. Larger percentage of those who responded to the questionnaire, and the interviewees hold this perception of feeling being cheated. The paper also shows that the Binis are still aggrieved over the forceful migration of the Benin artefacts by Britain.

No doubt that since the looting/illegal migration of the Benin artefacts in 1897, efforts have been, and are being made to see to the return of the looted artefacts. While some of them have been returned in the past, recent moves and efforts have yielded, or at least appear to portray positive omen for the quest for restitution by the Binis. The positive omen follows the recent commitments and promises made by the likes of the UK and Germany to begin the repatriation of the Benin artefacts beginning from 2022 (Are 2021). Also, on December 13, 2021, the Oba of Benin, Omo N'Oba N'Edo Uku Akpolokpolo, Ewuare II, signed the necessary documents for the return of a cockerel (Okpa) and Uhunwun Elao artefacts among those looted over 124 years ago (Enoghlease & Aliu 2021). During the event to sign the return of the artefacts, the Oba emphasized the importance of the restitution. He stated that "As our treasures are returned, our youths will be able to establish a new relationship with the heritage bequeathed by their forefathers. The return of all the treasures taken away will begin a new era of Benin history and civilization (Channels Television December 13, 2021; Enoghlease & Aliu 2021). The cockerel (Okpa) and Uhunwun Elao artefacts have been returned in 2022.

Despite this positive omen as touching the restitution of the Benin artefacts, the disunity and disagreement over the legal and rightful ownership of the artefacts between the Oba of Benin and the Edo State government

within which the Benin kingdom is located, is presenting a draw back for the restitution. While the governor of the state insists the artefacts belongs to the state, the Oba believes the artefacts belong in the palace (Are 2021; Enoghlease & Aliu 2021). According to the governor, “A transformational museum is to be built in Benin City, to house the artefacts upon their return, as part of a new cultural district in the city”, whereas the Oba argues that Benin kingdom is the “only legitimate destination for the artefacts” (Are 2021).

The controversy over ownership has sparked protest among members of the Igun Bronze Casters Guild, those who are traditionally recognized as the makers of the Benin artefacts. On their part, they assert that they work to beautify the palace to keep the history of the kingdom using various art works. They also declared that all the artefacts which they, and their forefathers have made over the years were done for the palace (Olaniyi 2021). This position suggests that the legal owner of the Benin artefacts is the palace of the Oba of Benin kingdom, from where the treasures were looted 124 years ago.

On its part, the Federal Government of Nigeria has willed into the issue to resolve the ownership crisis between the Benin palace and the governor of the state, currently rocking the Benin artefacts. In order to quell the crisis, the federal government had earlier decided it would be in custody of the returned artefacts, and all others that will be returned in the future, in the mean time before it will transfer them to Benin palace where it believes the treasures belong (Amadi 2021). The federal government however also lays partial claims to the artefacts because according to it, relevant international conventions on antiquities ascribe them as properties belonging to sovereign states, and not sub-national entities, or individuals (Amadi 2021). In statement by the Minister of Culture, “The 1970 UNESCO Convention, in article 1, defines cultural property as property specifically designed by that nation. This allows individual nations to determine what it regards as its cultural property...in essence,...the federal government will take possession of these antiquities, because is its duty to do so, in line with the extant laws.” By this statement, it therefore implies that the federal government is ready to take

possession of the returned artefacts, and thereafter decide to do with them what it deems fit.

This controversy over ownership has been described as a clog in the wheels of the smooth returns of the artefacts. For instance, a director of one of the European museums housing the Benin artefacts posits that “Our policy is that if claimants are in dispute amongst themselves, we wait until they resolve it” (Are 2021). In like manner, director of the University of Aberdeen in Scotland Museum, one of the museums also ready to restitute the Benin artefacts in their possession, Neil Curtis is of the opinion that he will be “very uncomfortable” returning the artefacts when the relevant parties are in disagreement over the ownership of the treasures (Are 2021). Nevertheless, this controversy has now been laid to rest, as the Federal government has decided that all returned artefacts be reposit with the Oba of Benin Palace from where they were originally taken. This indeed portends a positive sign for the complete restitution of the migrated Benin artefacts.

### **Conclusion**

The paper feels the pulse of the Binis over the illegal migration of the Benin artefacts by the British Empire in 1897. It is observed that the Binis have so much attachment with the migrated artefacts so much so that they now feel a part of them, their wealth and culture had been taken when the artefacts were migrated. Over a century after, the Binis are still very much interested in the restitution of the artifacts. The study also reveals that the Binis feel cheated over the migration and they still feel that legal actions should be taken against Britain to facilitate the return of the artefacts. The Binis are very united in seeing the restitution of the artefacts. In recent time, there has been some progress and successes in terms of securing the restitution of the Benin treasures, as the UK, France and Germany are already making the moves to return the artefacts, while some have actually been returned. While these successes are being recorded, the disagreement between the palace of the Oba of Benin kingdom and the governor of Edo State over the rightful owners of the artefacts could constitute a draw back to the progress already being made in the quest for restitution. The Binis’ quest for restitution is still very

much on course, and even after several decades, they still feel aggrieved over the forcefully and illegally migrated Artefacts. The Binis (including the State government and the palace) must therefore work harmoniously to see to the swift restitution of the artefacts.

### **BIBLIOGRAPHY**

- Agbedeh, T. "How Nigeria Loses Her Priceless Cultural Objects." *National Mirror Newspaper*, May 12, 2011.
- Agorsah, Kofi. "Restitution of Cultural Material to Africa." *African Spectrum* 12, no. 3 (1977): 305-308.
- Ananwa, Chika Joseph. "Internationalization of Benin Art Works." *Journal of Humanity* 2, no. 1 (2014): 41-53.
- Appiah, Kwame. (2009). "Whose culture is it?" In *Whose Culture: The Promise of Museums and the Debate over Antiquities*, edited by J. Cuno, 71-86. Princeton N. J.: Princeton University Press, 2009.
- Are, Jesupemi. "Dispute between Oba of Benin and Obaseki 'may Delay' Return of Looted Benin Artefacts." *The Cable*, July 23, 2021. <https://www.thecable.ng/dispute-between-oba-of-benin-obaseki-may-delay-return-of-looted-artefacts/amp>.
- Channels Television. "Oba of Benin takes Legal Possession of Bronze Head and Cockerel." Channels Television Live Broadcast, December 13, 2021.
- Dokolo, Sindika. "Returning Looted African Art is as urgent as Giving back Works Stolen by the Nazis." *The Art Newspaper*, July 2, 2018. <https://www.theartnewspaper.com/2018/07/02/returning-looted-african-art-is-as-urgent-as-giving-back-works-stolen-by-the-nazis>.
- Friedman, Ken. "Behavioural Artefacts: What is an Artefact? Or who does it?" *Artefact* 1, no. 1 (2007): 6-10.
- Geary, Chrstrand. *Things of the Palace: A Catalogue of the Bamum Palace Museum in Foumban (Cameroon)*. Studient zur Kelturkunde 60, Wiesbaden: Steiner Verlag, 1983.
- Gundu, Zacharys. "Archaeological Resources: Reflections on the Significance, Threats and the Stewardship Challenge in Nigeria." *African Journal of Existential Philosophy* 3, no. 2 (2012): 50-68.
- Gundu, Zacharys. "Looted Nigerian Heritage – An Interrogatory Discourse around Repatriation." *Contemporary Journal of African Studies* 7, no. 1 (2020): 47-66.
- ICE. United States Immigration and Customs Enforcement, 2012. <https://www.ice.gov/news/releases/his-returns-stolen-and-looted-antiquities-nigeria>.
- Iabor, Daniel. "The Art of the Benin People." *Journal of Advances in Social Science and Humanities* 5, no. 8 (2019): 949-974.

- Jemkur, Joseph. *Aspects of the Nok Culture*. Zaria, Nigeria: Ahmadu Bello University Press, 1992.
- Jones, Jonathan. "Spoils of War." *The Guardian*, Thursday September 11, 2003. <https://www.google.com/amp/s/amp.theguardian.com/culture/2003/sep/11/>.
- Kiwara-Wilson, Salome. "Restituting Colonial Plunder: The Case for the Benin Bronzes and Ivories." *DePaul Journal of Art, Technology and Intellectual Property Law* 23, no. 2 (2013): 375-425.
- Kohl, Karl-Heinz. "The Legacy of Leo Frobenius in Germany." In *Nigeria 100 Years Ago: through the Eyes of Leo Frobenius and His Expedition Team*, edited by R. Kuba and M. Hambolu. Frankfurt/Main: Frobenius Institute at the Goethe University, 2010.
- Kuba, Richard. "Travelling Frobenius: The Legacy of Leo Frobenius in Germany." In *Nigeria 100 Years Ago: through the Eyes of Leo Frobenius and His Expedition Team*, edited by R. Kuba and M. Hambolu. Frankfurt/Main: Frobenius Institute at the Goethe University, 2010.
- Laiwola, Paul. "Benin1897.com: Art and the Restitution Question." An Art Exhibition, Ibadan, Wy Art Editions, 2010.
- Laiwola, Paul. "Making Meaning from a Fragmented Past: 1897 and the Creative Process." *Open Arts Journal* no. 3 (2014): 85-96.
- Lunden, Staffan. "Displaying Loot: The Benin Objects and the British Museum." PhD diss., Goteborgs University, 2016.
- Macgregor, Neil. "To Shape the Citizens of "that Great City, the World." In *Whose Culture?: The Promise of Museums and the Debate over Antiquities*, edited by J. Cuno, 37-54. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2012.
- Merryman, John Henry. *Law, Ethics and the Visual Art*. Kluwer Law International, 2007.
- Merryman, John Henry. *Imperialism, Art and Restitution*. Cambridge University Press, 2010.
- Nevadomsky, Joseph. "Casting in Contemporary Benin Art." *African Arts* 38, no. 2 (2005): 66-96.
- Ogbechie, Syvelster Okwunodu. *The Postcolonial African Museum in the Age of Cultural Informatics*, 2016. <https://www.biblioteca.org.br/9090/publicacoes/index/8->
- Opoku, Kwame. "Would Western Museums return Looted Objects if Nigeria and other African States were ruled by Angels? Restitution and Corruption." *Modern Ghana*, August 18, 2009. <https://www.modernghana.com/news/233465/1/would-western-museums-return-looted-objects-if-nig.html>.
- Oxford English Dictionary, 1993.
-

### **Endnotes**

1. Interview with a Benin Chief on July 27, 2021
2. Interviews with a Benin Medical Doctor on July 20, 2021; Interview with a Benin artisan on July 21, 2021; and Interview with a Benin Art maker on July 30, 2021
3. Interview with a Benin trader on July 27, 2021
4. Interview with a Benin chief on July 27, 2021; Interview with a Benin artisan on July 21, 2021; and Interview with a Benin trader on July 27, 2021.
5. Interview with a Benin chief on July 27, 2021
6. Interview with a Benin art maker on July 30, 2021
7. Interview with two Benin chiefs on July 27, 2021; Interview with a Benin medical doctor on July 20, 2021; and Interview with a Benin artisan, July 21, 2021
8. Interview with a Benin medical doctor on July 20, 2021; Interview with a Benin chief, July 27, 2021; and Interview with a Benin art maker on July 30, 2021

# Analyzing the *Robe en Chemise* in the Late Eighteenth Century

---

**Lorenzo Merlino**

Universidade Estadual de Campinas

## **ABSTRACT**

This paper underscores some concepts and hypotheses currently being developed in my PhD research. It focuses on the *robe en chemise* — a paradigmatic dress that disclosed the utmost, fastest and deepest transformation in the women's attire before the end of the Belle Époque. It completely altered fashion and challenged the usual explanation of a unique French origin.

Moreover, it analyzes new perspectives that surfaced in recent articles and studies, including a British approach that is connected with Middle Eastern and Antillean influences, providing further understandings of this singular and radical revolution in the Western costume during the late eighteenth century.

## **KEYWORDS**

Fashion History, Dress, Costume, Robe en Chemise, Colonial.

At the 1783 *Salon de l'Académie royale de peinture et de sculpture*, opened as usual on August 25<sup>th</sup>, the onomastic day of the King, the newly admitted academician Élisabeth Vigée-Le Brun exhibited, among a large number of paintings, including in this group her *morceau de réception*, a portrait of the Queen Marie-Antoinette wearing a simple dress in white cotton muslin girded with an ochre striped *façonné* silk gauze sash, picturing in a daring way the French monarch, who was considered the first female figure of the kingdom, with decidedly unadorned clothes, complemented by a large straw hat with clear peasant reminiscences [fig. 1], similar to the one used by the painter in her self-portrait presented in the same salon.<sup>4</sup>



**Fig. 1.** Portrait de Marie-Antoinette en chemise, Élisabeth Vigée-Le Brun, 1783  
óleo sobre tela, 90 × 72 cm. Hesse-Darmstadt, Hessische Hausstiftung,  
Kronberg im Taunus.

The portrait of the Queen initially received favorable reviews, such as the one on the *Mercure de France*, which praised the “*beautiful shades of color, and the merit of the likeness*”, but soon severe considerations abounded, especially regarding the dress worn by Marie-Antoinette, and the painting had to be replaced by another, where the monarch was now shown in an attire considered more suitable, a fact that various critical texts of the time reported. The *Mémoires Secrets*, for example, described that “*Many people thought it inappropriate that these august personages [Marie-Antoinette and her sister-in-law, the Countess of Provence, wife of the future Louis XVIII] should be offered in public in a garment reserved for the interior of their palaces; it must be assumed that the author was authorized to do so and would not have taken such liberty on her own*”, adding in a footnote that “*Since this was written, the indecency of this costume has apparently been felt, particularly for the Queen, and higher orders have come to remove the painting*”, a comment that highlighted an association with intimacy regarding the dress. The substitution was corroborated by the *Correspondance littéraire, philosophique et critique*, which indicated that “[...] *as the public seemed to disapprove of this unworthy attire of Her Majesty, they hastened to replace it with one with clothes more similar to the dignity of the throne*”.<sup>2</sup>

So due to the polemic in regard to the dress, Vigée-Le Brun was forced to replace the first portrait by a new painting, which became known as the *Portrait of Marie-Antoinette “à la rose”*, where the Queen is presented, in a complete opposition, wearing a *robe à l’anglaise*, a simplification of the *robe à la française* in vogue since the 1770’s in the French fashion, considerably more informal than the solemn and structured *robes de cour* of the time, then often used in official majestic portraits, but still a far more pompous attire than the white garment that caused such a scandal.<sup>3</sup>

Despite all that controversy about such garment, soon after named *robe en chemise*, symptomatically relating the dress to the *chemise*, the usual undergarment worn by both man and woman from the Late Middle Ages to the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, it’s remarkably conventional in the History

of Costume to use the controversial Marie-Antoinette's portrait as a proof of a prevailing fashion going on in France at that time.

But, if the *robe en chemise* was of common use at this moment in the French society, why would it have caused such a shudder?

In this way, the virulence and intensity of the attacks directed against the dress worn by Marie-Antoinette does not indicate an evidence of a fashion, but rather points out to an isolated and particular occurrence, causing great aversion and, therefore, in dissonance with the dressing habits current in most of the French context at the time, given the scandal and commotion it caused, and the irrepressible upsurging of the *robe en chemise* in France can only be verified during the very final years of the *Ancien Régime*.

### **Trianon**

The second half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century saw a growing appreciation for simplicity, disaffection, and unpretentiousness, in which the role of Voltaire, Rousseau and other philosophers and writers was absolutely crucial in their promotion of naturalism and simplicity, and Marie-Antoinette, like most of the French society, will incur in this sometimes excessive search for the intimate related to an utopian deference to Nature.<sup>4</sup>

Inattentive with the risk and threat that such ideas and concepts could, and will, completely transform the society, and alter the established codes that particularly ensured the privileges of her social stratum, Marie-Antoinette will gradually and progressively alter her mode of behavior, transforming aesthetically her surroundings and changing her way of dressing, in a process that will take place completely outside the royal court and the Parisian society, in a course of isolation that, in addition to a reaction to such ideological and theoretic changes, it is certainly connected to a safeguard on her part in relation to the repudiation she has felt with the repeated condemnations and criticisms the Queen suffered since her arrival at Versailles.

In this process, Marie-Antoinette gradually moved away from the court in her castle of the Petit Trianon, presented to her by Louis XVI when

they ascended the throne in 1774, and in this environment full of eminent exclusivity and supposed authenticity, the young Queen gave vent to a gradual fascination with nature and simplicity, complementing her new property, from 1777 onwards, with a *jardin à l'anglaise* and a Temple de l'Amour, commissioned to the neoclassical architect Richard Mique, a disciple of Ange-Jacques Gabriel and his successor as *Premier architecte du Roi* since 1775, in absolute consonance with the irrepressible vogue of bucolism and gentleness, as advocated by Rousseau, for example.

The Queen's isolation conduct will then be negatively perceived and repeatedly commented on by the court and the public opinion, and her popularity will be reduced in proportion as she further isolated herself more and more. In consequence, her inner circle of trusted friends and a few members of her family-in-law became the envy of all the court, and this group became known as the « *société de Trianon* ». This « *société* », absolutely restricted and intimate, was essentially composed of a group of only 14 courtiers and 5 *princes de sang*, according to contemporary descriptions.<sup>5</sup>

And as several of her close friends reported and declared on this specific context of the Petit Trianon, the ladies of this group, and only them<sup>6</sup>, sometimes got rid of the heavy and structured clothes of the time in favor of simple dresses in percale or muslin, thus indicating this attire as exclusive and contextualized much more with the simulacrum of peasant life that was set on the the so-called Hameau de la Reine, the collection of replicas of pastoral buildings, a series of follies built between 1783 and 1787 next to her castle, where she took refuge from the court and society's comments in a supposed rustic nostalgia.

Therefore, more than a fashion occurrence, the series of female portraits that Vigée-Le Brun produced of some of Marie-Antoinette's close relationships<sup>7</sup> in the same period as the controversial portrait of the 1783 *Salon*, seemingly indicate a custom originated from this rural idyllic isolation, as well as an aspect conditioned much more to a particular portrait resource of the painter herself than a fashion that could be identified in a broader scope in the French context on this immediate pre-revolutionary period.<sup>8</sup>

### English portraiture

In almost the same moment across the Channel, in the 15<sup>th</sup> Exhibition of the Royal Academy, a mature and already firmly established Thomas Gainsborough exhibited a full-length, almost life-size portrait of a “*Lady of quality*”, numbered 78, whose apparent anonymity did not fool any of the visitors of the exhibition, given her fame and celebrity among both gentry and commoners in this early 1780s – it was the portrait of Georgiana Cavendish, *née* Spencer, the utterly famous Duchess of Devonshire [fig. 2].



**Fig. 2.** Georgiana, Duchess of Devonshire, Thomas Gainsborough, 1783  
Oil on canvas, 235,6 x 146,5 cm. National Gallery of Art, Washington

The reactions after the Royal Academy Exhibition opening – which always preceded the French by a trimester –, to the portrait of the, to a certain extent, main female character in English society at the time wearing a simple white muslin dress, girdled by a delicate sash in a similar fabric with iridescent reflections and a graceful powder blue shawl encircling her arms, were somehow usual and formal: the *St. James's Chronicle* stated that the portrait was “a very elegant picture of the Duchess of Devonshire, [...]”, the *Morning Herald* praised that “The portrait of the Duchess of Devonshire is after Mr. Gainsborough's best manner; [...]” and The Public Advertiser just cited that “[...] Gainsborough's other Portraits – Lady Horatia Waldergrave and the Duchess of Devonshire, and Mrs. Sheridan; all of whom we have seen painted by the President [Joshua Reynolds at the time]”, reactions quite the opposite to the French polemics with the Marie-Antoinette's portrait four months later.

The custom of portraying “ladies of quality” in a simple and undecorated attire, usually referred as *artistic dresses*, was extremely prevalent in English portraiture throughout the eighteenth century, as the examples are counted in hundreds, and this fashion could have played a role in the simplification of the everyday female garments of the period, even though those specific portrayals usually had an intentional allegoric sense, praised and detailed several times by Joshua Reynolds in his *Discourses*.<sup>10</sup>

Those dresses, especially the ones with a cross-over bodice like the one worn by the Duchess of Devonshire in the Gainsborough portrait, were largely common as a recurrent practice amid almost every English portrait painter of the eighteenth century, an aesthetic definitely reminiscent to the ancient classical costumes, as well as closely related to the celebrated simplicity in the informal styles of fashion in the 1770s and 1780s, when the adoption of plain fabrics such as cottons, and the prevailing use of colors such as white and blue, influenced by fashionable country pursuits and by the growing taste for sports and outdoor activities, expressed a marked change away from the previous predominant utilization of silk and the extensive use of intricate brocades and damasks in rich tones characteristic of the first half of the century.<sup>11</sup>

The cotton, a fiber that until this point was by no means popular, was usually reserved for very informal wear, among the contemporary classification of *undress* or *negligee*, but no pictorial representations have survived, even though since as early as the late 1740s some narratives and accounts indicate that such fashion existed and was in all regards used.<sup>12</sup>

Despite that lack of depictions, and the current allegorical manner characteristic in the female portraiture of the period, occasionally we can identify occurrences of fashionable dresses amid the vastness of female portraits produced at the time. Some of these precedents can be perceived, for example, in the 1780 Romney double portrait of Mrs. Richard Pryce Corbet and her daughter Mary (Cincinnati Art Museum) [fig. 3], or in the 1781 Reynolds portrait of Lady Elizabeth Seymour-Conway (Wallace Collection) and the 1782 Romney portrait of The Hon. Rebecca Clive, Mrs. John Robinson (Powis Castle)<sup>13</sup>, where all adult sitters are wearing what clearly seem to be early *robes en chemise*, then predating by a few years, in the English context, the Marie-Antoinette's portrait.



**Fig. 3.** Mrs. Richard Pryce Corbet and her daughter Mary, George Romney, 1780, finished in 1783  
Oil on canvas, 148 × 120,7 cm  
Cincinnati Art Museum, Cincinnati

The intense aesthetic exchanges between England and France throughout the Age of Enlightenment, even though the countries were at war most of the era, reflects the complexity of those relations. The examples are abundant, in many different spheres, and the fashion perspective is certainly one of the most prolific in those contacts. Aileen Ribeiro, for example, has shown several times in many of her studies those multiple and intricate connections, untangling approximations and oppositions.<sup>14</sup> A particular exemplification is highlighted by Kendra van Cleave, that argues for an English origin of the French *robe à l'anglaise*, and this through the mantua, or night-gown, an eighteenth-century informal dress of the time paradoxically reserved for morning use<sup>15</sup>, and therefore not related to the modern outfit. Van Cleave also indicates the primary origin of late related to Middle Eastern-inspired dressing gowns, adding even more layers on the origins of the *robe en chemise* during that period.<sup>16</sup>

### **Turquerie**

The Middle East has always emanated a broad attraction on the European, especially regarding its esthetics and, above all, textile related elements such as fabrics, colors, materials, decorations and construction of garments.

The publication in 1763 of Lady Mary Wortley Montagu's reflections on her travels with her *Turkish Embassy Letters*, although this collection of letters and manuscripts intensely circulated among her friends since her stay at the Sublime Porte as the wife of the British ambassador, between 1716 and 1718, launched a habit of wearing Turkish inspired costumes by the whole of the *beau monde*, and the vogue for masquerades and fancy dress balls during the Georgian era found in this custom its perfect congruence.

Montagu herself was portrayed several times in such attire, from the first, by Jean-Baptiste Vanmour in an Ottoman garb (National Portrait Gallery), produced while she was in Istanbul, and all the others, painted after her return, by such different names as George Knapton (private collection), Jonathan Richardson the Elder (Graves Gallery), Jonathan Richardson the Younger (private collection) and finally Jean-Étienne Liotard (Pałac

Lazienkowski), the Swiss painter mostly responsible for the vast intensification of the Turkish fashion in Europe during the 1740s and 1750s.

From the 1770s the influence of the *turqueries* induced the emergence of some outfits whose denominations leave no doubts about this repercussion and origin – the *robe à la circassienne*, *robe à la lévite*, *robe à la lévantine* and the more generally known *robe à la turque* were prevalent European fashions that arise from this period, paring with the *robe à la française* and *robe à l'anglaise*, and disputing the preference of the female upper class of the time.

A wide range of studies have been published on the specific facets of these aspects, almost all of them deeply analyzing those orientally named dresses<sup>12</sup>, but rarely relating the idea of comfort and looseness associated with the Middle Eastern silhouette to the popularization of the *robe en chemise* in the late 1780s, therefore requiring further attempts on showing and establishing those relations.

But an even more unexpected connection of the *robe en chemise* could have come from a place far further than the Ottoman Empire.

### **West Indies**

Throughout most of the eighteenth century the territories known as British West Indies referred to the various English colonies spread within the Caribbean Sea, where sugar and coffee were grown as commodity crops to be shipped to Europe, in plantations ruled by European but labored by enslaved black people captured in the African coast. In the same region, different French colonies were grouped as two entities at the time – *Saint-Domingue*, the actual Haiti, and the *Isles du Vent*, grouping the Lesser Antilles –, and in all these colonies a white elite was formed, where not rarely free people of color, which consisted of individuals of mixed African, European, and Native American descent who were not enslaved, were considered part of the upper class.

Despite the usual importation of the European conventions such as manners, styles and fashion, an interesting prevalence of white garments and dresses produced in plain or delicate small printed cottons can be traced in

the rare visual representations in the colonial scope during that period. One of the very few examples consists in Agostino Brunias, a painter of Italian origin who moved to England in 1758 accompanying the seminal Scottish architect Robert Adam. At the end of 1764, Brunias went to the British West Indies under the employ of Sir William Young, the newly-appointed president of a commission in charge to rule the islands of Dominica, Grenada, Saint Vincent and Tobago, seized from France as a result of the 1763 Peace of Paris. Brunias accompanied his patron on his travels throughout the islands, returning to Britain around 1775 in order to promote and sell his work, in which engravings played an important role on the circulation of these colonial society depictions, then returning to Dominica in 1784 and finally dying there in 1796.

Brunias made the evolving Creole culture incorporated with the colonial everyday life and the particular aspects of the local society the preminent subjects of his production, today dispersed around the globe but mainly located in the Yale Center for British Art, the Brooklyn Museum and within the Carmen Thyssen-Bornemisza Collection.



**Fig. 4.** West Indian landscape with figures promenading before a stream, Agostino Brunias, s/d. Oil on canvas, 28 x 81 cm. Colección Carmen Thyssen-Bornemisza

In the above painting [fig. 4], Brunias staged a group of women, two men and two children, all in various attitudes, where the delineation of the

women's status based on the subtleties of their skin and dress colors stands out, being the lady at the center of the composition the whiter colored skin person but also the whiter dressed one, a codification that reflects the social and racial hierarchies of the colonial society.<sup>18</sup>

The white color and the cotton fiber were not particularly associated with the privileged in Europe before the late eighteenth century, on the contrary, white and cotton were mostly connected with servants' clothes and informal dress. Thus, this colonial fashion may consist in a particular occurrence, circumscribed in the New World and probably originated without any European affinity or inspiration.

As pointed out by Jane Ashelford, the dresses worn by the free women of color in the French West Indies were not coming from the metropolitan fashion, but they were mostly a "refashioning" of the regional dress worn by the *petits blancs*, as it was named the group formed by the workers and tradesmen in the French colonies, who grouped with the *grand blancs*, the plantation owners and rich merchants, the insular elites.<sup>19</sup>

During the final years of the monarchy in France, some episodes can attest the circumstance of an influence with an unprecedented direction, in this way unusually coming from the colonies towards the metropole – from a « *Vêtement dit à la Créole* » and a « *coëffure à la Créole* », two engravings published in 1779 in the popular *Galerie des Modes et Costumes Français*, the first illustrated set of plates published in France exclusively devoted to fashion<sup>20</sup>, to *Mirza et Lindor*, a ballet staged in front of the King and the Queen at Versailles in March 1779 and performed again at the theater of the *Académie royale de musique* in November and December 1779, where the main dancer, Mlle Guimard was dressed « *en créole* »<sup>21</sup>, all signs of a noteworthy and unparalleled ascendancy.

Ashelford calls attention to the fact that the contemporary synonym of the *robe en chemise*, *gaulle*, would be a French translation of the Creole word "gole", an informal garment worn by the white colonial elite in the French West Indies.<sup>22</sup>

But the occasion of mostly white dresses within the privileged stratum related to the eighteenth century colonial world was not restricted to the

Antilles – in Brazil an even more particular painter, Carlos Julião, a Luso-Italian artist and engineer of the Portuguese colonial army, significant for his watercolors portraying the diverse racial and social types inhabiting the Portuguese colony, will produce what appears to be the only group of visual registrations of the Brazilian society before the arrival of the royal family in 1808.



**Fig. 5.** [Female costumes - 01], drawing 20 from *Riscos iluminados de figurinhos de brancos e negros dos uzos do Rio de Janeiro e Serro do Frio*, Carlos Julião, ca.1776/99 watercolor on paper, 45.5 x 35 cm National Library Foundation, Rio de Janeiro

Here, Julião presents three ladies, all elegantly dressed in white cotton ensembles printed in small floral patterns, a motif that won't be in fashion in Europe until the very end of the century, and noticeable is the woman on the left, wearing a peculiar headwear composition of a kind of a turban topped by a really flat wide-brimmed hat worn at the side, with a very narrow crown, a hat shape perhaps reminiscent of the Catholic *cappello romano*, or the

Mexican *sombrero de charro*, and surprisingly quite similar to the head arrangement of the lady in the center on Brunias' composition [fig. 4]. Also noteworthy are the loose sleeves, widely opened on the edges in both representations, making the two resemblances a possible indication of common fashion habits among the colonies in all the American continent, and a conceivable development of local, autochthonous and genuine fashion statements.

### **Considerations**

The analysis of Fashion History and its intricate and concomitant changes and alterations is a difficult task, as multiple vectors of influences and consequences, sometimes even paradoxical and contradictory, play a crucial part in all the transformations of the garments.

The nuances and subtext of dress in the late eighteenth century society were essential in an era where, as it has always been and always will be, choose what to wear incurred in telling, depicting, praising, or even censuring all sorts of messages and expressions, but also in caring on decisions of personal taste, issues of class, features of age, contexts of decorum, aspects of culture, and countenances of philosophy and politics.

The *robe en chemise* presents even more complex peculiarities, due to its possible, probable and presumable diversified origins, but additionally because its appearance marks a pivotal moment in fashion where the women abandoned the stiffed and corseted structures, but also the rich and abundant decorations, that has been going on in the female Western costume since the Early Renaissance.

This piece of clothing with seemingly both Creole and oriental origins, with its characteristic component being a natural fiber cultivated at that time in colonial America, fabricated in the pre-industrial British Isles and adopted in pre-revolutionary France, may consist in one of the very first *métissages* of the late modern period, to use here the neoteric term coined by Serge Gruzinski.<sup>23</sup>

## Endnotes

1. A signed copy by Vigée-Le Brun of her *Self-portrait in a straw hat*, part of the London National Gallery collection, can be seen at: <https://www.nationalgallery.org.uk/paintings/elisabeth-louise-vigee-le-brun-self-portrait-in-a-straw-hat>.
2. *Mercur de France* (Paris) September 6, 1783, <https://books.google.fr/books?id=sORR5wQ3OTUC>; *Mémoires Secrets [...]* (London: John Adamson, 1777-89), vol. 24, 9, <https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bpt6k65369555>; Friedrich Melchior, Baron von Grimm, et al., *Correspondance littéraire, philosophique et critique par Grimm, Diderot, Raynal, Meister, Etc [...]* (Paris: Garnier Frères, 1877-82), vol. 13, 441-442, <https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bpt6k5781395q?rk=236052;4>. Nolhac, in his biography of the painter, supposes that the order to remove the painting would have come from the Queen herself. Pierre de Nolhac, *Madame Vigée-Le Brun, peintre de Marie-Antoinette* (Paris: Goupil & C<sup>ie</sup> and Manzi, Joyant & C<sup>ie</sup>, 1912), 71.
3. A replica of the now lost original *Portrait of Marie-Antoinette "à la rose"* belongs to the collections of the Château de Versailles and can be seen at: <http://collections.chateauversailles.fr/#14ede615-413e-48ff-829f-9440b169cc96>. As soon as September 1783 the then director of the French Academy, the painter Jean-Baptiste-Marie Pierre, will mention and comment on this exchange on a report. Fernand Engerrand, *Inventaire des tableaux commandés et achetés par la direction des Bâtiments du roi (1709-1792)* (Paris: Ernest Leroux, 1900), 274.
4. Obviously, the French philosophers' colossal and complex production and its gigantic and profound effect on all Western conceptions cannot be sufficiently addressed in this paper. However, among some of the authors that approach more specifically the great changes that the philosophers specifically engendered on the Nature's appreciation in the 18<sup>th</sup> century are Charles Porset, *Voltaire humaniste* (Paris: Edimaf, 2003), Éliane Martin-Haag, *Voltaire : du Cartésianisme aux Lumières* (Paris: Vrin, 2002), André Charak, *Raison et perception : fonder l'harmonie au XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle* (Paris: Vrin, 2002) and Arthur Metzler, *Rousseau : La bonté naturelle de l'homme* (Paris: Belin, 1998).
5. Pierre-Victor, Baron of Besenval, *Mémoires de M. le baron de Besenval [...]*, (Paris: F. Buisson, 1805-07), vol. 3, 251.
6. Jeanne-Louise-Henriette Campan, *Mémoires sur la vie privée de Marie-Antoinette, [...]* (Paris: Baudouin Frères, 1822), vol. 1, 227-228 and Gustave-Armand-Henri, Count of Reiset, *Lettres inédites de Marie-Antoinette et de Marie-Clotilde de France (sœur de Louis XVI), reine de Sardaigne. Deuxième Édition* (Paris: Firmin-Didot, 1877), 151.
7. Images of this portraits can be found in <http://collections.chateauversailles.fr/#e14e9a28-c145-448f-8645-5925a5ba0772>, <https://www.pop.culture.gouv.fr/notice/joconde/000PE008952>, <https://www.invaluable.com/auction-lot/louise-elisabeth-vigee-lebrun-paris-1755-1842-97-c-s2-g712be6q>, <http://collections.chateauversailles.fr/#06c2c2e3-4fcf-4fc1-8b7b-64cc931d8031>, <https://artuk.org/discover/artworks/martine-gabrielle-yoland-de-polastron-17451793-duchesse-de-polignac-229479>, <https://artuk.org/discover/artworks/elisabeth-de-bourbon-17641794-princess-of-france-madame-elisabeth-218170>, [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Elisabeth\\_Louise\\_Vig%C3%A9-LeBrun\\_-\\_Portrait\\_de\\_Madame\\_de\\_Moreton,\\_La\\_Comtesse\\_de\\_Moreton\\_de\\_Chabrillan.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Elisabeth_Louise_Vig%C3%A9-LeBrun_-_Portrait_de_Madame_de_Moreton,_La_Comtesse_de_Moreton_de_Chabrillan.jpg).
8. The chief curator of 18<sup>th</sup> century fashion at the Musée de la mode de la Ville de Paris/ Palais Galliera, Pascale Gorguet Ballesteros, emphasizes that *robes en chemise* were not predominant at that time, unlike the *robes à l'anglaise*, the *robes à la polonaise* and the *caracos*, and that it is it was not until 1785/86 that the former were recommended by fashion publications. Pascale Gorguet Ballesteros, "Entre réalité et fiction, les choix vestimentaires de Mme Vigée Le Brun", in *Élisabeth Louise Vigée Le Brun*, directed by Joseph Baillio and Xavier Salomon (Paris: Réunion des musées nationaux, 2015), 49. Ballesteros also emphasizes that Vigée-Le Brun's

clothing choices sometimes collide with the “real existence” of the costumes portrayed by the painter. *Ibid.*, 47.

9. *St. James's Chronicle; Or, British Evening-Post*, 1<sup>st</sup> to 3 May 1783, N° 3455, 3, *Morning Herald, and Daily Advertiser*, 29 de abril de 1783, N° 780, 3 and *The Public Advertiser*, 2 May 1783, N° 15267, 2.

10. Joshua Reynolds, *Discourses on the fine arts delivered to the students of the Royal Academy* (Edinburgh: William and Robert Chambers, 1840), 13, 17, 20, 29, 31, 32, 41, 42 and 61.

11. Aileen Ribeiro, *The Dress Worn at Masquerades in England, 1730 to 1790, and Its Relation to Fancy Dress in Portraiture* (New York: Garland Publishing, 1984), 104, 127 and 130.

12. *Ibid.*, 127.

13. Images of the last two paintings can be found at: <https://wallacelive.wallacecollection.org/eMP/eMuseumPlus?service=ExternalInterface&module=collection&objectId=64921&viewType=detailView> and <https://www.nationaltrustcollections.org.uk/object/1181063>.

14. Aileen Ribeiro, *The Art of Dress: Fashion in England and France 1750 to 1820* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1995) and “Fashion in the eighteenth century: some Anglo-French comparisons” in *The Fashion History Reader: Global Perspectives*, ed. by Giorgio Riello and Peter McNeil (London and New York: Routledge, 2010).

15. Aileen Ribeiro, *The Dress Worn*, 104 and 122.

16. Kendra van Cleave, “The Lévite Dress: Untangling the Cultural Influences of Eighteenth-Century French Fashion”, *Textile Society of America 16<sup>th</sup> Biennial Symposium Proceedings*, Vancouver, 2018, 8.

17. More recent studies that somehow approach this aspect consist in Adam Geczy, *Fashion and Orientalism: Dress, Textiles and Culture from the 17<sup>th</sup> to the 21<sup>st</sup> Century* (London and New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2013), Charlotte Jirousek, *Ottoman Dress and Design in the West: A Visual History of Cultural Exchange* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2019) and Johannes Pietsch, “On Different Types of Women’s Dresses in France in the Louis XVI Period”, *Fashion Theory: The Journal of Dress, Body & Culture*, London, vol. 17, n° 4, 2013, 397-416.

18. For further references and informations regarding Brunias see Mia Bagneris, *Colouring the Caribbean. Race and the Art of Agostino Brunias* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2017); Beth Fowkes Tobin, *Picturing Imperial Power* (Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press, 1999), 139-174 and Robert S. DuPlessis, *The Material Atlantic: Clothing, Commerce, and Colonization in the Atlantic World, 1650–1800* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), 188-191.

19. Jane Ashelford, “‘Colonial livery’ and the chemise à la reine, 1779-1784”, *Costume*, Edinburgh, vol. 52, n° 2, sept. 2018, 220 and 222.

20. The engravings can be seen at:

<https://collections.mfa.org/objects/349408/gallerie-des-modes-et-costumes-francais-27e-cahier-de-costu?ctx=5ab30d36-5f43-4ee0-bb94-5a2465d282d5&idx=206> and

<https://collections.mfa.org/objects/312648/gallerie-des-modes-et-costumes-francais-17e-cahier-des-cos?ctx=5ab30d36-5f43-4ee0-bb94-5a2465d282d5&idx=138>.

21. Grimm, et al., *Correspondance littéraire*, vol. 12, 348.

22. Ashelford, “‘Colonial livery’”, 218.

23. Serge Gruzinski, *La Pensée Métisse* (Paris: Pluriel, 2012).

# The Shanpula Tapestry: Cultures Woven Together on the Silk Roads

---

**Lu Tian**

Freie Universität Berlin

## **ABSTRACT**

Considering that the Silk Roads are the result of the amalgamation of different cultures, it is worthwhile to conduct a closer analysis of the artifacts created by travelers and locals along the route. The Shanpula Tapestry, which was excavated in Shanpula, illustrates this need well. Various questions have already been asked regarding this object, including its identity and the purpose of the tapestry itself, and such mysteries can only be resolved once further examination takes place.

The presented research goes beyond a description of the exploration at Shanpula, however. The approach herein attempts to identify the various components of the Shanpula Tapestry through iconographic and typological analysis in order to show a life story of this tapestry.

## **KEYWORDS**

Silk Roads; Shanpula; Sampula; Tapestry; Centaur.

### **Introduction**

The Silk Roads have brought various peoples and cultures of the world into contact for many thousands of years. This was based not only on the exchange of goods, but also on ideas and different cultural concepts that still shape our world today. The artistic depiction of the Silk Roads is not limited to relics of Buddhism and other major religions, as the involvement of additional individuals during that period expanded and diversified the trade pathway, as well. The nomads of Central Asia and Iran in addition to those who were part of the Greek civilization acquired the various cultural traditions of the Silk Roads, connected these customs to their own mythical traditions, and as a result diversified the existing conventions.<sup>1</sup>

Because the Silk Roads are sites of the amalgamation of various cultures, a closer study of the artifacts produced by the travelers and people living along the route is worth conducting. The Shanpula Tapestry, excavated in Shanpula, is a perfect example of this analytical need (Fig.1). Various questions have already been raised regarding this object, such as the identity of the imprinted figures and the purpose of the tapestry itself, and it is only upon further examination can mysteries such as these be resolved. An overview of this object and its excavation, which is available from an excavation report from 2001, contains a number of details about new discoveries, which are illustrated by numerous high-resolution photographs and are described in additional essays.<sup>2</sup> A history of the tapestry and an analysis of excavations at Shanpula are first elucidated in the essay by Mayke Wagner from an archeological point of view.<sup>3</sup> Additionally, Chinese scholars such as He Xiaoxue, Gong Yingyan and Wang Libo have contributed some valuable insights into art testimonies from Shanpula, which are now housed in the Museum of Urumchi (Capital of the Uighur Autonomous Region of Xinjiang).<sup>4</sup> Nevertheless, in most scholarship this piece of tapestry was only mentioned in a haphazard manner.



**Fig. 1.** Centaur-Warrior Tapestry (Sampula 2001: 188)

The scope of my study goes beyond a simple overview of this tapestry and its excavations at Shanpula, however. The presented approach herein works to identify the various elements of the Shanpula tapestry through iconographic and typological analysis in order to show that the regions of China and Eurasia are culturally interrelated at that time. Utilizing this anthropological approach, a life history of this tapestry can be shown, which in turn expands the existing documentation of a more globalized world in early times.

### **Three States of The Shanpula Tapestry**

The present textiles (Fig. 1), which were excavated in the first Shanpula tomb in the Tarim Basin in 1984, may contribute to a better understanding of the history of the Silk Roads.<sup>5</sup> The textiles found their last use as trousers, as they still contained human leg bones during the excavation.<sup>6</sup> The earliest photographs (Fig. 2, Fig. 3) in the excavation report have shown that both trouser legs are made of patterned wool fabric. On each leg, the fabric was tied at the ankles with a narrow, greenish stripe.<sup>7</sup> The shape resembles that of bloomers, which are widely cut and gathered at the ankles.<sup>8</sup> The head of a spear-armed warrior is depicted on the left leg. When the illustration is displayed in a flattened manner, the following is visible: The warrior carries a spear in his right hand, which projects over his head into the upper field. The warrior's face is beardless in profile. The eyes, with their bluish color and dense, long eyelashes differ from the features of those people who inhabited the region. The bags under the eyes, the eyelids and the big nose are by no means true features for a typical Chinese individual, at least in particular a Han Chinese individual. With a wide belt, a yellowish headband, and combed back hair, the style of the warrior strikingly reflects the features common to Central Asia at the time. The excellent weaving technique creates a three-dimensional effect on the warrior's face through shading and brightness.



**Fig. 2** and **Fig. 3**. Representations on the pants legs (Sampula 2001: 188-189)

On the right side (Fig. 3), there is a magnificent display of a man-horse hybrid, or centaur, against a blue background. Surrounding him is a diamond-shaped floral ornament. Compared to other centaur depictions this centaur, which stands in the middle, was shown here with additional elements of an instrument, a cloak, and a hood. The diamond form is one of the unusual compositions in this picture. Furthermore, the 12 eight-petaled, crossed flowers also form a diamond composition. Each side of the diamond composition is made of three flowers which surround the centaur. In the corner, presumably, other flower forms and winged motifs are visible. By using a dark bluish color on the background, the figure stands out from the decor. The representations were limited above and below by a horizontal stripe pattern. Considering the eye-catching exotic figures on the pants, the tapestry is a product of more than one culture, showing that a transcultural story on the Silk Roads is probable.

During the conservation of the textile, the folded and piped parts were reopened, and the various patches were separated and readjusted to reconstruct the original image. As a result, the trouser form has been lost, but

the nature of the tapestry has been restored (Fig. 4).<sup>9</sup> The reconstructed tapestry measures 231cm in width and 48cm in height, which is actually larger than a life-size warrior. It is highly probable that the tailor who made the trousers had a large fragment in his hands, which he cut into four pieces.<sup>10</sup> The current state of this archaeological object (Fig. 1), which can now be seen by visitors to the museum, shows only part of the tapestry fragment, including new repairs.<sup>11</sup>



**Fig. 4.** Reconstructed situation (Sampula 2001: 188)

#### **Archaeological Context of Shanpula Tapestry**

Due to the dryness of the Tarim Basin, the textile and organic remains are well preserved.<sup>12</sup> In 1984, a pair of wool trousers with an expressive weave pattern were unearthed near the village of Shanpula, 25 km east of Kohtan (*Yutian*于阗), an ancient kingdom located on the southern branch of Silk Roads.<sup>13</sup> Shanpula is located in Luopu County, Xinjiang Province, south of the Taklamakan Desert and north of the Kunlun Mountains. The cemetery was

occupied from the time of the Han dynasty (202 BC - 220 AD) to the Jin dynasty (265 AD - 420 AD), which lasted from the 1st century BC until the end of the 4th century AD.<sup>14</sup> According to the sequence of the excavations at the Shanpula site, the large burial groups were divided into three groups and numbered 1, 2 and 3.<sup>15</sup> The trousers were found in the first cemetery group by the Xinjiang Archaeological Institute. The square burial room (5.95 x 5.0m and 2.60m high) contains remains of at least 133 adult males and females. These bodies were gradually added over the years or collected from earlier burials and relocated.<sup>16</sup> In winter, Shanpula's weather frequently is below freezing. Instead of clothing made of leather or fur, there was a large amount of woolen textiles, silk, gauze, knee-length trousers and short-sleeved shirts in many types and designs in all tombs.<sup>17</sup> This could indicate that these people died mainly during the hot summer.<sup>18</sup>

Information on the Khotan area can be found in the Chinese documentation starting in 126 BC, the year Zhang Qian (195 BC -114 BC) returned to the imperial court in Chang'an from his first voyage to the West.<sup>19</sup> A script was first adopted in the southern Tarim Basin through the dissemination and development of Buddhism, which is known as the Kharosthi script, one of the most important languages on the Silk Roads.<sup>20</sup> The oldest documentation was found in Kroraina (*Loulan*樓蘭), an ancient kingdom based on the northeastern edge of the Lop Desert, and the first mention of the Khotan king dates to about 300 AD. Records of the early history of ancient Khotan are mostly legendary rather than credible. Therefore, our knowledge of the early past in Xinjiang, which is located in the western part of modern China, is based solely on these archaeological finds.<sup>21</sup> For this reason, the following analysis mainly refers to the material appearances on the tapestry in different cultural spaces to show the identification of these figures on this object.

### **Identification of The Centaur**

The picture composition of the tapestry reflects the classical Greek traditions.<sup>22</sup> The upper part is dominated by a centaur framed by twelve crossed flowers. The flowers are similar to shamrocks, which could indicate a

sacred meaning to Christ. Representations of such flower forms are found throughout the Mediterranean and are occasionally associated with the Sassanid.<sup>23</sup> A four-leaf flower symbolizes the cross, the four gospels or the four cardinal virtues, depending on the context.<sup>24</sup> Twelve as a basic number is the sign of perfection. Three times four links the belief in Trinity with the four directions.<sup>25</sup>

The centaur is a hybrid of horse and human body in classical mythology. In most cases, these hybrid beings are depicted with the head, torso and arms of a man combined with the legs of a horse. Centaurs are often accompanied by a club, spear, shield, arrow, bow or sword as a weapon. In classical mythology, the centaurs are known as instinctual beings, which are normally associated with brutality, drunkenness, and eroticism.<sup>26</sup> A relatively early example of a centaur depiction is a statue from Greece around 900 BC. It is a standing person without feet, but with a hole at the hip, which is considered a female feature. The horse's legs and body are tied together at the buttock with the front person. The zigzag patterns on it are visible. The structure of this centaur is highly primitive and very different from those found later.

A frequent representation of a centaur is that of Nessos, who attacked Deianeira, the wife of Hercules, as she was crossing the river, whereupon Hercules killed Nessos.<sup>27</sup> In the 7th century BC a painter portrayed this mythological event on earthenware.<sup>28</sup> Hercules goes brandishing the sword as a weapon to the centaur Nessos. Nessos, on the left side, looks very anxious and begs the hero Heracles to forgive him. The representation of the centaur in this picture deserves high attention. First, his two front legs are the legs of a human. The horse's body is directly connected to the hips of the human, but the two bodies remain distinctly separated in their depiction. Second, Nessos has long and curly hair without a beard. There are also other representations from this period for the same motif. On a Grecian vessel from 7th century BC, Nessos was depicted with four horse feet. He also has a thick beard, long curly hair and wears a hat, which are typical Asian features.

With everything taken into account, in the evolution of centaur portrayals there are two types: The first is the "Front-Back" arrangement,

which consists of a standing human figure in the front and a horse in the back. The second is the “Top-Bottom” structure. In this composition, the human being sits on the horse and the human body is connected to the horse at the hip.<sup>29</sup>

As mentioned above, the history of the Centaur in Greek mythology is usually a negative story. Brutal, drunken, and lustful centaurs are known as half-animals because they have not yet completely abolished the habits of an animal. However, there is one exception. This extraordinary centaur is called “Chiron”; he is the only centaur not brutal and lustful, but skilled in medicine, wise and kind. Genetically, however, Chiron himself is of a different origin. He is the half-brother of Zeus. His origin is thus based on the properties of deities. Moreover, Chiron has raised and mentored many famous heroes.<sup>30</sup> In a fresco painting in the National Archaeological Museum he was documented as an educator with a beard. In this picture, Chiron teaches young Achilles how to play a string instrument. Chiron also has the “Top-bottom Composition” in this picture. He wears a cloak around his shoulders and a ring crown on his forehead.<sup>31</sup>

If we compare this figure with that from Shanpula, we can find two similarities. The two centaurs have a cloak. In addition, they both play an instrument.<sup>32</sup> What the Centaur from Shanpula plays is similar to the instrument *Salpinx*, a trumpet-shaped instrument from ancient Greece. However, the *Salpinx* is not often treated by scholars as ancient Greek music because it was mainly a military instrument.<sup>33</sup> The *salpinx* has always been used as a war trumpet, predominately as a sign of an attack at the beginning of games, sacrificial rituals and solemn processions.<sup>34</sup> Therefore, it is to be assumed that the centaur from Shanpula actually corresponds to the half deity half animal figure of Chiron, and at the same time he blows the instrument *Salpinx*.

### **Identification of The Warrior**

The face of the warrior is shown in three-quarter profile. His full cheeks, double chin, four-petalled mouth, straight nose and tear pockets under his large eyes are consistent with representations of Greco-Roman mosaics in the

Mediterranean or Central Asian regions, which were under the influence of Greece or the Roman Empire.<sup>35</sup> His headband could be a diadem, a symbol of kingship in the Hellenistic world, which is represented on Greek and Macedonian coins.

The clothing of this warrior is held together at the waist by a wide belt. The wide, V-shaped collar reveals the man's chest and is patterned by the yellow background with floral motifs.<sup>36</sup> Such a dress of the warrior does not resemble the Greek clothing. It resembles a Caftan with long sleeves and belt at the waist which spread in northern Eurasia in the middle of the first millennium BC.<sup>37</sup> Historian E. Knauer suggested a similarity with the Parthian clothing and called the Shanpula warrior a Parthian, which dated from 300 to 200 BC.<sup>38</sup> However, the physiognomic features here are different from the bearded faces from the Parthian Empire. Because of these contradictions, an alternative interpretation could be given as follows: The warrior is an immigrant to eastern Eurasia from the Greek territory and has adapted to the new environment.

Interestingly, the technical analysis of the textiles can be found in a Chinese article. The fibers of these pants were scanned by an electron microscope. The studies indicate that most of the pants are made of wool from the Xinjiang region and have a small proportion of wool from the Angora goat.<sup>39</sup> Scholars consider the Angora goat as an import from the Central Asian region, approximately from the area of today's Turkey.<sup>40</sup> In addition, this study has confirmed the relationship between Central Asia and Xinjiang. At that time, people could already get different materials for these textiles on the trade routes. With the immigration of nomads, this textile could have come through the Silk Roads and arrived in Xinjiang.

The former residents in Xinjiang may possibly have arrived and settled from the west. They may have come from the farming communities of the Oxus civilization in Bactria and Margiana, passed through the Pamir Mountains, moved along the Tianshan Mountains, and finally ended up in the Tarim Basin.<sup>41</sup> Alternatively, immigration may have taken place in different waves or periods, and the inhabitants of Xinjiang may have come from different geographical directions.

### Conclusion

The investigated “Centaur-Warrior Tapestry” is not only a relic with Greek characteristics but also a proof a mixing of the Central Asian artistic style and Hellenism. The figures on the tapestry suggest a site of production where not only nomads dwelled, but Hellenistic influences were also present. The Shanpula textile could probably have been made in one of the Greek colonial cities in Central Asia, which later became part of the Parthian Empire. Likewise, the textile may have been made in one of the Bactrian cities or the Seleucid Empire, which was under the influence of nomads and Greek immigrants at the time. Either way, the textile is a product of multiple cultures and influences, standing as an early sign of a more globalized world. For some unknown reason, the original tapestry was cut apart and used for various purposes. The textile finally reached Khotan via the Silk Roads. The person who wore the pants suddenly died on a hot summer day in the 1st century BC, probably in the wake of a nomadic attack. The origin of these Hellenistic images remains a mystery, but could point to a Western influence, which occurred earlier than has already been recorded in writing.

### BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Bromberg, Carol. Review of *Fabulous Creatures from the Desert Sands: Central Asian Woolen Textiles from the Second Century BC to the Second Century AD*, by Dominik Keller and Regula Schorta. *Bulletin of the Asia Institute*, 20 (2006): 134-136.
- Gong, Yingyan 龔纓晏. “Gudai zhongxi wenhua jiaoliu de wuzheng 古代中西文化交流的物證(The Archaeological Evidences of the Sino-western Cultural Communication).” *Jinan Shixue* 暨南史學, 2 (2003): 42-55.
- Haussig, Hans Wilhelm. *Archäologie und Kunst der Seidenstraße*. Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1992.
- He, Xiaoxue 何小雪. “Chenfeng de Luoma shenhua 塵封的羅馬神話[The Dusty Roman Mythology].” *Cultural Relics* 文物鑒定與鑒賞, no. 5 (2013): 78-79.
- Hulsewe, A. F. P. *China in Central Asia. The Early Stage, 125 BC - AD 23*. Leiden: Brill, 1979.
- Jacob, Georg. “Hinweis auf Wichtige Östliche Elemente der Islamischen Kunst.” *Der Islam*, no. 1(1910): 64-67.

Jia, Yingyi 贾应逸. "Xinjiang Zhagunluke Shanpula muqun chutu maozhipin de jianding 新疆扎滚鲁克、山普拉墓群出土毛织品的鉴定(The identification of wool textiles from Zagunluke and Shanpula tombs in Xinjiang)." *Sciences of Conservation and Archaeology* 文物保护与考古科学 20, no. 1 (2008): 18-23.

Knauer, E. R. *The Camel's Load in Life and Death*. Zürich: Akanthus, 1998.

Kretschmer, Hildegard. *Lexikon der Symbole und Attribute in der Kunst*. Stuttgart: Reclam, 2008.

Lin, Haicun 林海村. "The Kharosthi Script". In *20 Century Academic Dictionary: Archaeology, Museology* 20世纪中国学术大典: 考古学, 博物馆学, edited by Li Xueqin 李学勤, 470-471. Fu Zhou: Fujian Education Publishing, 2007.

Liu, Wensuo 刘文锁. "Shanpula mudi de maizang zhidu 山普拉墓地的埋葬制度(The Burial System of Sampula Cemetery)." *The Western Regions Studies* 西域研究, no. 3(2002): 50-55.

Nordquist, Gullög. "The Salpinx in Greek Cult." *Dance, Music, Art and Religion*, no. 16(1996): 241-256.

Wagner, Mayke. "The Ornamental Trousers From Sampula: Their Origins and Biography." *Antiquity*, no. 83(2009): 1065-1075.

Wang, Binghua 王炳华. *Xinjiang gushi 新疆古史*(The Ancient Corpses of Xinjiang). Urumchi: Xinjiang People's Publishing House, 2002.

Wang, Libo 王立波. "Xinjiang Shanpula ziyhi rentou mawushi tuxiang yuanyuan yanjiu 新疆山普拉遗址人頭馬武士圖像淵源研究(Study on Origin of Man-head Horse Image in Xinjiang Shanpula Site)." *Journal of Xinjiang Arts Institute* 新疆藝術學院學報 15, no. 3 (2017): 15-22.

Wieczorek, Alfried, ed. *Ursprünge der Seidenstraße: Sensationelle Neufunde aus Xinjiang, China*. Stuttgart: Theiss, 2007.

Xinjiang Institute of Archaeology and Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region Museum. *Zhongguo Xinjiang Shanpula: Gudai Yutian wenming de jieshi yu yanjiu* 中國新疆山普拉: 古代於闐文明的揭示與研究(Sampula in Xinjiang of China: Revelation and study of Ancient Kohtan Civilization). Urumchi: Xinjiang People's Publishing House, 2001.

Zhu, Lishuang 朱麗雙, and Rong, Xinjiang 榮新江. "Lianghan shiqi Yutian de fazhan jiqi yu zhongyuan de guanxi 兩漢時期於闐的發展及其與中原的關係". *China's Borderland History And Geography Studies* 中國邊疆史地研究 31, no. 4 (2021): 12-23.

---

## Endnotes

1. Haussig, *Archäologie und Kunst der Seidenstraße*, 38.
2. Xinjiang Institute of Archaeology, *Zhongguo Xinjiang Shanpula*.
3. Wagner, "Trousers", 1065-1075.
4. He, "Luoma shenhua", 2013. Gong, "Gudai", 2003. Jia, "maozhipin", 2008. Wang, "Man-head Horse", 2017.
5. Gong, "Gudai", 43.

6. Xinjiang Institute of Archaeology, *Zhongguo Xinjiang Shanpula*, 38.
7. Wagner, "Trousers", 1066.
8. Xinjiang Institute of Archaeology, *Zhongguo Xinjiang Shanpula*, 38.
9. Wagner, "Trousers", 1066.
10. Wieczorek, *Ursprünge der Seidenstraße*, 213-214.
11. Wagner, "Trousers", 1068.
12. Wang, *Xinjiang gushi*, 19.
13. He, "Luoma shenhua", 78. Khotan was the first of the Western kingdoms to acquire Chinese sericulture technology, a testament to the importance of this region on the Silk Roads. For a brief early history of Khotan Kingdom see Zhu and Rong, "Yutian", 2021, 12-23.
14. Wieczorek, *Ursprünge der Seidenstraße*, 202.
15. Xinjiang Institute of Archaeology, *Zhongguo Xinjiang Shanpula*, 1.
16. Liu, "Shanpula mudi", 53.
17. Bromberg, "Fabulous Creatures", 135.
18. Wagner, "Trousers", 1068.
19. Hulsewe, *China in Central Asia*, 235.
20. Lin, "The Kharosthi Script", 470.
21. Wagner, "Trousers", 1066.
22. Wagner, "Trousers", 1069.
23. Wieczorek, *Ursprünge der Seidenstraße*, 213.
24. Kretschmer, *Lexikon*, 60.
25. Kretschmer, *Lexikon*, 463-464.
26. Wieczorek, *Ursprünge der Seidenstraße*, 212.
27. Kretschmer, *Lexikon*, 212.
28. Wang, "Man-head Horse", 17.
29. Wang, "Man-head Horse", 18.
30. Kretschmer, *Lexikon*, 212.
31. For more information about this picture see Pier Giovanni Guzzo (Ed.): *Ercolano, Tre secoli di scoperte*. Milano: Mondadori Electa, 2008, 29.
32. Wang, "Man-head Horse", 19.
33. Nordquist, *The Salpinx in Greek Cult*, 241.
34. Wagner, "Trousers", 1069.
35. Wagner, "Trousers", 1070.
36. Wieczorek, *Ursprünge der Seidenstraße*, 214.
37. Wagner, "Trousers", 1070.
38. Knauer, *The Camel's Load*, 109.
39. Jia, "maozhipin", 20.
40. Jacob, "Hinweis", 67.
41. Bromberg, "Fabulous Creatures", 136.

# Plaster Casts and Originals' Travels in the Context of the Discovery of the *Winged Victory of Samothrace*

---

**Milena Gallipoli**

Universidad Nacional de San Martín

## **ABSTRACT**

In 1863, a French archaeological mission led by consul Charles Champoiseau dug out the *Winged Victory of Samothrace*. Currently, it is one of the most famous and reproduced artworks of the world, but its initial moment of coming to light was filled with institutional occurrences and political intrigues. The main aim of this proposal is to analyze the political agency of the plaster casts of the *Winged Victory* that travelled between France and the Ottoman Empire during its discovery. By looking into a series of epistolary exchanges and writings from Champoiseau I will examine a double migration. On the one hand, I will analyze the internal movements of the *Victory* inside the Musée du Louvre that lead to the conversion of the piece from anonymous discovery to one of Paris' leading ladies. On the other hand, in parallel, the Atelier de Moulage du Musée du Louvre started casting plaster copies of the *Victory* and some of them were used as diplomatic gifts for the Ottoman Empire. These traces account for a complex geopolitical scheme and how objects take on an active role within them. In this sense, this study case allows me to examine how circulations and transits of copies responded to an explicit political agenda, which ultimately reinforced and spread canonical artworks and their models.

## **KEYWORDS**

Copies; Plaster Casts; Archaeology; Diplomacy; Winged Victory of Samothrace.

Our story begins in the island of Samothrace, in 1863. The venue that was once characterized as “sterile and without port”, lacking of “any political or commercial importance”,<sup>1</sup> according to some sources of the time, was to become “one of the best-known islands of the archipelago”.<sup>2</sup> And such renown was due to the discovery of an antique marble: the *Nike or Winged Victory of Samothrace*.

French consul Charles Champoiseau (1830-1909) led the archaeological mission in Samothrace. In one of his publications, he recounted the initial encounter with the *Nike*:

...my eyes rested on a very beautiful fragment of white marble, barely emerging from the ground, (...), which I recognized, after having unearthed it myself, to be a breast of woman of the most admirable work.<sup>3</sup>

Already from the first impressions, Champoiseau expressed admiration and appreciation for the sculpture that he described as “...almost intact and treated with an artistry that I have never seen surpassed in any of the beautiful Greek works that I know of”.<sup>4</sup>

Currently, the *Nike of Samothrace* is one of the most famous and reproduced artworks of the world. However, its initial moment of coming to light was filled with institutional occurrences and political intrigues. The main aim of this chapter is to analyze a specific episode that delves into the political agency of plaster casts of the *Nike* that travelled between France and the Ottoman Empire since the discovery of the sculpture in 1863 until 1891, when a final mission by Champoiseau was culminated.

In this way, I will address a simultaneous migration: as the original and its fragments travelled from Ottoman territory to the Louvre, copies and fragments of casts inverted their route from the Louvre Museum –and more specifically, its Atelier de Moulage– to Constantinople. As I will argue, plaster copies of the *Winged Victory of Samothrace* were not mere complements of the original sculpture, but acted as key pieces within a complex scheme of negotiations that involved archaeology, politics and diplomacy, in an ultimate power dispute for the possession of Classical Antiquity.

### **From Samothrace to the Louvre**

Even though the *Winged Victory* was dug out in Ottoman territory, its fragments were quickly packed up alongside other findings and transported to France via Constantinople.<sup>5</sup> By 1863, the Ottoman Empire did not have a defined policy regarding the exit of antiquities, so, when Champoiseau had to deal with his newly discovered lady, no legal obstacles were faced regarding the export of Samothracian findings.

It is worth noting that, from the beginning, Champoiseau was explicit about the fact that the final destination of his discoveries was France and, more specifically, the Louvre. Some of these references aimed to obtain a reimbursement of 2,000 francs he had paid for location expenses during the mission,<sup>6</sup> whereas other statements sought future funding so as to continue excavations. A document addressed directly to Napoleon III expressed this question: exploring Ottoman land was essential to “enrich France” because other territories such as Greece were unavailable since their state legislation strongly restricted the exit of archaeological artifacts. However, much to French advantage, it was always possible to obtain a *firman* (decree or official Ottoman authorization) at the Embassy of Constantinople to export marbles, medals or other objects. Moreover, he continued to argue, besides the regulatory laxity of the Ottomans and a relatively low cost, this action was praised as noble and necessary because in those lands the precious antiques of the past were neither cared for nor appreciated:

... it would be sad to see it lost forever when nothing is easier than to save [this heritage]. For this it would be necessary to undertake this immediately and to finish in the least possible time the complete exploration of all the Greek ruins located on the Ottoman coast.<sup>7</sup>

In regards to the Louvre, the *Nike's* “natural destiny”, Champoiseau stated that thanks to this proposed archaeological policy, it was to become a “unique museum in the world” since it would lead in terms of owning the greatest collection of ancient Greek art –up to the point of surpassing fellow ones:

The Louvre Museum, so rich in all other respects, possesses, however, few Greek antiquities ... It would be easy, I believe, to collect almost everything that remains of this genre and thus endow, at little cost, France with a collection leaving far behind those as renowned as the British Museum.<sup>8</sup>

Now, within the Louvre, authorities such as Adrien Prévost de Longpérier (1816-1882), *Conservateur du Département des antiquités égyptiennes*, expressed “serious doubts about [Champoiseau’s] archaeological competence” in spite of his “good faith”, given that “travellers are quick to overstate the value of the ancient objects they discover”.<sup>9</sup> Nevertheless, after the arrival of the *Nike* in fragments, Champoiseau was endorsed and funding recommended. Overall, according to Longpérier, even though “the packaging has been done with deplorable negligence”, “this sculpture whose entire upper part is broken is extremely beautiful”.<sup>10</sup>

A few months after the sculpture’s arrival, it was mounted on a plinth to be rebuilt, assembled and restored. Afterwards, the original had a series of internal migrations inside the museum that have been well documented and studied by M. Hamiaux:<sup>11</sup> from 1866, it was placed in the Salle des Caryatides, where it remained for twelve years; around 1880, it was reported to be in the Salle du Tibre. Another key event in the history of the *Winged Victory* was the discovery of its base in the shape of a ship. The fragments of the galley had stayed in Samothrace and were transported by Champoiseau in a second mission to the island in 1879. Félix Ravaisson (1813-1900), supervised its great reconstruction and restoration between 1880 and 1883, period in which the sculpture was placed at the Cour du Sphinx. In the end, by 1883 the *Winged Victory of Samothrace* took its final form due to its positioning by the Daru stairs, built by Napoleon III, where the monument is placed until nowadays.

In parallel, the date on which the first mold of the *Nike* was taken is not entirely accurate. A first plaster cast of the sculpture before its restoration was produced around 1875 and copies were donated to Vienna and the École des Beaux-Arts.<sup>12</sup> Then, in the 1883 edition of the Atelier’s catalogue, this version of the *Winged Victory* made its first registered appearance with the catalogue number 134 for 300 francs, which also offered the fragments of the

sculpture sold separately for 100 francs and the galley for 600 francs.<sup>13</sup> So, it can be stated that as the original *Victory* transfigured from anonymous finding to one of the Louvre's leading masterpieces, copies from it started being produced so that institutions such as museums, universities and art academies from France and abroad could have their own *Victory* in plaster.

### **From the Louvre to Constantinople**

As the fame of the sculpture increased, the archaeological race in Samothrace did not stop. Champoiseau's missions in the years of 1879, 1883 and 1891 pursued as main aim finding new antiquities and completing the monument of the Nike, specially attempting to dig out its head and arms. Such constant need of returning to Ottoman territory entailed dealing with official authorities and creating steady and friendly bonds so as to guarantee access to the territory and, mainly, authorization to export findings.

During the period, the Ottoman Empire had a strong geopolitical position and between 1839 and 1876, its state had carried out a general process of reforms with a view to modernizing –and westernizing– its territory. Throughout Champoiseau's expeditions, there were no major conflicts related to the transit of the discoveries, for example the arrival of the galley to the Louvre in 1879 occurred without obstacle. Despite the fact that in 1874 a first antiquities law had been enacted that restricted the release of archaeological objects, the establishment of good relations with the Sultan allowed that, thanks to a personal directive, the discoveries would go to France as a gift from the Empire.<sup>14</sup> However, within Ottoman politics, there was a strong process of valuing their own heritage accompanied by an institutionalization thanks to the founding of the Müze-i Hümayun (Ottoman Imperial Museum) in 1869.<sup>15</sup> But, the key moment was the incorporation of painter and scholar Osman Hamdi Bey (1842-1910) in the direction of the museum in 1881. His management meant the definitive organization of the institution and the consolidation of archaeology as a local discipline accompanied by a regulatory framework, whose greatest achievement was the creation of the second antiquities law of 1884.<sup>16</sup> And with Hamdi Bey's administration, Champoiseau encountered his first obstacles and it was when

the exchange of copies emerged as a corollary and was subjected to political maneuvers.

In principle, in the absence of originals, the substitutes were plaster casts. Article 12 of the Ottoman law of 1884 established that although all archaeological objects belonged to the state, those who undertook the excavations could mold and make drawings of findings. Thus, the international financing of an excavation could at least legally obtain copies of the results. As W. Shaw argues about this matter: “plaster casts were but one of several modes of reproduction common to late-nineteenth-century archaeological practice”,<sup>17</sup> and Hamdi Bey was no stranger to making use of and profiting from the practice, for instance, within the promotion of local archaeology, he led the creation of courses that taught how to take molds from discoveries.

In the case of Champoiseau’s mission, despite the fact that the Louvre was fortunate enough to have the *Nike* and the galley in France, there were still exploration initiatives to find the head and others missing parts from the monument. For this reason, given the complications generated by the law to carry out excavations and the probable impossibility of owning their products, plaster casts began playing an essential role in the negotiations to obtain the necessary signatures and consolidate good relations with Hamdi Bey.

Around 1887, Champoiseau, together with Antoine Héron de Villefosse (1845-1919), another *conservateur* from the Louvre, began to plan a campaign to send him copy of the *Nike*. Far from being an innocent gift, this exchange took part of a diplomatic and political negotiation, in which each party played an active role and sought to gain leverage from it. Champoiseau’s perception about Hamdi Bey was not of a passive and indulgent character but of an opponent “who would never do anything for nothing” willing to exercise his power to the last consequences. In a letter the consul wrote about Hamdi Bey he expressed that: “this [suspicious] character does not want [illegible] the *firman* for the new excavations of Samothrace to be delivered to me, only after having acquired the certainty of sending the cast of the *Victory*”.<sup>18</sup>

Another epistle addressed to the Louvre evaluated the most appropriate way of making said shipment:

It seems to me that the plaster cast of the *Victory* and its wings is enough – The pedestal-galley is useless and no museum has it, I believe. We can send the detached wings and Hamdi Bey's workers [illegible] in Constantinople will put them in place. Perhaps it would be even easier to ship the body in two pieces and detach the floating portions of the garment.<sup>19</sup>

It is evident that what each party had to offer and demand established an inequality since, thanks to the copies of one, the other would obtain originals. In one of the few documents by Hamdi Bey from the archives of the Louvre, a response is recorded that accounted for these disadvantages and made use of them through certain ironies that established his position in the negotiation. His letter began stating that:

...one should not believe that the Museum, of which I have been given the honor of the direction, would thus consent to relinquish the originals in order to procure casts for the Academy of Fine Arts.<sup>20</sup>

In this regard, it is interesting to note that the Ottoman did not intend to assign the plaster cast to the Imperial Museum. Shaw has pinpointed that the Imperial Museum's program did not aim to demonstrate evolutionary aspects of the artistic canon, which was a key guideline for understanding the exhibition of plaster copies in museums. Instead, its cultural legitimacy lay in building itself as a reservoir of originals,<sup>21</sup> so as to consolidate a position within an international map of exemplary institutions that exhibited antique art. For this reason, in the museum's scheme, there was no place for copies.<sup>22</sup>

So, why request plaster casts for the Academy as a means of negotiating *firman*s? Hamdi Bey had founded and directed the Academy of Fine Arts (Sanayi-i Nefise Mektebi) in 1882 as an annex of the Imperial Museum. And it was this institution the projected destiny of the plaster of the *Nike* because canonical models were needed there to educate local artists. Hamdi Bey's letter proceeded to recognize such lack of models:

...it is however certain that this school needs a large number of casts which would serve to respond among the many young people who attend it, to the feeling of beauty, to initiate them into the history of plastic art in antiquity.<sup>23</sup>

However, when it came to explaining this shortage, it was because of those museums that had enriched themselves at the expense of the Ottoman soil, and, at the very least, the provision of plaster casts was to be an automatic compensation:

The British Museum and the Berlin Museum have understood this so well that the first has already sent to the school all the casts of the Parthenon sculptures and the second those of the Gigantomachy and those of the sculptures discovered in Olympia. I could therefore hope, Monsieur, that the Louvre Museum, considering everything that comes to it from this country, would be [illegible] interested in those of its children who devote themselves to the fine arts and donate some casts to the nascent institution in question. But, since this is not your way of seeing, Monsieur, we will not talk about it anymore, moreover I have already bought the Discobolus, the Achilles, the Venus, the *écorché* of Houdon etc. etc.<sup>24</sup>

With this brief reply, it can be noted how Hamdi Bey displayed a subtle but strong tactic of negotiation that appealed to the international imbalance in terms of possession of antiquities. In sum, Hamdi Bey claimed that not only was he unwilling to 'relinquish the originals' but he also ironically demonstrated offence for the fact that he even had to buy other plaster casts. Moreover, his criticism was specifically directed at the Louvre as opposed to other museums that had already made donations of casts.

In the case of the plaster cast of the *Nike*, a series of difficulties arose that prevented the negotiations from taking effect. The production of the cast was delayed, around 1889 Champoiseau continued to request information about its execution and issuance,<sup>25</sup> and, before his appointment as plenipotentiary minister that year –which implied greater access to public funds to excavate–, the Louvre reaffirmed the need to get the copy to Constantinople. Héron de Villefosse expressed the situation in terms of a

need “to spare certain influences in Constantinople and in particular those of Hamdi Bey”, since that “would make it easier for him to obtain the necessary authorizations to carry out searches”,<sup>26</sup> to which Champoiseau endeavor to begin “his campaign after Hamdi Bey”.<sup>27</sup>

The official decree of donation to the Academy of Fine Arts was signed in July 1889, and included a copy of the *Winged Victory* and its galley.<sup>28</sup> Six boxes with the *Nike* arrived in Constantinople in the early 1890s. In the end, in 1891 the longed French mission occurred, after obtaining permits and a financing of 3,000 francs. The results of the exploration were partially successful: only some inscriptions were found, the head of *Nike* remained missing and it was confirmed that some recorded marbles had been mutilated and destroyed by the local inhabitants of the island.<sup>29</sup> In addition, tensions between Champoiseau and Ottoman authorities unfolded because the consul refused to wait for the local supervisor in charge of registering the excavation, which derived in the suspension of the whole mission.<sup>30</sup>

Now, it should be noted that this particular episode did not mean the establishment of bad relations between Hamdi Bey and the Louvre as an institution, but rather with Champoiseau. The consul himself when considering the transit of another type of antiquities acknowledged this matter:

...the Director of the Ottoman Museum will certainly be keen to satisfy France with regard to Chaldean antiquities, in order to prove that the measures [taken] against my mission did not take on the character of a systematic unwillingness bias towards all French archaeologists.<sup>31</sup>

In this regard, Z. Çelik establishes that beyond the disputes over the possession of cultural property, the Ottoman Imperial Museum, represented by Hamdi Bey, sought to establish good relations with other museums such as the Louvre in order to create a network of scholars and academics.<sup>32</sup> This was evidenced, for example, in the tone of the director at the time of thanking the shipment of the plaster of the *Nike*, in which he even specified that its final destination would be the museum instead of the Academy and that the institution planned on having a plaster casts collection:

I acknowledge receipt of this perfect reproduction of an admirable work. Please accept my warmest thanks. I am very happy to see the Imperial Museum of Constantinople in possession of such a masterpiece, which will be one of the most beautiful ornaments of its casts' rooms.<sup>33</sup>

The connection between the Imperial Museum and the Louvre continued on good terms over time, and the latter even decided to send a second copy of the *Winged Victory* as a gift to Hamdi Bey, in this occasion, a reduction of the work.<sup>34</sup> The justification for the shipment reaffirmed the cooperative bond between both parties and established that:

Hamdy Bey is in very frequent scientific relations with M.M. the Conservators of the Ancient Departments, and, as such, renders us services that I would be grateful if you would recognize by means of this gracious concession.<sup>35</sup>

However, the donation was also an excuse to follow up on a series of authorizations of excavations in the Ottoman city of Tille, which Hamdi Bey confirmed in his reply. The curious thing about this second plaster is that its receipt revealed that the first *Nike* had never been mounted, as revealed by Hamdi Bey's thanking note:

...the small model of the *Victory* arrived in very good condition and we placed it in our library room, which is quite large. This model is charming and not only will it give us directions for mounting the large cast; but it also decorates our library.<sup>36</sup>

To sum up, we can conclude that for Hamdi Bey the power of the cast of the *Winged Victory* did not rely in its potential of exhibition and in its final destination as a museum object, but in the exchange itself and its transit. Thereby, these plasters used within negotiations schemes can be thought as a corollary of the bids, tensions and ironies that Hamdi Bey himself plotted with the French.

The renown of the *Nike* and its progressive central positioning within the Louvre increased its fame, which allowed its copies to be used as

diplomatic gifts and political exchanges. The circulation of reproductions allowed both Champoiseau and Hamdi Bey to exercise an active political position of lobbying for influence. While the first obtained bureaucratic permits to keep on exploring Samothracian land –and finding almost nothing–, the other managed to question the arrogant French security about the Hellenic heritage and obtain plasters and the certainty that new originals remain in the Imperial Museum. Closer examination to Hamdi Bey's responses to French authorities demonstrate that this agency cannot be reduced to a logic of centre-periphery or dominant-dominated since the Ottoman official acted with a strategy of obtaining resources that would legitimate his own museum and the status of the Ottoman capital. In this way, both French and Ottoman parties gained leverage from the situation. The Ottoman Empire could no longer claim the original *Winged Victory*, but it could make use of its plasters, and, thus, obtain its victory.

#### BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Çelik, Zeynep. *About antiquities: politics of archaeology in the Ottoman Empire*. Austin: University of Texas Press, 2016.
- Champoiseau, Charles. “La Victoire de Samothrace.” *Revue Archéologique* 21, no. 39 (January 1880): 11-17.
- Champoiseau, Charles. “Note sur des antiquités trouvées dans l’île de Samothrace: séance du 8 janvier 1892.” *Comptes-rendus des séances de l’année - Académie des inscriptions et belles-lettres* 36, no. 1 (1892): 22-5. Persée
- Gallipoli, Milena. “La victoria de las copias. Dinámicas de circulación y exhibición de calcos escultóricos en la consolidación de un canon estético occidental entre el Louvre y América (1863-1945).” PhD diss. Universidad Nacional de San Martín, 2021.
- Hamiaux, Marianne, Jean-Luc Martinez and Ludovic Laugier. *La Victoire de Samothrace. Redécouvrir un chef-d’œuvre*. Paris: Musée du Louvre, 2014.
- Hamiaux, Marianne. “La Victoire de Samothrace en restauration: gros plan sur la cuvette d’encastrement.” *Revue Archéologique* 2, no. 58 (2014): 297-302. Cairn.
- Hamiaux, Marianne. “La Victoire de Samothrace: découverte et restauration.” *Journal des savants* 1, no. 1 (2001): 153-223. <https://doi.org/10.3406/jds.2001.1643>
- Hamiaux, Marianne. “La Victoire de Samothrace: mode d’assemblage de la statue (information).” *Comptes-rendus des séances de l’année - Académie des inscriptions et belles-lettres* 142, no. 2 (1998): 365-77. <https://doi.org/10.3406/crai.1998.15867>

Héron de Villefosse, Antoine. "Fouilles exécutées par M. Champoiseau à Samothrace." *Comptes-rendus des séances de l'année - Académie des inscriptions et belles-lettres* 35, no. 4 (1891): 269-71. Persée.

Musée National du Louvre, *Catalogue des Moulages en Vente au Palais du Louvre, Pavillon Daru*. Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 1883.

O. R. "Archaeologische Untersuchungen auf Samothrake (Recherches Archéologiques à Samothrace, ouvrage publié, par MM. A. Conze, A. Hauser et G. Niemann. Vienne, Gerold, 1875. 1 vol. in-folio de 92 pages et 72 planches)." *Gazette des Beaux-Arts* 266, no. 13 (April 1876): 589-92. Gallica.

Reinach, Salomon. "La Victoire de Samothrace." *Gazette des Beaux-Arts* 404, no. 5 (February 1881): 89-103. Gallica.

Shaw, Wendy M. K. "Museums and Narratives of Display from the Late Ottoman Empire to the Turkish Republic." *Muqarnas* 24 (2007): 253-79.

Shaw, Wendy M. K. *Possessors and possessed: museums, archaeology, and the visualization of history in the late Ottoman Empire*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003.

---

## Endnotes

1. O. R., "Archaeologische Untersuchungen auf Samothrake (Recherches Archéologiques à Samothrace, ouvrage publié, par MM. A. Conze, A. Hauser et G. Niemann. Vienne, Gerold, 1875. 1 vol. in-folio de 92 pages et 72 planches)," *Gazette des Beaux-Arts* 266, no. 13 (April 1876): 590, Gallica. "Stérile et sans ports, elle n'a jamais eu d'importance ni politique ni commerciale".

2. Salomon Reinach, "La Victoire de Samothrace," *Gazette des Beaux-Arts* 404, no. 5 (February 1881): 90, Gallica. "N'est plus qu'un nom sur les cartes. ... Aujourd'hui, Samothrace est une des îles les mieux connues de l'Archipel".

3. Charles Champoiseau, "La Victoire de Samothrace," *Revue Archéologique* 21, no. 39 (January 1880): 12. "Mes yeux s'arrêtèrent sur un très beau fragment de marbre blanc, émergeant à peine du sol, à cinquante mètres environ, sud-est, de la stoa, que je reconnus, après l'avoir déterré moi-même, être un sein de femme du plus admirable travail".

4. Quote from Marianne Hamiaux, "La Victoire de Samothrace: découverte et restauration," *Journal des savants* 1, no. 1 (2001): 155, <https://doi.org/10.3406/jds.2001.1643>. "Est presque intact et traité avec un art que je n'ai jamais vu surpassé dans aucune des belles œuvres grecques que je connais".

5. Transportation was in charge of the ship *L'Ajaccio*, which disembarked in Constantinople on 13 May 1863, there, the boxes were dispatched by the Maritime Services of Imperial Couriers to Piraeus and were finally transshipped to *La Gorgone*, which arrived in the French city of Toulon on 24 August 1863. Hamiaux, "La Victoire de Samothrace: découverte et restauration," 163.

6. Letter from Charles Champoiseau to Le Comte de Niewerkerque, 18 December 1863. Archives Nationales de France (ANF hereafter), Archives des Musées Nationaux (hereafter AMN), Département des Antiquités grecques et romaines du musée du Louvre (Série A), 20140044/7. "Je crois cependant que, puisque le Musée du Louvre profite de mes travaux il est juste qu'il m'indemnisse de mes dépens".

7. Manuscript "Lire" from Charles Champoiseau to Sa Majesté l'Empereur Napoleon III, 26 December 1864. ANF, AMN, Département des Antiquités grecques et romaines du musée du

Louvre (Série A), 20140044/7. "C'est une héritage [mince] et si précieux à la fois qu'il serait désolant de le voir se perdre à jamais lorsque rien n'est plus facile que de le sauver. Pour cela il faudrait entreprendre immédiatement et terminer dans le moins de temps possible l'exploration complète de toutes les ruines grecques situées sur le littoral ottoman".

8. Manuscript "Lire" from Charles Champoiseau to Sa Majesté l'Empereur Napoleon III, 26 December 1864. ANF, AMN, Département des Antiquités grecques et romaines du musée du Louvre (Série A), 20140044/7. "Le Musée du Louvre, si riche sous tous les autres rapports, possédé cependant, peu d'antiquités grecques ... Il serait facile je crois, de rassembler presque tout ce qui reste en ce genre et de doter ainsi, à peu de frais, la France d'une collection laissant bien loin celle si renommée du British Museum". It is not known whether these words reached Napoleon III or not.

9. Letter from Adrien de Longpérier to Monsieur le Surintendant, 29 December 1863. ANF, AMN, Département des Antiquités grecques et romaines du musée du Louvre (Série A), 20140044/7. "Les voyageurs sont prompts à s'exagérer la valeur des objets antiques qu'ils découvrent".

10. Letter from Adrien de Longpérier to Monsieur le Surintendant, 11 May 1864. ANF, AMN, Département des Antiquités grecques et romaines du musée du Louvre (Série A), 20140044/7. "L'emballage a été fait avec une déplorable négligence" and "Cette statue dont toute la partie supérieure est brisée est extrêmement belle".

11. See also: Marianne Hamiaux, "La Victoire de Samothrace: mode d'assemblage de la statue (information)," *Comptes-rendus des séances de l'année - Académie des inscriptions et belles-lettres* 142, no. 2 (1998): 365-77, <https://doi.org/10.3406/crai.1998.15867>; Marianne Hamiaux, "La Victoire de Samothrace en restauration: gros plan sur la cuvette d'encastrement," *Revue Archéologique* 2, no. 58 (2014): 297-302, Cairn; Marianne Hamiaux, Jean-Luc Martinez, and Ludovic Laugier, *La Victoire de Samothrace. Redécouvrir un chef-d'œuvre* (Paris: Musée du Louvre, 2014).

12. Hamiaux, "La Victoire de Samothrace: découverte et restauration," 167. Hamiaux indicates that the plaster is in the collections of the Petite Ecurie du Roi in Versailles, which gathers the collections from the Louvre, École des Beaux-Arts and the Sorbonne.

13. Musée National du Louvre, *Catalogue des Moulages en Vente au Palais du Louvre, Pavillon Daru* (Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 1883), 9.

14. Wendy M. K. Shaw, *Possessors and possessed: museums, archaeology, and the visualization of history in the late Ottoman Empire* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003), 91.

15. For an analysis of the Ottoman Imperial Museum also see Wendy M. K. Shaw, "Museums and Narratives of Display from the Late Ottoman Empire to the Turkish Republic," *Muqarnas* 24 (2007): 253-79.

16. It established a broad definition of what objects were considered antiques and defined that no individual could claim possession of an antique and it could not be exported without a government permit. Likewise, the Imperial Museum was attributed a monopoly on the authorization and supervision of any excavation in Ottoman territory.

17. Shaw, *Possessors and possessed*, 138.

18. Letter from Charles Champoiseau to Cher Monsieur, 9 November 1887. ANF, AMN, Département des Antiquités grecques et romaines du musée du Louvre (Série A), 20140044/7. "Ce [méfiant] personnage ne veut [illegible] me faire délivrer le firman pour les nouvelles fouilles de Samothrace qu'après avoir acquis la certitude de l'envoi du moulage de la «Victoire». Previous paraphrase: "Peut-être cela nous coutera t'il encore quelque petit moulage, le Directeur des Musées Ottomans ne faisant jamais rien pour rien, malgré".

19. Letter from Charles Champoiseau to Cher Monsieur, 23 September 1887. ANF, AMN, Département des Antiquités grecques et romaines du musée du Louvre (Série A), 20140044/7. "Il me semble que le moulage de la Victoire et de ses ailes suffit - La galère piédestal est inutile et aucun musée ne la possède, je crois. On pourra envoyer les ailes détachées et les ouvriers qui Hamdi Bey [illegible] à Constantinople les mettra en place. Peut-être même serait plus

facile d'expédier le corps même en deux morceaux et de détacher les portions flottantes du vêtement”.

20. Letter from Osman Hamdi Bey to Monsieur le Conservateur, 15 December 1887. ANF, AMN, Département des Antiquités grecques et romaines du musée du Louvre (Série A), 20140044/7. “Il ne faudrait pas croire que le Musée dont on m'a fait l'honneur de me confier la direction, consentirait ainsi à se dessaisir des originaux pour procurer des moulages à l'École des Beaux-Arts”.

21. In connection with this, Hamdi Bey's discovery of the Sarcophagus of Alexander at Sidon in 1887 was a key event that meant the provision of a masterpiece of its own to the Ottoman Imperial Museum.

22. Shaw, *Possessors and possessed*, 137.

23. Letter from Osman Hamdi Bey to Monsieur le Conservateur, 15 December 1887. ANF, AMN, Département des Antiquités grecques et romaines du musée du Louvre (Série A), 20140044/7. “Il est pourtant certain que cette école a besoin d'un grand nombre de moulages qui serviraient à répondre parmi les nombreux jeunes gens qui la fréquentent, le sentiment du beau, à les initier à l'histoire de l'art plastique dans l'antiquité”.

24. Letter from Osman Hamdi Bey to Monsieur le Conservateur, 15 December 1887. ANF, AMN, Département des Antiquités grecques et romaines du musée du Louvre (Série A), 20140044/7. “Le British Museum et le Musée de Berlin ont si bien compris cela que le premier a déjà envoyé à l'école tous les moulages des sculptures de Parthénon et le second ceux de la Gigantomachie et ceux des sculptures découvertes à Olympie. Je pouvais donc espérer Monsieur, que le Musée du Louvre considérant tout ce qui lui vient de ce pays, voudrait bien [illegible] s'intéresser à ceux de ses enfants qui s'adonnent aux beaux-arts et faire don de quelques moulages à l'institution naissante dont il s'agit. Mais, puisque telle n'est pas votre manière de voir, Monsieur, nous n'en parlerons plus, d'ailleurs j'ai déjà acheté le Discobole, l'Achille, la Venus, l'écorché de Houdon etc. etc. ”.

25. Letter from Charles Champoiseau to Cher Monsieur, 4 May 1889. ANF, AMN, Département des Antiquités grecques et romaines du musée du Louvre (Série A), 20140044/7.

26. Letter from Antoine Héron to Villefosse a Monsieur le Directeur, 12 June 1889. ANF, AMN, Atelier de moulages du Louvre (série Y), 20150043/4. “M. Champoiseau a besoin de se ménager à Constantinople certaines influences et en particulier celle de Hamdi Bey” and “...lui permettrait d'obtenir plus facilement les autorisations nécessaires pour exécuter des fouilles”.

27. Letter from Charles Champoiseau to Cher Monsieur, 12 July 1889. ANF, AMN, Atelier de moulages du Louvre (série Y), 20150043/4. “Je commencerai ma campagne auprès d' Hamdi Bey”.

28. Copy of decree from A. Fallières, 9 July 1889. ANF, AMN, Atelier de moulages du Louvre (série Y), 20150043/4.

29. See Charles Champoiseau, “Note sur des antiquités trouvées dans l'île de Samothrace: séance du 8 janvier 1892,” *Comptes-rendus des séances de l'année - Académie des inscriptions et belles-lettres* 36, no. 1 (1892): 22-5, Persée and Antoine Héron de Villefosse, “Fouilles exécutées par M. Champoiseau à Samothrace,” *Comptes-rendus des séances de l'année - Académie des inscriptions et belles-lettres* 35, no. 4 (1891): 269-71, Persée.

30. Hamiaux, “La Victoire de Samothrace: découverte et restauration,” 203-5.

31. Letter from Charles Champoiseau to Cher Directeur, 13 August 1891. ANF, AMN, Département des Antiquités grecques et romaines du musée du Louvre (Série A), 20140044/7. “Le Directeur du Musée Ottoman aura certainement à cœur de satisfaire la France en ce qui concerne les antiquités chaldéennes, afin de prouver que les mesures [prises] contre ma mission ne revêtaient point le caractère d'un parti pris de mauvais vouloir systématique envers tous les archéologues français”.

32. Zeynep Çelik, *About antiquities: politics of archaeology in the Ottoman Empire* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2016), 61.

33. Letter from Osman Hamdi Bey to Monsieur Kaempfen, 6 March 1890. ANF, AMN, Atelier de moulages du Louvre (série Y), 20150043/4. “Je vous accusant réception de cette reproduction si parfaite d'un œuvre admirable, je vous prie d'en agréer mes plus vifs remerciements. Je suis bien heureux de voir le Musée Impérial de Constantinople en possession d'un pareil chef-d'œuvre, qui sera l'un des plus beaux ornements de ses salles de moulages”.
34. The production of reductions of the *Nike of Samothrace* is an interesting case because the Atelier de Moulage was not accustomed to selling them but decided to make an exception for this work. In 1887, French goldsmith Lucien Falize (1839-1936) from the firm Bapst & Falize offered a reduction of the sculpture to the Louvre, who took a Mould of it and incorporated into their offer of casts. See Milena Gallipoli, “La victoria de las copias. Dinámicas de circulación y exhibición de calcos escultóricos en la consolidación de un canon estético occidental entre el Louvre y América (1863-1945)” (PhD diss. Universidad Nacional de San Martín, 2021), 92-9.
35. Letter from Albert Kaempfen to Monsieur le Ministre de l'Instruction Publique des Cultes et des Beaux-Arts, 21 December 1892. ANF, Travaux d'art, musées et expositions, F/21/4467. “Hamdy Bey est en relations scientifiques très fréquentes avec M.M. Les Conservateurs des départements antiques, et nous rend, à ce titre, des services que je vous serais très obligé de vouloir bien reconnaître au moyen de cette gracieux concession”. The decree was signed on 9 January 1893.
36. Letter from Osman Hamdi Bey to Monsieur Kaempfen, 22 February 1892. AN, AMN, Atelier de moulages du Louvre (série Y), 20150043/4. “Le petit modèle de la Victoire est arrivé en très bon état et nous l'avons placée dans la salle de notre bibliothèque qui est assez grande. Ce modèle est charmant et non seulement il nous donne des indications pour monter le grand moulage; mais encore il orne notre bibliothèque”.

# The Power Bricolage: the Binondo Pagoda at the Manila Festivities (1825)

---

**Ninel Valderrama Negron**  
University of Kansas

## **ABSTRACT**

This paper aims to examine the Binondo pagoda, an ephemeral architecture, part of the royal ceremonies in Manila in 1825. This ceremony celebrated king Ferdinand VII's donation of his portrait to The Philippines as a memento for faithful allegiance at the end of the Latin American independence wars (1810-1825). The Binondo pagoda combines elements that shared a western background but were designed for a Filipino audience. Its design is an overlapping of buildings between western elements like an arch of triumph with atop a three-level pagoda. At first glance, the ephemeral architecture endorses the Spanish throne. However, in a more cautious inquiry, Chinese and sangley symbols propose multi-layer analysis, where the project was interwoven with local elites and their visual traditions. This object proposes a better understanding in the model transits between different parts of the Hispanic world.

## **KEYWORDS**

Fidelity; King Fernando VII; Manila, 1825; Chinese diaspora.

### Introduction

Alonso Martín's engraving of the cover page of Bartolomé Leonardo de Argensola's *Conquest of the Moluccan Islands* in 1609 shows a territorial iconography on top of a crocodile and adorned with a feathered skirt and a cornucopia<sup>4</sup>.



**Fig. 1.** Alonso Martín (grab.) [Cover] in: Bartolomé Leonardo Argensola, *La conquista de las islas Malucas*, Madrid, Imprenta Alonso Martín, 1609

She is marveling at a Spanish coat of arms inscribed on the celestial vault between a scale and the sun. Before rushing into any iconographic reading, this territorial personification is identified with the name “Maluca”. However, the evident resemblance with the iconography of America, codified couple of years earlier by Cesare Ripa, is not accidental. The New World’s rhetorical figure from Ripa’s *Iconologia* begins with America’s description as a “naked woman, of dark color, mixed with yellow”<sup>2</sup>



**Fig. 2.** Cesare Ripa, “América”, *Iconologia*, second edition, 1603.

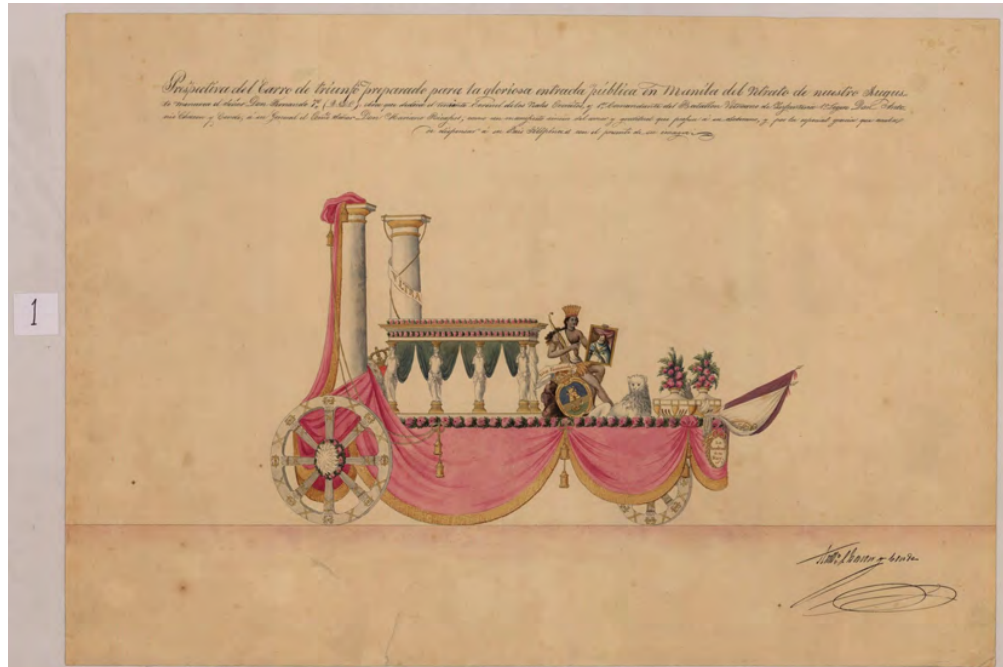
Probably, this iconography recalls the interest of the Spanish Crown to bring the Asian islands closer to their American dominions in order to have control of the mercantile routes, mainly those related to the trade of spices. Ricardo

Padrón has argued that the Spanish Crown tried to connect Asia and America in a variety of ways in the sixteenth century. The idea to keep America and Asia together was not a mere afterthought; rather, "it was the prevalent tradition at the time" (23)<sup>3</sup>.

In the same vein, it is worth noting that the iconographic image of Manila retains part of this belated notion because the jurisdiction of the Philippines was part of New Spain (which would later become Mexico) during the colonial period. The relationship between Asia and America was emphasized nearly three centuries later, during the Latin American Wars, another critical moment for the Spanish Crown. However, there was a significant difference: instead of serving as an ally to the Americas, Manila positioned itself as the truly faithful to the Crown in distinction to the emerging Latin American nations.

Spanish King Fernando VII's coronation was marked by a one-of-a-kind political scenario: Napoleon invaded Spain and imprisoned his father King Carlos IV and Fernando VII in 1808. This event triggered the Hispanic world's city councils to declare autonomic sovereignty over their vast territories and ultimately led to the Latin American wars of independence (1810–1825). As its final attempt to reclaim its continental empire, Spain participated in military battles of reconquest from 1827–1830.<sup>4</sup> In parallel, Fernando VII's political survival depended on the communicability of his image as a sign of stability.<sup>5</sup> Consequently, my study highlights an ideological campaign carried out via the visual vindication of the king's image through royal ceremonies, statues, ephemeral monuments, and urban plans, intending to resurrect a global empire.

This paper aims to examine part of the collection of twenty-five watercolors and panegyrics that narrates the King portrait entrance to Manila in 1825 in the aftermath of the Latin American independence. Among the watercolors that chronicles the entrance of the portrait, this image is central to the assembling of power performed in the ceremony. There is no doubt that Manila is symbolized in the same way as America.



**Fig. 3.** Tomás Cortés, "Perspectiva del carro del triunfo [...]", acuarela, Manila, 1825, Biblioteca Real de Madrid, España, DIG/ARCH3/CAJ/19 (1-26)

This watercolor presents an allegorical carriage, explicitly made to transport the image of His Majesty. The carriage contained columns with the motto *Non Plus Ultra* and two globes girded by a Crown. A matron symbolizing Manila pointed toward the portrait in the center, and farther ahead, there is a gold-lettered sign that reads, "Loyalty to your King." Manila was marketed as a loyal stronghold in comparison to insurgent vicerealties, this was also reflected in the narration of the ceremonies named *Dias Grandes en Filipinas* written by Antonio Chacón y Conde, he exclaimed:

Si hubiese sido posible elevar en brazos a la Capital Manila en sus Estramuros para ponerla a la presencia de V.M. en aquellos días de regocijos, de lucimiento y de entusiasmo, se presentaría a la vista V.M: la viva semejanza del Parayso del Asia, codiciada por todas la Naciones de las quatro partes del Mundo.<sup>6</sup>

The arrival of a portrait of Fernando VII in Manila occurred at a period of political turmoil; according to Patricio Noguera, a king's image had never garnered as much interest as the one transported in 1825.<sup>2</sup> During the Ancient Regime, the monarch's portrait replaced his physical presence during certain public acts, such as royal oaths. When a new king took the throne, his effigy was comparable to his presence in absence, and it was a mechanism by which people outside Madrid, and especially beyond the Peninsula, could recognize his face (Mínguez 2007; Rodríguez Moya 2003; Cañeque 2004). These festivities celebrated the king's donation of his portrait to the Philippines as a memento for faithful allegiance at the end of the Latin American independence wars. Fernando VII tried to solve the empire's crisis by abolishing the Spanish Constitution of 1812 and restoring absolutism by 1825. Ruth Llobet sheds additional light on the political climate that existed before to the portrait's arrival notably the second constitutional era (1820–1823), which was characterized by numerous conspiracies in Manila<sup>3</sup>. As this panorama shows, the Philippines' allegiance to the Crown had to be fabricated with these artifacts rather than being an indisputable reality. I consider the entry of the portrait of Fernando VII to be one of the most integral visual responses to the justification of the absolutist regime in its colonial domains.

The king's authority in the overseas territories was represented by events honoring significant milestones in the kingdom's history between the sixteenth and nineteenth centuries. The cities of the Hispanic world were lavishly decorated during those days, but the occasions were not frivolous; rather, the coronation and swearing-in of the monarchs underlined the dynasty's continuity while also symbolically confirming the city's annexation to the Spanish Empire.<sup>4</sup> The Spanish Crown shared a common ritual language that went across geographies and time periods<sup>10</sup>. New technologies of rule, representations of power, and venues for exercising that authority needed to be devised and implemented in order to shape political subjectivities and loyalties in colonial spheres.

Prior studies have demonstrated how the king's portraits served to naturalize remote power overseas, with his image functioning as a sovereign

surrogate.<sup>11</sup> Following the lead of these scholars, this study takes a slightly different approach: rather than focusing on images of the king or what is central to royal festivals, this research focuses on the descriptions and ornaments that appear to be on the margins but actually hold the ritual together. I use the term ornaments to refer to royal banners, luxurious carpets, candles, and other artifacts, which were prevalent in royal ceremonies. At first glance, these pieces appeared to be minor details, yet their operation was crucial to the persuasiveness of the royal apparatus.

Despite the fact that ornamentation is always present in ceremonial festivities commemorating kingdom milestones, only a few scholars have paid attention to meticulous ekphrastic descriptions of ornamentation and functionality within the ceremony. The *Relaciones*, a book that describes each city's festivities became the literary counterpart to these celebrations. The goal of the *Relaciones* was to increase the sense of belonging to a collectivity identified with a monarch by using rhetorical resources to promote a dazzling image of royalty. The *Relaciones* prioritized the meticulous and comprehensive description of the ornaments of ephemeral monuments because they embodied political discourse. The narrative's purpose in and of itself was to stylize the language in order to create a verbal monument comparable to festivities.<sup>12</sup> and emphasize certain elements, such as hyperbole and the detailed description of physical spaces.

In the past, these texts have been excluded from much academic scrutiny due to their elaborate tropological use and ekphrastic qualities. For example, Antonio Bonet Correa, a scholar of royal festivities claims that these texts are “concepts based on clichéd formulas. They belong to a very specific genre of hyperbolic and elliptical phrases whose reading would be tiresome due to the monotonous and heavy repetition, without providing surprises. Whoever has read one relation can claim to have read them all”.<sup>13</sup> According to art historian Manuel Romero de Terreros, they “consist of indigestible descriptions in prose and verse [...] they are very tiring to read, lack literary value, and contain data of little historical interest”.<sup>14</sup>

As the above quotations show, ekphrasis on ornaments is widely regarded as a genre devoid of originality. I believe these criticisms have

neglected how the configuration of discourse and festivity function in a hyperbolic key and undervalued the political and social ramifications of using this approach. Christopher Johnson also points out how the entire Hispanic world, including its motto *Plus Ultra*, is built on the functionality of hyperbole. I contend that the royal ceremonies were envisioned as yet another gear in the machinery of symbolic culture.<sup>15</sup> Thus, hyperbole became central to all figurative thought, with its most complete representation of royal festivities, because the trope's goal was to expand the faculties of imagination and conception in such a way that it transformed, rather than recreated, the world as we perceive it in everyday experience.

I believe that excessively repeated patterns with rich ornamentation could be viewed as a strategy. This utterance has made ornaments to be perceived in the background positionality. This paradoxical feature of ornaments, according to Antoine Picon, has a deeper dimension that is indicated in the word's origins. In Latin, *ornamento*, *ornamentum*, has the same etymological root as the verb *ordino*, which means to organize or order. An ornament, in other words, expresses the underlying order of things. Picon observes that another pair of words, *cosmetics* and *cosmos*, confirm the kinship between ornament and order, as both derive from the Greek verb *kosmein*, which means both to adorn and to order.<sup>16</sup> This presentation will try to address the following questions: Why do textual accounts engage in such a meticulous and exhaustive examination of ornaments? What role do they play in the ceremony? Do they have socio-political ramifications?

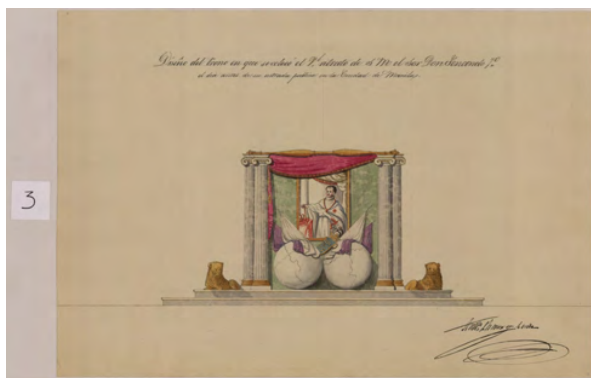
To address these questions, I will examine the plethora of texts and images that describe the Manila's ceremony. The best-known *relación*, *Días Grandes en Manila* was written by ceremonial planner Antonio Chacón y Conde. Also, the military engineering corps in Manila, which was made up of both Spaniards and native artists, painted twenty-five watercolors that recount the entrance of the King's portrait. The festivities, their ornamentation, and the watercolors and eulogies that illustrated them were intended to support the Spanish throne and portray this colonial city as a model of fidelity.

Santiago Salvador Arzinas, a professor at the Real Colegio de San José in Manila, produced one of these panegyric pamphlets defending absolutism's efficacy and divine right to govern for the portrait's entrance:

Y así en virtud de la regia autoridad que reside esencialmente en su persona, debemos respetar su trono como el de Dios, a quien representa; debemos mirarle como destello del poder divino y ministro del Altísimo”<sup>17</sup>

Ernst Kantorowicz has affirmed that the king reflected the duplication of natures that occurred in Christ and represented and imitated the living Christ.<sup>18</sup> Arzinas quoted De Solórzano Pereira—one of the most significant emblem authors of the seventeenth century— as stating that the king was God’s vicar on earth. Thus, the return of absolutism was supported by the same mechanisms and emblem books of the past, which were adapted to the new circumstances.

In his speech, Arzinas intended to distance the Latin American events from the archipelago; thus, he began: “Señor. Cuando la Asia oriental escuchando de eco unas funestas noticias que agitaban el reyno español, reposaba amorosamente en el seno de una pacífica paz.”<sup>19</sup> In using the word *echo*, Arzinas referenced and emphasized the remoteness of those disturbances while underscoring the contrast between the “agitation” of the American colonies and the “peaceful peace” that meant belonging to the Crown. The extreme use of tautology in “peaceful peace” emphasized the entire discourse’s hyperbolic intention.



**Fig. 4** Antonio Chacón y Conde. *Diseño del trono*, acuarela, Manila, 1825. Biblioteca Real de Madrid, España, DIG/ARCH3/CAJ/19 (1-26)\_

Now, let us examine how the watercolors depicting the 1825 event support similar Ancient Regime political ideologies to Divine Right based in Solominism. The proven mechanisms of symbolic culture aided the restoration of Fernando VII's absolutism.

The royal portrait in the Casa de Renta de Administración de Vino shows the painting resting on a throne made for the occasion, flanked by a double Ionic colonnade. The ceremonial planner Chacón y Conde described: "A los pies del Retrato Real, se colocaron los dos mundos, y más abajo, a los lados del Trono, en su base, dos Leones de una vara de altura, tan bien imitados que parecían naturales".<sup>20</sup>

With this description in mind, I will explain how these watercolors attempted a symbolic transfer of the Hebrew king's throne to Manila in order to confer superior and privileged colonial status on the Philippines. The watercolors used to depict the Manila ceremony evoke the claim of the Spanish Empire as the legitimate heir to Jerusalem's throne.<sup>21</sup> The political doctrine known as Solomonism encouraged the Spanish king to emulate King Solomon of Israel in his three essential virtues: wisdom, prudence, and justice. As Martha Fernández has expressed, Solomonism was also imitated in a material way in the Americas through both Solomon's throne and the architectonic revival of the temple, probably the most notable example in the Americas is the Basilic of Guadalupe in Mexico City <sup>22,23</sup> Although not an entirely idiosyncratic iconography, the artistic representation of Solomonism illustrates the new Crown's concerns that fueled the strengthening of its ties with the Pacific.

As Victor Mínguez has pointed out, the inheritance of the biblical chair was a recurrent theme in Spanish artwork in the 17th and 18th centuries. The Habsburg dynasty sought to recreate the Kingdom's symbolic legacy, seeking a visual similarity between the Hispanic and Solomonic thrones.<sup>24</sup> Filipino's watercolor composition of the traditional Spanish throne flanked by rampant lions, could be a simplified version of the throne of Solomon. Also, the portrait of Fernando VII included in this watercolor seated in throne recreated a representational apparatus with the claim of maintaining the image of the Global Empire. *The Book of Kings* describes how "the throne of

Solomon had six steps, and its back had a rounded top. On both sides of the seat there were armrests, with a lion standing beside each of them” (1:20). As mentioned above, the title of King of Jerusalem was transferred to the throne’s iconography, widely used by the Spanish Monarchy. Moreover, the standing lions and the Hebrew temple’s chandeliers on either side still remain operative symbolic devices of the Bourbon dynasty today in the Salón del Trono in Madrid.

**The return of the pactum subjectionis:  
Negotiating with the indigenous elites**

Following past practices in royal ceremonies, this strong advocacy for the restoration of absolutism and divine doctrine also sought to renew the colonial pacts with the indigenous elites. The Binondo pagodas were a crucial part of Manila’s royal ceremonies in 1825. Binondo is considered the oldest Chinatown in the world, created by Spanish captain Luis Pérez Dasmariñas in 1594. Binondo had developed into a commercial hub. Located near the Spanish settlement of Intramuros but across the Pasig River, the neighborhood was placed strategically for policing practices. A critical negotiation with a prominent Chinese community of Binondo was evident in the arrival of the King’s portrait. The Pagoda’s artists modernized the classic formulas on Solomon’s throne by including vernacular iconography, such as certain Buddhist themes on the pagodas used in the feast. This resurgence of the Habsburg *pactum subjectionis* was critical in the development of these ephemeral structures.

The two Chinese pagodas -bordering the Binondo neighborhood- were built to answer this call, the design of these pagodas melds Western and Eastern elements, such as a triumphal arch atop a three-level pagoda. At first glance, the ephemeral architecture endorses the Spanish throne: the base is reminiscent of the Castile emblem, and therefore, the pagoda resting on the Spanish state could allude to Spain’s geopolitical dominion over the archipelago.



**Fig. 5.** Tomás Cortés, *Vista del arco del triunfo y pagoda*, acuarela, Manila, 1825, Biblioteca Real de Palacio, España, DIG/ARCH3/CAJ/19 (1-26)\_

However, upon more careful inspection, reveals a multilayered analysis, as the imperial project was interwoven with local elites and their visual traditions. The placement of certain elements (such as Fu Lions, incense, and fruit) connects Buddhist teachings, Eastern representations of power, and their syncretism with the Spanish king. We also can recall the chandeliers as

being part of the *Salon del Trono* in Madrid. The first body of the pagoda is the central part, which is flanked by feline guardians reminiscent of Fu Lions, which were tasked with warding evil spirits away from the thresholds of Buddhist temples, palaces, and imperial tombs.<sup>25</sup> At the same time, these animals' position is reminiscent of the fierce lions that generally appear to be guarding the Hispanic throne.

The ritual of taking an oath before the royal banner and the unveiled portrait on display represents, as Mínguez has asserted, a gesture of blind loyalty to the ruling institution—the Crown surpassing the person of the king in power.<sup>26</sup> The unveiling of the Philippines' oil painting signified the surrogate of royal authority, which was highlighted with the placement of the image, exposed before a tabernacle. For this event, five vessels were organized as a Buddhist offering, and objects such as incense, fruit, and water were typically provided. In the Western tradition, the *Book of Kings* also recalls this feature: “Solomon also ordered all the items for the Lord’s temple: the gold altar and the table on which to place the candlesticks” (7:40-50). Juan Bautista de Villalpando, author of a text examining *El Escorial*, has expressed that the tabernacle’s role is to “immolate, sacrifice, offer in sacrifice,” as a reference to the altar used for burnt offerings.<sup>27</sup> In the image, the offerings are depicted below the portrait of Fernando VII, consequently, they acquire a multicultural dimension, in which both traditions underscore the importance of burning offerings; for example, the *Book of Exodus* refers to the need to build the temple altar to burn thymoma, a fragrant incense (3:35-40).

Additionally, it is significant that the Spanish monarch is placed on the altar, where the Buddha would typically appear, expressing the substitution of the traditional structure of a Buddhist temple<sup>28</sup>. This transposition was highlighted by the Chinese ideograms placed above the portrait, which referenced the honorific place that corresponded to kings. With Solomonic architecture as a reference, the Philippines' tabernacle was framed within the typical structure of a Buddhist temple; on the columns farthest from the portrait, there were inscriptions in Chinese; and on the nearest, there were two green dragons. It is important to note that, even in formal artistic terms, there is an intimate visual comparison between the undulating serpentine

mythical monsters viewed in the columns of the pagoda and the enunciation of the Solomonic column.

My interpretation of Chinese characters in this context painted on the pagoda offers a new understanding of this power interplay. These Chinese phrases are paired stanzas that are part of classical architectures that, depending on the context, can change their semantic meaning. The spring couplets read as follows: “天增歲月 [Although time flies], 春滿乾坤 [The spring comes, and the fortunes will enter the household].” These correspond to the first stanzas of classical extracts related to the arrival of spring. These couplets are typical decorations placed on both sides of a house’s door during the Chinese Lunar New Year. Yet here, these stanzas are related to the entry of the portrait in December 18, 1825. As already mentioned, this time was critical for the relationship between Spain and its colonies. The paired stanzas stressed the Philippines’ political stance as distancing themselves from the colonies in the Americas, underscoring the archipelago’s faithful status despite its remoteness.

The third couplet reads “風調雨順 [The wind and rain come in time],” which indicates the arrival of weather conducive to agricultural harvest, and the fourth couplet reads, “國泰民安 [The country is prosperous and the people are at peace].” The Latin American wars position Manila as the center of peace. Mariano Ricafort, the 61st Governor-General of the Philippines, also refers to this notion in his correspondence when he writes:

El Rey nuestro señor (que Dios le guarde), deseando expresar a estas islas su Real Gratiud por el constante amor con que en medio de las turbulencias y revoluciones que han sufrido sus otros Dominios de América, se han mantenido inalterablemente fieles a su soberanía, y que me puso al frente de estas provincias en este tiempo de necesidad, con la imposibilidad de viajar a ellas para mejor probar su amor y benevolencia, nombró a su primer pintor de cámara don Vicente López para que representara su Real Retrato.<sup>29</sup>

This atmosphere of peace corresponded with a poem that surrounded the Plaza Mayor. The Champs-de-Mars portion of the first stanza likely referred to the internal wars on the American continents. Hence, Manila recognized itself as a bastion of peace and a model for other nations. These stanzas summarized the celebration's detailed proposal:

Frente al Palacio Real: "Aunque en los Campos de Marte / Manila da pruebas de su lealtad / con más gloria y más arte / en los campos ondea hoy / el estandarte de la paz". Al otro lado, frente al Ayuntamiento, "Viva Fernando VII, objeto de nuestro tierno amor / Viva Manila, centro mundial / de lealtad y honor."<sup>30</sup>

The conflicts in Latin America emphasized that, unlike his predecessors, Fernando VII felt the need to flaunt a triumphant attitude, not only as part of a ceremony, but as a necessity. The approach behind these ephemeral architectural elements was to promote an imperial visual project that endorsed a loyal city's construction in the collective imaginary.

The archipelago's vernacular visual discourse merged with these rhetorical devices to emphasize that these colonies were the only ones loyal to the Monarchy underscore the epistemological concerns surrounding the nature of the Hispanic world's latent center-periphery division. The primary function of the visual language of the Pagodas and the other watercolors was to shift the colonial order and describe the borderlands of the Empire as essential to the survival of Hispanic world.

While the broader intellectual debate in nineteenth-century studies centers around Latin American identity and the ideological implications of providing an alternative locus of thinking few studies have investigated how the study of Manila in the same period adds a new dimension to Latin American scholarship by seeking to understand another side of the notion of Latin American Art through examining the artistic response of the Spanish empire borderlands during the Latin American independence and its aftermath. The examination of art objects produced in the Spanish empire borderlands can provide a new and different perspective on established

depictions of power and the “othering” of artistic creations. This perspective acknowledges Spain’ long history of colonialism in the Philippines and other colonial territories like Cuba and Puerto Rico, and assesses these nations’ respective historical and cultural trajectories with Latin America. It also compels us to acknowledge the borders implicit in the nation-state and regional narratives that form the bedrocks of Latin American studies, as well as to consider the structural limits inherent in the formation of area studies more broadly.

### **BIBLIOGRAPHY**

Biblioteca Real del Palacio, DIG/ARCH3/CAJ/19 (1-26)\_  
UST, LIB265\_PG 3

Argensola, Bartolome Leonardo de. *Conquista de las Islas Malucas*. Madrid: Alonso Martín, 1609.

Arzinas, Salvador Santiago de. *Discurso gratulatorio que en la solemne entrada del Real retrato de N. C. M. el Sor. D. Fernando VII*. Manila: Imprenta de Sampaloc, 1826.

Chacón y Conde, Antonio. *Días grandes en Filipinas*. Manila: Imprenta Filipina, 1826.

Ripa, Cesare. *Iconología*, Madrid: Akal, 2007.

Bautista, Juan de Villalpando. *El Templo de Salomón*. Madrid: Ediciones Siruela, 1991.

Cornu, Philippe y F. J. López, Martín. *Diccionario Akal del budismo*. Madrid: Akal Ediciones, 2004.

Costeloe, Michael P. *La respuesta a la Independencia: la España imperial y las revoluciones hispanoamericanas, 1810-1840*, México: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 2011.

Cuadriello, Jaime. “El trono vacío o la monarquía lactante”, in *Visiones de la Monarquía Hispánica*, edited by Victor Mingüéz, Castellón de la Plana: Universitat Jaume I, 2007.

De Llobet, Ruth. “Orphans of Empire: Bourbon Reforms, Constitutional Impasse, and the Rise of Filipino Creole Consciousness in an Age of Revolution.” Ph.D diss., University of Wisconsin, Madison, 2011.

Fernández, Martha. “El salomonismo en la Nueva España: soportes, espacio y urbanismo”. In: *Acervo Mexicano Legado de Culturas*, edited by Galicia Isasmendi, Erika *et.al.*, Sevilla: Universidad Pablo Olavide/BUAP, 2017.

Johnson, Christopher. *Hyperboles: The Rhetoric of Excess in Baroque Literature and Thought*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2010.

Kantorowicz, Ernst. *The King’s two bodies. A study in medieval political theory*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1957.

- Luengo, Pedro. *Manila, plaza fuerte: 1762-1788: ingenieros militares entre Asia, América y Europa*, Madrid: Ministerio de Defensa/CSIC, 2013.
- Massip, Francesc. *La monarquía en escena: teatro, fiesta y espectáculo del poder en los reinos ibéricos: de Jaume el conquistador al príncipe Carlos*. Madrid: Consejería de Madrid, 2003.
- Miller, Tracy. "Of Palaces and Pagodas: Palatial Symbolism in the Buddhist Architecture of Early Medieval China" *Frontiers of History in China*, vol. 10, 2015, pp. 245-259.
- Mínguez, Víctor. "El rey de España sentado en el trono de Salomón" *Visión de la monarquía hispánica*, edited by Victor Mínguez. Castellón de la Plana: Universitat Jaume I, 2007, pp. 19-56.
- Osorio, Alejandra. *Inventing Lima: Baroque Modernity in Peru's South Sea Metropolis*, New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009.
- Padrón, Ricardo. *Indies of the Setting Sun: How Early Modern Spain Mapped the Far East as the Transpacific West*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2020.
- Picon, Antoine. *Ornament: The Politics of Architecture and Subjectivity*. Chichester: Wiley, 2014.
- Reyes, Rachel. "Paradise in Stone: Representations of New World Plants and Animals on Spanish Colonial Churches in the Philippines" in *Art, Trade, and Cultural Mediation in Asia, 1600-1950*. edited by Rachel Reyes, London: Palgrave, 2019.
- Rípodas Ardanaz, Daisy. "Versión de la monarquía de derecho divino en las celebraciones reales de la América borbónica." *Revista de historia del derecho*, núm. 34, 2006, pp. 241-267.
- Rodríguez, Dalmacio. *Texto y fiesta en la literatura novohispana: 1650 - 1700*. México: Instituto de Investigaciones Bibliográficas, 1998.

---

## Endnotes

1. Bartolome Leonardo de Argensola, *Conquista de las Islas Malucas* (Madrid: Alonso Martin, 1609), [Cover]
2. Cesare Ripa, *Iconología* (Madrid: Akal, 2007), 23.
3. Ricardo Padrón, *Indies of the Setting Sun: How Early Modern Spain Mapped the Far East as the Transpacific West* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2022), 23.
4. Michael P. Costeloe, *La respuesta a la Independencia: la España imperial y las revoluciones hispanoamericanas, 1810-1840* (México: FCE, 2011), 20.
5. Fransec Massip, *La monarquía en escena: teatro, fiesta y espectáculo del poder en los reinos ibéricos* (Madrid: Consejería de Madrid, 2003), 19.
6. Antonio Chacón y Conde, *Días grandes en Filipinas* (Sampaloc: Imprenta Filipina, 1826), 9.
7. Patricio Hidalgo, *La fidelidad premiada: la entrada del retrato de Fernando VII en Manila el 18 de diciembre de 1825* (Madrid: ACCI, 2018), 28.
8. Ruth de Llobel, "Orphans of Empire: Bourbon Reforms, Constitutional Impasse, and the Rise of Filipino Creole Consciousness in an Age of Revolution" (Ph.D diss., University of Wisconsin, Madison, 2011), 225-279.

9. Victor Mínguez, "El rey de España sentado en el trono de Salomón" in *Visión de la monarquía hispánica*, ed. Victor Mínguez (Castellón de la Plana: Universitat Jaume I, 2007), 277-79.
10. Alejandra Osorio, *Inventing Lima: Baroque Modernity in Peru's South Sea Metropolis*, (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 107.
11. Several authors have investigated this aspect of the king's image overseas, see: Mínguez 1995; Rodríguez Moya 1998; Osorio 2004; Cañeque 2013.
12. Dalmacio Rodríguez, *Texto y fiesta en la literatura novohispana: 1650 – 1700* (México: Instituto de Investigaciones Bibliográficas, 1998), 134.
13. Antonio Bonet Correa, *Morfología y ciudad: Urbanismo y arquitectura durante el Antiguo Régimen en España* (Barcelona: Gilberto Gili, 1978), 49. Cited also in Rodríguez, 135.
14. Carlos de Sigüenza y Góngora, *Relaciones históricas: selección, prólogo y notas de Manuel Romero de Terreros* (México: Universidad Nacional Autónoma, 1954), viii. Cited also in Rodríguez, 135.
15. Christopher Johnson, *Hyperboles: The Rhetoric of Excess in Baroque Literature and Thought* (Harvard University Press, 2010), 127-28.
16. Antoine Picon, *Ornament: The Politics of Architecture and Subjectivity* (Chichester: Wiley, 2013), 37-38.
17. Salvador Santiago de Arzinas, *Discurso gratulatorio que en la solemne entrada del Real retrato de N. C. M. el Sor. D. Fernando 7 en la Ciudad de Manila pronunció en la Santa Iglesia Catedral* (Manila: Imprenta de Sampaloc, 1826), 2.
18. Ernst Kantorowicz, *The King's two bodies. A study in medieval political theory*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1957), 35.
19. Arzinas, *Discurso gratulatorio*, 4.
20. Chacón, *Días grandes*, 11.
21. The title of King of Jerusalem, still held by the current King of Spain, Felipe VI, is a medieval legacy that refers to the capture of this city by Godfrey of Bouillon after the First Crusade. As Ana de Zabala and María Cruz González comment: "Jerusalem was considered the umbilicus mundi, not only in a spiritual sense, but also geographically: it occupied within the ecumene, considered flat, the central place (199)". After the fall of Jerusalem, the title became an honorific rather than a territorial title, and its hereditary line was divided into several descendants. The Spanish kings inherited it when they added the territory of Naples to the Hispanic Empire. The chronology of the title of Kings of Jerusalem is significant because it was linked to the kings of Aragon, in particular to Fernando the Catholic in 1510 (Zabala and Cruz Gonzalez 207).
22. Martha Fernández, "El salomonismo en la Nueva España: soportes, espacio y urbanismo" in *Acervo Mexicano Legado de Culturas, Arte, Creación y Patrimonio Iberoamericano* ed. Erika Galicia Isasmendi, Fernando Quiles García, Zara Ruiz Romero (Puebla: Benemérita Universidad Autónoma de Puebla, 2017), 20-40.
23. Intellectuals such as Serlio and Guarini championed Solomonian revivals and other concrete architectural forms that attempted to reconstruct the Solomonian temple, such as the Dome of the Rock, the Hagia Sophia in Constantinople, and the monastery of San Lorenzo de El Escorial-
24. Mínguez, "El rey", 19-56.
25. Tracy Miller, "Of Palaces and Pagodas: Palatial Symbolism in the Buddhist Architecture of Early Medieval China", *Frontiers of History in China*, vol. 10, (2015): 245-259; Rachel Reyes, "Paradise in Stone: Representations of New World Plants and Animals on Spanish Colonial Churches in the Philippines" *Art, Trade, and Cultural Mediation in Asia, 1600–1950* ed. Rachel Reyes (London: Palgrave, 2019), 43-48.
26. Mínguez, 22.
27. Juan de Villalpando Bautista, *El Templo de Salomón* (Madrid: Ediciones Siruela, 1991), 267.
28. Philippe Cornu y Francisco Javier López, Martín, *Diccionario Akal del budismo* (Madrid: Akal Ediciones, 2004), 398.

29. National Archives of the Philippines (NAP), Exp. I S1-74
30. Chacón, *Dias grandes*, 18.