

## FROM JACOBAN ATTRIBUTE TO ISABELLINE RELIC: HOLY QUEEN ISABEL'S PILGRIM'S STAFF\*

POR

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### ABSTRACT

During the opening of the tomb of the Blessed Isabel, Infanta of Aragon and Queen of Portugal —the wife of King D. Dinis— in March 1612, in order to continue her canonization process, there were found, deposited on top of the coffin, some personal objects: the staff and a small leather pouch offered by the Archbishop of Santiago de Compostela during her pilgrimage in 1325. Acquiring an immediate spiritual value as an authentic relic, the pilgrim's staff was disposed for veneration within a silvery reliquary, executed between 1612 and 1614, and later transported in a pompous processional parade during the feasts held in Coimbra on the occasion of her canonization announced in 1625, while the pouch and a fragment of the staff were sent to the Court of King D. Filipe III of Portugal – IV of Spain. We favored, as the main lines of research in the field of Art History, the presentation of the data obtained after a rigorous material analysis of the staff and a thorough consultation of the available documented sources concerning the only relic of the so-called Holy Queen Isabel's Treasure displayed for public adoration, within the historic chronological frame from 1325 to 1625.

**KEY WORDS:** D. Isabel, *Infanta* of Aragon and Queen of Portugal; Saint Isabel of Portugal; Holy Queen's Treasure; Relics cult; Jacobean Pilgrim; Pilgrim's Staff; Medieval Goldsmithing.

## DE ATRIBUTO JACOBEO A RELIQUIA ISABELINA: EL BORDÓN DE PEREGRINA DE LA SANTA REINA ISABEL

### RESUMEN

Durante la apertura de la tumba de la Beata Isabel, infanta de Aragón y reina de Portugal —esposa del rey D. Dinis—, en marzo de 1612, para dar continuidad a su proceso de canonización, fueron encontrados, depositados sobre el ataúd, algunos objetos personales: el bordón y la escarcela ofrecidos por el arzobispo de Santiago de Compostela durante su peregrinación en 1325. Adquiriendo un valor espiritual inmediato, como una auténtica reliquia, el bordón de peregrina fue dispuesto a la veneración de los fieles dentro de un relicario de plata, ejecutado entre 1612 y 1614, y luego transportado en una pomposa procesión durante las fiestas celebradas en Coimbra con motivo de su canonización, alcanzada en 1625, mientras que la escarcela y un fragmento del bordón fueron enviados a la Corte de D. Felipe III de Portugal – IV de España. Privilegiamos, como líneas principales de investigación en el campo de la Historia del Arte, la presentación de los datos obtenidos tras un riguroso análisis material y de una consulta exhaustiva de las fuentes documentales disponibles que se refieren a la única reliquia del llamado Tesoro de la Reina Isabel dispuesta para la veneración pública, dentro de un cuadro cronológico histórico comprendido entre 1325 y 1625.

**PALABRAS CLAVE:** D. Isabel, infanta de Aragón y reina de Portugal; santa Isabel de Portugal; tesoro de la Reina Santa; culto de las reliquias; peregrina jacobea; bordón de peregrino; orfebrería medieval.

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## STUDY JUSTIFICATION

During the organization of the celebrations of the five hundred years of the beatification of Santa Isabel, *Infanta* of Aragon and Queen of Portugal (1516-2016), we proposed in the beginning of 2015, as a member of the Brotherhood of the Holy Queen responsible for the artistic and historic heritage of the Poor Clare's community of Coimbra, to organize a double exhibition of the *Treasure of the Holy Queen*, first at the *Museu Nacional de Arte Antiga*, in Lisbon, and then, at the *Museu Nacional de Machado de Castro*, in Coimbra. After the first conservation analyses of the staff-relic, ordered by the Brotherhood, we noticed the scarcity and superficiality of the studies dedicated to it. Some contemporary authors do not even include it as part of the *Treasure of the Holy Queen* set.

The methodology proposed for the study is based on the critical analysis of the known documented sources, general studies available, and on the thorough examination of the staff-relic, the central artistic object of the present investigation. Properly presenting the historical context of the reception of the staff by the Queen, during her pilgrimage to Santiago de Compostela, it is important to do a thorough analysis of the sources describing its discovery inside the medieval stone tomb, in order to gather enough information to understand its material composition and to discuss the aesthetic affiliation. The detailed material analysis is brought about mainly, but not exclusively, due to the lack of studies —despite the many times that the relic was present at national and foreign exhibitions—, and the difficulties associated to the physical and visual access to the object, which is still kept in the original reliquary and under a tight vigilance by the Brotherhood of the Holy Queen Isabel in Coimbra.

## 1325. THE PILGRIMAGE OF D. ISABEL OF ARAGON TO SANTIAGO DE COMPOSTELA

After the death of King D. Dinis [1261|1279-1325]<sup>2</sup> on January 7th, 1325, D. Isabel [c.1270-1336], his wife, *Infanta* of Aragon and Queen consort of Portugal, decided to depart from the Portuguese Court and head to one of the main pilgrimage centers of Western Europe: Santiago de Compostela. Following the royal ceremonies at the Monastery of São Dinis and São Bernardo in Odivelas, nearby Lisbon —the monastic house where the King was buried and the first funeral legacies were celebrated (Pina 1729, 93)— the Widow-Queen decided to make a pilgrimage to the Cathedral of Santiago de Compostela, the sanctuary where the alleged relics of the Apostle Saint James rest (Lacerda 1735, 253; Esperança 1666, II: 41; Brandão 1672, 489-490; Figanière 1859, 182, 194). The future Holy Queen Isabel would thus become one of the most celebrated pilgrims of the Jacobean shrine (Carrillo 1617, 93-94; Vasconcelos 1993, I: 48-50).

Before the one year anniversary of the King's death, the Queen had embarked on this spiritual journey to Compostela with the main purpose of obtaining suffrages “for the

soul of her husband, and the penalties that he might suffer in Purgatory” (Carrillo 1617, 81).<sup>3</sup> The Jacobean pilgrimage sanctuary had not been selected randomly, since D. Dinis himself had already traveled to Santiago de Compostela with the purpose to visit “the body of the holy Apostle, & that holy Church” (Brandão 1672, 268-269), apparently in 1318.<sup>4</sup> For centuries, the Santiago de Compostela pilgrimage routes were the guarantors of the forgiveness of the living who sought the spiritual assistance of the Holy Apostle at the Jacobean sanctuary (Castiñeiras 2016c, 53).

Considering the currents of ascetic spirituality and reflective religiosity deeply rooted in late medieval Iberian Kingdoms (Pacheco and Castro 2007, 87-91), D. Isabel of Aragon would have sought to benefit from the indulgences granted on the occasion of the 1325 Jubilee (Rincón García and Romero Santamaría 1999, I: 58; Singul 2012, I: 52-53), and certainly to bear witness to her own faith and devotion to Saint James, probably in alignment with a piety brought from Aragon (Figanière 1859, 183, 201; Lacerda 1735, 18). Through continual prayer to God and the saints of her devotion, the Queen would be led to the exercise of works of mercy by the *hand* of the Jacobean saint.

Shedding the garb and attributes denouncing her high social condition (Carrillo 1617, 81), and stripping the members of her entourage from it as well, D. Isabel departed in mid-May or in the beginning of June 1325. She would embark on the main Jacobean Portuguese itinerary, going along Odivelas/Lisbon, Santarém, Coimbra, Arrifana, Porto, Barcelos, Ponte de Lima, Valença, and coming to Galicia by the towns of Tui, Porriño, Redondela, Pontevedra, Caldas de Reis and Padrón, until reaching Santiago de Compostela a few days before the official feast of the Holy Apostle (Esperança 1666, II: 292; Cidraes 2008, II: 1416), on 25th July (Faci Ballabriga 1999, II: 31).

The first hagiographic work to mention the offerings made and received during D. Isabel's stay at the Jacobean sanctuary dates back to the sixteenth century,<sup>5</sup> the *Vida & milagres da gloriosa Raynha sancta Ysabel, molher do catholico Rey dō Dinis sexto de Portugal* from the author Afonso Diogo, printed in 1560:

Among the [pilgrimages] that she made the most notable was that of Santiago de Galicia, arranging it covertly without saying where she was going, in July in the strength of all calm, & from the place that is a league from the city, whence the church of the blessed Apostle [St. James] arose on foot & was there on his [feast] day when he celebrated the Archbishop's Mass, and he was offered by this lady the richest of the many

<sup>3</sup> Regardless the monarch's true personal virtues and faults, D. Dinis was one of the best-placed characters on the long journey to Paradise from Dante Alighieri's [1265-1321] major work: *The Divine Comedy* (Alighieri 2013, XIX, 139, XXV, 17-18).

<sup>4</sup> During the royal peregrination the Portuguese King bequeathed a donation of 300 maravedis through a testamentary legacy (Macedo 2004, 14-16), which allowed the inscription of his birthday date on the cathedral's anniversary Mass book: “Pro rege Portugali D. Dionisio et pro aliis regibus” (Rodríguez Porto 2014, 135-136).

<sup>5</sup> As already pointed out by Helena Costa Toipa [1964], the earliest documentary references to D. Isabel's pilgrim journey must date back to the writing of her first biography, written about her death in 1336 and first published in 1672 by Friar Francisco Brandão [1601-1680], although there are manuscripts and other printed works dating from the sixteenth century (Toipa 2020, 17).

<sup>2</sup> The three biographic dates shown in this article correspond to the year of birth, the beginning of the reign/episcopacy and the death of the monarchs and prelates.

crowns she had, the one with the many precious stones. And of all her garments, the finest which she wore during the king's life, adorned with many seed pearls, pearls and precious stones, and a mule threaded with a bridle of gold and silver, and of many precious stones with a rich covering: and some very rich pink cloths with the blazons of Portugal and Aragon with seed pearl rhombs: and very rich cloaks that she had made, and a very rich vestment, the entire length of the same saddle. And cups of marvelous relief work, through which she drank during her husband's life. And in cash she gave a very large offering and alms, which all said there was no memory of others like them. On her return to Portugal, the archbishop gave her [a] staff and shells<sup>6</sup> for her to have the appearance of a pilgrim of Santiago which she accepted (Diogo 1560, 23, 33-34).

More enlightening than Afonso Diogo's account is the set of two illuminated manuscripts that adorn the *Genealogia da Casa Real de Portugal*, a work commissioned by Infante D. Fernando [1507-1534], most likely between 1530 and 1534, following the pilgrimage to Santiago de Compostela on June 7th, 1529 (Braga 1997, 158, 346). The two illuminated paintings thus show the moment of the entourage's arrival at the sanctuary (Fig. 1), by the west gate, at the exterior façade of the *Pórtico de la Gloria* (Castiñeiras González 2016a, 760), and the delivery of the Queen's offerings to the archbishop in the cathedral during the Mass celebration (Fig. 2).

The first hagiographic source known, the *Livro que fala da boa vida que fez a Raynha de Portugal, Dona Isabel e seus bons feitos e milagres em sa vida e depois da morte* — a manuscript produced in 1592,<sup>7</sup> in hagiographic context but based on a biographical record written between July 4th, 1336 and June 24th, 1337, attributed to the Franciscan friar and later bishop of Lamego, D. Friar Salvado Martins [?] [1331|1349], the former Queen's confessor and the executor of her second will who assisted her on the death-bed (Vasconcelos 1993, I: 268-271, 283; Calvo Ruata 1999, I: 15-16; Gomes 2020, 34) —, shows that D. Isabel during the offering of the liturgical celebration delivered a golden crown with precious gems (Fig. 2), noble metal implements, rich fabric vestments and a large sum of money destined for the cathedral (Brandão 1672, 513).

As a sign of deep gratitude, the Archbishop D. Berenguel de Landoira [c.1262|1317-1330] —the superior general of the Dominican Order until his nomination to the Compostela archbishopric and responsible for the renovation given to the Jacobean sanctuary in the beginnings of the fourteenth century (Yzquierdo Perrín 2012, 103-104; Castiñeiras González 2016a, 775)— gifted the Portuguese Queen with some offerings, more valuable for their inherent spiritual value than for the noble materials that constituted them.

The *Relaçam da vida da Gloriosa Santa Isabel* assures that "as she fulfilled her pilgrimage" the prelate "offered the Queen a staff and a pouch so that by the staff and the pouch she might appear to be a pilgrim of Santiago" (Diogo 1560, 33-34; Brandão 1672: 513). These insignia were made of noble and valuable materials that were worthy of a queen, but

formally they were close to those that the Jacobean pilgrims used during the pilgrimages undertaken towards Santiago de Compostela, as shown by both objects present in the pilgrim's panel of the Church of Santiago de Turégano, in Segovia, executed around 1232 by the Master Mateo workshop (Castiñeiras González 2016a, 753-755).

In the possession of the archiepiscopal offers, D. Isabel returned to Coimbra, getting back to the city by August 7th (Rodríguez Porto 2014, 141). As far as the most reliable hagiographic works and historical documents reveals, the *Pilgrim-Queen* would never return to Santiago de Compostela (Nascimento 2019, 142), despite several authors (Macedo 2004, 21; Ramôa 2010, 73; Andrade 2012, 229) having considered the possibility of a second peregrination in 1335, one year before her death.<sup>8</sup>

### 1336. THE JACOBAN INSIGNIA ON THE QUEEN'S SHROUD

In 1336, eleven years after the peregrination, D. Isabel would be encouraged to undertake another important journey, not as a pilgrim but as *Pacis et patriae Mater*. This time she would go towards Estremoz, trying to reconcile the disputing relatives once again. In her old age and apparently ill, D. Isabel of Aragon did not survive the long and exhausting trip to Alentejo, in the south of Portugal, and died, in sanctity odor, on July 4th, 1336.

Seeking to enforce the testamentary premises of the Queen-Mother,<sup>9</sup> D. Afonso IV [1291|1325-1357], her son and King of Portugal, ordered the immediately transportation of the coffin to Coimbra, the former Kingdom capital, where it arrived in the afternoon of July 11th. In a solemn funeral ceremony, organized at the church of the Monastery of Santa Clara and Santa Isabel of Hungary, on the next day, July 12th, D. Isabel was buried in the tomb commissioned by herself to the Aragonese Master Pero [c.1300-1350] (Vasconcelos 1993, I: 23-24, 34-51; Macedo 2020, 51).

D. Isabel of Aragon owned a large estate, consisting of vast properties acquired and large rents earned as Queen Consort of D. Dinis, and a valuable portable inheritance, made up of palatial household objects, jewels and personal adornments, implements and liturgical vestments, ritual artifacts and devotional reliquaries. The quality of the exquisite works and the quantity of fine materials used on them suggests a royal commission by and for a royal person, probably through dowries from D. Isabel parents and personal gifts from her brother, the King of Aragon, Jaime II [1267|1291-1327]; or her husband, D. Dinis. But the Queen herself must have acquired many of the luxury goods of her private house and chapel (Domenge and Molina 2009, 308-309, 319; Andrade 2012, 188; Vairo 2004, 150).

<sup>8</sup> Probably the second pilgrimage arose in the chronicle of D. Afonso IV but due to an error, considering that author believed that the Queen had travelled to Santiago in 1335 and not in 1325 (Pina 1653: chap. XXIII; Vasconcelos 1993, I: 48-49). The Jesuit Priest Pedro de Perpilhão himself doubted this second pilgrimage to Compostela but never stop trying to explore it in his works due to its strong popular diffusion (Toipa 2020, 174, 177-185).

<sup>9</sup> The first will was drawn up on April 19th, 1314, and the second on December 22nd, 1327, supplemented in the meantime by an addition made on March 12th, 1328 (Vasconcelos 1993, I: 23-24, 34-51, 103, II, 8-9, 22-27).

<sup>6</sup> Did the author refer to the alms pouch, probably adorned with the Jacobean scallop shells?

<sup>7</sup> The manuscript is deposited in the Museu Nacional de Machado de Castro (MNMC 2221).

FIGURA 1

**Arrival of D. Isabel of Aragon and her entourage to the Cathedral of Santiago de Compostela through the south portico on the silver facade (detail of the illuminated manuscript frame - left section). António de Holanda and Simão Bening. Illuminated manuscript 1530-1534**



Provenance: © The British Library Board, *Genealogia da Casa Real de Portugal*. (Add MS 12531, folio 9r).

FIGURA 2

**D. Isabel of Aragon at the time of the offering to Archbishop D. Berenguel de Landoira (detail of the illuminated manuscript frame - right section). António de Holanda and Simão Bening. Illuminated manuscript 1530-1534**



Provenance: © The British Library Board, *Genealogia da Casa Real de Portugal*. (Add MS 12531, folio 9r).

The will, drawn up on December 22nd, 1327, allows us to identify, in addition to the many assets to be distributed among her descendants,<sup>10</sup> housekeepers, religious houses and welfare institutions, the composition of a part of the estate that was handed over to the Poor Clare nuns of Coimbra, which would be the origin of the so-called *Holy Queen Treasure*, the most important set of medieval sacred goldsmith artifacts in Portugal.

Consisting of five objects, the *Treasure* can be classified into four specific categories: a) devotional implements

<sup>10</sup> For instance, her daughter-in-law D. Beatriz, wife of D. Afonso IV, received an emerald crown, a “small crown with pierced stones” and many other jewels, some with relics. The granddaughter, D. Leonor, daughter of D. Constança, was bequeathed with “another crown” (Vasconcelos 1993, II: 15-16).

—the True Cross reliquary and the reliquary—sculpture of the Virgin Mary with Christ the Child required for liturgical celebrations and devotional manifestations; b) liturgical implements —the ceremonial cross used in the procession rituals; c) adornment props —the necklace for personal use, perhaps only worn until 1325; (d) apparatus utilitarian objects —the pilgrim’s staff conceived for long walks, but probably never used as one, that was kept as a valuable offering made by the Compostela archbishop.

Considering the historiographical shortcomings caused by the absence of documentation, it is possible, however, to move towards a possible chronology of the execution of the pieces between the late thirteenth century and the first quarter of the fourteenth century; in addition to the plausible location of the production centers, enclosed within an

Iberian geographical area, in the midst of Aragon, Portugal and Galicia, although the materials origins that compose them might go beyond these territories.

The testamentary clauses of December 27, 1327, make it possible to identify part of the property inherited by the Poor Clare community —religious house “in whose hands I leave my body” (Vasconcelos 1993, II: 15)— which were deposited at the time in the oratory and private chambers of the Queen Palace, erected in the immediate vicinity of the monastery. Thus we now know that she had bequeathed a large sum of money, about 12 000 Portuguese pounds, and the remainder 36 000 to pay debts and expenses related to her funeral, and also for the:

Chapel for this monastery, as they find it, for I to be there during this time with gold and silver<sup>11</sup> crosses and chalices and thuribles and garments, and all the other things that belong to this chapel and all the other things that I have then paid [with] this will of mine as I command, [and] also silver, and gold, to there be (Vasconcelos 1993, II: 12-18).

To these goods some more would be added such as “my great Cameo brooch pierced in the middle,<sup>12</sup> and my crown of yellow stones, which they call citrines, & the pendilia crown,<sup>13</sup> & the choral,<sup>14</sup> & the veil, and the Saint<sup>15</sup> which I told to set for the brides from my house who would marry” (Vasconcelos 1993, II: 15-16; Esperança 1666, II: 41).

<sup>11</sup> Among the listed liturgical implements there would certainly be the processional cross, executed in jasper, silver and gilded silver adorned with precious stones deposited in the Museu Nacional de Machado de Castro, in Coimbra (MNMC 6035).

<sup>12</sup> Would this be the jewel applied in the reliquary image of the Virgin Mary holding the infant Christ (MNMC 6034) deposited today at the Museu Nacional de Machado de Castro?

<sup>13</sup> From the five objects that make up the Queen's Treasure, the supposed necklace (MNMC 6037) is the one that has promoted the most discussion among art historians, namely by António Nogueira Gonçalves (Gonçalves 1983, 15-16); Nuno Vassallo e Silva, which defends that the piece is constituted by the joining of several brooches (Silva 1995, I: 459); Mário Barroca (Barroca 2002, 263); or Fernanda Alves and Mariana Mora, who argued that the centrepieces belonged to a belt (Alves and Mora 2003, 85). More recently Luísa Penalva and Anísio Franco, curators of the Museu Nacional de Arte Antiga, which assume that the necklace pieces belonged to a crown (Penalva and Franco 2016, 45-47). However, although the testamentary document identifies among the jewels belonging to D. Isabel a “pendilia crown” and a “crown of yellow stones”, we find in Isabeline hagiographic works references to this necklace, which was a piece entrusted to the Poor Clare community and displayed for veneration of the faithful as early as 1336. Let us cite, for instance, the work of Bishop of Porto, D. Fernando de Lacerda, present during the transferring of the relics in 1677, who mentioned two miraculous wonders wrought by the intercession of D. Isabel's necklace, when it was loaned to restore the health of two patients: D. Luíza Prestrella, causing her to recover “from a flow of blood, as the Holy Queen necklace was placed on her neck”; and doctor Thomé Pinheiro da Veiga, Crown Judge and Court Judge, as the necklace placed around his neck freed him from a leech stuck in his throat (Lacerda 1735, 310-311; Vasconcelos 1993, I: 110). In the meantime, the necklace was loaned to the parturient women to help them during birth (Gonçalves 1983, 15), which seems to have led to the disappearance of some pieces, most likely, kept as precious relics (Alves and Mora 2003, 85).

<sup>14</sup> It was included in the jewellery collections of the MNMC 6036.

<sup>15</sup> We believe that the listed piece concerns the reliquary image of the Virgin Mary with Christ the Child (MNMC 6034) and in which some of the gems belonging to D. Isabel may have been applied within.

Strangely, the last testamentary diploma, dated 1327, does not provide any information about the gifts offered by the Archbishop of Compostela. Although not identified and located in the last will, it is safe to propose the hypothesis that the pilgrim's insignia were deposited or placed in the Queen's Palace, in some private chamber or even in the palatine chapel, since “she had also idols that she worshiped, and the altar where she would put them” (Resurreição 1625 (?), [5]) and “Of them both made the Holy One such a great esteem, that without abandoning them in life, she brought them to the grave in death” (Esperança 1666, II: 293).

We do not know if the objects had any practical use during her daily life or if they were kept as a reminder of the journey undertaken to Galicia and contemplated in the most intimate moments of devotion. We also do not know whether they were disposed in the tomb by D. Isabel's own express disposition, either orally or in scripture which might have been lost meanwhile —which would seem to make perfect sense— or if the Abbess or any member of the Royal Family had made this deliberation on their own (Rincón García and Romero Santamaría 1999, I: 61). Based on the precepts established at the time, everything indicates that the Jacobean insignias have been gathered by D. Isabel de Cardona [?-1362?], the abbess of the monastery between 1329 and 1362 and niece of D. Isabel of Aragon, and placed over the wooden coffin between 11 and 12 of July, either by her or by D. friar Salvado Martins, the Queen's confessor, under the close surveillance of the King D. Afonso IV. The latter two were both will executors that accompanied the Queen's corpse from Estremoz to Coimbra (Vasconcelos 1993, I: 41-46, 229-230).

Regardless of who made the final decision, the truth is that by ordering her sumptuous funeral tomb, about six years earlier, she had the pilgrim's staff (Figs. 3-4) and pouch (Fig. 5) incorporated at the complex tomb iconographic program. Once reproduced on the laying statue, they reveal D. Isabel intentions to use them on the journey that awaited her in death. In fact, of all the riches and treasures accumulated throughout her life —namely the ones pointed out—, D. Isabel chose to be buried with the humblest ones: the staff and the pouch of Jacobean pilgrim, a decision perhaps made between the years 1329-1330, date pointed to the execution of the tomb (Macedo 2016, 22). Therefore, the importance of the Jacobean insignia in relation to all its personal objects is unequivocally demonstrated.

Considering that the sculptor Master Pero had installed his workshop in Coimbra, where he was directly in contact with the Queen, the commissioner of the tomb, it is strange to see the differences between the staff crosier of the tomb and the original. Would it be possible that the master sculptor had never had direct access to the staff? In fact, the crosier of the tomb reveals similarities to the staff of the relief statue of the Church of Santiago of Turégano, in Segovia —executed around 1232 by the Master Mateo workshop (Castiñeiras González 2016a, 750-754)—, with the double curving shapes on the left upper section.

Under a personalized and autobiographical program (Melo 2018, 335), the composition elements of the statue reveals the main actions performed in life that D. Isabel intended to be remembered after her death: the crown representing her royal lineage and regal status (reinforced by

FIGURA 3

**Tomb of D. Isabel of Aragon. The sculpture shows the Poor Clare habit with which it was shrouded and the pilgrim staff arranged on the coffin (painted in gold). Mestre Pero Sculpture, 1329-1330 (polychrome in 1782)**



Photographic Record: Milton Pacheco, June 7th, 2008. Santa Clara-a-Nova Monastery, Coimbra (CRSI 32).

the coats of arms of the royal houses of Portugal, Aragon and the Holy Roman Empire); the Poor Clare of the Third Order habit an act of humility during her widow condition; the staff and the pouch as a devout Jacobean pilgrim —the scallop sculpted in the pouch leaves no doubt —, while the book of hours reveals her piety and devotion to the Christian Faith. And although both Jacobean pieces are represented in the funerary statue, their existence seems to have been relegated to oblivion until the first quarter of 1600, even though a print that circulated a few decades earlier evoked symbolically the staff (Diogo 1560).

Yet, the Queen would never have imagined that she would finally be the subject of so many other pilgrimages, namely from devotees to her own grave guarded in Coimbra.

#### 1612. THE DISCOVERY OF THE JACOBAN INSIGNIA

Continually sought by the faithful who wished to obtain divine benedictions through the Blessed-Queen, the tomb in which her human remains were deposited would be religiously veiled by the Poor Clare nuns, without any known attempt of being opened during the periods that were prior of immediately after her beatification on April 15th, 1516.<sup>16</sup>

<sup>16</sup> The admiration for the discovery of the Jacobean insignias helps to prove, as António de Vasconcelos has already pointed out in 1891, “that the lid of the monumental tomb had never been removed. Had it ever been opened, devotion and godliness would have failed to appropriate these valuable relics” (Vasconcelos 1993, I: 292, 401).

FIGURA 4

**Detail of the crosier of the staff carved in the lying statue of D. Isabel's tomb, composed of juxtaposed golden volutes. Mestre Pero. Sculpture, 1329-1330 (polychrome in 1782)**



Provenance: Santa Clara-a-Nova Monastery - Coimbra (CRSI 32). Photographic record: Brotherhood of Queen Santa Isabel - Babo Ribeiro Photography 2018, July 4th

FIGURA 5

*Detail of the tomb of D. Isabel of Aragon with the coin-laden alms pouch, adorned with a scallop (painted also in gold). Mestre Pero. Sculpture, 1329-1330 (polychrome 1782)*



Provenance: Santa Clara-a-Nova Monastery - Coimbra (CRSI 32). Photographic Record: Milton Pacheco. June 7th, 2008.

In the Kingdom this holy cause would continue to be cumulated by successive prerogatives granted by the Holy See, revealing circumstance of the commitment made by King D. Manuel I [1469|1495-1521] —also a Jacobean pilgrim in 1502 (Góis 1749, I: 83-86)— and his successors, D. João III [1502|1521-1557] and D. Sebastião [1554|1568-1578]. However, with the consolidation of the Iberian Dual Monarchy, the apostolic process of the canonization gained a new political-devotional impulse, first with King D. Filipe I of Portugal [1527|1580-1598] requesting, between 1583 and 1591, elements leading to the canonical procedures, and then with D. Filipe II of Portugal [1578|1598-1621] gathering the financial resources and requesting the procedural requirements.<sup>17</sup>

Ten years after his accession to the throne, a time in which the royal visit to Portugal would begin to be outlined, the chancellery of the Council of State of the Kingdom of Portugal would send, on July 19th, 1608, a letter addressed to D. Filipe II informing him that “with his pious and holy zeal he ordered the Canonization of the Holy Queen Isabel, a very old claim of the Kingdom of Portugal, for the great devotion found there” (Vasconcelos 1993, II: 105-112).

<sup>17</sup> By order of the Audit of the Rota, given on June 8th, 1611, the judgment of the commissioner of inquiry “on the life, miracles and holiness” of D. Isabel was entrusted to the Bishop of Coimbra, D. Afonso de Castelo Branco, assisted by the Bishop of Leiria, D. Martim Afonso Mexia [?-1623] and by the court judge and royal councillor, doctor Francisco Vaz Pinto. As early as December 12th, the monarch turned three scholars of the University of Coimbra into his attorneys, the Jesuit and theologian Francisco Suarez [1548-1617], the Augustine and theologian Friar Egidio da Apresentação [1539-1626], and the jurist João Carvalho [1573-1644], to address the legal aspects of the process (Vasconcelos 1993, I: 350-351; Brasília 1957, 5-6).

Gathering the possible oral statements and consulting the available written records, one would proceed with the immediate canonical procedures, the examination of the sacred candidate’s remains deposited in the stone tomb that had been closed on July 12th, 1336. Since then, the Poor Clare nuns, as well as the believers who went to the monastery, were aware that in the funeral urn lay the human remains of D. Isabel, although ignoring its state of preservation and the objects deposited therein. The verses sung by the Portuguese poet Vasco Mouzinho de Quevedo Castelbranco in 1596 attest it:

How much security promises us  
This tomb full of mysteries,  
Where God, lays this beautiful body  
To be our property such medium (Castelbranco  
1596: 57v).

The opening session of the tomb took place at 1:00 pm on March 26th, 1612, and occurred at the “upper chapel” of the old monastic church of Santa Clara and Santa Isabel of Coimbra. The session was attended by the Bishop of Coimbra D. Afonso de Castelo Branco [c.1522|1585-1615] in the presence of the assistant judges, the Rector of the University of Coimbra, D. João Coutinho, the chief physicist of the Kingdom and Prime Medicine scholar, Balthezar d’Azeredo [1552-?], the doctor António Sebastião, the surgeon Gonçalo Dias, the inquisitor Gaspar Borges de Azevedo, in addition to a great assembly (Vasconcelos 1993, II: 113-114, 119, 122; Escobar 1680, 293).

After the opening of the tombstone, an unidentified Jesuit priest<sup>18</sup> found the Jacobean insignia on top of the coffin,

<sup>18</sup> At the opening session were present four Jesuit priests: Francisco Suarez, one of the prosecutors, Manoel de Lima, rector of the College of Jesus in Coimbra, João Delgado and Andre Palmeiro (Vasconcelos 1993, II: 117).

covered by a reddish cloth and a ragged cowhide. According to the record made by the notary Thomé Nunes, executed on the same day with the confirmation of the "old book of the history of her life", the following items were found: "A long staff of about six and a half ordinary palms covered

with plates of gilded brass and carved with Santiago shells, and at the end of that staff a crutch of red jasper stone, with a brass finishing, and said crutch was attached to the staff with silver brass cords" (Vasconcelos 1993, II: 115-116, 122-123) (Figs. 6, 7, 8, 9).

**FIGURE 6**

*Pilgrim's Staff of D. Isabel of Aragon, the Holy Queen. Compostelan Workshop, Goldsmithery, | c.1325 (?) Provenance: Santa Clara-a-Nova Monastery - Coimbra (CRSI 396)*



Photographic Record: Milton Pacheco. September 16th, 2016.

**FIGURE 7**

*Cross of D. Isabel's pilgrim's staff. Compostelan Workshop Goldsmithery. c.1325 (?)*



Photographic register: Milton Pacheco, September 16th, 2016.

**FIGURE 8**

*Detail of the stick, adorned with golden scallop, from D. Isabel's pilgrim's staff. Compostelan Workshop Goldsmithery, c.1325 (?)*



Photographic register: Milton Pacheco. September 16th, 2016.

**FIGURE 9**  
**Wooden base of D. Isabel's pilgrim's staff Compostelan Workshop Goldsmithery, c.1325 (?)**



Photographic register: Milton Pacheco. September 16th, 2016.

According to the chief surgeon's report, tied to the staff were "a square bag which the outside cover looked like silk and its inside leather with some tattered parts, and inside it was no other thing more than a devotional scapular as wide as a hand with a square plate bore with a cross of gold thread" (Vasconcelos 1993, II: 115-116, 122). On one side of the *escarcela* it was embroidered "the figure of the same Apostle, and on the other [side] the shell of his insignia" (Escobar 1680, 223), the most characteristic Jacobean symbol representation, it is uncertain if it was made of lead or tin like those that were acquired by the pilgrims in Compostela (Sebastian 1994, 302).

But on the basis of the report written by the Inquisitor Gaspar Borges de Azevedo, from the Coimbra's Inquisition Tribunal, there had also been found, next to the Jacobean insignia, "some linen saddlebag" (Escobar 1680, 293; Esperança 1666, II: 305) utility objects never mentioned again in other hagiographic memories dedicated to D. Isabel.

Examined and appreciated as relics —earthly physical memories with an attached bond to the sacred, according to Saint Thomas Aquinas [1225-1274] (Singul 2012, 52)— the staff and the pouch "were given by the lord bishop to the nuns, so they would be encased, as they deserved" so that "they kept everything as relics of the so-called saint with due veneration" (Vasconcelos 1993, II: 119). However, the greatest discovery was not the Jacobean insignias, but the incorruptibility of D. Isabel corpse after of two hundred and seventy-six years following her death.

From the celebrated *Holy Queen Treasure*, originally entrusted to the religious community of Santa Clara of Coimbra from 1336 —which, for various historical vicissitudes, was incorporated first in the Museum of Silver of the Cathedral of Coimbra and later in the Museu Nacional de Machado de Castro— only the pilgrim's staff remains today in the possession of the Brotherhood of the Holy Queen Isabel.

The pledge made by the Abbess D. Catarina do Crucifixo de Noronha [1544-1618] which was twice called to testify

at the hearings held in February 1612, would determine the ordering of a reliquary, executed in silver with hyaline dial, for depositing the pilgrim's staff (Fig. 10), as attested by the inscription embossed on both sides of the reliquary monstrance: "ANNO. D[E]. 1612. SE. ABRIO POR M[ANDA]DO. D.º S. S. DE O SEPVLCRO DA R. [AINH]A E DEN[T]RO NELLE // SE ACHOV ESTE BORDÃO SÊDO ABBA. [DESSA] D. [ON]JA C[ATARI]Nª D. N. [ORONH]A Q[UE] AQVI O MANDOV POR".

**FIGURA 10**  
**Reliquary of the Holy Queen Isabel pilgrim's staff offered by the Abbess D. Catarina de Noronha (detail of the monstrance and the relic-staff). Portuguese Workshop. Goldsmithery, 1612-1614**



**Provenance:** Santa Clara-a-Nova Monastery - Coimbra (CRSI 397). Photographic Record: Milton Pacheco, June 7th, 2008.

With the execution of this "silver bearer", as the Franciscan Friar Manoel da Esperança [1586-1670] called it in 1666 (Esperança 1666, II: 306), the staff, a relic of second-class according to the Church, was properly secured and more easily protected from possible attempts of obtaining some spiritual graces after direct contact performed by the believers. For that same reason, the reliquary should be kept in the high choir of the old monastic church, nearby of the Queen's tomb chapel and the altar dedicated to her (Esperança 1666, II: 35).

Meanwhile, the Bishop of Coimbra, D. Afonso de Castelo Branco, sponsored a tomb reliquary, made in silver and crystal, to guard the incorrupt corpse of the Holy Queen Isabel (Vasconcelos 1993, I: 370-379, II, 120; Escobar 1680, 303), which still remains displayed for veneration by the most faithful believers, as well as for curious tourists who visit the monastic church of Saint Isabel of Portugal, in Coimbra.

During centuries many prodigious episodes have been reported in relation to the staff. Without contesting the truth of the fabulous episode or criticizing the sources consulted, the Carmelite Friar Antonio de Escobar [1618-1681], as well as the Friar Manoel da Esperança (Esperança 1666, II: 293), or the Bishop of Porto D. Fernando Correa de Lacerda [1628|1673-1685] (Lacerda 1735, 401, 433-434), interpreted the prodigy of the "silver-capped crutch-like staff, and in its finishing a red stone" as divine intervention operated by God through the Holy Queen, thus taking away the extraordinary power of the Jacobean insignia:

[She] wanted to settle her Sepulcher in the High Tribune [...] They could not take the stairs, so because it was too heavy, then the Holy Queen came, touching it

with the staff she had brought from Santiago, and with ease she took that machina, obedient to such a weak instrument; but God uses those instruments in the ostentation of the greatest prodigies. The staff had no strength on its own for such an impetus, for the hand of Holy Queen communicated it (Escobar 1680, 227-228).

Friar Escobar mentioned this prodigy again in the chapter devoted to the transfer of the venerating corpse of the Holy Queen from the old to the new monastery in Coimbra, asserting, however, that "For having to lay it down in the same prodigious way the religious women had the same staff, but the arm of the Holy Queen was missing, so as to give power to such a feat" (Escobar 1680, 223, 227-228, 337-338).

On May 25th, 1625, Portuguese and Spanish diplomatic delegations nominated to represent King D. Filipe III of Portugal [1605|1621-1640|1665] were gathered at the Basilica of Saint Peter in Rome to participate in the canonization ceremony of the Blessed D. Isabel of Aragon presided by the Pope Urban VIII [1568|1623-1644] (Vasconcelos 1993, I: 445-446). Since this date, the Church of Rome officially worships the Holy Queen. For the public ceremony, the Italian artist Gian Lorenzo Bernini [1598-1680] conceived a magnificent scenario, composed by ephemeral architectural structures ornamented with statues and paintings that evoked the Queen royal lineage origins and her main miracles.<sup>19</sup> Among the last set of paintings was the official portrait, showing Saint Isabel with the Poor Clare of the Third Order habit, the royal crown and the pilgrim staff. This would turn out to be the most popular iconographic model of the Holy Queen in the next two centuries (Pacheco 2020, 174-179).

The news of D. Isabel's elevation to the Church altars was announced in Coimbra on July 6th, 1625. Immediately, honorable public demonstrations would begin to be organized — not only religious festivities but also profane feasts— to mark the canonization of the Holy Queen who would be acclaimed patron of the Kingdom of Portugal that same year (*Relação* 1625, 1; Vasconcelos 1993, II: 352). The official festivals began on September 20th, 1625, with the inauguration of a large amphitheater erected on the wide margin of the monastery, where the Holy Queen of Portugal would rest.

But the highlight of the celebrations held in Coimbra took place on Sunday, October 11th, with the organization of a solemn procession between the church of Hospital of Saint Lazarus and the monastic Church of Santa Clara and Santa Isabel. Behind the many floats, some of them adorned with various sculptures alluding to D. Isabel of Aragon (*Relação* 1625, 12-23; Menezes 1626, 130-133; Lacerda 1735, 358-371), came a precious relic, the pilgrim's staff:

Under the canopy there was the Holy Queen Relic, & it was the staff, with which she journeyed to Santiago of Galizia. This staff was found within the tomb of the Queen, when it was opened to begin to make the first diligence necessary for its Canonization, and it was so unspoiled that, being made out of wood, it seemed that at that time the artifact had just been finished. It seems the Heaven wanted us to keep this staff from the time when the Holy Queen sojourned, so there was a

memory of how it had been on earth such & pilgrim creature (*Relação* 1625, 23; Lacerda 1735, 371).

The symbolic burden and spiritual appreciation bestowed on the venerable Isabelline relic would have it displayed at the most emblematic moments of the life of the Poor Clare nuns of Coimbra. After being carried away in the procession organized in 1625, the "miraculous staff of the Holy Queen" would once again leave the monastic church to be transported in the solemn processional parade in the occasion of the laying the first stone in the foundation of the new monastery at *Alto da Esperança* place (Lacerda 1735, 387).

Afterward the liturgical ceremonies organized in the church of the Monastery of Santa Clara and Santa Isabel, on the morning of July 3rd, 1649, it left the church of the Monastery of Santa Cruz "there is a very important procession to the sound of timbales, shawms, & trumpets, & bells, with all the dances, holidays, and joys, which the City uses in its most solemn processions, "in which came the members of the Brotherhood took part, the brothers of the College of St. Peter, the brothers of St. Francis, the university scholars and the rector of the University of Coimbra, and, under the canopy held by six doctors, Doctor Fr. Manoel d'Ascensão Abbot of the Collegio de S. Bento, dressed in pontifical clothes, with the staff of the very blessed Queen raised in his hands" (Esperança 1666, II: 87-88).

The pilgrim's staff would therefore be the chosen relic to represent the Holy Queen Isabel during the great festivals held in Coimbra on the occasion of her canonization in 1625. Due to the importance acquired over the centuries, as a precious relic of Saint Isabel of Portugal and as a priceless artifact belonging to Queen D. Isabel de Aragão, the staff is only used during the major festivities and processions on very special dates defined by the Brotherhood of the Holy Queen Isabel under the authorization of the Bishop of Coimbra.

#### 2016. THE HOLY QUEEN'S PILGRIM STAFF-RELIC: HISTORICAL ORIGIN, MATERIAL CONSTITUTION AND ARTISTIC COMPOSITION

The Holy Queen's pilgrim staff is undoubtedly the Isabel-line relic about which we have more historical information: the geographical origin, the date of acquisition and even the model that gave rise to its material execution. Like the other objects of the *Holy Queen Treasure*, the staff is considered a piece of high material value, due to the composition of the noble materials employed, and the high artistic inventiveness resulting from the physical execution and the ornamental grammar presented in its elements.

Although it was conceived as a noble supporting tool to assist in the long pilgrimage walks, the staff has a formal archetype very characteristic of the episcopal and abbatial staffs of the eleventh to the thirteenth centuries —common in representations of the hermit saints (Farré Torras 2012, 11-12) and also bishops (Alturo i Perucho 2019, 28-31)<sup>20</sup>— a feature corroborated by the material configuration of the staff's upper section, which is very close to the model of the crosier of the staff offered, according to tradition, by Saint

<sup>19</sup> The canonization ceremony, held in Rome in 1625, was studied in Pacheco 2020.

<sup>20</sup> The illuminated manuscripts of the Jaca Council's acta, deposited at the Archivo de la Catedral de Huesca, shows several representations of the tau crosier staff examples.

Bernard of Clairvaux [1090-1153] to the prior-major of the Monastery of Santa Cruz of Coimbra, Saint Teotónio [c.1082-1162], the first Portuguese saint (Martyres 1960, III: 208).

The prelate's offer was intended to present D. Isabel with the Jacobean insignia, but her royal condition would have determined the offering of a sophisticated piece, executed in noble materials and within the conventional models that the tradition attributed to the Holy Apostle one, although the material composition and the ornamental disposition distinguish it among the other known copies. It seems that the staff was executed in an Iberian workshop, apparently by a goldsmith already working in Santiago de Compostela or temporarily hired by D. Berenguel de Landoira.

The obvious typological and stylistic similarities of the relic-staff —“a silver-crocheted crutch-style staff with a red stone finishing” (Esperança 1666: II, 293)— unmistakably refer to two works closely linked to the Jacobean shrine: two sculptures and one illuminated manuscript.

As Father António Nogueira Gonçalves [1901-1998], already pointed out, the similarities between the staff offered to D. Isabel (Fig. 12) and the episcopal staff held by the majestic sculptural figure of the Apostle Saint James of the *Pórtico de la Glória* trumeau of the Santiago de Compostela

Cathedral's (Fig. 11), produced by Master Mateo workshop between 1168 and 1188 (Castiñeiras González 2010, 198, 212; Castiñeiras González 2016c, 54-55), are quite evident (Gonçalves 1984, 116). In this same sculptural set it is possible to recognize another tau-shaped staff decorated at the extremities by lion heads produced also in the campaign of 1168-1188. The staff was integrated at the sculpture of the Apostle Saint James, the second one from the right side on the main entrance of the portico section.

But the existence of a third coeval iconographic source work thus seems to reinforce the supposed existence of the specific Jacobean staff in the Cathedral of Santiago de Compostela, which, according to the tradition, “was found in a bronze column, near the older chapel, as a relic” (Moralejo and Real 1999); Faci Ballabriga 1999, II: 33; Castiñeiras González 2016a, 788-789). In the illuminated *Tumbo del Monasterio de los Santos Justo y Pastor de Toxos Outos*, dated from second half of the thirteenth century, around 1284-1289, the Archbishop D. Diego Gelmírez [c.1070|110/1101-1140] — the responsible for the *pious theft* of the relics of Braga, in 1102, and for the invention of the scallop shells as Jacobean insignia, around 1099-1106 (Castiñeiras González 2016b, 46, 50, 57, 65, 68, 73-74) — was pictured wielding the staff (Fig. 13), in a palatial environment in the presence of the knights Fruela Alfonso and Pedro Muñiz (Yzquierdo Perrín 2012, 117-119, 124; Castiñeiras González 2016a, 763).

**FIGURE 11**

**Staff of sculptural figure of Saint James the Apostle in the Portico of Glory of the Cathedral of Santiago de Compostela. Master Mateo, Sculpture, 1168-1188**



Provenance and photographic record: © Imagen del Pórtico de la Gloria restaurado bajo el mecenazgo de la Fundación Barrié. ©Fundación Barrié/Fundación Catedral de Santiago

**FIGURE 12**

**Holy Queen Isabel Pilgrim Staff (detail of the top). Compostela Workshop. Goldsmithery. c.1325 (?)**



Provenance: Santa Clara-a-Nova Monastery - Coimbra (CRSI 396). Photographic record: Milton Pacheco. September 16th, 2016

**FIGURE 13**  
**Staff of Archbishop D. Diego Gelmírez. French Scriptorium(?). Illumination. Thirteenth century**  
**(second half - 1284-1289)**



Provenance and photographic record: *Tumbo del Monasterio de los Santos Justo y Pastor de Toxos Outos*, folio 2v. (ES.28079.AHN / CODICES, L.1002). Archivo Histórico Nacional de Madrid, Spain

Based on the illuminated manuscript *Tumbo B* of the *Archivo de la Cathedral of Santiago*, dated from 1324-1326, it is possible to know that the devotional sculpture of the enthroned *Santiago Apóstol* executed for the main altarpiece of the Compostela cathedral by Master Mateo workshop around 1211 (Castiñeiras González 2016a, 756-757, 765-766, 769; 2015, 67, 75) had a similar staff upon the occasion of the Queen's visit. Meanwhile, by other illuminated manuscript, the *Cartulaire de l'Hôpital de Saint-Jacques de Tournai*, executed between 1489 and 1512 (Castiñeiras González 2016a, 778-779), it is possible to verify that the staff held by the statue no longer has a tau configuration.

The historical origins of this staff typology used and reserved for the archbishops of Compostela, as the direct successors of the "pilgrim apostle", seem to date back to the twelfth century (Castiñeiras González 2016a, 753), and apparently were used by the same archbishops until the mid-sixteenth century (Cidraes 2008, 1414). The formal and stylistic similarities present in these artistic sets with the staff that was offered to D. Isabel are quite evident.

Father Nogueira Gonçalves had suggested that the piece was "performed for the honorary offering to high dignitaries, as so many them would go to the noble sanctuary," which would determine a scheduled and anticipated production, and then be stored as a "reserve, waiting for the occasional illustrious person who could come" to the Jacobean sanctuary. A similar position was taken by Maria de Lourdes Cidraes [1940], an academic who argues that the Archbishop D. Berenguel de Landoira must have had anticipated information of the Queen's intention to journey to Compostela (Cidraes 2008, 1414) when he met her in 1324 (Brandão 1672, 462-465).

However, these two arguments reveal an evident fragility: no identical offerings made to sovereigns who visited the tomb of the Jacobean apostle are known. For instances, some years later, her grandson Alfonso XI of Castile's [1311|1325-1350] also went to Santiago de Compostela

sanctuary, first in 1332 and later in 1345 (Rodríguez Porto 2014, 144, 154), and no similar offers are mentioned, as in others registers of royal visits.

Despite several uncertainties, due to the absence of documentary sources and material elements, it is legitimate to propose some conjectures about the provenance of the staff that was offered to the Portuguese Queen.

In view of the multiplicity of staffs with the same configuration in the cathedral sculptures set and considering the tradition of the Archbishops of Compostela claiming the status of the legitimate Holy Apostle Saint James representatives on earth, is it possible that the one that was offered to D. Isabel was the ceremonial staff of the Archbishop D. Diego Gelmírez, used in symbolic rituals and celebrative dates associated to Saint James, like the 25th July festivity? And was it the staff offered by the archbishop during the liturgical ceremony of the Mass, before the whole assembly, or in a private session? In our point of view, it seems fitting that the quantity and quality of the offers made by the Queen —namely a personal royal crown, alongside many other valuable gifts—, would merit the offer of the symbolic staff of the archbishops of Compostela, quite easy to substitute by the offeror.

Moreover, the configuration of the crozier lion heads seems to us quite rudimentary when compared to the lion images of the pieces belonging to the *Treasure of the Holy Queen*, so we must question whether the staff was in fact executed on a date well before the delivery to the royal pilgrim. And although they are proven to be very stylized, we doubt that the goldsmiths of the late thirteenth and of the beginnings of fourteenth centuries did not have the knowledge of more perfectionist techniques. In one-way or another, if it is not in fact the original statue staff, it must have been accurately made based on the original one, once it is considered a "real facsimile of the Compostela prelates' staffs" (Castiñeiras González 2016a, 762, 765-766). Therefore, despite the many doubts, the staff model offered to D. Isabel is certainly inspired in the piece executed between the twelfth and thirteenth centuries.

The material composition of the staff appears not to be exceedingly complex, having a centerpiece made of a single, silver-coated segment with gilded accents —not the "brass" and "golden brass" described by the notary during the opening of the tomb in 1612— except for damaged surfaces and lower section, resulting from human intervention. It supports, at the top, an elaborate crozier carved in a semi-precious stone, fixed by silvery elements, where decorative grammar reaches greater detail as a piece of apparatus.

The main stem of the staff is composed of a wooden core (Fig. 9), with a total dimension of 124 cm, and was enclosed with silver foil only covering an extension of 107 cm (Figs. 6-8). Considering the measures provided in the opening of the tomb written by the notary Thomé Nunes, the staff had "six and a half ordinary palms" (Vasconcelos 1993, I: 401, II: 118-119), thus about 143 cm, having been cut a fragment of the lower section, the size of 19 cm, that the Poor Clare nuns sent to D. Filipe III of Portugal, certainly to Madrid, as some authors attests: "which will be sent to King of Castile the pouch, & a piece of the staff, which was cut off its foot" (Escobar 1680, 299).

By comparing the dimensions of the reliquary commissioned by the Abbess D. Catarina do Crucifixo de Noronha

FIGURE 14

*Staff's dowel decorated with Jacobean scallops (detail).  
Compostela Workshop Goldsmithery c.1325 (?)*



Provenance: Santa Clara-a-Nova Coimbra Monastery (CRSI 32). Photographic Record: Milton Pacheco September 16th, 2016.

FIGURE 15

*Staff's dowel decorated with Jacobean scallops (detail).  
Compostela Workshop Goldsmithery c.1325 (?)*



Provenance: Santa Clara-a-Nova Coimbra Monastery (CRSI 32). Photographic Record: Milton Pacheco September 16th, 2016.

for the relic's accommodation —a container made of silver and crystal with 147 cm high, 29.8 cm wide and 19 cm deep (Fig. 10)— the staff was integrated with the amputated lower section. Although its physical composition is unknown, it is to be assumed that the sent fragment of the staff was finished with a spike foot, encased in a single (and solid?) piece of silver, or of another metal, but equally coated in silver. The presence of this spike feet finishing the lower section of the staff would give it a greater resistance to the impacts caused by constant movements, as we know from similar pieces still used today, such as the episcopal staff or even the silver staffs steered by the board members of the Holy Queen Isabel Brotherhood during the festivities of our patron saint. Moreover, a close examination of the oldest representations of the staff, present in the stony image of Saint James in the Glory Portico and in the twelfth century sculpture of the same saint, placed in the Museum of the Cathedral of Santiago de Compostela, attest to the existence of a spike a trimming the lower section of the dowel.<sup>21</sup>

Of the five sectioned snap-in pieces of the staff, with an annular rim only at the top, covering the entire wood-

en internal structure, only four can be found, which were adorned with the supreme Jacobean symbols: the scallop shells —a total of fourteen—, scored in a stylized manner along the surface of the dowel and coated with a golden-glimmering silvery matter (Figs. 14-15).

The presence of similar scallop shells on the staff's stem found in the funerary statue of the Archbishop D. Bernardo II [?-1240], deposited at the Colexiata de Santa Maria de Sar, in Compostela, indicates the past existence of a common and older model associated to the Jacobean Apostle (Moralejo and Real 1999).

It seems that only the scallop shells had been golden; however, the vague testimony of Sebastião Coutinho de Sousa, present in the opening notice of 1612, suggests the possibility of other emphasized sections, unless he confused the brilliance of the metals: the "staff like a crutch set in gold or silver with many small shell carvings" (Vasconcelos 1993, II: 118-119).

According to the report written by the Coimbra's chief surgeon, Gonçalo Dias, present at the tomb opening, it was "a wooden staff with a cross shape on top" (Vasconcelos 1993, II: 123). In fact, the upper section of the staff —the crosier—, the most elaborate segment of this piece. It was designed in a tau shape and is 11.7 cm wide and 3 cm deep.

The horizontally handle is made in single blood red jasper stone with large grey and wispy black veins (Fig. 7) —the

<sup>21</sup> In the painting of Holy Queen Isabel made at the beginning of the eighteenth century for the See of Guarda, in Portugal, and presently deposited at the Guarda Museum (MG 314), the staff has the same spike-shaped finish.

FIGURA 16

*Staff crosier detail and its lower support. Compostela Workshop Goldsmithery c.1325 (?)*



Provenance: Santa Clara-a-Nova Coimbra Monastery (CRSI 32). Photographic Record: Milton Pacheco September 16th, 2016

FIGURA 17

*Staff crosier detail topped with the leonine figure. Compostela Workshop Goldsmithery c.1325 (?)*



Provenance: Santa Clara-a-Nova Coimbra Monastery (CRSI 32). Photographic Record: Milton Pacheco September 16th, 2016

red is considered to be the color of the Holy Apostle James (Faci Ballabriga 1999, II: 33), identified as “sardinus” in the *Comentarios of Beatus of Liébana* (Moralejo and Real 1999; Macedo 2004, 24-25)—, the same stone material used in the conception of the processional cross belonging to the personal items of D. Isabel. Polished and carved on eight facets, the jasper stone was fixed in the center by a small silver rim attached to the central stem, endowed with a sharp edged knot, and reinforced at the poles by two stylized and chiseled figures forming diametrically opposed lion heads, also made out of silver (Figs. 16-17).

The presence of the leonine figures in the crosier of the staff—an animal equally present in many other works commissioned by D. Isabel and commonly associated with the symbolic representation of the Kings and Christ majesties—, has given rise to repeated interpretative readings that, in our opinion, do not justify or properly clarify its materialization at the crosier of the staff. In the Jacobean context the same lions appear flanking the chair of Saint James in the Glory Portico, at the crosier of the staff of the first Compostela archbishop, and supporting the reliquary statue of the Pilgrim Apostle in the Relic Chapel of the same cathedral.

Reinforcing the support of the jasper stone two gothic-like trifoliums, with a triangular and hollowed shape, were placed beneath and probably crafted at a time close to the execution date or to the possible gifting of the staff (Fig. 16). Despite the Portico’s statue revealing the absence of the double supports, the close examination of the staff suggests that they were placed during the final assembly phase of the parts, in order to guarantee the stability and safety of the jasper stone.

Despite recent doubts,<sup>22</sup> the testimony of the notary Thomé Nunes recorded during the opening of the casket in

<sup>22</sup> According to Luísa Penalva, the lateral reinforcements would later be added, probably during the late nineteenth century, a “more understandable intervention in an already revivalist neo-Gothic context” (Penalva and Franco 2016, 34-35).

1612 proves, in our view, the placing of the said trifoliums during D. Isabel’s life: “And in the end of that staff a stone handle of red jasper, with brass gargoyle-like trimmings, and attaching that handle to the staff with silver brass spinners” (Vasconcelos 1993, II: 115-116, 122-123). Our argument is reinforced by the existence of a set of three paintings, all of them dated from the seventeenth century—two from the Monastery of Santa Clara-a-Nova,<sup>23</sup> in Coimbra, and one from the Convent of Santo António,<sup>24</sup> in Évora (today in the National Museum of Frei Manoel do Cenáculo, Évora)— which reveal the presence of silver supports. The closest example of the original supporters is represented in the painting of the alms box (Fig. 18), preserved in the Coimbra monastery, although the most perfect example of the staff comes from the painting of the Évora convent.<sup>25</sup> But many other examples could exist, still to be located and identified.

The staff offered in 1325 by the Archbishop of Compostela to the Queen of Portugal, D. Isabel of Aragon, ended up acquiring the premises of a sacred relic from the moment it was removed from the royal tomb in 1612, in the context of the canonization process concluded in 1625. The importance of this object in the devotional context is further demonstrated by its integration in the official models of representation of Santa Isabel between 1625, the date of her canonization, and 1896, the year in which Queen D. Amélia de Orleães e Bragança [1865-1951] had ordered the deliverance of the sculpture executed by the Portuguese artist António Teixeira Lopes [1866-1942] (Pimentel 1999, 78).

<sup>23</sup> One painting was reintegrated in the alms box (CRSI 734) (Fig. 18) on the twentieth century but was executed in the same seventeenth century as the second painting from the altarpiece of Santa Isabel (CRSI 5) located at Chapter House of the monastery.

<sup>24</sup> This painting was originally from the Franciscan Convent and after being in the Évora Public Library it was deposited in the main city museum (ME 4465).

<sup>25</sup> This painting not only shows the two silver supports—very stylized—, but also displays the two lions’ heads in the crosier and the stem decoration with multiple scallop shells.

**FIGURE 18**  
***Holy Queen Isabel wielding the pilgrim's staff (detail of the alms box painting). Portuguese Workshop. Painting seventeenth century***



Provenance: Santa Clara-a-Nova Monastery - Coimbra (CRSI 734). Photographic record: Milton Pacheco, 2016, April 29<sup>th</sup>.

Since then, the relic staff has been the target of continuous devotional manifestations by devotees of the Holy Queen and more recently, in the late twentieth century, required for religious art exhibitions to satisfy the curiosity of visitors. But it is at the Church of Santa Isabel of Portugal, of the Monastery of Saint Clare in Coimbra, that the relic staff can be worshiped by the believers and admired by the visitors all year long.

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