

[Recepción del artículo: 28/07/2022]
[Aceptación del artículo revisado: 09/10/2022]

HEROD AND THE ORANT QUEEN: THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL DISCOVERIES IN THE CATHEDRAL OF SANTIAGO, AND ITS MEDIEVAL STONE CHOIR HERODES Y LA REINA ORANTE: LOS DESCUBRIMIENTOS ARQUEOLÓGICOS EN LA CATEDRAL DE SANTIAGO Y EL CORO DEL MAESTRO MATEO

FRANCISCO PRADO-VILAR
Universidad de Santiago de Compostela
f.prado.vilar@usc.es
OCID ID: 0000-0002-3373-7557

ABSTRACT

During the restoration works and archaeological excavation carried out in the crypt of the Portal of Glory of Santiago Cathedral between 2017 and 2021 numerous pieces of its dismantled medieval stone choir were unearthed, including a series of reliefs representing the Massacre of the Innocents. This article analyzes the stylistic, iconographic, contextual, and comparative evidence that allows us to date them to the last quarter of the twelfth century, and discusses how they bear witness to the diversity of stylistic idioms of the different sculptors who arrived in Compostela to work on the monumental enterprises undertaken in the cathedral between 1168 and 1211 under the direction of Master Mateo. The restitution of these pieces to their probable original place on the façade of the stone choir gives insight into the brilliant scenography designed by Master Mateo for the different spaces of the cathedral, including the altars located in the choir, adapting their sculptural ornamentation to the temple's liturgical topography, and tracing paths of visual connection between them so that the faithful, in their movements, could intuitively apprehend the theological connections among biblical episodes. The essay includes a historiographical critique aimed at liberating the choir's fragments from the modern constructs in which they remain imprisoned, as a preliminary step to achieve a new vision of this essential work in the corpus of medieval art.

* I want to express my gratitude to the Santiago Cathedral Foundation, and its Director, Don Daniel Lorenzo, for the facilities to study the works discussed in this article and publish the photographs, and to the Department of Patrimony of the Galician government (Xunta de Galicia) for providing all the documents and information requested for this research.

KEYWORDS: Romanesque sculpture, choir, *jubé*, Santiago Cathedral, Master Mateo, Portal of Glory.

RESUMEN

Durante las obras restauración y prospección arqueológica de la cripta del Pórtico de la Gloria, acometidas entre 2017 y 2021, se descubrieron numerosas piezas del coro pétreo del maestro Mateo, incluida una serie de relieves que representa la Matanza de los Inocentes. En este artículo se analiza la evidencia estilística, iconográfica, contextual y comparativa que permite datarlas en las últimas décadas del siglo XII mostrando cómo son testimonio de la diversidad de “acentos” estilísticos que tenían los diferentes artífices que llegaron a Compostela para trabajar en las monumentales empresas acometidas en la basílica jacobea entre 1168 y 1211, acentos que confluirían en la formación de esa “koiné” artística única en el arte del 1200 que conocemos como “estilo mateano” y que tiene su máxima expresión en el Pórtico de la Gloria. La restitución de las piezas descubiertas a su probable lugar original en la fachada del coro revela la magistral planificación escenográfica diseñada por el maestro Mateo para los diferentes espacios de la catedral, incluidos los altares dispuestos entorno al coro, adaptando su ornamentación figurativa a la topografía litúrgica y trazando sendas de conexión visual entre ellos para que el visitante, en sus desplazamientos, pudiese aprehender intuitivamente las conexiones teológicas entre episodios bíblicos. El artículo incluye una revisión historiográfica destinada a liberar los fragmentos del coro de las estructuras modernas en las permanecen aprisionados, como paso preliminar necesario para alcanzar una nueva visión de esta obra central en el corpus del arte medieval.

PALABRAS CLAVE: Románico, Escultura, Santiago, Pórtico de la Gloria, Maestro Mateo, coro.

A great work of art like Compostela is well nigh inexhaustible; the strangest and most unexpected threads are woven into the complex pattern; the more one studies, the more new vistas in surprising directions will unfold themselves.

A. K. Porter, “Santiago Again”¹

The grandeur and misery of the historian: his desire will always be suspended between the tenacious melancholy of the past as an *object of loss* and the fragile victory of the past as an *object of recovery* [...] We still have some monuments, but we no longer know the world that required them; we still have some words, but we no longer know the utterances that sustained them; we still have some images, but we no longer know the gazes that gave them flesh.

G. Didi-Huberman, *Confronting Images*²

¹ A. K. PORTER, “Santiago Again”, *Art in America*, 15 (1927), pp. 96-113, esp. p. 113.

² G. DIDI-HUBERMAN, *Confronting Images: Questioning the Ends of a Certain History of Art*, Philadelphia, 2005, p. 38.

She was one of the stars of the international Romanesque Art exhibition of 1961, organized by the Spanish government under the auspices of the Council of Europe, with venues in Barcelona and at the cathedral of Santiago de Compostela. The curator of the Santiago show, Manuel Chamoso Lamas, gave this “orant queen” pride of place in the apse of the crypt under the Portal of Glory, raising her on a pedestal framed by a red curtain (Fig. 1a).³ There she was admired by the multitude of visitors and dignitaries attending this event, which was heavily promoted by the Franco regime to showcase its acceptance as a legitimate participant in the European cultural institutions. Her charming smile was even captured by the cameras of the NO-DO (acronym for “Noticiario y Documentales”), the official cinema newsreels of the regime, and broadcast to movie theaters all over Spain in a monographic episode surveying the artworks on display at both venues.⁴

But, once the center of attention, this delicate figure of the Virgin of the Annunciation remains today all but forgotten, confined to a corner of the partial reconstruction of the medieval stone choir of Santiago Cathedral which was undertaken in the 1990s by assembling, with a great deal of controversy, original fragments with modern pieces (Fig. 1b).⁵ Unexpectedly, however, the spotlight is again on her due to an archaeological discovery which occurred during the restoration campaign carried out in the crypt of the Portal of Glory – the lower storey of the cathedral’s west narthex – between 2017 and 2021 when many elements of the medieval choir were recovered.⁶

The poetics of history have wanted that, precisely near the place where she reigned supreme for decades elevated on an altar by Chamoso Lamas, there emerged a sculptural

³ In the exhibition catalogue (*El Arte Románico*, Barcelona, 1961, p. 525, cat. no. 1800), this figure is classified as a “Virgin” or an “orant queen.” Close parallels with a type of Virgin of the Annunciation found in Spanish Romanesque monuments of the second half of the twelfth century, such as the Annunciation carved in a voussoir of the portal of the church of Santo Domingo de Soria, or the reliefs decorating the sarcophagus of San Ramón in the cathedral of Roda de Isábena, confirm this identification. In this article, I will keep referring to this Virgin of the Annunciation as the “orant queen” in order to highlight her unique place in the historiography.

⁴ Available online on the web archive of the Spanish Broadcasting Corporation (RTVE), see (min. 5:00): <https://www.rtve.es/play/videos/revista-imagenes/arte-romanico/2864294/?locale=ES>

⁵ In an article surveying the objects on display at the 1961 Romanesque Art exhibition, Chamoso Lamas expanded on his analysis of this figure, assigning it to the medieval choir of Santiago Cathedral, see M. CHAMOSO LAMAS, “La exposición de arte románico”, *Compostellanum*, 7-2 (1962), pp. 213-248, esp. p. 218.

⁶ The discovery of pieces from the stone choir in the crypt did not come as a surprise. It is well known that there was a chronological coincidence between the dismantling of the medieval choir in 1604 and the construction of the monumental staircase that gives access to the cathedral’s west entrance, now known as the Obradoiro façade, a moment when the crypt around which it was built was also remodeled. In 1978, during works to renovate the pavement of the loggia located at the top of the staircase, many pieces from the choir were discovered (Fig. 15). Francisco Pons Sorolla, the architect-conservator of the cathedral for most the twentieth century, declared at that time that “It was logical to think that remains of Mateo’s stone choir could appear, considering that the staircase was made at a date close to its dismantling, but there are also interesting pieces on the floor of the old cathedral [the crypt] and even some were lifted and then left on the site,” see T. CALVO, “Nuevos hallazgos escultóricos en la Catedral compostelana”, *La Voz de Galicia*, January 27, 1978. These discoveries were met with great public interest because, just a year earlier, a spectacular bounty of sculptural fragments from the façade of Notre-Dame Cathedral had been unearthed in Paris, garnering international headlines, see C. GÓMEZ-MORENO (ed.) *Sculpture from Notre-Dame, Paris: A Dramatic Discovery*, exh. cat., New York, 1979.



Fig. 1. a. Virgin of the Annunciation (also known in the historiography as the “Orant Queen”), ca. 1170/90. Santiago Cathedral Museum. Photo: M. Chamoso Lamas. b. Reconstruction of the medieval choir of Santiago Cathedral (1995-99). Santiago Cathedral Museum

fragment, the head of a king, which is so similar in its physiognomic features (nose, eyes, eyebrows), carving technique, and even the design of the crown, that can only be the product of the same workshop, if not the same hand (Figs. 3b, 3c). This head once formed a unit with a torso found nearby, representing Herod, as it can be inferred from the remains of two monstrous legs carved on his side that belonged to a small figure of the devil whispering in his ear, a particular feature in Spanish Romanesque iconography of the evil king ordering the Massacre of the Innocents. In effect, three fragmentary reliefs featuring soldiers, two of them killing babies, were also unearthed in the same section of the crypt confirming the attribution of all these pieces to a cycle representing the gruesome biblical event (Fig. 2).

The unquestionable similarity between the heads of Herod and the “orant queen” provides the definitive comparative evidence to date securely this Massacre of the Innocents to the last quarter of the twelfth century, correcting the perplexing and incongruous dating of 1250-1350 which was given to these sculptures when they were made public in September 2021.⁷ Both pieces are also related to other sculptures from the dismantled Romanesque choir,

⁷ The public presentation of the archaeological discoveries from the crypt in September 2021 was accompanied by a dossier titled *Descubriendo la Catedral. Nuevos hallazgos arqueológicos 2017-2021 / Discovering the Cathedral: New Archaeological Finds 2017-2021* where the dating of 1250-1350 was given to these sculptures, stating that “their provenance is thought to be a chapel of unknown location within the cathedral complex” (see http://catedralsantiago.es/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/Libroto_expo_hallazgos_2021.pdf). In response, I published an article on the digital platform *Románico Digital* outlining the principal arguments for an earlier chronology and a hypothesis for the attribution of these reliefs to the medieval choir, see F. PRADO-VILAR “Los nuevos



Fig. 2. Reliefs of the Massacre of the Innocents (reconstruction of the sequence of 4 plaques, including the insertion of the fragmented head of an infant in plaque 4), ca. 1170/90. Santiago Cathedral Museum

such as the figure of Solomon, with which Herod shares a general physiognomic configuration, and particular details like the arched rictus of the mouth, and the design of the beard with a moustache curling at its ends (Figs. 3a, 3b).⁸ Moreover, viewed as a group, these sculptures help contextualize other artworks from the cathedral of Santiago which, despite their extraordinary artistic quality, have remained relegated to a certain historiographical marginality because they inhabit an undefined “transitional” stylistic and chronological space between two well-defined creative moments: on the one hand, the productions of the workshops

descubrimientos en la catedral de Santiago y el coro del Maestro Mateo,” *Románico Digital*, October 9, 2021 (<https://www.romanicodigital.com/nuevos-descubrimientos-catedral-santiago-coro-maestro-mateo>). Subsequently, Ramón Yzquierdo Peiró, director of the Santiago cathedral museum, published an article, to which I will make detailed reference in the second section of this essay, presenting the evidence for the dating and provenance advanced in the dossier, see R. YZQUIERDO PEIRÓ, “Descubriendo la catedral: los relieves de la Matanza de los Inocentes y otros hallazgos en las obras de la cripta y la escalinata del Obradoiro”, *Compostellanum*, 66.3-4 (2021), pp. 379-439. I refer to this article for the measurements of the reliefs and the exact places where they were found (the specific measurements of the pieces I discuss in detail here will be given below). For further information about the intervention in the crypt, see the report drafted by the lead archaeologist A. BONILLA RODRÍGUEZ, *Actuaciones arqueológicas vinculadas al Proyecto básico y de ejecución de restauración de la escalinata y cripta del Obradoiro de la Catedral de Santiago de Compostela (y actuaciones de remate en su entorno)*, Santiago Cathedral Foundation, Santiago de Compostela, 2021.

⁸ This figure of Solomon belongs to a series of twenty-four sculptures representing biblical characters which were re-used in 1611, after the choir’s demolition, as decoration for the exterior precinct of the “Puerta Santa” located in the Quintana square. For these sculptures, see J. CARRO GARCÍA, “As esculturas empotradas da Porta Santa”, *Boletín de la Universidad de Santiago de Compostela*, 5 (1933), pp. 66-80; and M. CHAMOSO LAMAS, “El coro de la Catedral de Santiago”, *Cuadernos de estudios gallegos*, 5 (1950), pp. 189-215, esp. pp. 198-203.

responsible for the transept portals in the first two decades of the twelfth century and, on the other hand, the style we associate with the Portal of Glory (ca. 1188) and the project of the cathedral's west narthex, undertaken under the direction of Master Mateo.⁹

A case in point is the majestic Christ that presides over the frieze of the Platerías Portal, about which Seraffín Moralejo wrote memorable lines delineating the constellation of stylistic inflections around which it gravitates (Fig. 3d):

If there are some clear affinities of content and mood with the Christs of Amiens and Chartres, there is also a certain resemblance of his facial type with the head of King Lothair from Saint-Remi, Reims, a piece datable before 1150. Thus, the beginnings of the Gothic and its classical phase come to be knotted in this Compostelan Christ, as if making an unnecessary parenthesis in all the art of Master Mateo and even all that goes from Senlis to Strasbourg.¹⁰

Certainly, a survey of this figure's historiography reveals that it disoriented art historians to such an extent that its classification fluctuated between being considered a work of the first decades of the twelfth century, precursor of the "proto-Gothic" column statues of the *Portail Royal* at Chartres, by A. Katzenellenbogen, to being seen as Master Mateo's *opera prima*, foreshadowing the style of the Portal of Glory, by M. Gómez-Moreno.¹¹ In this respect, the decision on the part of the art historians J. Gudiol Ricart and J. A. Gaya Nuño of selecting it to illustrate the cover of their volume dedicated to "Romanesque Architecture and Sculpture" in the landmark editorial project *Ars Hispaniae*, published in 1948 – where they discuss it as a youthful work by Master Mateo, which shows "a sensibility similar to the winged fluidity observed in the first Christs of the French Gothic" – emerges as a brilliant transgressive gesture, especially by comparison with the complete invisibility of this figure in current scholarship on Spanish medieval sculpture.¹²

⁹ For the workshops responsible for the transept portals, with discussions of previous literature, see F. PRADO-VILAR, "The Marble Tempest: Material Imagination, the Echoes of *Nostos*, and the Transfiguration of Myth in Romanesque Sculpture," in B. V. PENTCHEVA (ed.), *Icons of Sound: Voice, Architecture and Imagination*, New York, 2020, pp. 152-205.

¹⁰ S. MORALEJO ÁLVAREZ, *Escultura gótica en Galicia (1200-1350), Resumen de la Memoria presentada para la obtención del grado de Doctor, Universidad de Santiago, Facultad de Geografía e Historia, Santiago de Compostela, 1975*, pp. 1-35, esp. pp. 21-22. For the head of Lothair from Saint-Remi, see W. SAUERLÄNDER, *Gothic Sculpture in France, 1140-1270*, New York, 1972, p. 395.

¹¹ See M. GÓMEZ MORENO, *El arte románico español. Esquema de un libro*, Madrid, 1934, p. 131; and A. KATZENELLENBOGEN, *The Sculptural Programs of Chartres Cathedral: Christ, Mary, Ecclesia*, New York, 1964, p. 121. See also J. M. PITA ANDRADE, "En torno al arte del maestro Mateo: El Cristo de la Transfiguración en la portada de Platerías", *Archivo Español de Arqueología*, 23 (1950), pp. 13-26.

¹² J. GUDIOL RICART and J. A. GAYA NUÑO, *Arquitectura y escultura románicas*, *Ars Hispaniae*, vol. 5, Madrid, 1948, p. 348. The figure of the "orant queen" (Virgin of the Annunciation) discussed above presents a similar case of "invisibility" due to her difficult stylistic and chronological categorization. The imbrications of this figure with the international trends of the mid-twelfth-century "early Gothic" can be discerned by comparison with the Virgin of the Annunciation carved in the stone retablo from the parochial church of Carrières-sur-Seine, dated after 1150, now preserved at the Louvre (inv. RF 1612), see P.-Y. LE POGAM, "Le retable de Carrières", in J. E. A. KROESEN and V. M. SCHMIDT (eds.), *The Altar and Its Environment, 1150-1400*, Turnhout, 2009, pp. 169-182; and P. PLAGNIEUX, "L'onde de choc' des portails chartrains", in D. BERNÉ and P. PLAGNIEUX (eds.), *Naissance de la Sculpture Gothique. Saint-Denis, Paris, Chartres*, Paris, 2018, pp. 139-149, cat. no. 76.



Fig. 3. a. Head of Solomon, originally from the medieval choir of Santiago Cathedral, ca. 1170/90. b. Head of Herod, from the medieval choir of Santiago Cathedral, ca. 1170/90. c. Head of Fig. 1a. d. Head of Christ in Majesty, Platerías Portal of Santiago Cathedral, ca. 1170/90. e. Soldier from the Massacre of the Innocents. f. Angel from the reverse façade of the Portal of Glory, Santiago Cathedral, ca. 1180. g. As in Fig. 1a. h. Detail of Fig. 3e. i. Figure representing an elect, south pier of the Portal of Glory, Santiago Cathedral, ca. 1180. j. Figure of a choirboy from the medieval choir of Santiago Cathedral, ca. 1170/90

As we shall explore in the following pages, these recently discovered pieces from the medieval choir contribute to illuminate a crucial phase of the monumental biography of the cathedral of Santiago. They shed light on the stylistic diversity of the artists who converged in Compostela in the second half of the twelfth century to work on the ambitious enterprises undertaken under the direction of Master Mateo – the “sapiens architectus” who was entrusted by King Fernando II in 1168 with the task of transforming the basilica of St. James, originally conceived as a pilgrimage church, into a magnificent royal cathedral, the Reims and St. Denis of the Kingdom of León-Galicia. To accomplish this transformation, which culminated in the consecration of the cathedral in 1211, three interconnected projects were built: a Royal Pantheon, a stone choir, and the three-storied narthex of the Portal of Glory.¹³ During those

¹³ On Master Mateo’s projects, see S. MORALEJO ÁLVAREZ, “El 1 de abril de 1188: Marco histórico y contexto litúrgico en la obra del Pórtico de la Gloria”, in C. VILLANUEVA and S. JENSEN (eds), *El Pórtico de la Gloria: Música, arte y pensamiento*, Santiago de Compostela, 1988, pp. 19-37; R. SÁNCHEZ AMEIJERAS, “Dreams of Kings and Buildings:

decades, artists from different origins, and with diverse stylistic idioms, worked alongside each other in a collaborative enterprise that resulted in the formation of that unique *koiné* we know as “Master Mateo style”, which achieves its maximum expression in the imposing sculptural ensemble of the Portal of Glory.

THE ARTISTIC CONSTELLATION OF SANTIAGO IN THE TWELFTH CENTURY

Any pilgrim arriving in Compostela after the completion of the Portal of Glory could have found in it something that reminded him of the art of his homeland. In effect, the work that crowned the cathedral of Santiago reveals itself as a synthesis of the most fortunate formal and iconographic solutions developed in monuments along the roads leading to it. It is not easy, therefore, to determine a precise affiliation for an ensemble such as this, which seems to have been conceived as a veritable anthology of the main stylistic trends of the Romanesque and the early Gothic.¹⁴

The recent discoveries give us new insights into that “veritable anthology of stylistic trends” that Serafín Moralejo observed in the Portal of Glory. In their iconography, compositional design, carving style, and typology, they are connected to a constellation of contemporary monuments both in the Iberian Peninsula and beyond the Pyrenees, especially Burgundy and the Île-de-France. Representations of the Massacre of the Innocents showing iconographic features (i.e. Herod being advised by the devil) and figure types similar to the Santiago reliefs are ubiquitous in Spanish Romanesque monuments of the second half of the twelfth century, particularly in areas with sculptural ensembles which have been related to aspects of the art of Master Mateo, such as Soria, Tudela, and Aguilar de Campoo.¹⁵ The Compostelan soldiers find their close relatives in contemporary works, including the capital

Visual and Literary Culture in Galicia (1157–1230)”, in J. D’EMILIO (ed.), *Culture and Society in Medieval Galicia: A Cultural Crossroads at the Edge of Europe*, Leiden, 2015, pp. 695-764; and F. PRADO-VILAR (ed.), *The Portal of Glory: Architecture, Matter, and Vision*, Madrid, 2020.

¹⁴ S. MORALEJO ÁLVAREZ, “A arte europea na época do Pórtico da Gloria: Fontes, paralelos e influencias”, in *O Portico da Gloria e a arte do seu tempo*, exh. cat., Santiago de Compostela, 1988, pp. 142-143, esp. p. 142. This is the catalogue of the groundbreaking exhibition organized by the Galician government in 1988 to celebrate the 800 anniversary of the setting of the lintels of the Portal of Glory. Co-curated by Serafín Moralejo and Carlos Valle, it featured an impressive selection of objects which, as it will be shown in this article, continue to provide insights that help us interpret the new archaeological findings. The exhibition also generated scholarship that served to mark the state of the question, both in the catalogue, with texts by S. Moralejo and C. Valle, and in the collection of essays resulting from the international symposium convened on the occasion, authored by leading scholars such as W. Sauerländer, G. Zarnecki, M. Stokstad, N. Stratford, J. Williams, and others, see *Actas simposio internacional sobre O Pórtico da Gloria e a Arte do seu Tempo (Santiago de Compostela, 3-8 de Outubro de 1988)*, Santiago de Compostela, 1991. By contrast, the catalogue of the most recent exhibition devoted to Master Mateo, celebrated at the Prado Museum in 2017, is of limited value as it presents mostly derivative summaries of studies published elsewhere in the previous two decades, and scholarship which was already outdated, in content and methodological approach, by the time of the show’s opening, see R. YZQUIERDO PEIRÓ (ed.), *Maestro Mateo*, Madrid, 2017.

¹⁵ See M. MELERO MONEO, “El diablo en la Matanza de los Inocentes: una peculiaridad de la escultura románica hispana”, *D’Art*, 12 (1986), pp. 113-126. This scholar noted the close stylistic connection between the production of artists working in Tudela (cathedral’s cloister and church of San Nicolás) and aspects of the sculpture of the Portal of Glory, see M. MELERO MONEO, “Modelos y relaciones en la escultura de Navarra y Aragón en la segunda mitad del siglo XII: Borgoña, la Isla de Francia y Compostela”, in C. RÜCKERT, and J. STAEBEL (eds.), *Mittelalterliche*

of the Massacre of the Innocents from the church of Santa Cecilia at Aguilar de Campoo or, specifically within the cathedral of Santiago, the armored knight carved in one of the columns of the Portal of Glory, which is an exact small version of one of the Massacre soldiers, including the details of his sword (Fig. 4).¹⁶ A comparison between the soldiers in the Aguilar capital and the Portal of Glory column with those in the reliefs allows us to deduce that the apparent robotic character of the latter may be due, in part, to the fact that they are the product of a sculptor accustomed to working in smaller formats, in which the figures are supported in tightly packed compositions of concatenated bodies. He is out of his comfort zone, however, translating these designs to a larger scale forcing him to make the figures function anatomically as if they were moving in space. But, for all its apparent strangeness, this is not an awkward product of the provincial Galician Gothic of 1250-1350 but a daring experiment in visual narrative, which accords to the demanding goals set by Master Mateo for the sculptors working under his direction. Indeed, we see a succession of arresting compositions frozen at their dramatic peak, which achieve cinematic dynamism when we visually scan them from left to right as if they were frames of a film strip (Fig. 2). The narrative begins at Herod's palace where an *armiger* (military attendant), informs Herod of the Magi's escape, and points to the devil who, whispering in the king's ear, sets off the tragic events. As Herod unleashes his anger ordering the slaughter with a swift gesture, a soldier fulfills the command stabbing a baby with his sword while a mother kneels in horror holding the body of her dead child. The action quickens in the contiguous scene where another soldier steps over the corpse of a baby, burying his right foot on his back, and jumps to grab another infant

Bauskulptur in Frankreich und Spanien: Im Spannungsfeld des Chartrester Königsportals und des Pórtico de la Gloria in Santiago de Compostela, Frankfurt, 2010, pp. 133-149, esp. 144-149. For the iconography of the Massacre of the Innocents in Spanish Romanesque sculpture, see E. LOZANO LÓPEZ, "Tradición e innovación: el ciclo de la Matanza de los Inocentes en el Románico hispano", *Anales de Historia del Arte*, Volumen extraordinario (2010), pp. 275-291. As can be explored by perusing the exhibition catalogue *O Pórtico da Gloria e a Arte do seu tempo*, cited earlier, the Compostelan head of Herod also presents stylistic affinities with works such as a fragmentary head from the north portal of the abbey church of Silos (*O Pórtico da Gloria*, p. 145, no. 217) or the marble sculpture of Zechariah now preserved in the parochial church of San Juan at Arévalo (*O Pórtico da Gloria*, p. 143, no. 212). The north portal of the Silos church, a work by the so-called Second Atelier, to which aspects of the sculpture of the Portal of Glory have also been related, featured a Massacre of the Innocents, of which only a voussoir remains. Scholars have pointed to this Silos north portal ensemble as the probable inspiring model for the proliferation of representations of the Massacre in the aforementioned monuments, see: G. BOTO, *Ornamento sin delito. Los seres imaginarios del claustro de Silos y sus ecos en la escultura románica peninsular*, Silos, 2000; E. LOZANO LÓPEZ, "Maestros castellanos del entorno del segundo taller silense: repertorios figurativos y soluciones estilísticas", in *Neue Forschungen zur Bauskulptur in Frankreich und Spanien*, Berlin, Frankfurt am Main, 2010, pp. 197-211; and E. VALDEZ DEL ÁLAMO, *Palace of the Mind. The Cloister of Silos and Spanish Sculpture of the Twelfth Century*, Turnhout, 2012, pp. 343-400.

¹⁶ Soldiers dressed in hooded chainmail armor are ubiquitous in contemporary Spanish Romanesque sculpture. Another close parallel to the Santiago soldiers is provided by a capital of the Massacre of the Innocents from the cloister of the monastery of Santa María la Real at Aguilar de Campoo, now preserved in the National Archaeological Museum in Madrid, which was also featured in the *O Pórtico da Gloria e a arte do seu Tempo* exhibition (p. 77, no. 96). Similar costumes and figure types are common in monuments elsewhere in Europe. Especially interesting is a voussoir from the doorway of St. Mary's Abbey at York, decorated with a scene of Herod ordering the Massacre, see K. HOFFMANN (ed.), *The Year 1200. The Exhibition*, New York, 1970, p. 25, no. 31; and "St. Mary's Abbey, Voussoirs with Scenes from the New Testament", in *An Inventory of the Historical Monuments in City of York*, vol. 4, London, 1975, p. 39.

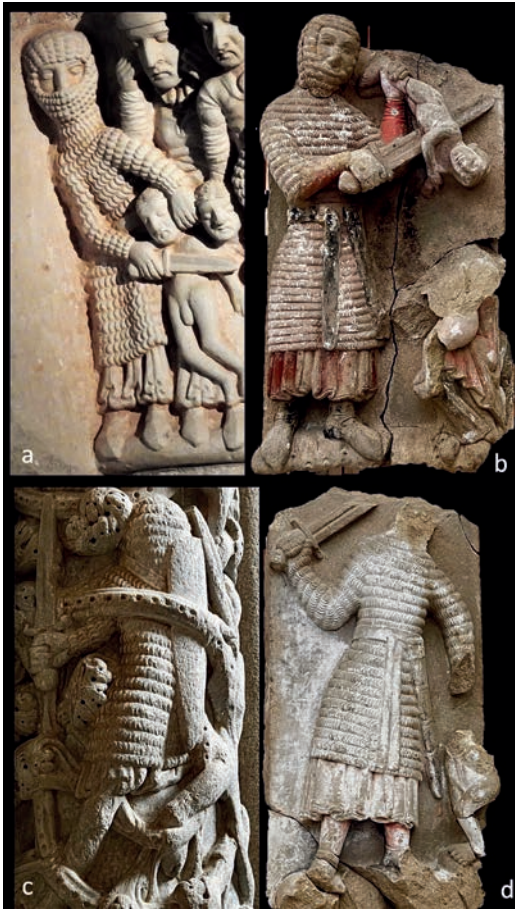


Fig. 4. a. Detail of the capital of the Massacre of the Innocents from the church of Santa Cecilia at Aguilar de Campoo, ca. 1170. b. Soldier from the Massacre of the Innocents. c. Soldier from a column in the north pier of the Portal of Glory, Santiago Cathedral, ca. 1180. d. Soldier from the Massacre of the Innocents

by the hair raising his sword to slash his throat with a blow. Following a topographic progression from the palace to the outskirts of the city, it is possible that the next scene in this frieze would have brought us further away on the road departing from Bethlehem with a depiction of the next biblical episode commonly represented in cycles of the Infancy of Christ, the Flight into Egypt. Precedents and parallels to imagine the continuation of the Compostela sequence can be found in examples such as a fragmentary relief from Étampes, which, as Walter Cahn has argued, could have belonged to a choir screen, or the north portal of Notre-Dame Cathedral in Paris for which the Santiago reliefs provide a worthy precedent.¹⁷ As Moralejo noted, and recent studies confirm, artists conversant with the early Gothic monuments of the Île-de-France also arrived in Santiago to work on the projects directed by Master Mateo and decisively contributed to the formation of the stylistic *koiné* associated with his name. Indeed, the Compostelan Massacre reliefs seem to combine figure types which are ubiquitous in Spanish Romanesque programs with elegant compositional designs we find in monuments such as the cathedral of Le Mans (dated before 1158) where the biblical episode is represented in the voussoirs through a series of *tableaux* emphasizing

ing the grief of mothers kneeling in a variety of postures (Fig. 5).¹⁸ It is as if a sculptor steeped in the Iberian tradition had been compelled to execute compositional designs produced by a

¹⁷ W. CAHN, "The 'Tymanum' of Saint-Pierre at Etampes: A New Reconstruction", *Gesta*, 25-1 (1986), pp. 119-126.

¹⁸ See T. E. POLK II, "The South Portal of the Cathedral at Le Mans: Its Place in the Development of Early Gothic Portal Composition", *Gesta*, 24-1 (1985), pp. 47-60; and M. ANGHEBEN, "Le portail royal du Mans et l'évolution de la première sculpture gothique entre les façades de Dijon et de Chartres", *Cahiers de civilisation médiévale*, 237 (2017), pp. 27-58. For the Massacre of the Innocents in early Gothic churches, see K. NOLAN, "'Ploratus et Ululatus': The Mothers in the Massacre of the Innocents at Chartres Cathedral", *Studies in Iconography*, 17 (1996), pp. 95-141.



Fig. 5. a, c, d Voussoirs from the north portal of Le Mans Cathedral, ca. 1153. b, f Soldiers from the Massacre of the Innocents. e Detail of Fig. 5c

“French” artist.¹⁹ Here, again, the confluence of stylistic idioms we observe in these recovered pieces from the stone choir can also be detected in the Portal of Glory. As Carlos Nodal has demonstrated in his extraordinary study of its polychromy, the first layer was probably the work of artists originating in the Île-de-France because we find the closest parallels, as for the pigments deployed, painting techniques, and ornamental motifs, in monuments such as the cathedrals of Senlis and Angers (Fig. 6).²⁰

The convergence of various artistic traditions, and their synthesis-in-the-making, revealed in the Massacre reliefs is also reflected in the architectural fragments of the choir recovered during the same campaign. Two sections of arcades with spandrels featuring palmettes relate the Santiago choir to one of the largest and most notorious choir screens of its age, that of the

¹⁹ In a disquisition teasing out the complexities of the stylistic relation between Chartres and Le Mans, Sauerländer brought up a similar point when he observed that: “At Le Mans, we would have, for instance, Chartrain craftsmen who had to use for the scenes in the voussoirs a model book which has nothing to do with Chartres,” see W. SAUERLÄNDER, “Sculpture on Early Gothic Churches: The State of Research and Open Questions”, *Gesta*, 9-2 (1970), pp. 32-48, esp. p. 39.

²⁰ C. NODAL MONAR, “Las policromías del Pórtico de la Gloria: Secuencias, Repertorios decorativos, Técnicas, Contextos y Autoría”, in F. PRADO-VILAR (ed.), *El Pórtico de la Gloria: Restauración, policromía y la transfiguración de la materia*, Madrid, 2021, open access digital edition: <https://issuu.com/fundaciongeneralucm/docs/porticogloria-restauracion-policromia>.



Fig. 6. a. Censing angel, tympanum of the Portal of Glory, ca. 1188. b. Tamar, from the Coronation Portal of the cathedral of Notre-Dame at Senlis, ca. 1170. Photo: Jean Delivré

great church of Cluny III (Figs. 14a, 14b).²¹ The expansion of this Cluniac decorative architectural vocabulary in the Iberian kingdoms by the mid-twelfth century is attested by the arcade of the refectory of the monastery of Oña, discovered in 1969, which, as it happens with the remains of the Santiago choir, still shows traces of polychromy.²²

The excavations in the crypt also yielded two slabs carved with concave roundels corresponding to the panels that covered each choir stall, of which we already had a sizable number of extant pieces. One of them is decorated with a budding rosette of curling acanthus leaves with pearly stems which seems a direct translation into stone of the lush vegetal designs found in the best products of the manuscript illumination created in the orbit of what is known in the historiography the “art of the year 1200” such as an initial “P” in Paris, BnF,

²¹ See C. EDSON ARMI and E. BRADFORD SMITH, “The Choir Screen of Cluny III”, *The Art Bulletin*, 66-4 (1984), pp. 556-573; and, especially, with a complete catalogue of fragments and new proposals for reconstruction, see N. STRATFORD, B. MAURICE-CHABARD and D. WALSH (eds.), *Corpus de la sculpture de Cluny: Les parties orientales de la Grande Eglise Cluny III*, Vol. 2, Paris, 2011, pp. 609-668.

²² For Oña, see J. L. SENRA, “La irrupción borgoñona en la escultura castellana de mediados del siglo XII”, *Anuario del Departamento de Historia y Teoría del Arte*, 4 (1992), pp. 35-52. For the connections between the art of Master Mateo and Burgundy, see N. STRATFORD, “Compostela and Burgundy? Thoughts on the Western Crypt of the Cathedral of Santiago”, in *Actas simposio internacional sobre O Pórtico da Gloria*, pp. 53-81; R. SÁNCHEZ AMEIJERAS, “Rebellious Architecture: Movement, Subversion, and Transubstantiation in the Visionary Mode”, *Codex Aquilarensis*, 35 (2019), pp. 85-114; and EADEM, “From the End to the Beginning: Time, Movement, and Cosmology at the Dawn of the Gothic”, *Codex Aquilarensis*, 37 (2022), pp. 377-329.

MS. Latin 16746 (Fig. 7).²³ The microarchitectural frames of the canon tables of this codex give us an idea of the designs with which the Santiago artists were working to carve the splendid canopies crowning each choir stall, composed of towers with rose windows supported by trefoil arches that frame a bestiary of humans and hybrid animals wrestling in dynamic poses.²⁴



Fig. 7. a. Canon tables, Paris, BnF, MS. Latin 16746, ca. 1170, fol. 5r. b. Canopy from a stall of the medieval choir of Santiago Cathedral, ca. 1170/90. c. Canon tables, Paris, BnF, MS. Latin 16746, ca. 1170, fol. 4v. d. Initial P, Paris, BnF, MS. Latin 16746, ca. 1170, fol. 107r. e. Fragment from the medieval choir of Santiago Cathedral, ca. 1170/90. f. Fragment from the medieval choir of Santiago Cathedral, ca. 1170/90. Photo: M. Chamoso Lamas, courtesy of the Real Academia Galega de Belas Artes

²³ The denomination “Art of the Year 1200” was coined on the occasion of the exhibition of the same name celebrated at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in 1970, where this manuscript, Paris, BnF, MS. Latin 16746, and the other three volumes of the same bible (Latin 16743, 16744 and 16745) were exhibited, see HOFFMANN (ed.), *The Year 1200. The Exhibition*, pp. 248-249, no. 247. For an evaluation of the virtues and shortcomings of this term, see W. SAUERLÄNDER’s exhibition review, “The Year 1200, a Centennial Exhibition at the Metropolitan Museum of Art. February 12-May 10, 1970,” *The Art Bulletin*, 53-4 (1971), pp. 506-516. For the art of the Portal of Glory within this international context, see *IBID.*, “1188. Les contemporains du Maestro Mateo,” in *Actas simposio internacional sobre O Pórtico da Gloria*, pp. 7-41. For a panorama of the art of this period, including a re-engagement with the terminological questions it poses, see G. BOTO VARELA, M. SERRANO COLL, and J. McNEILL (eds.), *Emerging Naturalism. Contexts and Narratives in European Sculpture 1140-1220*, Turnhout, 2020.

²⁴ For a discussion of the iconography of these canopies, see E. LOIC, “Liturgical Activation of the Stone Choir in Santiago de Compostela: Looking at Material through the Immaterial,” in A. SELIGER and W. PIRON (eds.), *Choir Stalls*

This discussion of the artistic constellation to which the newly discovered fragments from the choir belong leads us to revise the question of its chronology, which is now customary to situate in the first decade of the thirteenth century, at the end of Master Mateo's interventions in the cathedral.²⁵ However, A. López Ferreiro and M. Chamoso Lamas had argued that the choir must have been one of the first projects to be undertaken when work resumed in the cathedral under Master Mateo's direction in 1168 as it was an essential space for the daily life of the canons and the liturgy of the church. We know from the *Historia Compostelana* – the chronicle recounting the deeds of Archbishop Diego Gelmírez – that a stone choir had been built under his patronage, presumably by the same workshops responsible for the transept portals:

He [Diego Gelmírez] built a spacious choir with enough capacity [for the 72 canons] and, to this day, by the grace of God and Santiago and through the efforts of the bishop, it is magnificently decorated with the grandeur of an excellent clergy. The same bishop, as *sapiens architectus*, built a high pulpit in the right corner of the same choir, where the singers and the deacons perform their liturgical duties, and another one on the left side where the readings and the Gospels are read (HC I. 78.2).²⁶

The *Historia Compostelana* also tells us of the damage suffered by this structure during the revolt of the burghers of Santiago against the archbishop in 1136:

And those infamous men chased the venerable old man to the entrance of the altar of Santiago, with many stones and a multitude of rocks. With such cruelty and ferocity the stones and rocks flew from the hands of the criminals towards the glorious prelate that when they hit the stones of the choir of Santiago and collided, they turned them into sand (HC III. 47.4).²⁷

and Their Workshops. Newcastle upon Tyne, 2017, pp. 128-143; and on the choir's polyvalent performative and symbolic dimensions, see IDEM, "Terrestrial and Celestial Connections through Symbolic Schemata: The Stone Choir within the Sacred Topography of Santiago de Compostela", in PRADO-VILAR (ed.), *The Portal of Glory: Architecture, Matter, and Vision*, pp. 133-156. On microarchitecture, see, more recently, J.-M. GUILLOUET and A. VILAIN (eds.), *Microarchitectures médiévales: L'échelle à l'épreuve de la matière*, Paris, 2018.

²⁵ See, for instance, YZQUIERDO PEIRÓ (ed.), *Maestro Mateo*, pp. 116-120.

²⁶ My translation. For the Latin text, see E. FALQUE REY (ed.), *Historia Compostellana*, Turnhout, 1988, p. 121. For a Spanish translation, see EADEM (trad.), *Historia Compostelana*, Madrid, 1994, p. 189. For the *Historia Compostelana*, with previous bibliography, see F. PRADO-VILAR, "Flabellum: Ulises, la catedral de Santiago y la Historia del Arte medieval español como proyecto intelectual", *Anales de historia del arte*, Volumen Extraordinario, 2 (2011) pp. 281-316.

²⁷ My translation. For the Latin text, see FALQUE REY (ed.), *Historia Compostellana*, pp. 509-510; For a Spanish translation, see IBID. (trad.), *Historia Compostelana*, pp. 581-582. The chronicle gives other indirect references about the use of the choir for meetings and to receive dignitaries on especial occasions. It was in the choir where Gelmírez met with Queen Urraca to settle their disputes (HC I. 107.3), see Ibidem, p. 253, and he also gathered there with his canons during the tense negotiations with King Alfonso VII in 1126 (HC II. 86.4), Ibidem, pp. 472-473. A. López Ferreiro argued for the location of this choir in the first three bays of the central nave, west of the transept, thus occupying the same area as Master Mateo's choir, see A. LÓPEZ FERREIRO, *Historia de la Santa A. M. Iglesia de Santiago de Compostela*, vol. III, Santiago de Compostela, 1900, pp. 432-433. On Gelmírez's choir, see E. CARRERO SANTAMARÍA, "Arzobispos y obras en Santiago de Compostela entre los siglos XII y XIII. La definición del espacio litúrgico en la catedral," in M. D. TEJERA, M. V. HERRÁEZ and M. C. COSMEN (eds.), *Reyes y prelados. La creación artística en los Reinos de León y Castilla (1050-1500)*, Madrid, 2014, pp. 173-202, esp. pp. 181-182.

It is feasible to suppose that Master Mateo, following the *modus operandi* we observe in his interventions in other parts of the cathedral, of embellishing previous structures or reusing what was left of them, such as the transept portals and the west front, could have also redeployed parts of the damaged stone choir from Gelmirez's time and put his recently assembled team of masons to work on its enhancement. This would accord with the chronological framework suggested by the various artistic traditions we have discerned in the analysis of the new findings, and which we see merging in the project of the choir. It is here where we witness the process of formation of the Matean style.

As a conclusion to this section, let us perform a visual *peripeteia* through the constellation of images assembled in Figures 2 and 3 to get insight into how these artists work together following a set of designs for the realization of various sculptures to be then allocated to different parts of the choir and the narthex of the Portal of Glory. The thick and rigid folds of Herod's garment are comparable to those of an angel from the reverse façade of the Portal of Glory, and both of them find their echo in figures from the cloister of Tudela Cathedral (Figs. 2 and 3f). Additionally, the position of this angel's right arm is similar to the right arm of one of the soldiers from the Massacre (Figs. 3e and 3f), whose left arm resembles, in turn, the disposition of the arms of the "orant queen" (Figs. 3e and 3g). Finally, the infants from the Massacre follow the same figure type as the elect being led to heaven by angels in the voussoirs and spandrels of the south archway of the Portal of Glory (and the drapery style of this group of angels is, again, similar to that of Herod).

Once we have established the chronological and stylistic context of the archaeological discoveries in the crypt, and before we explore their significance to achieve a new vision of Master Mateo's choir, it is necessary to undertake another kind of archaeological exploration, one that entails sifting through the layers of historiography to liberate the fragments of the choir from the modern constructs in which they remain immured.

HERITAGE IN FRAGMENTS:

THE MAKING AND UNMAKING OF MASTER MATEO'S CHOIR (1909-1999)

The whole is the false.

T. Adorno, *Minima Moralia*²⁸

In 1909, coinciding with the celebration of the first Holy Year of the twentieth century, a momentous event took place in Santiago de Compostela: the Galician Regional Exposition.²⁹ The organizing committee of the archaeological section, chaired by Antonio López Ferreiro, the canon-archivist of Santiago Cathedral and an eminent historian, stated its objectives in grand terms: "We aspire to a complete resurrection of Galicia and its people; to a total objectification of the history of our Galician homeland; and, essentially, to the knowledge of the Galician soul." Rather than staging a "vanity fair," they intended to present to the world "a

²⁸ T. ADORNO, *Minima Moralia. Reflections from Damaged Life*, London, 2020, p. 54.

²⁹ See J. CARRO GARCÍA, *La exposición regional gallega de 1909*, Santiago de Compostela, 1959; and C. GARCÍA MARTÍNEZ and R. M. MÉNDEZ GARCÍA (eds.), *Exposición Galega de 1909*. Santiago de Compostela, 2010.

modern archaeological exhibition, democratized, and following European standards” which should include a comprehensive selection of objects, “not just those with an intrinsic artistic merit, but also all types of objects with a documentary value as sources for the history of Galicia.” Central to this effort was the creation of “an inventory of all ancient monuments, landmarks of our ancient life, which disappear every day due to the destructive action of time and the more destructive action of men.”³⁰

Visitors to the archaeological section, located in the College of San Clemente, were treated to a feast. Entering the cloister, they would walk into a forest of glorious fragments, each of them endowed with the capacity to conjure up the magnificence of the monuments of which they once formed part. There stood the “orant queen” in her first appearance “on stage” and, nearby, one could see pristine fragments of Master Mateo’s choir, some of them recovered by López Ferreiro himself during the renovation works in the pavement of the Baroque wooden choir that had substituted the medieval one in 1610 (Fig. 8).³¹

When the seventeenth-century choir was removed in 1946 to gain space in the nave and increase the visibility of the altar, a large number of fragments from its medieval predecessor were found redeployed as building material in its foundations and wall precinct. In charge of the archaeological excavations was Manuel Chamoso Lamas, by then appointed high commissioner of patrimony for the region of Galicia, a post he occupied for the next four decades.³² He published his findings in his seminal 1950 article “El coro de la Catedral de Santiago” where he gathered all known documentary sources informing about the appearance and uses of the medieval choir.

The first physical reconstruction of one of the choir stalls was undertaken on the occasion of the 1961 Romanesque Art exhibition, for which Chamoso Lamas used as a basis the proposal published by J. M. Pita Andrade a few years earlier.³³ The reconstructed stall was exhibited in a room devoted monographically to the choir, surrounded by a selection of the fragments recovered in the recent excavations, where visitors could appreciate their variety and aesthetic quality, as well as their significance to understand an art that reflects, as Chamoso Lamas wrote, a new “creative impulse [and] is set on its path towards a phase of consolidation that culminates in the grand Portal of Glory.”³⁴

New pieces from the choir, offering valuable additional information regarding its structure and decorative elements, were retrieved by Chamoso Lamas during the excavation campaigns conducted in various areas of the cathedral in the following years. The knowledge obtained from those discoveries led this scholar to try several new forms of assembling, which

³⁰ CARRO GARCÍA, “La exposición regional gallega de 1909”, p. 16. For A. López Ferreiro, see C. SANTOS FERNÁNDEZ, *Antonio López Ferreiro (1837-1910). Canónigo, historiador y novelista compostelano*, Santiago de Compostela, 2012.

³¹ For these pieces, see LÓPEZ FERREIRO, *Historia de la Santa A. M. Iglesia de Santiago de Compostela*, vol. IV, pp. 321-322.

³² CHAMOSO LAMAS, “El coro”. For an introduction to M. Chamoso Lamas’ work and legacy, see *Santiago y los Caminos de Santiago. Obra y fotografía de Manuel Chamoso Lamas*, Santiago de Compostela, 1999.

³³ See *El Arte Románico*, p. 534, cat. no. 1827; Pita Andrade’s proposal for reconstruction was published in J. M. PITA ANDRADE, “El arte de Mateo en las tierras de Zamora y Salamanca”, *Cuadernos de estudios gallegos*, 8 (1953), pp. 207-226.

³⁴ CHAMOSO LAMAS, “La exposición, del Románico”, pp. 223-234.

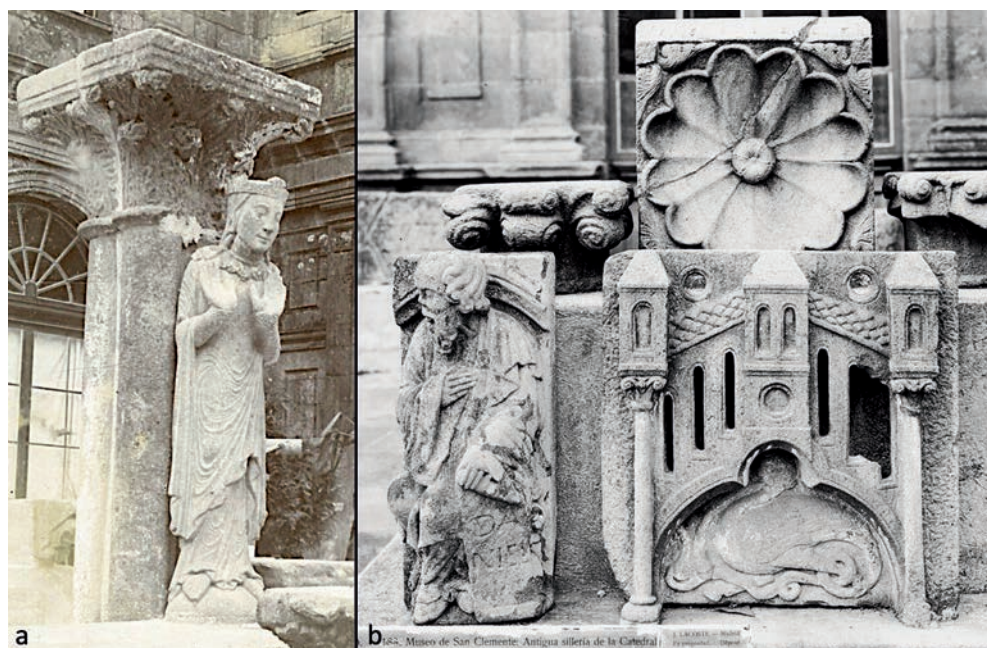


Fig. 8. a. Photograph of Fig. 1a at the Galician Regional Exposition, 1909. Photo: Archivo de la Real Academia de Bellas Artes de San Fernando. b. Fragments from the medieval choir of Santiago Cathedral at the Galician Regional Exposition, 1909. Photo: Lacoste, Archivo IPCE

resulted in the reconstruction of two choir stalls to be presented in the epoch-making exhibition of *The Year 1200* organized by the Metropolitan Museum of Art in 1970 (Fig. 9a).³⁵

After the exhibition's closing, the two choir stalls were permanently installed in the Santiago cathedral museum occupying a privileged place in the crypt of the Portal of Glory, next to the "orant queen," until 1985, the year of Chamoso's death, when Ramón Otero Túñez and Ramón Yzquierdo Perrín dismantled it to attempt a new reconstruction for the exhibition "Santiago de Compostela. 1000 Ans de Pèlerinage Européen," organized on the occasion of the biennial *Europalia* festival, which that year was dedicated to Spain (Fig. 9b, 9c).³⁶ As was reported by the press at the time, these two professors from the University of Santiago had

³⁵ There was no full montage of the two choir stalls in New York, but only the reconstructed canopies were exhibited, see HOFFMANN (ed.), *The Year 1200. The Exhibition*, pp. 44-5, no. 52 ("Choir screen, two units, 1180-1200"). In his exhibition review, Sauerländer praised the presence of the choir fragments but lamented the sparse representation of Spanish and Italian art, affirming that "the fragments excavated from the choir of Santiago are important, but could not make up for the unavoidable absence of Maestro Mateo," see SAUERLÄNDER, "The Year 1200, 'a Centennial Exhibition'", p. 511. Chamoso published the archaeological discoveries he made in the 1960s campaigns in two articles: M. CHAMOSO LAMAS, "Nuevas aportaciones al conocimiento del arte del Maestro Mateo", *Príncipe de Viana*, 25 (1964), pp. 225-238; and IDEM, "Noticias sobre recientes descubrimientos arqueológicos y artísticos efectuados en Santiago de Compostela", *Príncipe de Viana*, 32 (1971) pp. 35-48.

³⁶ See *Santiago de Compostela. 100 ans de Pèlerinage Européen*, exh, cat, Brussels, 1985, pp. 219-24, cat. no. 26. The reconstruction of the choir stalls was widely covered by the Galician press, see, for instance, X. R. POUSA,



Fig. 9. a. Reconstruction of the medieval choir of Santiago Cathedral by M. Chamoso Lamas and J. M. Pita Andrade (1971). b. Reconstruction of the medieval choir of Santiago Cathedral, choir stalls, by Otero Tuñez and Yzquierdo Perrín (1985). c. Reconstruction of the medieval choir of Santiago Cathedral, exterior wall precinct, by Otero Tuñez and Yzquierdo Perrín (1985)

been working intensely for the past seven years studying all the known fragments of the choir, including those discovered in the 1978 excavation in the platform over the crypt of the Portal of Glory (to which I will refer hereafter as the “Obradoiro loggia”).³⁷ However, the result of their work proved problematic in several aspects. On the one hand, it entailed the costly and wasteful carving of new granite pieces that had to be attached to the medieval fragments, adding little of value to our understanding of the original structure or to the visualization of its aesthetic qualities. On the other hand, in those details in which this proposal departed from the older one was only to make it worse and less sound from an art historical point of view for they were based on questionable assumptions unsupported by the material or documentary evidence. For instance, whereas Chamoso Lamas and Pita Andrade insightfully contemplated the existence of wooden chairs – easy to adjust to the stature of each canon, more comfortable, and replaceable – Otero and Yzquierdo imagined, with no archaeological basis and taking as a model representations of thrones in relief sculpture (where no real people seat), a continuous granite bench punctuated by structurally awkward “corbels” –in reality, capitals incoherently disposed as column bases, on which many a canon would have surely injured his knees.³⁸

“Finalizó la reconstrucción de los tres sitios del coro del Maestro Mateo que viajarán a Europalia”, *La Voz de Galicia*, September 11, 1985.

³⁷ Cfr. n. 6 above.

³⁸ Jesús Carro published an important piece of documentary evidence, which has gone largely unnoticed, suggesting the existence of wooden chairs. In the meeting of the cathedral chapter corresponding to August 8, 1605, the

Taking these shortcomings into consideration, and knowledgeable of the technical problems that had arisen during the assembling of the choir stalls at Ghent, the Santiago cathedral chapter decided not to allow the permanent installation of this reconstruction in the presbytery of the cathedral, next to the high altar, as Otero and Yzquierdo had wished. Their disconformity with the way their work had been treated increased when preparations began for the 1988 exhibition to commemorate the 800 anniversary of the setting of the lintels of the Portal of Glory, for which the organizing institutions – the regional government of Galicia and the Santiago cathedral chapter – judiciously appointed Serafin Moralejo, the most brilliant Compostelan art historian of the time, and later professor of medieval art at Harvard, as its main scientific adviser, in collaboration with Carlos Valle, who had curated the *Europalia 1985* exhibition. Feeling unjustly excluded from this project, Otero and Yzquierdo threatened the Galician government and the Santiago cathedral chapter with suing them over “intellectual property rights” if they attempted to reassemble the three choir stalls that had been exhibited at Ghent, for they consider themselves to be the “authors” of the work.³⁹

Two years later, in 1990, Otero and Yzquierdo finally published their monograph *El coro del Maestro Mateo* proposing a complete reconstruction, with drawings by Alejandro Barral, a Santiago cathedral canon who was then the director of its museum, and had given the authors unfettered access to its lapidary, where all the fragments of the choir were stored (Fig. 10).⁴⁰ The main virtue of the book, in addition to Barral’s excellent drawings, is that it gathers all known documentary sources on the choir, most of which had been previously published by López Ferreiro in his *Historia de la Santa A. M. Iglesia de Santiago de Compostela* and by Chamoso Lamas in his 1950 article. Among its flaws, however, is a critical one: it lacks the basic tool for any reconstruction to be attempted, a detailed catalogue *raisonnée* of all the surviving fragments, with measurements and photographs.

In the following years, Yzquierdo Perrín used the press to sound the alarm about the state of the choir’s fragments as a way to have his proposed reconstruction become a material reality.⁴¹ At long last, with the support of the cathedral chapter, Otero and Yzquierdo

canons decided that “the collegiate church of Padrón be given as many chairs from the old choir as they need, and the rest can go to the convent of San Francisco of this city,” see CARRO GARCÍA, “As esculturas empotradas da Porta Santa”, pp. 76-77.

³⁹ These circumstances are recounted by Otero and Yzquierdo themselves in a section of their 1990 monograph on the choir titled “Defaming and Silence” which captures the sense of entitlement they felt regarding anything related to Master Mateo’s choir, its fragments, and its reconstruction, see R. OTERO TÚÑEZ and R. YZQUIERDO PERRÍN, *El coro del Maestro Mateo*, A Coruña, 1990, pp. 24-28. One is left to wonder if Master Mateo, in spirit, or Chamoso Lamas and Pita Andrade, authors of the reconstruction on which Otero and Yzquierdo largely based theirs, would have joined in this “copyright infringement” lawsuit.

⁴⁰ Alejandro Barral was director of the Santiago cathedral museum for thirty years. His work as a historian has been posthumously published: A. BARRAL, *El Sepulcro de Santiago: Documentos-Toponimia-Arqueología*, Santiago de Compostela, 2019.

⁴¹ In a long article published in *El Correo Gallego* (“El drama del arte en Compostela. Una pieza única del románico lleva 7 años enmohecándose en un almacén”, *El Correo Gallego*, February 23, 1993), which opens with a series of alarming headlines: “The drama of art in Compostela. A unique Romanesque monument has been accumulating mold for seven years in a warehouse. Mateo’s choir, contemporary of the Portico, sleeps in the cathedral’s storeroom,” R. Yzquierdo Perrín denounced the “destruction of the choir” and recounted again how the cathedral chapter had



Fig. 10. Fragments of the medieval choir of Santiago Cathedral. Photo: Courtesy of *El Correo Gallego*

convinced the Barrié Foundation, which had published their book, into committing 80 million pesetas to undertake the reconstruction of a large section of the choir (17 stalls) so it could be presented as the star event to mark the last Santiago Holy Year of the millennium in 1999.⁴² When, on February 14, 1995 newspapers reported on the solemn signing of the agreement between the Barrié Foundation and the Archbishopric of Santiago to execute Otero and Yzquierdo's project, the news was met with skepticism among the scientific community, and with disbelief by the Department of Patrimony of the Galician government, which had not been informed despite being the authority responsible for enforcing the laws on the protection and the preservation of historic monuments, in charge of overseeing that any project affecting them was in keeping with current legislation.⁴³

The eminent art historian Joaquín Yarza expressed in the leading newspaper *El País* what others only said in private, declaring that there was “no scientific reason for the

refused to allow the installation of his reconstruction next to the high altar because of “interests and envy disguised as supposed scholarly criticism,” and how the Galician government wanted to assemble the choir stalls for the 1988 exhibition without his permission, so he had to hire a lawyer to impede it and exercise his “intellectual property rights.”

⁴² The Barrié Foundation was willing to embark on the reconstruction of the choir because it had just completed successfully the project of reproduction of the musical instruments held by the Elders of the Apocalypse in the Portal of Glory, a project that was exemplarily led by the renowned musicologists José López-Calo and Carlos Villanueva, enlisting an international team of scholars and luthiers, see J. LÓPEZ-CALO (coord.), *Los instrumentos del Pórtico de la Gloria. Su reconstrucción y la música de su tiempo*, 2 vols., A Coruña, 1993.

⁴³ See “La restauración del coro del maestro Mateo será financiada por la Fundación Barrié”, *La Voz de Galicia*, January 17, 1995.

reconstruction,” and that he preferred “the studies on paper, instead of such a wasteful expenditure when there were other more pressing needs for the conservation of cultural heritage.” In an ominous forecast of things to come, Yarza warned that, if the reconstruction were to be carried out, it could be compared to the “detestable destruction of the Roman theater of Sagunto.”⁴⁴

As for the administration, when the Department of Patrimony finally received the text of the agreement, which simply stated that Otero and Yzquierdo would be the scientific directors of the reconstruction (with no committee of experts overseeing their work) and that it was to be executed by Valentín Ramos, the stonemason who had collaborated with them in the contentious *Europalia 1985* reconstruction, the Director General of Patrimony sent a document to the two signing institutions reminding them of the requirements they needed to meet, in compliance with the legislation on patrimony, to begin the process of obtaining the administrative permissions to have their plan approved. They ought to provide a detailed historical report justifying their project, and two technical reports on its viability, one signed by an architect, and another signed by a prestigious conservator. All of them should adhere to some basic guidelines determined by law:

The proposed reconstruction entails the execution of a hypothesis of the reality of the choir of Master Mateo in his time. Therefore, the reconstruction project must document in detail each of the original pieces, describing them and arguing the hypothesis for their placement to prove their authenticity as indicated in section 39.2 of the LPHE (Law of Spanish Historical Patrimony).

Any action to be carried out must be absolutely respectful with the original pieces, avoiding possible physical aggressions (fixings, anchorages, etc.) or chemical aggressions (attacks produced by materials such as cement mortars, resins, etc.)

The criterion for intervention on these original pieces will be cleaning and consolidation of their current state, avoiding attempts to “recover” their original state, either volumetrically or in their polychromy.

A historical study and analysis of each and every one of the original pieces must be presented, with photographs and drawings of all their parts, and laboratory analyses of the characteristics of the stone, as well as the polychromies, etc.

Detailed plans (plans, elevations, sections) of the hypothesis of assembly shall be submitted, where the original pieces are distinguished and located.

A detailed and specific study of the treatment foreseen for each original piece (restoration techniques, anchorage and fixation systems, indicating how and where) will be provided.⁴⁵

Biased accounts of the Department of Patrimony’s reticent position were leaked to the press under the headlines “Patrimony wants to impede the restoration of Master Mateo’s choir.” In response, on April 4, 1995, Ángel Sicart, the Director General of Patrimony, who was also a professor of medieval art at the University of Santiago, gave an interview trying to

⁴⁴ F. SAMANIEGO, “El maestro Mateo visita la catedral compostelana. Comienza a unirse el rompecabezas de las piedras del coro montado en 1211 y demolido en 1603”, *El País*, March 12, 1995.

⁴⁵ Excerpts from the document sent by the Department of Patrimony to the Santiago cathedral chapter on February 22, 1995, signed by Ángel Sicart, Director General of Patrimony. Archivo de Galicia, Santiago de Compostela, Sig. G-79632/6.

educate the public on the issues at stake, affirming that the proposed reconstruction of the choir was based on a mere hypothesis about which there were conflicting opinions. He praised the generosity of the Barrié Foundation but said that the 80 million pesetas could be put to better use to aid the cathedral in solving other more urgent problems such as the consolidation and repair of its roofing and vaults because humidity was the gravest deteriorating factor of the whole monument. Furthermore, he concluded by saying that those funds could be used for the much-needed modernization of the cathedral museum.⁴⁶ However, once the agreement had been made public, the 80 million pesetas had been committed, and excitement about the possibility of recovering an “endangered masterpiece” had been stoked, it was too late to reverse course. The dissenting voices within the Department of Patrimony and in the scientific community were silenced, and Otero and Yzquierdo were allowed to go ahead with the project without real external scientific supervision.

In the archives of the Department of Patrimony of the Galician government, now preserved in the Arquivo de Galicia in Santiago de Compostela, there is no trace that the documentation which was required to comply with the aforementioned regulations was ever presented. There is not one report “where each and every one of the pieces is documented through drawings, color photographs, and sufficient data where the original pieces are clearly identified, explaining in detail the hypothesis of reconstruction as well as complementary systems of anchorages, fastenings, and specific treatments foreseen for the restoration of original pieces.”⁴⁷ That documentation, if it ever existed, was even withheld from the team of stonemasons who were executing Otero and Yzquierdo’s orders, as revealed by a formal petition filed by Valentín Ramos, the sculptor leading the team, through the register’s office of the Department of Patrimony on April 15, 2000 (a year after the reconstruction was publicly unveiled):

I declare that, as a person involved in the restoration and reconstruction of the stone choir of Master Mateo in the cathedral of Santiago de Compostela, and in view of the constant refusal, during the execution of the project, on the part of the artistic direction [Otero and Yzquierdo] to show me the relevant permits certifying that my work in the restoration was within the strictest legality, I request a certified copy of all the permits granted by the Department of Patrimony for the intervention in the choir and, additionally, I request information about all the reports submitted [by Otero and Yzquierdo] regarding such an intervention.⁴⁸

⁴⁶ “Cultura intenta impedir la restauración del coro pétreo del Maestro Mateo”, *La Voz de Galicia*, April 4, 1995.

⁴⁷ The only documentation that comes close to what was required by the Department of Patrimony is an architectural project for the conditioning of the space in the cathedral museum where the choir stalls were to be installed, signed by the architect Guillermo Muñoz Chesa, which was submitted to the Department of Patrimony by the Barrié Foundation on July 18, 1995. The administrative permission to carry out this project was issued by the Director General of Patrimony on December 12, 1995 (Arquivo de Galicia, Santiago de Compostela, Sig. G-69752/1). Unlike this detailed project signed by the architect, the “justifying report for the reconstruction” submitted by Otero and Yzquierdo occupies barely two folios containing just a general statement of purpose with no technical specifications.

⁴⁸ Arquivo de Galicia, Santiago de Compostela, Sig. G-83439/1. In one of his publications extolling the wonders of the reconstruction, Yzquierdo Perrín affirms that this documentation was produced: “After the selection of the pieces to be used, based on the studies by professors Otero and Yzquierdo, they were subjected to a detailed analysis in which photographic documentation played an essential role. In this way, an exceptional archive was created, consisting of thousands of images on different types of support,” see R. YZQUIERDO PERRÍN, *Reconstrucción del coro pétreo del Maestro Mateo*, A Coruña, 1999, p. 50. If it exists, this “exceptional archive” is not in the possession

One can infer from this document that Valentín Ramos wanted to have official confirmation that everything he had been asked to do by the scientific directors of the project was in conformity with current legislation and had the approval of the Department of Patrimony.⁴⁹

No wonder, because what people saw when the reconstruction was unveiled on July 25, 1999 to celebrate the “last Santiago Jubilee of the millennium” was heartbreaking (Figs. 11, 12, and 13): original pieces, with their polychromy, awkwardly affixed to granite recreations; unnecessary prostheses attached with resin to medieval figures, detracting from their aesthetic appreciation; unique fragments with full figures, which had been previously exhibited in the museum in their volumetric integrity so visitors could contemplate their beauty and learn about the process of their material making, now immured in dark angles; and important



Fig. 11. a. Reconstruction of Master Mateo's choir by Otero Tuñez and Yzquierdo Perrín (1999), section showing the botched assembling of new pieces to original fragments. b. Attachment of granite prostheses to original figures

of the Department of Patrimony of the Galician government, as it was required as part of the process to obtain the corresponding permissions to intervene in each of the original pieces. It is not located either in the other institution where it should have been deposited, that is, the cathedral of Santiago, which is the entity that owns the monument, and the place where the reconstruction was carried out. I thank the Director of the Santiago Cathedral Foundation, and the Department of Patrimony of the Galician government for their continuing efforts to try to locate this essential documentation which, as of now, remains unavailable to the scientific community.

⁴⁹ The deficient planning of the project led to multiples problems during its implementation, and it went exorbitantly overbudget. From an estimated 80 million pesetas, it ended up costing, according to the Barrié Foundation, over 250 million pesetas. In an interview given just a few months before the date set for its inauguration, Valentín Ramos lamented the unforeseen difficulties they were encountering when they began assembling the choir stalls because the pieces did not fit as they expected, see C. PINO, “Comenzó el montaje de la reconstrucción del coro de piedra del maestro Mateo”, *La Voz de Galicia*, January 24, 1999.



Fig. 12. a. Reconstruction of Master Mateo's choir by Otero Tuñez and Yzquierdo Perrín (1999), showing the affixing of granite protheses and the encasing of original pieces. b. Medieval fragment corresponding to 12a in its original state. Photo: M. Chamoso Lamas

artworks, such as the “orant queen” relegated to corners far from view, with no iconographic justification for their location other than serving as fillers (cfr. Fig. 1).⁵⁰

Even if these circumstances are well known among experts on the cathedral of Santiago, it becomes imperative to recall them here in order to shed light on the particular prism through which the new discoveries in the crypt have been analyzed and presented. Indeed, in the article where these findings were published, written by Ramón Yzquierdo Peiró, current director of the Santiago cathedral museum, under the advice of Ramón Yzquierdo Perrín, there appears to be a direct relation between an explicit agenda to vindicate Otero and Yzquierdo's work, continuously pushed throughout the text, and the author's contrived analyses of these finds, an agenda that becomes transparently stated, again, in the conclusions:

⁵⁰ In a long self-congratulatory article chronicling the reconstruction, Yzquierdo Perrín openly states that the goal was to use as many original pieces as possible, even if their arrangement did not correspond to a feasible iconographic hypothesis as to their placement in the medieval structure, declaring that “se ha preferido la transgresión de una hipotética iconografía a la no utilización de algunas de las piezas disponibles,” see R. YZQUIERDO PERRÍN, “El coro del Maestro Mateo. Historia de su reconstrucción”, in R. YZQUIERDO PERRÍN (ed.), *Los coros de catedrales y monasterios: arte y liturgia. Actas del simposio organizado por la Fundación Pedro Barrié de la Maza en A Coruña, 6-9 de septiembre de 1999*, A Coruña, 2001, pp. 107-185, esp. p. 164. In this article, Yzquierdo Perrín offers a detailed account of the manipulation of original pieces, which were subjected to all sorts of operations (allegedly respecting their integrity), like making plaster casts to serve as models for the carving of the new granite protheses. From the beginning of the project of reconstruction, “reversibility” was the catchword used to silence detractors and encourage the promoters to go ahead with it despite the warnings put forth by art historians and conservation experts. The word, however, has changed meanings overtime. As Yzquierdo Perrín explained in an interview given on the occasion of the unveiling of the reconstruction (“La reconstrucción del coro de piedra del maestro Mateo fue abierta al público”, *La Voz de Galicia*, July 25, 1999) by “reversibility” they meant that there was the possibility that, if new pieces from the choir were discovered in the future, they could be inserted into their reconstruction in substitution of the modern reproductions. Nowadays, the alleged “reversibility” of the project is used to appease



Fig. 13. a. Reconstruction of Master Mateo's choir by Otero Tuñez and Yzquierdo Perrín (1999), showing the affixing of granite protheses and the encasing of original pieces. b. Medieval fragment corresponding to 13a in its original state. Photo: M. Chamoso Lamas

In the excavation, interesting archaeological remains were recovered, among them numerous pieces from the choir of Master Mateo that complete the set of remains found at other times and that confirm the structure proposed by professors Otero and Yzquierdo in the reconstruction published in 1990, which allowed the recovery of this work, until then forgotten, and which was an important part of the museography of Master Mateo's work in the Compostelan cathedral.

Finally, the excavation also allowed the recovery of a series of reliefs, accompanied by other scattered fragments, in which the Massacre of the Innocents is represented following the models of Gothic art in the Iberian Peninsula.⁵¹

Only by forcing the second conclusion, that is, the chronological and stylistic displacement of the reliefs of the Massacre of the Innocents to "the Gothic," disconnecting them from the choir, can one attempt to sustain the first. In fact, contrary to what that author concludes, the new findings do not confirm Otero and Yzquierdo's hypothesis for the reconstruction of the choir (nor was the choir "forgotten" before they took over its study for over two decades) but, rather, they serve to signal significant deficiencies in their analysis of its structure and iconography. Furthermore, these new discoveries highlight just how unfortunate it is that, instead of having all the surviving fragments at the disposal of the scientific community to be

critics from expressing outrage over the visible flaws of the reconstruction, and the questions it raises regarding the integrity of the medieval fragments. Conservation experts consulted for this paper dispute the alleged "reversibility" of the reconstruction.

⁵¹ YZQUIERDO PEIRÓ, "Descubriendo la catedral", p. 422.

properly catalogued, digitized and studied, we are relegated to see them encased in a modern historicist recreation.

To be sure, in addition to the Massacre of the Innocents, Yzquierdo Peiró also mischaracterizes the architectural fragments recovered in the crypt, concluding that they confirm Otero and Yzquierdo's hypothesis, when they do exactly the opposite. This is the case of two portions of arcades which, according to this author, formed part of the arcade Otero and Yzquierdo imagined for the exterior walls of the choir (Figs. 9c and 14a, 14b). However, it is evident that those two fragments do not belong to the same arcade for they differ in their measurements, most notably in the span of their arches. Consequently, what they really show is that there were other arcaded structures in the choir not contemplated by Otero and Yzquierdo, some of which might have even served as frames for figural reliefs such as the slabs with the Massacre of the Innocents.

Another example of the author's questionable interpretations is provided by the two large voussoirs discovered in the same area of the crypt as the reliefs of the Massacre of the Innocents (Fig. 14c). Trying to disconnect them from the choir, presumably because they do not fit in any structure foreseen by Otero and Yzquierdo, he speculates that they are later works coming from the dismantled medieval cloister, using the same feeble stylistic arguments as for the Massacre reliefs. However, their decoration, with acanthus leaves featuring pearled stems, is identical, in design and carving technique, to other fragments from the choir discovered in the crypt during this campaign, and, moreover, they find close parallels in the Portal of Glory, in the large acanthus leaves covering the archivolts of the north archway (Figs. 14d and 14e). In fact, viewed in their correct chronological context, these voussoirs give us relevant new information about the choir because they serve to confirm that another voussoir, ornamented



Fig. 14. a. Section of an arcade from the medieval choir of Santiago Cathedral (height: 46cm, width: 109cm, span of the arch: 59cm). Santiago Cathedral Museum. b. Section of an arcade from the medieval choir of Santiago Cathedral (height: 49cm, width: 89cm, span of the arch: 65cm). Santiago Cathedral Museum. c. One of the two voussoirs unearthed in the recent excavations in the crypt. Santiago Cathedral Museum. d. Detail of Fig. 14c. e. Detail of Fig. 7e

with two angels holding a sun and a moon, which was found during the 1978 excavations in the Obradoiro loggia, in the midst of numerous fragments from the choir, also belonged to the choir as part of a structure not included in Otero and Yzquierdo's reconstruction (Figs. 15b and 15d). It is curious to note that what Yzquierdo Peiró does with these recently discovered voussoirs is exactly what Yzquierdo Perrín did with the voussoir of the two angels. Disregarding its archaeological context, he disconnected it from the choir, with no argument to do so, and included it in his reconstruction of the façade of the Portal of Glory as belonging to its central arch, a placement which is structurally impossible considering its format and dimensions.⁵²

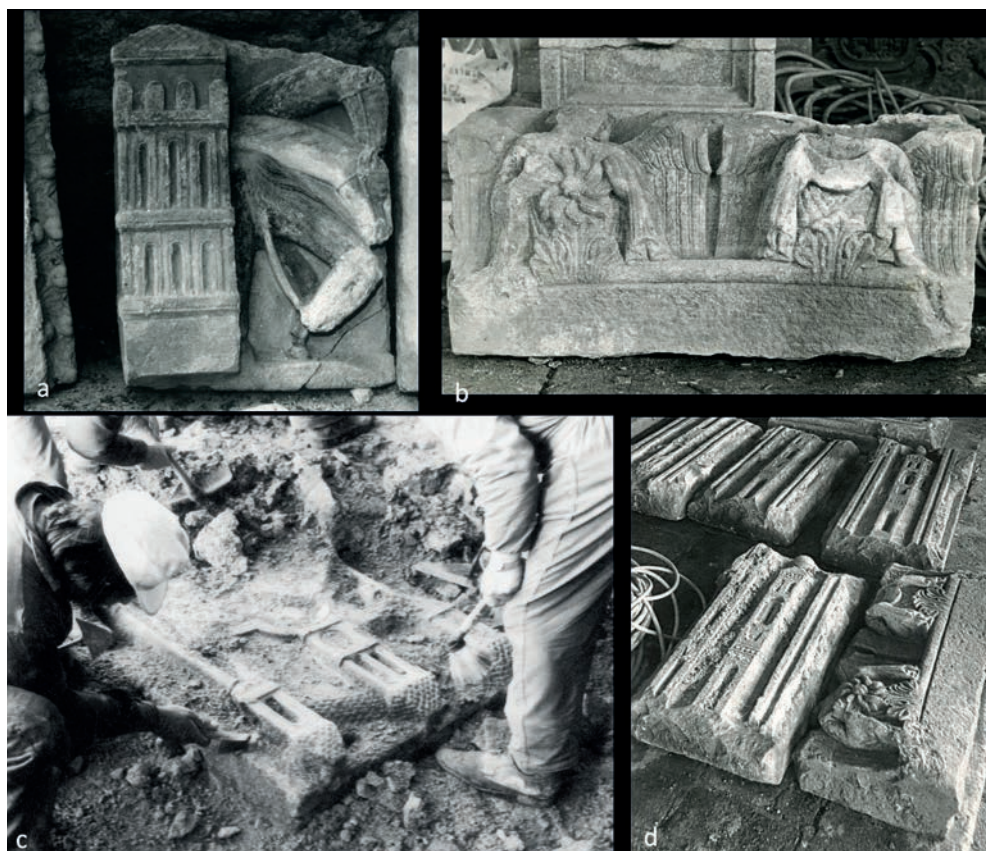


Fig. 15. Fragments from the medieval choir of Santiago Cathedral, unearthed in 1978. Photos: Courtesy of *El Correo Gallego*. a. Relief with the horses of the Magi. b. Voussoir with angels holding a sun and a moon. c. Unearthing of the canopy of a choir stall. d. Fragments from the choir including the voussoir in Fig. 15b

⁵² For the incorrect assignment of the voussoir with the two angels to the central arch of the façade of the Portal of Glory, see R. YZQUIERDO PERRÍN, “La fachada exterior del Pórtico de la Gloria: Nuevos hallazgos y reflexiones”, *Abr-ente*, 19-20 (1987-8), pp. 7-42, esp. p. 13, lam. V, fig. 2. In a recent article on the façade, mostly a summary of Yzquierdo Perrín's and Otero Tuñez's previous treatment of the question, Yzquierdo Peiró also includes this voussoir in the central arch, see R. YZQUIERDO PEIRÓ, “Recuperando la fachada occidental de la catedral: Investigación,

Once we have undertaken the necessary task of conducting a critical examination of the historiography, we may begin to delve into the exceptional significance of these discoveries to achieve a novel vision of this essential work in the corpus of medieval art. As we will see in the following section, a key piece of the puzzle to get insight into the placement of the reliefs of the Massacre of the Innocents is provided by another work discovered during the 1978 intervention in the Obradoiro staircase, a relief with three horses (Fig. 15a). This fragment also puzzled art historians at the time of its discovery because it was “not easy to fit into the reconstructions that have been undertaken so far of master Mateo’s choir.”⁵³

SINGING BOYS AND DREAMING KINGS: TOWARDS A NEW VISION OF MASTER MATEO’S CHOIR

And having been warned in a dream not to go back to Herod, they returned to their country by another route.

Matthew 2:12

conservación, hallazgos, enigmas e interrogantes”, in A. LABORDE (coord.), *La restauración del Pórtico de la Gloria. Catedral de Santiago de Compostela: Documentación, estudios y conservación*, Madrid, 2021, pp. 269-289, esp. p. 279. For a complete reconstruction of the façade, based on a new architectural planimetry resulting from the data obtained during the recent conservation campaign directed by the cathedral’s architect Javier Alonso, and on technical analyses of the surviving fragments, which made possible the restitution of all the extant sculptures to their original locations in the scenography of the narthex, see F. PRADO-VILAR, “The Façade of the Portal of Glory: Revelation of a Recovered Masterpiece”, in PRADO-VILAR (ed.), *The Portal of Glory: Architecture, Matter, and Vision*, pp. 49-133. Yzquierdo Peiró, in the aforementioned article on the discoveries of the crypt (“Descubriendo la catedral”, pp. 382-388), also tries to reopen two old historiographic questions regarding the cathedral’s west façade that had been treated by Yzquierdo Perrín in the past, without garnering much support for his conclusions. One of them is the issue of the existence of a structure pre-dating Master Mateo’s intervention in the cathedral’s west end, something that Yzquierdo Peiró denies affirming that the data gathered in the crypt shows that it is wholly a Matean construction. As background to frame this question, he cites a long list of outdated bibliographic references while failing to discuss recent studies that contradict his conclusion. Among them are the structural and technical analyses of the fabric of the west front by A. Münchmeyer, R. de la Torre, and B. Sperandio who all concur, unequivocally, that Master Mateo did not build a west front *ex novo* but, rather, transformed a pre-existing structure, and executed a project which, in turn, underwent several revisions during the long period of its implementation, see A. MÜNCHMEYER, “The Western Part of the Cathedral of Santiago de Compostela: An Approach towards the Building and the History of its Construction”; B. SPERANDIO, “The Construction of the Portal of Glory”; and R. DE LA TORRE, “The Creation of the Portal of Glory: An Examination of its Construction and Building Techniques”, in PRADO-VILAR (ed.), *The Portal of Glory: Architecture, Matter, and Vision*, pp. 157-261. Another question Yzquierdo Peiró raises is whether it existed a medieval staircase to access the Portal of Glory from the square, something that Yzquierdo Perrín had put into question until J. A. Puente Míguez settled the issue basing his arguments on the observations conducted on the vaults of the crypt during the excavations in the Obradoiro loggia in 1978, demonstrating that there were indeed traces of a staircase, see J. A. PUENTE MÍGUEZ, “La fachada exterior del Pórtico de la Gloria y el problema de sus accesos”, in *Actas simposio internacional sobre O Pórtico da Gloria*, pp. 117-142. Contrary to what Yzquierdo Peiró says (“Descubriendo la catedral”, pp. 389-392), the data gathered during the recent intervention in the crypt does not open the possibility of reviving Yzquierdo Perrín’s long discarded theory, but, rather, supports the feasibility of Puente Míguez’s reconstruction.

⁵³ See “Más de cincuenta piezas, la mayoría del coro del maestro Mateo, recuperadas en la escalinata del Obradoiro”, *La Voz de Galicia*, February 11, 1978. The article reports that the relief with the three horses was found on February 8, 1978 “convirtiéndose en una de las piezas más importantes que, sin embargo, no es fácil acoplar en las reconstrucciones que hasta ahora se habían aventurado del coro de Mateo. El mismo día fueron recuperadas otras diez piezas entre las que figuraban doseles, arcos de medio punto (algunos con sus capiteles), y frisos”.

On March 18, 1340, the notorious Galician nobleman Pedro Fernández de Castro “el de la Guerra” gave an endowment to the cathedral of Santiago to found a funerary chapel for him and his family which should be located near the choir “so o leedoyro, da parte u están os tres Reyes magos,” that is, “under the *legitorium*, in the area where the three Magi are situated.”⁵⁴ We know from several written sources that this *legitorium* was a raised tribune occupying the fourth bay of the nave, west of the crossing, capacious enough to have its own altars and to hold occasional meetings of the cathedral chapter.⁵⁵ However, Pedro Fernandez de Castro’s testament is the only reference we have informing about the possible iconographic program decorating its façade. Considering that there is a proliferation of medieval tympana representing the Epiphany in the cathedral of Santiago, and in other churches of the city, Otero and Yzquierdo proposed that the reference in that document to the place in the *legitorium* “where the three Magi are situated” might refer to a tympanum decorating its central doorway. According to these scholars, the other extant tympana would be later derivations from this lost Matean prototype. Following this line of argumentation, Otero and Yzquierdo proceeded to associate the relief with the three horses discovered in the 1978 excavations to this lost Epiphany tympanum, interpreting them as a representation of the horses that the Magi dismounted to approach the site of the Adoration on foot. Thus, in their reconstruction, they situated the relief to the left of the Epiphany tympanum and completed their proposed iconographic program for the choir’s façade with an Annunciation, located to the right:

The relief of the horses of the Magi, which must have occupied a preferent position on the door of the choir’s façade, calls for the existence of another relief balancing the composition [on the other side of the tympanum], both from the point of view of the iconography and for the sake of symmetry...the Annunciation.⁵⁶

The problem with this reconstruction arises when we consider an additional piece of information offered by another document related to Pedro Fernández de Castro’s funerary chapel, stating that it was located “so o leedoyro hu dizen a pistola” that is “under the *legitorium*

⁵⁴ A. LÓPEZ FERREIRO, *Historia de la Santa A. M. Iglesia de Santiago de Compostela*, vol. VI, Santiago de Compostela, 1903, p. 117 n. 1, and Appendix XX (for a transcription of the document).

⁵⁵ For the documentation informing us about the choir’s structure and, specifically, about the *legitorium* and its façade, see CHAMOSO LAMAS, “El coro”, esp. pp. 204-208; and, more recently, CARRERO SANTAMARÍA, “Arzobispos y obras en Santiago de Compostela”, pp. 188-190. For a discussion of the typology of the Santiago choir in comparison with Spanish and European examples, see J. E. A. KROESEN, *Staging the Liturgy: The Medieval Altarpiece in the Iberian Peninsula*, Leuven, 2009, pp. 189-194. The bibliography on the function, typologies, and terminology of choir screens in different countries is vast, see, for a recent survey, the essays in S. BUCKLOW, R. MARKS and L. WRAPSON (eds.), *The Art and Science of the Church Screen in Medieval Europe. Making, Meaning, Preserving*, Suffolk, 2017; and, with a focus on Spanish examples, E. CARRERO SANTAMARÍA, “Centro y periferia en la ordenación de espacios litúrgicos: Las estructuras corales”, *Hortus Artium Medievalium*, 14 (2008), pp. 159-178.

⁵⁶ YZQUIERDO PERRÍN, *Reconstrucción del coro pétreo*, p. 28; and OTERO and YZQUIERDO, *El Coro*, pp. 94-95. The fact that both Yzquierdo Perrín and Yzquierdo Peiró do not question the adscription of the relief of the three horses to Master Mateo’s choir, despite the fact that it is hardly “Matean” in style if we compare it to the sculptural ensemble of the Portal of Glory, reveals the inconsistencies in their stylistic arguments to displace chronologically the reliefs of the Massacre of the Innocents. In fact, the relief of the horses not only shares with those of the Massacre the same carving style and the color range discernible in the traces of their polychromy but also the height of the plaque (93 cm) leaving little doubt that they formed part of the same sequence.

where they read the Epistle [south side].”⁵⁷ Therefore, the presence of “os tres Reyes magos” in the area of the funerary chapel, which, as this second document suggests, was in the southern section of the *legitorium*, cannot correspond to an Epiphany tympanum, necessarily located over the central doorway. This apparent contradiction was recently solved by Rocío Sánchez Ameijeiras who brilliantly argued that the relief of the three horses did not belong to an Epiphany but, rather, to a representation of the episode of the Dream of the Magi, finding a direct iconographic and compositional parallel in another famous sculptural fragment from a dismantled choir, the *jubé* of Chartres Cathedral (Fig. 16a).⁵⁸ This would be a suitable theme to serve as a backdrop for Pedro Fernandez de Castro’s tomb because, in reflecting the Christian conception of death as a transitional dream to eternal life, it would establish an evocative link with another funerary chapel within the cathedral, the Royal Pantheon, where kings also slept, like the Magi, awaiting to be awoken to eternal life. There, the funerary effigies of the two monarchs who sponsored the enterprises directed by Master Mateo, Fernando II and Alfonso IX (VIII in the regnal number of the Kingdom of Galicia), appear asleep as if waiting to be woken up by the trumpets of the angels of the resurrection who will come to announce the end of time.⁵⁹

If the presence of a representation of the Dream of the Magi on the south side of the choir’s façade suggested that it might be part of a cycle of the Infancy of Christ, the discovery of the reliefs of the Massacre of the Innocents confirms this hypothesis indicating that the balustrade of the Santiago *legitorium* could have been ornamented with a succession of narrative scenes beginning on its north side and advancing, in the direction of reading, from left to right, as in the Chartres *jubé*, of which Santiago now emerges as a precedent.⁶⁰ As more fragments from these two dismantled cathedral choirs come to light, we may begin to retrieve

⁵⁷ For a transcription of this document, see LÓPEZ FERREIRO, *Historia de la Santa A. M. Iglesia de Santiago de Compostela*, vol. VI, Appendix XXV, pp. 113-122, esp. p. 120.

⁵⁸ R. SÁNCHEZ AMEJEIRAS, “The Dormant Kings: Aesthetics, Politics, and the Royal Tombs at Santiago de Compostela”, in P. COCKERHAM and C. STEER (eds.), *Tomb Monuments in Medieval Europe*, Donington, Shaun Tyas (forthcoming). For the Chartres *jubé*, see the excellent discussion in J. E. JUNG, *The Gothic Screen: Space, Sculpture, and Community in the Cathedrals of France and Germany, ca. 1200-1400*, Cambridge and New York, 2012, pp. 180-183; and J. MALLION, *Le Jubé de la Cathédrale de Chartres*, Chartres, 1964, pp. 135-137.

⁵⁹ The seminal study on the Santiago Royal Pantheon is S. MORALEJO ÁLVAREZ, ¿Raimundo de Borgoña († 1107) o Fernando Alfonso († 1214)? Un episodio olvidado en la historia del panteón compostelano”, in *Galicia en la Edad Media, Actas del Coloquio de Santiago de Compostela 1987*, Madrid, 1990, pp. 161-178. Also see, more recently, SÁNCHEZ AMEJEIRAS, “The Dormant Kings;” and her forthcoming book *Conversaciones en la catedral: estética, política y conmemoración regia en la Europa pre-moderna*, Salamanca (forthcoming); and, with a different proposal as to its location: G. BOTO, “Aposentos de la memoria dinástica. Mudanza y estabilidad en los panteones regios leoneses (1157-1230)”, *Anuario De Estudios Medievales*, 42-2 (2012), pp. 535-565; and IDEM, “Panthéons royaux des cathédrales de Saint-Jacques-de-Compostelle et de Palma de Majorque. À la recherche d’un espace funéraire qui n’a jamais été utilisé”, in A. BAUD (ed.), *Espace ecclésial et liturgie au Moyen Age, actes du colloque international réuni en novembre 2006*, Lyon, 2010, pp. 275-310.

⁶⁰ Another particularly relevant comparative example for the Santiago choir façade, for being strictly contemporary with Master Mateo’s project, is the choir screen (*pontile*) of the abbey church at Vezzolano, also decorated with a polychrome sculptural frieze. For this and other Italian examples, see D. COOPER, “Recovering the lost rood screens of medieval Renaissance Italy”, in BUCKLOW, R. MARKS and WRAPSON (eds.), *The Art and Science of the Church Screen in Medieval Europe*, pp. 220-245, esp. pp. 227-235.



Fig. 16. a. Relief of the Dream of the Magi, from the *jubé* of Chartres Cathedral, ca. 1230. b. Head of Herod, from the *jubé* of Chartres Cathedral, ca. 1230. c. Dream of the Magi, from the portal of the church of Santo Domingo de Soria. d. Relief with the three horses of the Magi, from the medieval choir of Santiago Cathedral (height: 93cm, width: 63cm). e. Head of Herod, from the medieval choir of Santiago Cathedral

the experience of pilgrims traveling between Chartres and Santiago in the first decades of the thirteenth century, observing with delight the echoes and play of resemblances between them, here the Dream of the Magi, there Herod's temperamental countenance (Fig. 16 b and 16e).⁶¹

Considering the width of the central nave, the topography of the choir's façade, and the probable distribution of narrative scenes, it is feasible to assume that the center of the Santiago Infancy cycle would have been occupied by an Epiphany located over the doorway giving access to the choir, which sources tell us, was quite monumental and an important stage in solemn liturgical processions in the cathedral. A relevant testimony of the use of this "via sacra"

⁶¹ For the Chartres Herod, see C. LITTLE (ed.), *Set in Stone: The Face in Medieval Sculpture*, New York, 2006, pp. 90-92, no. 33; and IDEM, "Joseph at Chartres: Sculpture Lost and Found", in K. NOLAN and D. SANDRON (eds.), *Arts of the Medieval Cathedrals: Studies on Architecture, Stained Glass and Sculpture in Honor of Anne Prache*, London, 2015, pp. 179-196.

passing through the choir is provided by the 1472 “Regulations of choir and altar” which stipulate that a “mass be sung to Santiago in the chapel of the Savior [easternmost chapel of the ambulatory] and from there they should walk in a procession towards the door of the choir, which is opposite the Obradoiro [cathedral’s west façade], to then enter the choir continuing towards the altar of Santiago.”⁶² It is unlikely that this Epiphany would have been completely destroyed after the dismantling of the choir in 1604, in view of the standard practice of reusing its principal sculptures to decorate other parts of the cathedral. As I have argued elsewhere, that Epiphany might, in fact, be the one that is now encased in the façade of the Corticela chapel – once an independent little parish church which underwent several re-buildings over the centuries and was finally connected to the east side of the cathedral’s north transept through a passageway (Fig. 17b).⁶³ Certainly, this is an exceptional piece of clear Matean stylistic affiliation whose compositional particularities might offer clues as to its original location in the choir’s façade, facing the narthex of the Portal of Glory. While two of the Magi are displaced to a marginal position on the archivolt, the central space of the tympanum is reserved for the dramatization of a *tableau vivant* in which a single king, dressed in the manner of a contemporary monarch, kneels as he removes his crown in a gesture of submission before the enthroned Virgin and Child. Significantly, the king makes a steep turn towards the exterior, lifting his gaze to look up towards a place that, from his original position, would correspond to the massive oculus of the tribune of the Portal of Glory. Activated by the light streaming through it, this oculus becomes a multivalent screen endowed with the capacity of transfiguring itself into the vision of an apocalyptic sun, in the context of the eschatological program of the Portal of Glory, and also, when viewed in relation to the choir, as a representation of the star that guided the Magi and signaled the place of the Epiphany.⁶⁴ Indeed, in the horizontal connection between the oculus and the Epiphany, Master Mateo created a compelling architectural stage for the performative instantiation of the biblical text:

⁶² CHAMOSO LAMAS, “El coro”, p. 206; and A. LÓPEZ FERREIRO, *Historia de la Santa A. M. Iglesia de Santiago de Compostela*, vol. VII, Santiago de Compostela, 1903, p. 117 n. 1, and Appendix XXXVIII (for a transcription of the document).

⁶³ The installation of the Epiphany tympanum in the façade of the Corticela chapel would constitute another instance of reuse of parts of the choir soon after its dismantling to enhance important entrances, as it happened with the redecoration of the *Puerta Santa* with the addition of 12 figures of prophets (completed later with an additional 12) from the choir (see above n. 8). The cathedral chapter probably considered the Corticela chapel the perfect place to relocate the beautiful Epiphany from the choir because it was dedicated to the Virgin, and was an important chapel functioning as the parish church for foreigners (many foreign artists working in Santiago got married and baptized their children there). In the cathedral archive there is no specific record documenting any of these two relocations of pieces from the choir, something that is not surprising since they were punctual works carried out within the larger comprehensive project of renovation undertaken at that time in the area where both the Corticela chapel and the *Puerta Santa* are located. In fact, it could be possible that the master mason who, according to Jesús Carro, could have been responsible for the redecoration of the *Puerta Santa* with pieces from the choir, Francisco Fernández Araujo, could have also worked in the Corticela entrance, see CARRO GARCÍA, “As esculturas empotradas da Porta Santa”. Another candidate to have done this work is Juan de París, a master mason from France, and parishioner of the Corticela chapel, who is documented working in its fabric in the 1610s, for which he received considerable payments, see P. PÉREZ COSTANTI, *Diccionario de artistas que florecieron en Galicia durante los siglos XVI y XVII*, Santiago, 1930, pp. 420-421.

⁶⁴ See F. PRADO-VILAR, “Cuando brilla la luz del Quinto Día: El Pórtico de la Gloria y la visión de Mateo en el espejo de la historia”, *Románico*, 15 (2012), pp. 8-19; and IDEM, “*Aula Siderea*: Architecture, Transfiguration, and Eschatology in the Cathedral of Santiago”, in PRADO-VILAR (ed.), *The Portal of Glory: Architecture, Matter, and Vision*, pp.



Fig. 17. a. Scheme showing the connection between the oculus in the tribune of the Portal of Glory and the choir's façade. b. Epiphany tympanum from the Corticela chapel of Santiago Cathedral. c. Digital reconstruction of the medieval choir of Santiago Cathedral by Anxo Miján

After they had heard the king [Herod], they went on their way, and the star they had seen when it rose went ahead of them until it stopped over the place where the child was. When they saw the star, they were overjoyed. On coming to the house, they saw the child with his mother Mary, and they bowed down and worshiped him. Then they opened their treasures and presented him with gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh (Mat. 2: 9-11).

31-47, esp. pp. 41-45. For the role of the choir's Epiphany tympanum within Master Mateo's transformation of the cathedral into an aulic stage for ceremonies exalting the union between *regnum* and *sacerdotium*, such as coronations and investitures of knights, see PRADO-VILAR, "The Façade of the Portal of Glory," pp. 123-133.

Continuing the narrative sequence of the Infancy of Christ cycle, we would see, after the Epiphany tympanum, the episode of the Dream of the Magi, located to its right, of which we only preserve the plaque with three horses, followed by the Massacre of the Innocents whose composition, as I reconstruct it in this article, emphasizes precisely that directionality of visual reading from left to right as if we were seeing a succession of frames on a film strip whose scenes are arranged in an emotional and dramatic crescendo (cfr. Fig. 2). We may presume that the cycle would have concluded with the scene of the Flight into Egypt situated in the extreme south of the balustrade of the *legitorium*.

When we restore the Massacre of the Innocents to its original place on the choir's façade we can achieve a new vision of the brilliant scenography designed by Master Mateo for the different spaces of the cathedral, adapting their sculptural ornamentation to the temple's liturgical topography, and tracing paths of visual connection between them so that the faithful, in their movements, could intuitively apprehend the theological relation among biblical episodes. Such is the connection established, along the longitudinal axis of the cathedral's south aisle, between the Massacre represented in the choir and the Last Judgment depicted in the south archway of the Portal of Glory, where angels carry the elect to heaven – depicted, as we have seen, as “innocent children” following the same figural models as the Innocents in the Massacre. Certainly, the story of the Massacre of the Innocents was frequently invoked by preachers and commentators who considered them to be the first Christian martyrs whose pure souls gained glory despite not having been baptized, and who, therefore, constituted prefigurations of the souls of the martyrs mentioned in the Book of Revelation at the opening of the fifth seal:

When he opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of those who had been slain because of the word of God and the testimony they had maintained. They called out in a loud voice, “How long, Sovereign Lord, holy and true, until you judge the inhabitants of the earth and avenge our blood?” Then each of them was given a white robe, and they were told to wait a little longer, until the full number of their fellow servants, their brothers and sisters, were killed just as they had been (Rev. 6: 9-11).

In a now classic study, Serafin Moralejo pointed to liturgical theater, particularly the *Ordo Prophetarum* (procession of the prophets), as a source of inspiration for the sculptural ensemble of the Portal of Glory, underscoring the theatrical dimension of Master Mateo's architectural project.⁶⁵ If visitors to the Portal of Glory observed biblical characters who appeared to have the vivacity and immediacy of actors in a liturgical play that seemed to be unfolding around them at the very moment of their contemplation, so, too, in the choir – which is, by its very nature and function, the primordial performative stage within the church – they would see the petrified effigies of the singing boys who intone the chants during the Divine Office, and also, of the characters they would have occasionally played in liturgical dramas (Figs. 3h, 3i, 3j, and Figs. 9, 10, 11, 12).⁶⁶ Certainly, choirboys were the protagonists of another popular

⁶⁵ S. MORALEJO ÁLVAREZ, “A Sermon in Stone: The Sculptures of the Cathedral of Santiago de Compostela”, *FMR*, 61 (1993), pp. 83-103.

⁶⁶ For the liturgical texts preserved in the archive of Santiago Cathedral, see P. ROMANO ROCHA, “La liturgia de Compos-tela a fines del siglo XII”, in *Actas simposio internacional sobre O Pórtico da Gloria*, pp. 397-410. For the documents

play that, alongside the *Ordo Prophetarum* and the play of the Epiphany, was performed as part of the Christmas cycle (*Officium Stellae*): the *Interfectio puerorum*, or play of the Innocents.⁶⁷ Among the numerous twelfth-century compilations containing versions of this liturgical drama, the *Fleury Playbook* (Orléans, Bibliothèque Municipale MS. 201) is especially informative because, as Susan Boynton has discussed, it gives instructions for the choirboys to play the innocents: “for the killing of the children, the innocents [both referring to the choirboys and the characters they play] should wear white robes, and [processing] rejoicing through the church, let them pray to God saying ‘O how glorious is the kingdom’.” Once they have been slaughtered: “as the children remain prostrate, an angel from on high says, as if admonishing them: ‘You who are in the dust, rise up and cry out.’ The children prostrate [sing]: ‘Why, our Lord, do you not defend our blood?’”⁶⁸ This responsory, intoned by the choirboys, is a direct quotation from Revelation 6: 9-11 making explicit in the play the eschatological dimension of the Massacre of the Innocents. Boynton concludes by saying that:

The Fleury *Interfectio puerorum* makes a richly symbolic use of boy singers, building on the commentary traditions associated with the scriptural account of the Massacre and with the feast of the innocents to create visual, musical, and liturgical connections between the boys of an ecclesiastical choir and the New Testament child martyrs.⁶⁹

This was an essential moment in the play which sums up a long exegetical tradition expounding on this episode’s Christological, eschatological, and baptismal implications, as is recalled by authors such as Thomas Aquinas:

And while he [Herod] thus persecutes Christ, he furnished an army (of martyrs) clothed in white robes of the same age as the Lord. ... O blessed infants! He only will doubt of your crown in this your passion for Christ, who doubts that the baptism of Christ has a benefit for infants.⁷⁰

This network of exegetical associations is evoked in Master Mateo’s stenographic design. In fact, we preserve a considerable number of figures representing choirboys which have come down to us from the dismantled choir, and several of them present the particularity of being barefoot, nude and just partially covered with robes, suggesting that they may represent the martyrs (or the choirboys in their role as martyrs) performing this momentous part of the

related to the role of choirboys in Santiago, contained in the Statutes issued during the time of Archbishop Juan Arias (1232–1266), and their participation in liturgical Easter plays, such as the *Visitatio Sepulchri*, see E. LOIC, “Liturgical Activation of the Stone Choir”, pp. 133-135.

⁶⁷ For the plays of the Christmas cycle, including the “Coming of the Magi,” the “Massacre of the Innocents,” and the *Ordo Prophetarum*, see K. YOUNG, *The Drama of the Medieval Church*, vol. II, Oxford, 1933, pp. 29-171.

⁶⁸ S. BOYNTON, “Boy Singers in Medieval Monasteries and Cathedrals”, in E. RICE, and S. BOYNTON (eds.), *Young Choristers, 650–1700*, Woodbridge, U.K., 2008, pp. 37-48, esp. p. 47; IDEM, “Performative Exegesis in the Fleury *Interfectio puerorum*”, *Viator*, 29 (1998), pp. 39-64 (for the full transcript of the Fleury play); and IDEM, “From the Lament of Rachel to the Lament of Mary: A Transformation in the History of Drama and Spirituality”, in N. HOLGER PETERSEN, C. CLÜVER and N. BELL (eds.), *Signs of Change: Transformations of Christian Traditions and Their Representation in the Arts, 1000-2000*, Amsterdam, 2004, pp. 319-340.

⁶⁹ BOYNTON, “Boy Singers”, p. 47.

⁷⁰ Cited in T. TINKLE, “Exegesis Reconsidered: The Fleury ‘Slaughter of Innocents’ and the Myth of Ritual Murder”, *The Journal of English and Germanic Philology*, 102-2 (2003), pp. 211-243, esp. pp. 218-219.

play when they enact the resurrection of the saints intoning the aforementioned responsory from Revelation 6: 9-11 (Fig. 3j).⁷¹ In Yzquierdo and Otero's reconstruction, these group of figures representing barefoot boys in robes are placed flanking each of the stalls' canopies, interspersed with the other, fully dressed, figures of choirboys (cfr. Fig. 9b).⁷² However, they may have been originally located elsewhere in the choir's façade near the reliefs of the Massacre, providing, with their presence, the exegetical gloss for the biblical episode. Thus, in Master Mateo's expanded theater, we observe the same "pueri" petrified in different roles: as choirboys perched over the stalls, and as "innocents" in the Massacre on the choir's façade, who, in turn, reflect the martyrs raised up and conducted by angels to heaven in the Portal of Glory (Figs. 3h, 3i, and 3j).⁷³

Singing their liturgical chants in the enthralling scenario of the stone choir, the Compostelan choirboys could have delighted in the spectacle of seeing themselves transcribed in granite, and in hearing the reverberations of their voices transformed into images rendered eternal by art. Within the cathedral, the choir was a multi-temporal space encompassing the past, the present, and the future: it was an archive housing the codices containing scripture and music; it was an immersive theater to produce a plethora of contingent sensations in the present tense of the daily performances when, as it happened in the Portal of Glory, the boundaries between life and art were blurred; and it was a recording machine where those ephemeral performances were captured in stone and projected *sub specie aeternitatis*.

This new vision of Master Mateo's choir that emerges from the recent archaeological discoveries also allows us to begin to trace the impact of this enchanted artistic environment, which surely captured the attention of visitors to the cathedral of Santiago over the centuries, on later monuments. In addition to the connections with the Chartres *jubé* outlined above, we may compare it with the oldest choir screen preserved still *in situ* in the Iberian peninsula, one that might have found its inspiration in the Santiago model: the stone choir screen of Toledo Cathedral, built under the patronage of Archbishop Pedro Tenorio (r. 1377-99) just at a moment when, as it had happened in Santiago, he was trying to transform his cathedral

⁷¹ Notably, these figures resemble the representations of the martyrs of Revelation 6:9-11 in contemporary manuscripts of the Commentary on the Apocalypse by Beatus of Liébana, such as the Cardeña Beatus (Metropolitan Museum of Art, accession number: 1991.232.6 <https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/466201>). For the stylistic connections between the Cardeña Beatus and Master Mateo's art, see W. D. WIXOM, and M. LAWSON, "Picturing the Apocalypse: Illustrated Leaves from a Medieval Spanish Manuscript", *Bulletin of the Metropolitan Museum of Art*, 59-3 (2002), pp. 1-56.

⁷² For an advance of my research on the iconography of the figures of the "dressed" choirboys in the Compostelan choir, who are represented performing a variety of gestures that correspond to the musical system of solmization known as the "Guidonian hand," used for the teaching and performance of chant in twelfth-century cathedral schools, see F. PRADO-VILAR, "Ángeles en Compostela: La melodía figurada de los niños del coro del maestro Mateo", *Románico Digital* (August 15, 2022 <https://www.romanicodigital.com/actualidad/noticias/angeles-compostela-melodia-figurada-ninos-coro-maestro-mateo>).

⁷³ It is likely that, as it is documented for other cathedrals, the Compostelan choirboys would have moved to different locations within the choir on the occasion of specific liturgical celebrations, even performing from the *legitorium* where they would occupy the same elevated space as their granite surrogates in their various allegorical transfigurations, both the ones inside the choir, and those carved on its façade. For the choirboys at Notre-Dame Cathedral and their performances from the *jubé*, see C. WRIGHT, *Music and ceremony at Notre Dame of Paris, 500-1550*, Cambridge, 1989, pp. 165-192.

into the coronation church of the Kingdom of Castile.⁷⁴ Scholars have noted the structural and topographical connections between the Compostela and the Toledo choirs, in that they were both located in the same area of the nave, west of the crossing, and featured a façade with a tribune, a central doorway and side altars. The Toledo choir screen is decorated with a sequence of narrative reliefs framed by microarchitectures, which might be a Gothic update on the decorative arrangement of the Santiago *legitorium*.

Let us conclude with the words of the scholar to whose indefatigable labor we owe the discovery and preservation of many vital fragments of the Compostelan choir. In a letter sent to a government official on August 4, 1964, with the intention of raising funds for the renovation of the cathedral museum, Chamoso Lamas expressed his excitement at the value of the pieces he had just unearthed, an enthusiasm akin to the one we are privileged to experience today in view of the new discoveries, and the possibilities they offer to open a new phase in the recovery of one of our most important monuments:

We have discovered sculpted pieces that I have already been able to identify as belonging to the Portal of Glory, and that provide a new and surprising knowledge of the artistic affiliation of the art of Master Mateo [...] Believe me, Providence is more than compensating us for what we do for Compostela. Any of the pieces I have just unearthed would be a blank check from any important museum in the world. Today a sculpture by Master Mateo would fetch the same price as a painting by Velázquez, perhaps it would even be more interesting, and, in these three months, we have unearthed several pieces by his workshop.⁷⁵

To Manuel Chamoso Lamas

⁷⁴ For the Toledo choir in relation to Santiago, see A. FRANCO MATA, “El Coro de la catedral de Toledo”, *Abrente*, 42-43 (2010-2011), pp. 113-165; and, for the iconography of the choir screen, see T. NICKSON, “Reframing the Bible Genesis and Exodus on Toledo Cathedral’s Fourteenth-Century Choir Screen”, *Gesta*, 50-1 (2011), pp. 71-90.

⁷⁵ Letter from Manuel Chamoso Lamas to Enrique Salvado Torres, August 4, 1964. Full text available on the digital archive of the Council of Galician Culture:

http://consellodacultura.gal/fondos_documentais/epistolarios/epistola.php?id=72325&epistolario=9629

