

## **PATHOS - the bodies of Christ on the Cross.**

### **Rhetoric of Suffering in Wooden Sculpture Found in Portugal, Twelfth-Fourteenth Centuries. A Few Examples**

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#### **Abstract**

In Portuguese medieval art, freestanding wooden sculptures representing Christ on the Cross are among the less studied typologies. For this reason, it is important to discuss and question some of the most representative works of aesthetic values and/or iconographic models that characterised this European production between the twelfth and fourteenth centuries. The option for the *Christus patiens* typology is justified by the fact that it includes a large number of sculptures, some still requiring analysis and reflection, with the possibility of bringing to light new elements through fresh comparisons or using laboratory-based findings. The examples analysed here demonstrate the existence of artistic models reflecting the importance of foreign formal and iconographic references, which in turn raise the issues of the import and/or reinterpretation by Portuguese sculptors of these ideas, and of the itinerancy of foreign sculptors through Portugal, locating this corpus within an international historiographical discussion.

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#### **Introduction**

- [1] In Portugal, twelfth to fourteenth century sculptures of Christ, whether freestanding or in bas-relief, are a highly heterogeneous group as far as their materials, iconographic choices, authorship or origin are concerned. Commissioned by Portuguese patrons, they have been defined as Portuguese. However, whether made by national or international artists in Portugal or imported, these sculptures fit into to the larger, international framework of formal and iconographic models that provide a material answer to the spirituality and devotional manifestations that marked the late medieval Western world.
- [2] A systematic and comprehensive inventory of the twelfth to fourteenth century representations of Christ in Portugal is yet to be undertaken. Such representations can be found in churches, museums and private collections. They constitute a heterogeneous group of wood crucifixes of large dimensions, whether isolated or part of Depositions or

Calvary compositions; metal crucifixes intended for altar display, processions and in the decoration of small caskets; representations of Christ on the Cross, in small sculptural groups representing Holy Trinities; stone bas-reliefs found in gravestones; and the singular case of a Christ at the Sepulchre. These models and typologies reflect the iconographic choices applied to works produced in other European kingdoms during the same period.

- [3] Each of these typologies is interesting in itself but, in the impossibility of a comprehensive discussion of over forty artworks in these pages, this discussion will be restricted to a group of freestanding wooden sculptures dating from the period ranging from the late Romanesque through the Gothic. While these sculptures are the most representative of the aforementioned typologies, they also share the uncertainty of their date and place of origin. Discussion will focus on the Bouças Christ, found at the church of Matosinhos (Northern Portugal), and on the articulated Christ owned by the Grão Vasco Museum in Viseu (Northern Portugal), which, although they have been previously referenced, require extensive re-examination. This discussion will be complemented by references to other sculptures found in Portugal, which have already been the object of academic discussion. The publication of a comprehensive study of representations of Christ in Portuguese medieval art will occur elsewhere, once the conditions for the publication of a wider study are met.
- [4] The scarce Romanesque wooden sculptures surviving in Portugal<sup>1</sup> mirror the trends observed in the same type of sculptures found in other Iberian kingdoms, or even in other European territories, especially in France, from where most of the artistic tastes and innovations of the period irradiated. Since the nineteenth century, and as in other European countries, the search for art with markedly national characteristics, embodying a "national spirit", if not "regional schools", was more or less recurrent, especially in relation to works by anonymous authors and without documental support to confirm their provenance. Currently, art historiography, and especially that which pertains to the period analysed here, studies objects within wider-ranging geographical and chronological contexts, aiming to identify transnational models and themes that circulated with the same ease as their authors and patrons did. This study follows this latter approach, as do others, namely those presented in the recent International Symposium *Medieval Europe in Motion* (Lisbon, 18-20 April 2013), or the current European research projects developed by several universities such as the [www.magistricaloniae.org](http://www.magistricaloniae.org) project.
- [5] However, the small number of sculptures of great quality found in Portugal is perhaps explained by the fact that unlike the French regions of Auvergne and Burgundy, or the

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<sup>1</sup> This situation has been discussed by several authors, quoting the most recent works: Mário Jorge Barroca, "Mário Algumas iconografias. Cristo Crucificado", in: *História da Arte em Portugal. O Gótico*, Carlos Alberto Ferreira de Almeida e Mário Jorge Barroca, eds., vol. 2, Lisbon 2002, 180, in which the author mentions that in spite of the documental reference to the existence of Christs on the Cross during the twelfth century, such as the one at the Old Cathedral in Coimbra in 1180; the same absence of items was noted by Pedro Dias, *A Escultura de Coimbra do Gótico ao Maneirismo*, exh. cat., Coimbra 2003, 46.

Spanish territories of Aragon, Catalonia and Palencia, Portugal was not an important production centre. In addition, a large proportion of these sculptures may have been imported, or made in Portugal by artists of a foreign origin or trained abroad, given the ease of circulation of people and goods during the period, as attested by the appointment of foreign bishops and abbots to relevant Portuguese monasteries and dioceses. Hence, the patronage of foreign itinerant artists occurred as frequently in Portugal as in other countries of the medieval West. Written sources from the period are rare and omit information regarding artistic patronage, both in Portugal and throughout Europe – but this should not in itself preclude the idea of the circulation of artists, techniques, and tastes, in contradiction to the aforementioned nationalistic bias.

- [6] Upon close observation, the small number of high-quality wooden sculptures representing Christ on the Cross, tentatively dated by Portuguese historiography to the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, does appear to date from an earlier period, and perhaps even share a foreign origin, when compared to other works, most likely of local origin. Many sculptures have disappeared, due to carelessness, natural degradation of materials, replacement by supposedly more modern items, theft, sale, or, upon the extinction of monastic orders, transfer from their original location to private and public collections. The varying artistic quality of surviving artworks, allied to the subsequent modifications they endured, with their vernacular sculptural value often hidden under layers of paint and mortar, unsurprisingly aroused little curiosity in Romanesque art studies, as underlined by Manuel Luís Real in an unpublished subchapter originally intended for his *Portugal Roman* (1986).<sup>2</sup>
- [7] In Portugal, there are no known surviving wooden sculptures of the triumphant Christ (*Christus triumphans*) typology. In fact, only two iconographic typologies particularly prominent in Romanesque and Gothic imagery appear to be present in this selection: the suffering Christ (*Christus patiens*) and the weeping Christ (*Christus dolens*). While they were most intensely used between the twelfth and fourteenth centuries, and correspond to specific styles – Romanesque and Gothic – the three major typologies were some time present beyond the chronological periods and artificial boundaries of each style, demonstrating how artistic values were not geographically and chronologically set, but rather interacted with new artistic values, according to tastes and commissions of patrons with varying levels of erudition.
- [8] During the eleventh and twelfth centuries, as far as iconography and shape are concerned, two representations of Christ were predominant – the *Maiestas domini*, a severe and dominating judge, on the gate tympana of many cathedrals, parish and monastic churches; and the Christ on the Cross (*Christus triumphans*), austere, inaccessible, triumphant, not-human in his indifference to his own pain.<sup>3</sup> Yet from the mid-

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<sup>2</sup> I am particularly grateful to Manuel Luís Real for sharing with me these unpublished pages in which he identifies and analyses some Romanesque wooden sculptures.

<sup>3</sup> See, among others, Jean Wirth, *L'Image à l'Époque Romane*, Paris 1999, 40-52.

twelfth century onwards, a series of events changed the social framework in which this religious art was produced. Gradually, religious sentiment, previously centred on the glorification of Christ, experienced change. As meditations on his sufferings during his life, culminating with his death on the cross, became the norm, a new Christian religiosity, centred on the humanity of Christ, took precedence. The changes witnessed since the mid-twelfth century, at the level of the social and religious framework within which these artistic manifestations appeared, and the manner in which they transformed themselves, have already been identified and much discussed by other authors, and I will approach only the major themes that enable the understanding of this discussion.

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### **"Christus patiens": body of suffering, body of redemption. Examples in Portuguese sculpture**

- [9] The images of Christ that characterised Portuguese artistic production during the thirteenth century (and even during the late twelfth century) reflected iconographic characteristics somewhat different from those seen in the more standardised examples of the typology of the Triumphant Christ. The motives behind this difference were the same that presided to the production of devotional sculpture in other Western countries. In the early 1300s, Byzantine crucifixes reached Europe. They endowed representations of Christ with a Classical gesture repertoire: the arched eyebrows and the open mouth (distinctive characteristics of Greek tragedy masks, which determined the figurative schemes for pain in Classical sculpture) were used in the West in the new images of a humanized God, a hero of his own tragedy.<sup>4</sup> However, they initially maintained some of the characteristics of representations of Christ usually classified as "Romanesque", namely the feet set apart, individually nailed to the cross, and often resting on the footrest. Examples of excellence of this new aesthetic include the crucifixes painted by Giunta Pisanno during the mid-thirteenth century, considered to be the highest expression of the interpretation of Christ as Man, with profound dramatic tension, of which the *Christus patiens*<sup>5</sup> is the greatest example as far as humility and realism are concerned. In Portugal, where there are no surviving wood sculptures from this period, an example of this late Romanesque, or proto-Gothic, arrangement is the depiction of the Calvary in one of the panels of the Arouca Diptych-Reliquary<sup>6</sup>, from the late twelfth century, likely made in Northern Europe, which can be found at the Museum of Sacred Art in Arouca.
- [10] Even before Giunta Pisanno's depictions of suffering, other examples embodied this new weeping sensitivity, though they did not yet display the compassion-inducing excruciating

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<sup>4</sup> Moshe Barasch, *Imago Homini. Studies in the Language of Art*, Vienna, 1991 quoted by Sánchez Ameijeiras, "Espiritualidad mendicante y arte gótico", in: *Las religiones en la Historia de Galicia*, Santiago de Compostela 1996, 333-353, here 345-346.

<sup>5</sup> G. Barsali et al., eds., *História e Obras-primas de Pisa*, Florence 1995, 90.

<sup>6</sup> See, among others, the most recent publication by João Soalheiro, "193. Díptico-relicário", in: *Cristo Fonte de Esperança. Exposição do Grande Jubileu do Ano 2000*, exh. cat., Porto 2000, 228-229.

pain, and were not entirely gothic in the combination of their various components. In painting and sculpture, Christ's body was presented in a not too pronounced curve, though his thoracic and abdominal muscles were more voluminous and protruding, and the outline of the ribs followed artificial and parallel lines. They rarely displayed the fifth wound; the *perizonium* tended to become shorter, reaching the knees or ending slightly above them, suggesting a fluid fabric that concentrated volume in the upper part, where it was twisted and knotted at the front or on the side. The arms, slightly flexed, did not yet mirror the straight arms of the crosses, and the hands, nailed to the cross and open, displayed fingers spread but not tensed; the legs were brought together but the feet were kept apart; the face leaned to the right, with introspective sadness marked in the expression of lips in inverted arch, the eyes mostly closed, the hair in thick, heavy, strands, undulating over the shoulders. There were no copious amounts of blood appearing or spurting out of the passion wounds, nor hematomas or other wounds; in some cases, the head still bore the crown of the king of the Jews, although the most common is to either find the head merely displaying the bloody and limp hair, at times held by a crown made of rope, paving the way for the representations of the crowns of thorns that, from the fourteenth century onwards, permanently set the dramatic tone of the compositions.

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### **The "strange" case of the articulated Christ at the Grão Vasco Museum (Viseu, Portugal)**

- [11] Before proceeding with the identification and analysis of an ensemble of sculptures under the typology of *Christus patiens*, I would like to introduce here a sculpture and a theme which I will discuss in a future occasion but which, given its flexibility – both physical and in terms of its multiple functionalities – does not clearly fit into the typology of the *Christus patiens* nor that of *Christus triumphans*, but shares features of both, depending on the circumstances of the liturgical calendar.
- [12] This wooden, life-sized sculpture (Figs. 1, 2) has the particularity of being articulated at the neck, arms – shoulders, elbows and wrists –, knees, left hip and two feet. The shoulder and elbow articulations use spherical fittings, where traces of the attempts to disguise it with canvas are visible. Only the left hip features a metallic hinge. The marks on both sides of the neck and shoulders seem to suggest an original presence of identical metal fittings to ensure mobility of the head. Both these articulation devices can be found in other European medieval articulated sculptures: the spheres are known in Italian wooden sculpture, and the metal fittings can be found, for example, in the Santo Cristo of Burgos.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> María José Martínez Martínez, "El Santo Cristo de Burgos y los Cristos dolorosos articulados", in: *Boletín del Seminario de Estudios de Arte y Arqueología*, 69-70, Valladolid 2003-2004, 207-246, here 237-238.



1 Articulated Christ, mid-12th century – 1st quarter 13th century, wood with traces of colour, 162 x156 x 23cm. Museu Grão Vasco, Viseu, Portugal, inv. 890 (Photo: José Pessoa/DGPC/ADF)

- [13] With this configuration, the sculpture can be adapted both to a static configuration of a *Christ on the Cross*, with stretched arms and legs, and the head raised and facing ahead; and of a the *Deposition from the Cross* as well as the *Deposition in the Tomb*, other equally powerful iconographies in the liturgical furnishings of churches in the Iberian Peninsula, Italy, France and Germany, since the tenth century, with special incidence in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, pursued through the following centuries, until the Counter Reformation in some regions. This sculpture, currently at the Grão Vasco Museum, in Viseu (inv. 890), of no known provenance, ownership history, or date of acquisition, has been the object of scant discussion. The only study of which it has been the object dates it to the thirteenth century.<sup>8</sup>
- [14] First observations indicate the uniqueness of this sculpture, both in Portugal and internationally, where, while the existence of articulated sculptures of Christ has been a known reality, the articulations tend to be limited to the arms, and in some cases to one of the legs. Thus it is necessary, given the absence of sources to illuminate its older and recent history, to observe it in the greatest possible detail, question it, and compare it, stylistically and iconographically, with other examples.
- [15] As stated by Maria José Martínez Martínez regarding the articulated sculpture of the Santo Cristo in Burgos, the purpose of these articulated images resided in their use during Holy Week medieval rituals, namely the Roman rite celebrated during the liturgy of Good Friday.<sup>9</sup> The morphology of the face and of the body parts of the Viseu Christ discussed

<sup>8</sup> Lúcia Maria Cardoso Rosas, "50. Cristo", in: Maria de Fátima Eusébio and João Soalheiro, eds., *Arte, Poder e Religião nos Tempos Medievais, A Identidade de Portugal em Construção*, exh. cat., Viseu 2009, 198-199. While the author alludes to dendrochronological analysis dating the wood of the object to the thirteenth century, I have been unable to consult such process, as it is not located at the Grão Vasco Museum.

<sup>9</sup> Martínez Martínez, "El Santo Cristo de Burgos y los Cristos dolorosos articulados", 232-233.



here, clearly places it at a chronological and formal distance from the Burgos Santo Cristo, a thirteenth century gothic representation of suffering, which featured a fixed head bent forwards, a pained expression and visible signs of martyrdom on the body. Only the arms are articulated. The Viseu Christ in addition to the intense flexibility of its limbs, which may be due to possible changes to the body during the Gothic period, features a Romanesque treatment in the features of the face, very much similar to other Iberian and French Romanesque wooden sculptures – the shape of the head itself, as well as the large, almond-shaped, wide open eyes; a long and narrow moustache, of which only traces subsist; a beard with striated strands and the characteristic curls found in French, Spanish (Pyrenees) and Italian Romanesque Christs. Also of a Romanesque feature is the absence of any visible signs of flagellation and of other moments of the Passion; as are the separated feet, held to the Cross by two nails, rather than the juxtaposed feet held by one nail, a Gothic feature; and the short and discreet *perizonium*, perhaps intended for a removable cloth garment, possibly a full-body *colobium* (which would have hidden the articulation mechanism), or even a larger and more ostentatious *perizonium*. The body of the Viseu Christ does not find a comparable example on Iberian soil during this period, and may in fact date from a later period, perhaps even from the mid-fourteenth century. Current research does not allow a complete discredit that this could be an Iberian Romanesque sculpture, one of the earliest examples of this typology, created with the aim of integrating the rites defined by Galtier Martí as the paraliturgical of the Holy Week (the representation of the Crucifixion, the Deposition and the Procession of the Holy Burial, the Deposition – and the Resurrection) which date from the second half of the twelfth century.<sup>10</sup>

- [16] Regarding formal and stylistic characteristics, Lúcia M. C. Rosas, in her study of this *unicum* of free-standing Portuguese medieval sculpture, compared it to the "1147 Cristo", a Romanesque wooden sculpture, originally from a church in the Urgel diocese (Catalonia, Spain) and currently held at the National Art Museum of Catalonia (inv. 015950-000). The author identifies similarities between both statues "on the face, the structure of the beard and in the fact that the feet appear side-by-side, rather than juxtaposed".<sup>11</sup> However, this Catalonian object, dating from the end of the first half of the twelfth century, originally in polychrome wood, features articulated arms only. It does display separated feet, and in spite of a clearly Romanesque treatment of the face, the physiognomy of the Burgos Cristo differs substantially from that of the Viseu example – better proportioned, with smaller eyes, and with a more "naturalistic" outline; the beard is treated in a different manner, featuring heavily designed and individualised "commas". However, the elements common to these two sculptures do not appear to go beyond the expected shared aesthetic principles of the period.

<sup>10</sup> Galtier Martí, "Los orígenes de la imagen del Cristo descendido de la cruz, destinado al desenclavo, y la procesión del santo entierro", 139-146, here 141 and 145.

<sup>11</sup> Lúcia M. C. Rosas, "50. Cristo", in: Maria de Fátima Eusébio and João Soalheiro, eds., *Arte, Poder e Religião nos Tempos Medievais*, exh. cat., Viseu 2009, 198.

- [17] It is possible that the smooth head, without traces of hair chiselled on the wood, whether in striations and/or scrolls, with a high forehead and nape of the neck, originally held a wooden, or, more likely, metal crown, which hid the upper part of the head, enveloping it, as happens with other known sculptures (not only of Christ, but also of Mary), that I will reference further ahead. Initial observation of the face of the Viseu sculpture, which bears strong signs of erosion or even destruction, allows us to find parallels with other French and Catalan twelfth century sculptures, namely with the physiognomic model of a Crucified Christ attributed to an Auvergne sculpture or studio (Fig. 3), currently at the Musée National du Moyen Age – Thermes de Cluny in Paris (inv. CL23409). Originally from the church of Saint-Jean de Jérusalem in the Puy-de-Dôme, it bears striking similarities with the Viseu sculpture – the exaggerated nose and the protruding ears, elements with a specific identifying strength given their size, their format, and especially the triangular shape of the noses in both sculptures.
- [18] While it would be expectable to find equally striking similarities in the treatment of the hair, beard and moustache, such comparison would be, at best, speculative, given the strong erosion experienced by the Portuguese object. Upon closer inspection of the Viseu Christ, however, it seems apparent that the beard and moustache were originally more abundant and, more importantly, resulted from a derivation of the beard seen in the sculpture of Christ at the church of Santa María de Mig de Arán (also known as Mijaran), kept today at the church of the Convent of San Miquieu de Vielha – Valle de Arán (Lleida, Catalonia). The prototype for both sculptures seems to be the Christ of the Portal of the church of Ripoll<sup>12</sup> – striated beard, with its rare scrolling ends very flat and curly (different from the protruding commas ending the beards of other twelfth century sculptures of Christ), and the striated moustache laid over the beard, or in an almost straight line along the descending movement of the lips. The contour of the mouth of the articulated Christ of Viseu – a straight perforated (semi-open) line – finds resonance with the statue of the Christ of Lavadieu. This sculpture, today at the Louvre (inv. RF1662), was part of a stone Deposition from the second half of the twelfth century. It also finds a more distant similarity with the half-open mouth of the *Majestat Batlló* of the National Art Museum of Catalonia in Barcelona (inv. 015937-000).

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<sup>12</sup> Xavier Barral i Altet, "Le bois, de l'artisanat au chef d'œuvre", in: *Les Royaumes d'Occident*, Paris 1983, 343-356 and 349-350; Marie-Pasquine Subes, "Le Christ de Mijaran et ses liens avec la sculpture romane d'Erill la Vall et de Ripoll", in: *Quaderns del MEV*, IV Vic 2010, 9-30, here 20. See picture in <http://www.biodiversidadvirtual.org/etno/Cristo-de-Mijaran-%28románico%29.-img7185.html> (accessed 27 November 2013).





2 Head of articulated Christ at Museu Grão Vasco (detail), inv. 890 (photo: José Pessoa/DGPC/ADF)



3 Puy-de-Dôme Christ on the Cross (detail), 12th century, wood, h: 158 cm. Musée National du Moyen Âge - Thermes de Cluny, Paris, France, inv. CL23409 (photo: Agence Photographique de la Réunion des Musées et du Grand Palais)

- [19] The outline and shape of the eyes differ from many of the aforementioned comparative models. Indeed, the Viseu Christ presents wide open eyes, and can be compared with those of a Triumphant (?) Christ, dating from 1130-1140, attributed to a Burgundy workshop, today at the Cleveland Museum of Art;<sup>13</sup> and also with the outline of the eyes

<sup>13</sup> See picture of *Corpus from a Crucifix* (detail), c.1130-1140, polychromed wood, France, Burgundy, (Autun?), 111 x 220 x 78 cm. Cleveland Museum of Art, U.S.A., inv. 35.36. in <http://www.clevelandart.org/art/1980.1> (accessed 27 November 2013).

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of another Triumphant Christ, c.1150-1200, from Palencia, Spain, currently at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York (inv. 35.36).<sup>14</sup>

- [20] The scarcity of information on the origins of Viseu Christ renders discussions on its patron, namely his identification, almost impossible. However, given the participation of this type of objects in the stagings of the liturgy during Holy Week, it is possible that it originates from a monastery in the region, where this type of ceremony would have taken place. This would explain its later transfer to the main museum of Viseu, should the acquisition by a private individual or an antiques dealer, and later donation to the museum be excluded.
- [21] Finally, as we examine the proposed chronology, based in the iconographic and stylistic elements already discussed, it is my opinion that this work dates from some time between the mid-twelfth century and the first quarter of the thirteenth century. Therefore, it appears to be the oldest articulated Christ in the Peninsula, since its stylistic characterisation underlines that it dates from the same period, or perhaps even from before, as the oldest known sculpture currently known in Spain – *Cristo de los Gascones*, a late Romanesque work (Santos Justo y Pastor church, in Segovia).<sup>15</sup> Tradition says that it came from France, and also features the particularity of being articulated in several areas – shoulders and elbows – though clearly less areas than the Viseu Christ. The Portuguese articulated sculpture may have been imported from France or from the territories located largely in the former Hispanic Mark, or perhaps made in Portugal by an itinerant foreign artist, as was common during the period. Until proven otherwise, it is a unique typology in Portugal, and there are no indications of an artistic "school" that precedes or follows it, a situation that characterises many of the best works of Portuguese medieval sculpture.

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### **The Senhor Bom Jesus of Bouças (Bouças Christ)**

- [22] Within the universe of Portuguese wooden sculpture, some noteworthy examples coincide with the "mixed" Christ typology.<sup>16</sup> One particularly interesting item stands out due to its typology and its attributable dating: the Crucified Christ of the former Benedictine

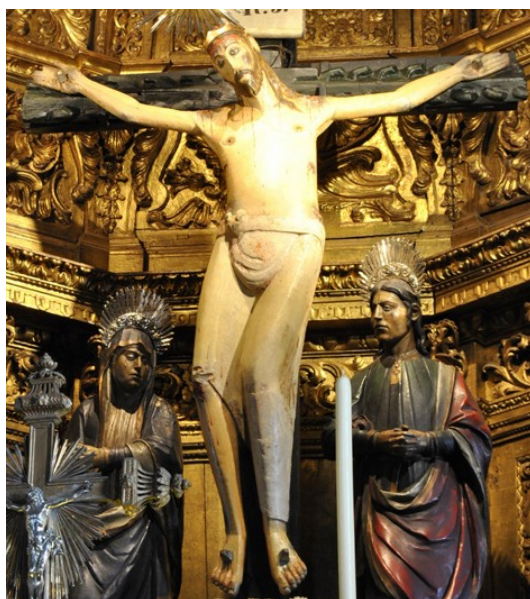
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<sup>14</sup> Regarding the two sculptures currently found in American museums see, among other titles, P. Verdier, "A romaneseque corpus", in: *Bulletin of the Cleveland Museum of Art* 68, Cleveland 1981, 65-74 and John P. O'Neill and Mark D. Greenberg, eds., *The Metropolitan Museum of Art. Europe in The Middle Ages*, New York 1987, 64-65.

<sup>15</sup> See the results put forward by Maria José Martínez Martínez, "El Santo Cristo de Burgos y los Cristos articulados", in: *Boletín del Seminario de Estudios de Arte y Arqueología*, 69-70, Valladolid 2003-2004, 207-246, here 237: "La más antigua de que tengo noticia es el llamado 'Cristo de los Gascones', conservado en la iglesia de San Justo de Segovia, una imagen todavía románica que tiene articulados los hombros y los brazos, sin que existan trazas de que las articulaciones hayan sido disimuladas con materiales flexibles. Su aspecto actual es resultado de arreglos en diversas épocas por el uso continuado que se ha hecho de ella. Como es propio de la época románica, el tratamiento esquemático prevalece sobre las formas naturalistas". About the "Cristo de los Gascones" see, among others, I. de Caballos-Escalera, *Segovia Monumental*, Madrid, 1953, 52; S. Alcolea, *Segovia y su Provincia*, (Guías Artísticas de España), Barcelona, 1958, 45; V. Herbosa, *El Románico de Segovia*, León 1999, 79; J. Castán Lanaspá, "El Cristo yacente llamado de Los Gascones", in: *El Arbol de la Vida. Las Edades del Hombre*, exh. cat., Segovia 2003, 355-356.

<sup>16</sup> As previously established by Manuel Luís Real (unpublished manuscript, 1986, 177).

Monastery of Bouças, today on display, and the object of great worship, at the main church of Matosinhos, to where it was transferred in 1510 (Figs. 4, 8). It is known equally as *Senhor de Matosinhos*, *Senhor Bom Jesus of Bouças* or *Bouças Christ*.



4 Bouças Christ (Senhor de Matosinhos, or Senhor Bom Jesus de Bouças), mid-12th century, or first decades of the 13th century, polychromed wood, 204 x 169 x 33 cm. Matosinhos parish church (photo: © Alexandre Maniés)

- [23] It is a freestanding, life-sized, polychrome wooden sculpture (repainted several times) attached to a wooden cross with straight arms. The object of constant devotion since the Middle Ages,<sup>17</sup> popular belief has attributed its authorship to the biblical Nicodemus (who, according to tradition, was a sculptor), who would have thrown the sculpture out to sea, to protect it from profanation, which then reached the Portuguese shores of the Leixões harbour. The same legend surrounds one of the most emblematic Western images of Christ on the Cross, dating from the twelfth century, the *Volto Santo* at Lucca cathedral, itself modelled on the prototype of the *Volto Santo* from the Borgo San Sepolcro, dating from the seventh-ninth century). The same legend of authorship appears in Galicia, Spain, within the religious setting that surrounded the appearance of the sculptures of the Crucified Christs of the churches of Fisterra and Ourense.<sup>18</sup>
- [24] The "contamination" of Portuguese reality with this legend, a type of foundational myth regarding some impressive images of Christ on the Cross, is owed to a mid-twelfth century to the early thirteenth century trend, which echoed throughout Europe, regarding large wooden images of Christ, either solemn or suffering, on the cross. The attribution to Nicodemus at a determined moment contributed to heighten the credibility of the material representations of the Saviour (the hypothetical author knew the model and it was present in his life and at the moment of death), thereby heightening the power of the

<sup>17</sup> José Gonçalves Fabião, "A devoção, romaria e festa do Bom Jesus de Matosinhos. Sua origem e evolução", in: *Boletim da Biblioteca Pública Municipal de Matosinhos* 32 (1988), 313-334.

<sup>18</sup> Sanchez Ameijeiras, "Espiritualidad mendicante y arte gótico", 345.

sculptures to intervene in the reality, i.e. the miraculous power (and perhaps some sort of replacement of the effect attributed to the relics of the Holy Cross when they were absent from the images). Undoubtedly, this legend contributed to the ample veneration of these statues to this day. More interestingly, the Bouças Christ is connected with an added epilogue whereby, fifty years after the original finding of the statue, an arm originally missing from the sculpture also came ashore. That there is little difference between the arm and the original piece was an indication that it did in fact belong to the original sculpture.<sup>19</sup> This other miracle, while clearly fictional, may be based on a real occurrence – not its arrival by sea to Matosinhos, but the fact that, at an unknown date, most likely from the second quarter of the sixteenth century, after the Council of Trento's dispositions, one of the arms of the sculpture was replaced. This "graft" may have been hidden by mortar, polychromy, and subsequent layers of paint.<sup>20</sup> This type of intervention may signify, in the case of the Matosinhos statue, as indeed of many other statues of Christ with alterations in the arms occurring in different countries of Western Christianity, that the Romanesque or Gothic sculptures previously integrating sculpture groups of the Deposition, where the right arm of Christ always appeared free from the cross and limp, were adapted to a different iconography, with the right arm being replaced by a new arm, nailed to the Cross, with Christ transformed from Deposed to Crucified. The similarities between the Matosinhos sculpture and other late-Romanesque Christs from former documented Depositions, as we shall see, further substantiate this hypothesis.

- [25] In 1950, Correia de Campos considered this to be an artwork showing its age. For this collector and historian, "the sculpture is almost entirely useless as artwork, with its successive layers of paint", referring both to the disastrous restoration of the face, undertaken at an unknown date, which became a mask-like and strange face, with eyes open wide, painted in a bizarre and exaggerated manner; and to the long hairpiece, in natural hair, that contributed to dissimulate the original medieval face of this sculpture.
- [26] However, vicissitudes aside, it is possible to identify the typology to which this statue originally belonged, the *Christus patiens* – the body twists to the right, the head hangs softly to the right, and with a subtle projection forward, the long legs are held in parallel, with almost no flexion or contouring of the muscles, the feet are kept separate, in a discrete outwards rotation, held by a visible nail. The anatomy of the legs is not disguised under textured draperies, as often happens, but is instead visible by "attaching itself" to the simulated fabric of this very long *perizonium* which reaches the ankle in the right leg and the knee on the left leg, uncovering a wound there. The cloth is held on the upper part of the hips with a piece of fabric from the same cloth, knotted on the right, and falls

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<sup>19</sup> Joel Cleto and Suzana Faro, "Imagem do Bom Jesus de Matosinhos. Um velho e famoso naufrago", in: *O Comércio do Porto. Revista Domingo*, Porto (15 April 2001), 20-22; A. J. da Costa Valbom, A. J. S. de Matos Guimarães and J. J. Morel dos Reis, eds., *O Santuário do Senhor de Matosinhos*, Porto 1983, 25-26.

<sup>20</sup> The report regarding the restoration undertaken by Alexandre Maniés, which should determine whether different wood was used in one of the arms, is forthcoming. Should it be inconclusive on this issue, dendrochronological analysis should be undertaken.

over the lower abdomen in a semi-circular fold, very much like an "apron", recalling other examples of twelfth-century crucified Christs. The long and lithe flexed arms, presented as if they were not holding the weight of the body (an artificiality characteristic of Romanesque statues), display the hands with the palms facing the viewer, fingers held together, without any sign of the tension brought on by the intense pain of the nails perforating them and holding them to the cross. The whole image "breathes" serenity, even though sadness and pain are visible in the leaning head and in the large flexion of the body.

- [27] The most recent study on Gothic images of the Crucifixion considers that this work dates from the late thirteenth century, or even from the first years of the fourteenth century.<sup>21</sup> In spite of the known existence, especially in Italy, of wooden images dating from the second half of the thirteenth century and even from the fourteenth century that maintained characteristics of representation specific to the Romanesque visual formulae, namely the two feet held separately and nailed to the Cross individually, on par with aspects that clearly characterise Gothic imagery, there are, in the case of the *Bouças Christ*, many elements of its form and iconography that suggest it dates from an earlier period. As we will see, the analysis of the formal elements and the disciplined search of parallels and differences with other, international, Romanesque and Gothic images suggest a date consistent with the first hypothesis put forward by Correia de Campos and J. A. Pinto Ferreira – the late twelfth century, or early thirteenth century.<sup>22</sup>
- [28] In addition to the previously mentioned representation of the feet, we find the evidence of a treatment that aimed, more than anywhere else on the body, to suggest a naturalism worthy of recording, with obvious similitudes with the chiselling of the feet of the Metropolitan Museum's Christ of Palencia (inv. 35.36), dating from 1150-1200 and with another Christ on the Cross from the same Spanish province, from the parish church of San Miguel de Aguilar de Campóo, dating from between the late twelfth century and the early thirteenth century.<sup>23</sup> However, it is equally important to search for the existence of parallels between other constitutive parts of this artwork and wooden sculptures dating from the twelfth century and from the first decades of the thirteenth century, still existing on other countries.
- [29] The torso, arms, and the positioning of the legs – exhibiting the long, barely sinuous body, with a smooth torso barely displaying open visible wounds, instead opting for subtle markings on the wood, underlined by some polichromy and layers of paint – appear removed from the intense naturalism usually displayed in these sculptures during the

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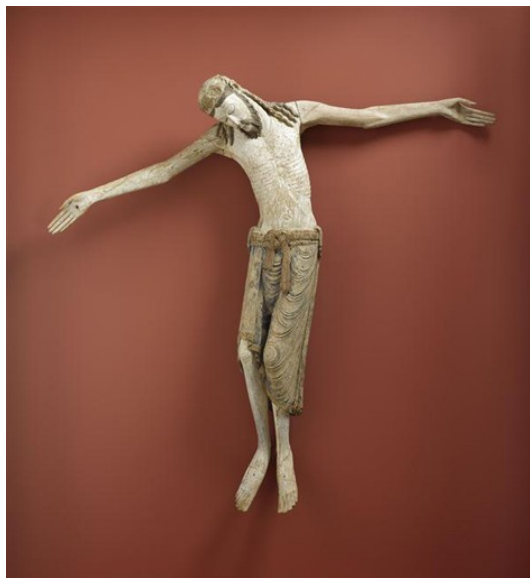
<sup>21</sup> Barroca, "Mário Algumas iconografias. Cristo Crucificado", 179-187. Manuel Luís Real considered it to date from the thirteenth century, even though he recognised the existence of many defining characteristics of the previous century (unpublished manuscript, 1986, 177).

<sup>22</sup> Correia de Campos, *Imagens de Cristo em Portugal*, Lisboa [1950], 146; J. A. Pinto Ferreira, "A Escultura do 'Bom Jesus de Bouças' (Nótula Histórica e Etnográfica)", in: *Separata de Boletim Cultural da Câmara Municipal do Porto*, vol. XXI – Fasc. 1-2, Porto 1958, 7.

<sup>23</sup> C. J. A. G., "28 – Anónimo", in: *Las Edades del Hombre. El Arte en las Iglesias de Castilla y León*, exh. cat., Salamanca 1988, 72-73.



Gothic period. The *Bouças Christ* features closer resemblances with the well-known and aforementioned Christ from a former Deposition, known as the *Courajod Christ* (Burgundy, second quarter of the twelfth century), currently at the Louvre (inv. RF1082), the earliest known example of the few surviving French Depositions of the period (Fig. 5, 11).<sup>24</sup>



5 Courajod Christ, 2nd quarter of the 12th century, polychromed wood, 155 x 158 x 30 cm. Musée du Louvre, Paris, inv. RF1082 (photo: Agence Photographique de la Réunion des Musées et du Grand Palais)

- [30] There are clear analogies with this model at the level of its conception and disposition of several parts of the bodies (being that the *Courajod Christ*, older and featuring great artistic quality, should be considered a model, and even a prototype for other subsequent representations), namely in the taste for barely curving and smooth surfaced torsos, with a light chiselling of the ribcage, as well as for the parallel legs slightly bending towards the right, with feet kept separate, and the head leaning in the same direction.
- [31] It is also important to compare the *Bouças Christ* with two other examples attributed to French workshops in the region of Burgundy – the Christ from a former Deposition originally on display at Pisa Cathedral (until 1595), and today held at Pisa's Museo dell'Opera del Duomo (Fig. 6),<sup>25</sup> and the Cleveland Museum of Art's Triumphant (?) Christ<sup>26</sup>, from 1130-1140 – both large sculptures.

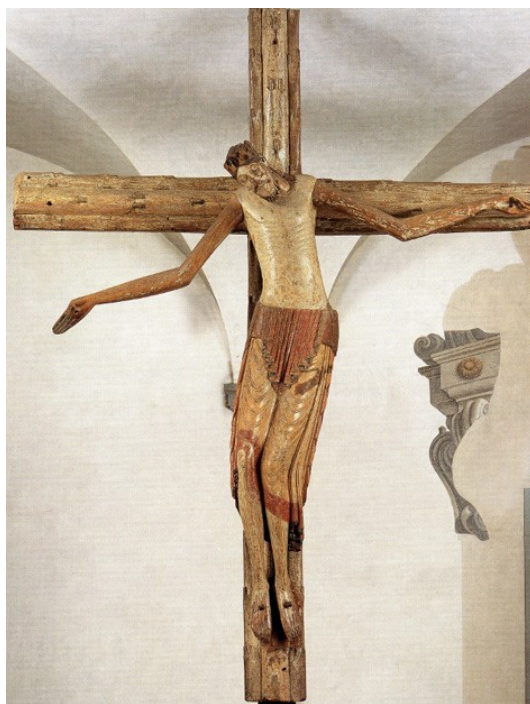
<sup>24</sup> See, among other studies, Jean-René Gaborit, "Le rappresentazioni scolpite della Deposizione in Francia dai X ai XIV secolo", in: Giovanna Saporì and Bruno Toscano, eds., *La Deposizione Ligneia in Europa. L'immagine, il Culto, la Forma*, Milano 2004, 560 and Bruno Toscano and Giovanna Saporì, "La Deposizione ligneia: da una mostra a un *suma*", in: Francesca Flores d'Arcais, ed., *Il teatro delle statue: gruppi lignei di Deposizione e Annunciazione tra XII e XIII secolo* (Actas do Convegno "Attorno ai gruppi lignei della deposizione"), Milano 2005, 18.

<sup>25</sup> I am grateful to Diego Guidi, Director of the Artistic Heritage of Pisa, who so readily, and without charge, sent me the images of the Romanesque Christ of the Christ held at Pisa's Museo dell' Duomo published here.

<sup>26</sup> See picture of *Corpus from a Crucifix*, c.1130-1140, polychromed wood, France (Autun?), 111 x 220 x 78 cm. Cleveland Museum of Art, U.S.A., inv. 35.36. in <http://www.clevelandart.org/art/1980.1> (accessed 27 November 2013).

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6 Christ from a Deposition, 2nd half of the 12th century, polychromed and gilded wood, 370 x 240 cm. Museo dell'Opera del Duomo, Pisa, Italy (photo: © Museo dell'Opera del Duomo)

- [32] The sculpture in Pisa, dating from the second half of the twelfth century, has gigantic proportions that contribute for its strong visual and emotional impact on the faithful: "It represents one of the most important masterpieces of statues from this period, especially because of the importance of proportions and the delicacy of its modelling, and the contrast between each visual mass bearing a fragmented rhythm, with diagonal prevalence, that delineate the body of Christ with the Cross as a background that confers it its pathos and drama, as well as the fine, subtle model in the almost chiselled lines that decorate the surface with delicate drawings."<sup>27</sup> This work features an obvious stylistic relationship with the *Courajod Christ*,<sup>28</sup> as well as with the Bouças Christ, on the treatment of the torso. As for the Cleveland Museum of Art's Christ, attributed to the circle of Gislebertus de Autun its almost texture-less torso also serves as a comparative item, as does the modelling and disposition of the legs.<sup>29</sup>

<sup>27</sup> António Chinca, "Cristo em madeira da Duomo", in: U. Castelli Barsali, R. Gagetti and O. Parra, eds., *História e Obras-primas de Pisa*, Firenze 1995, 50. See also Gampiero Lucchesi, *Museo dell'Opera del Duomo di Pisa*, Pisa 1993, 33, in which the sculpture is compared with the *Courajod Christ*, with other objects from the twelfth century, such as the Triumphant Christ held at the Metropolitan Museum of Art (inv. 35.36), with the Deposition at the Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum (Boston).

<sup>28</sup> Pietro Toesca, "Un Crocefisso borgognone", in: *Belle Arti I* (1947), 135-139, had previously established this connection, which was then referenced in other studies on the two images. See Antonino Caleca, "I gruppi toscani", in: Giovanna Saporì and Bruno Toscano, eds., *La Deposizione Ligneata in Europa. L'immagine, il Culto, la Forma*, Milano 2004, 325.

<sup>29</sup> P. Verdier, "A romanesque corpus", 65-74. See also H.D.W., "1. Corpus from a Crucifix. Burgundy, probably Autun", in: Walter Cahn, ed., *Romanesque Sculpture in American Collections*, Turnhout 1999, 147-148.



7 Christ on the Cross, 2nd half of the 12th century or 1st half of 13th century, polychromed wood, 157 x 163 x 34 cm. Church of San Vicente de Ardisa, Zaragoza, Aragon, Spain. Museu Diocesano de Jaca, inv. MDJ00017 (photo: © MDJ Archive)

- [33] Outside French Romanesque sculpture, other examples reflect the same model/figurine concept of the *Bouças Christ*, in churches on the Iberian side of the Pyrenees – in Aragon, the Christ found at the church of de San Vicente de Ardisa, dating from the second half of the twelfth century or from the early thirteenth century, currently at Jaca's Museo Diocesano (Fig. 7); and the Christ held at the Santa Maria de Alquezar Collegiate (Huesca), dating from the first years of the thirteenth century.<sup>30</sup>
- [34] Likewise, the "strange" *perizonium* of the *Bouças Christ*, the longest in Portuguese sculpture, and without identical parallels between the twelfth and fourteenth centuries, must be analysed in the context of the same family in medieval European sculpture. Once again, the *Courajod Christ* provides an important reference. It displays the oldest known model of a long purity cloth, which covers a large part of the legs of the Christ, and almost reaches the left ankle. However, the treatment of the *perizonium* draping is different in the two sculptures. Other sculptures of Burgundian origin also provide interesting comparisons – the previously mentioned Pisa Duomo example, whose *perizonium* stands out for its size, and covers an important part of the legs, and especially the left leg, as well as the manner in which the cloth fits and moulds the legs, and is held at the waist, creating, at the centre, an apron-like fold, notwithstanding the differences in the visual treatment between this Christ and the Bouças example. Even though none of the sculptures discussed here feature exactly similar purity cloths, they have in common a longer than usual cloth, and a central fold, whether draped horizontally or vertically – which places them within a typology with specific

<sup>30</sup> See, among others, María del Carmen Lacarra Ducay, *Catedral y Museo Diocesano de Jaca*, dir. Victor Nieto Alcaide, Bruxelles 1993, 95-96.

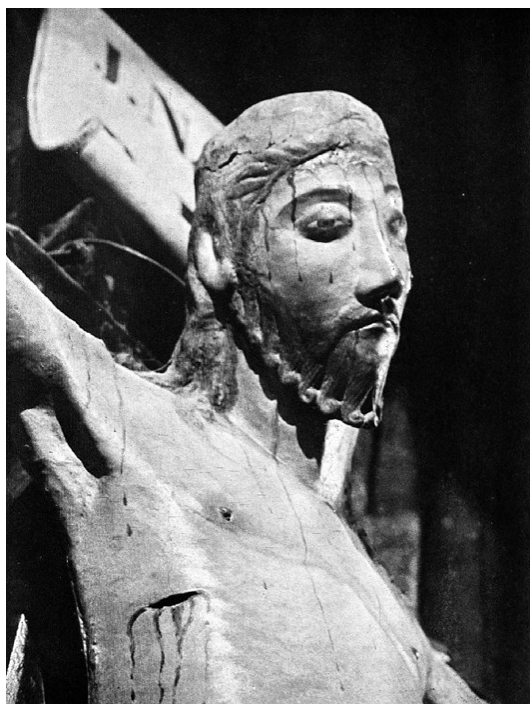
characteristics.<sup>31</sup> In addition to the Brugundian sculptures we find other good examples of the chiselling of this model of *perizonium* in wooden images of Christ in Northern Spain (with a fold at the centre falling over the lower torso, as is the case of the twelfth century Triumphant Christ, from the Catilistar Castle (Zaragoza, Aragon), and that of the Romanesque Christ from the Monastery of San Pedro de Siresa (Huesca, Aragon)).<sup>32</sup> Another example stands out not because of its dimensions, but because of its strangely smooth treatments, without any expressive draping of the cloth, and in which the fabric is displayed skin-like – the *perizonium* treatment of the Cleveland Museum of Art's sculpture.

[35] Equally as important to the characterisation of this work, as well as to its geographical and chronological contextualisation are the comparisons at the level of the face. The *Bouças Christ* features an oval face, with large, almond-shaped eyes, and salient eye orbits; the nose is long, prominent and triangular, similar to the Viseu sculpture; the ears are large and equally salient, with the usual treatment that these elements also benefit in aforementioned Romanesque representations of Christ; the mouth is slightly open, with downwards curving lips. Throughout time, the beard, moustache and hair were subjected to several layers of overpaint and the addition of other painted elements, such as the blood on the forehead. Simple direct observation and the use of old reference photographs allow us to understand that, originally, the long moustache followed the curving of the lips, mirroring other twelfth century sculptures of Christ; the beard was depicted in thin, parallel striations carved into the wood and ending in small individual strands in the shape of salient, comma-like, curls. This last feature is one of the most notable characteristics of the beards of the images of French Christs dating from the first half of the twelfth century, and of Catalan and Aragonese sculptures from the mid-twelfth century, and was a device used throughout the thirteenth century.

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<sup>31</sup> The *perizonium* model with a fold in the centre, presenting a semi-circular or rectangular shape, pleated or smooth, constitutes, in Iberia, one of the models identified in Romanesque sculpture of the north of the peninsula by Carmen Gómez García, *Disposición del Paño de Pureza en la Escultura del Cristo Crucificado entre los siglos XII e XVII*, Madrid 2007, 319, where, in addition to the examples quoted here, others such as the Áneu Christ, in Manresa, in Ripio, and the *1147 Christ* (Catalonia National Art Museum) are discussed. It should also be noted that this is the same typology of *perizonium* found in the Christ of the bas-relief of Santo Domingo de Silos (Burgos), dating from 1090-1120 (regarding this bas-relief see Elisabeth Valdez del Álamo, *Palace of the Mind. The Cloister of Silos and Spanish Sculpture of the Twelfth Century*, Turnhout 2012).

<sup>32</sup> Lacarra Ducay, "El Cristo de San Pedro de Siresa. Aproximación a su estudio", in: *Homenaje a don Antonio Durán Gudiol*, Huesca 1995, 483-497. This same figurine, found in wooden statues, can also be observed in small metal sculptures, usually of gilded bronze, and are excellent examples such as the Christ at the Metropolitan Museum of Art (inv. 17-190-760), and another similar object, more rigid in the anatomical treatment at the Louvre (inv. OA7489), presenting similarities in the treatment of the face of the Christ of Cristo de Santa Maria de Mijaran, as noted by Subes, "Le Christ de Mijaran et ses liens avec la sculpture romane d'Erill la Vall et de Ripoll", 20. These two metal Christs are either of French or English origin (Plantagenet domains) and date from the first half of the twelfth century.



8 Bouças Christ (detail). Reprod. from J. A. Pinto Ferreira, "A Escultura do 'Bom Jesus de Bouças' (Nótula Histórica e Etnográfica)", *Separata de Boletim Cultural da Câmara Municipal do Porto*, vol. XXI, numbers 1-2, Porto 1958, Pl. 4

- [36] The X-rays of the *Bouças Christ*, undertaken by Alexandre Maniés for the intervention of conservation and restoration in 2012, corroborate these observations (Figs. 9, 10).<sup>33</sup> These confirm the design of the head and facial hair, which are fundamental for the dating of the work. In addition to the radiographs, the statue also underwent the removal of some filling mortar, which brought to light the original chiselling of the hair – it confirmed that it followed the depictions of sculptures of Christ from Burgundy and the Pyrenees, with the exception of the Christ from the Erill-la-Val Deposition. The hair, parted in half, develops along striated, parallel lines on the wood, over part of the forehead and close to the ears, falling in sculpted long, thin, separate strands of hair, over the neck, shoulder and back. Thus, the radiographs demonstrate that the treatment of the hair, beard and moustache next to the forehead and ears is identical to the *Courajod Christ*. These models were repeatedly used, with varying levels of alterations, in wooden statues of the Crucifixion in France and North Iberia<sup>34</sup> throughout most of the entire twelfth century and early thirteenth century.<sup>35</sup>

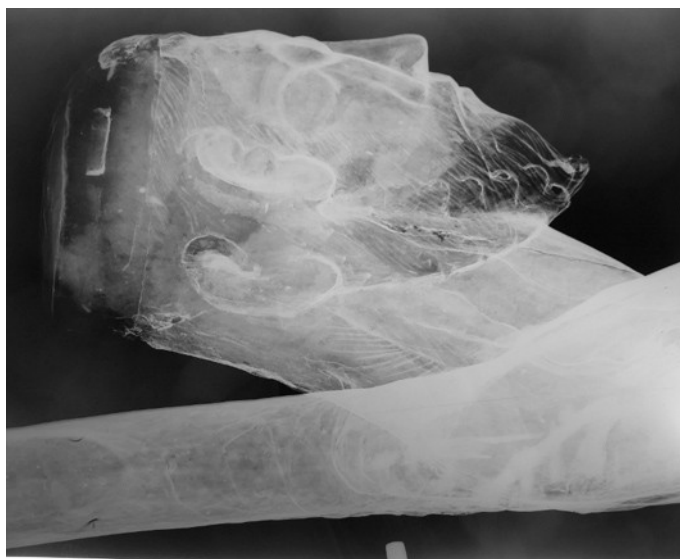
<sup>33</sup> To Alexandre Maniés I thank the images of the X-rays and photographs of the visible spectrum of the head of the statue (unpublished), fundamental to the arguments presented here. Although the laboratory analysis are still pending, given that they are an integrant part of the M.A. thesis of Maniés, the information he agreed to share with me has been important in the understanding of this work, enabling a more acute questioning based on the images available. Once the full conclusions of the laboratory analysis are known, this statue can be the object of a new study.

<sup>34</sup> In what concerns the beard and the moustache, these also recall those of the Romanesque Christ of the Marés Museum (inv. 650), originally made in the Catalonian Pyrenees and the aforementioned wooden Christ held at the Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum, Boston.

<sup>35</sup> M. L. Real (1986), not yet using X-rays, identified an Iberian matrix to the model of the beard and moustache of this sculpture – "with parallel, crocheted, hair strands, and an exaggeratedly long  
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9 X-ray of the head of Bouças Christ  
(Photo: © Alexandre Maniés)



10 X-ray of the head of Bouças Christ  
(Photo: © Alexandre Maniés)

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hair" - and believed he saw that plaited hair "on the forehead" (in the manner of Erill laVal's Deposition). However, in possession of the laboratory analysis results, and after a full restoration, it is clearly noticeable that the sculptor chose limp hair, in parallel striations, parted in half at the top of the head, a model which, as I have discussed, recalls the twelfth century Burgundian Christs as well as examples from Aragon and Catalonia dating from the twelfth century to the first third of the thirteenth century.

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11 Head of Courajod Christ. Musée du Louvre, Paris, France. Inv. RF1082 (Photo: Agence Photographique de la Réunion des Musées et du Grand Palais)

- [37] A discreet rope crown deteriorated, and of an unknown date, ties the hair of the *Bouças Christ*. The head is elongated on the upper part, a device also found in the *Courajod Christ* and subsequently used in the Christ at the Tivoli Cathedral Deposition (c.1230-1240), most likely with the aim of creating a support for a high crown, whose lower part would therefore fit over the head, and thus hide the rough wood, while simultaneously being removable and autonomous. These crowns, which have disappeared from both the Portuguese and Louvre sculptures, could be in metal, as was probably the case for the latter, and as is the case of, among others, the Romanesque Christ at the Catilistar castle; or in wood, as the Pisa sculpture, and the sculpture found at the Museu Frederic Marés, Barcelona,<sup>36</sup> of a Leon-Aragonese origin, and dating from the last quarter of the thirteenth century, or the Ourense cathedral's triumphant Christ from the early thirteenth century, among many other examples.<sup>37</sup>
- [38] The stylistic and comparative analysis undertaken here culminates in a proposed revision for the date of production of this sculpture, locating it in the mid-twelfth century to the early thirteenth century at the latest. This in turn requires a new examination of the possible patrons for the *Bouças Christ*. The absence of written documentation, allied to the abundance of important political and social figures susceptible of supporting the Benedictine monastery of Bouças, make this identification quite difficult. Joel Cleto<sup>38</sup> raises the possibility of a patronage by Mafalda (1197-1256), the devout daughter of king

<sup>36</sup> Francesca Español, "Los Descendimientos hispanos", in: *La Deposizione Ligneia in Europa. L'immagine, il Culto, la Forma*, Giovanna Saporì and Bruno Toscano, ed., Milan 2004, 529-531.

<sup>37</sup> Rocío Sanchez Ameijeiras, "Algunos aspectos de la cultura visual en la Galicia de Fernando II y Alfonso IX", in: *Románico en Galicia y Portugal*, Santiago de Compostela/Lisbon 2001, 182.

<sup>38</sup> Joel Cleto, "Lord of Matosinhos. Legend. History. Heritage" (Synthesis), 2007, [http://joelcleto.no.comunidades.net/index.php?pagina=1256238787\\_01](http://joelcleto.no.comunidades.net/index.php?pagina=1256238787_01) (accessed 27 November 2013).



Sancho I, the patron of the Monastery of Arouca, supporting his hypothesis with Mafalda's well-known appreciation of relics, a category to which this sculpture can be ascribed, given the attributed hand of Nicodemus, as well as with the close relationship between the monasteries of Arouca and Bouças. His stylistic considerations characterise the sculpture as too Gothic to have been produced in Mafalda's lifetime. This argument, however, can be dismissed by a fresh stylistic analysis, which indicates a different conclusion, and does not therefore completely invalidate the possibility of Mafalda as patron.

[39] Cleto then ponders on the possible patronage by Geraldo Domingues (1285?-1321), bishop of Porto between 1300 and 1308, who, in spite of dying in the southern city of Évora, requested his burial to occur at Bouças. Regardless of this devotion, which led him to want to be buried at Bouças, the characteristics of the image suggest late twelfth century to early thirteenth century, and not the early fourteenth century, when Domingues was bishop of Porto.

[40] While it is not possible to accept or refuse any of these hypotheses, it is necessary to underscore other possibilities for patronage of the Bouças monastery. Patronage by a bishop of the Porto Cathedral is possible. They include figures of probable Burgundian origins, such as Hugo (1112-1138) and his successor, Pedro Rabaldes (1138-1145). Further research may establish some connection to Burgundy. After all, the founding family of the country, the counts, then kings, of Portugal, originated from this French region, and regular artistic exchanges were therefore not a novelty. In addition, the legend pertaining to the sculpture's origin underscores that, in spite of the identity of its patron, its authorship is most likely foreign, most likely in France or North Iberia, whether in Aragon, Catalonia or Palencia, travelling to Portugal by sea, arriving at Leixões. This issue therefore, remains open to debate.

[<top>](#)

### **A fragment of a Christ on the Cross (MNAA Christ)**

[41] Other works reveal the "fusion" of iconographic elements, and gestures, in a type that can be characterised as "mixed", featuring distinct elements from the Matosinhos sculpture, with a greater number of Gothicising elements – the overlapping though not yet crossed feet – but with the arms still tense, and the crown fixated on the hair. The first known example of this trend is the fragment of a sculpture representing Christ on the Cross held at Lisbon's Museu Nacional de Arte Antiga (MNAA, inv. 1468 Esc.), dating from the thirteenth century (Fig. 12). The collector Ernesto Vilhena donated it to the museum and its provenance is unknown. The context of its commission and production is therefore equally unknown.



12 Fragment of a sculpture of Christ on the Cross (MNAA Christ), 13th century, wood, 141 x 34 x 26,5 cm. Museu Nacional de Arte Antiga (MNAA), Lisbon, Portugal, inv. 1468 (photo: José Pessoa/DGPC/ADF)

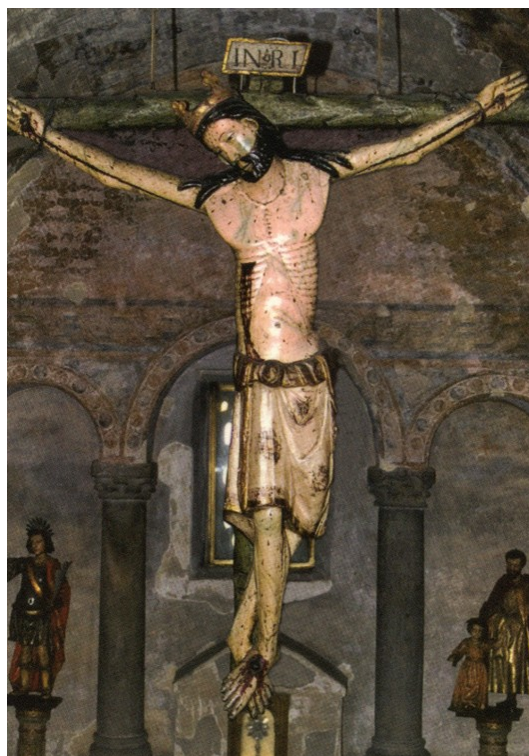
- [42] In spite of the destruction of many elements and of the impressive erosion of the wood, the typology of the *Christus patiens* is obvious, as is the quality of the original work. The torso features an undulating design, with a slight curve to the right, as well as the use of schematic lines on the thorax and the vertical draperies on the *perizonium*.<sup>39</sup> The latter is one of the most differentiating elements when compared to other thirteenth century elements. It ends at knee-height, and is tied with a rope around the hips, forming deep, vertical folds, conferring greater volume and sense of verticality to the statue. This *perizonium* typology – short, with the fabric fold covering the pelvic area, as we have seen in the case of the Bouça Christ – is relatively common in the imagery of the late-Romanesque wooden sculptures in Northern Iberian territories, which can be observed in the aforementioned examples, as well as in those of the San Mamés hermitage (in Así de Broto, Huesca), and in the Christ of the former monastery at San Pedro de Ripoll (thirteenth century). This *perizonium* tends to vanish throughout the thirteenth century when the curve of the torso and of the hips forces the fabric knot to move to one side of the hips.

<sup>39</sup> Maria João Vilhena de Carvalho, "7. S. João Evangelista", in: *Santo António. O Santo do Menino Jesus*, exh. cat., Lisbon 1996, 60-61 and Maria João Vilhena de Carvalho and Sandra Vaz Costa, "Cristo Crucificado", in: *O Santo do Menino Jesus. Santo António, Arte e História*. Lisbon 1995, 74. License: The text of this article is provided under the terms of the [Creative Commons License CC-BY-NC-ND 3.0](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/3.0/).

- [43] The gothic quality of this sculpture, initially suggested by the slightly undulating torso is further reinforced by the joined position of the legs, the juxtaposition of the feet held to the Cross with one single nail, and the position of the head, slightly leaning towards the right, yet sufficiently raised to enable the viewer to understand that the represented being is living, and therefore disconnected from the representations of commotion and horror conveyed by many sculptures of Christ from the 1300s. The *MNAA Christ* also indicates, in addition to the *perizonium*, the existence of a real crown, either open with high finials, closed, or hat-like, such as the one we see on the Calvary Christ known as the *Tragó de Noguera Christ* at the National Art Museum of Catalonia (inv. 015887-000), dating from the last quarter of the twelfth century, or the first quarter of the thirteenth century, an image with which it shares the position of the head and some schematics in the delineation of the ribs. However, both sculptures differ in the positioning of the legs, as the Catalonian item presents them wider apart.
- [44] Except for the *perizonium's* more archaic and suggestive model, the *MNAA Christ* finds worthy parallels with the Christ on the Cross found at the Asturian church of San Julián de los Prados, Oviedo, dating from the thirteenth century (Fig. 13).<sup>40</sup> A lifesize sculpture, it hangs on the apse over the main altar. The upper part of the body with the modelling of the pectoral muscles, the curving and well delineated ribs, the smooth and slightly protruding stomach, the position of the head, and the presence of a royal crown, as well as the long, thin strands of hair falling over the shoulder and neck (quite deteriorated in the case of the *MNAA Christ*), and the legs that are held together by one nail over the juxtaposed feet, are noteworthy.

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<sup>40</sup> Maria Soledad Álvarez Martínez, *El Románico en Asturias*, Oviedo 1999, 251-252. The author associates the Christ de San Julián de los Prados with the Christs at Cueras and at Semproniana. See also G. Ramallo, "Imaginería medieval en la zona sur-occidental asturiana", in: *Asturiensia medievalia* 4 (1981), 237- 274, here 252.



13 Christ on the Cross, 13th century, polychromed wood, San Julian de los Prados Church, Spain  
(Photo: Paulo Almeida Fernandes)

- [45] The *MNAA Christ's* choice of crown and the *perizonium* model signals a survival of Romanesque elements indicating the sculptor's preference for formulae no longer in fashion, though still prevalent during the first half of the 1300s, an occurrence which suggests a chronological period for this work of c.1200-1250. As far as the image is concerned, I suggest an Iberian authorship, although a specific geographical circumscription is not possible at the present time.

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### **Two examples of sculptures from the 1300s**

- [46] The images discussed below were produced during the fourteenth century, and maintain defining characteristics of the *Christus patiens*. The first is the *Christ on the Cross* at the church of the Monastery of Santa Maria de Almoster, a house of the Cistercian Order in Santarém, founded in 1292 by Berengária Aires de Gosende (Fig. 14).<sup>41</sup>
- [47] It reveals a certain staticity, in accordance with models from previous periods, as can be seen in the body's mostly rectilinear position – the thorax only portrays softness in the curving lines of the ribs and in the slightly protruding abdomen and pectoral muscles – as well as in the arms stretched on the cross. The physiognomy also displays features of sculptures of Christ that can be dated to the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, such as the excessively large and protruding ears, or the beard, which appears in short strands presented with a heavy graphic effect. However, the sculpture also features important Gothic elements in use since the mid-thirteenth century or even the fourteenth century:

<sup>41</sup> See Barroca, "Algumas iconografias. Cristo Crucificado", 183.

the juxtaposed feet, not yet in a fan shape, a much shorter *perizonium*, featuring a higher number of folds and more diverse than those of the previous examples, the head jutting forward, slightly bending to the right, accentuating a face marked by suffering, as the closed eyes seem to suggest, as well as the arched eyebrows, the outline of the half-opened mouth, in a slightly descending curve, the hair in long, compact strands (with a painted mortar filling) suggesting a bloodied hair that relates with the prominent crown of thorns framing the upper part of his head. In other words, in this image, while Christ suffers on the Cross, he is alive and bears his pain heroically. This is underscored by the hands, with their open fingers, which are not tensed, the visible wounds, which are not dilacerated, the colour of the body and of the face, a natural tone, rather than a greenish or greyish one.



14 Christ on the Cross, mid-13th century. Church of the Santa Maria de Almoester Monastery, Santarém, Portugal (Photo: Paulo Almeida Fernandes)

- [48] With the date of the founding of the Monastery of Almoester in 1292, and the death of Berengária in 1310, and assuming she was the statue's patron, M. J. Barroca offers an execution date in the first years of the fourteenth century.<sup>42</sup> This possibility is coherent with the formal characteristics of the object.
- [49] Also in the vicinity of the old quarters of Santarém, the so-called *Cristo de Mont'Iráz* takes its name from the first small hermitage for which it is believed to have been made, and which is believed to have housed the first Dominicans of Santarém in 1218-1225. The

<sup>42</sup> Barroca, "Algumas iconografias. Cristo Crucificado", 183.



image is smaller than the sculptures discussed so far, and is also smaller than other Iberian wooden sculptures of Christ intended for liturgical theatrical stagings. It is possible that, originally, this Deposition, of more modest dimensions, was placed on the main altar or within a side altar, as seems to have occurred with similar images (and even with the same iconography), such as one of the paintings of the altarpiece of St. Matthew and St. Francis in Maiorca Cathedral, from the second half of the fourteenth century.<sup>43</sup>

[50] The *Cristo de Mont'Iráz* survived the destruction (disappearance) of a sculpture group of the Deposition from the Cross,<sup>44</sup> as demonstrated by its position and its interaction with the cross itself – only the figure's left arm is nailed to it. The right arm hangs loose, the body is bent over, the head hangs forward. This is the image of an inert, dead body, which should have been surrounded by four additional figures also present at the Golgotha during the painful episode. The fate of the other figures in this group is unknown.



15 Mont'Iráz Christ, c.1250-1350, polychromed wood, 112 x 74 x 35 cm. Santa Iria da Ribeira Church, Santarém, Portugal (photo: Paulo Almeida Fernandes)

<sup>43</sup> Español, "Los Descendimientos hispanos", 37.

<sup>44</sup> Known for a long time as Christ on the Cross, it was only in 1997 (Vitor Serrão, "Tumulária Medieval", in: *Santarém. Candidatura de Santarém a Património Mundial II*, Santarém 1997, 122), that it became identified as a Deposition.



- [51] This image has known several possible dates, which range from the end of the twelfth century, early thirteenth century<sup>45</sup>, to the thirteenth century.<sup>46</sup> The modelling of the torso, the artificially protruding ribs, but with great visual impact, the flat and smooth stomach, the summary modelling of arms, hands, legs and feet – juxtaposed and held with a single nail –, the absence of the crown of thorns and the long *perizonium* (reaching the knees), with the fabric treated like a cinched wrap, suggest a date coinciding with the first phase of the Portuguese Gothic (thirteenth century). However, these elements were still prevalent during the fourteenth century in international representations of Christ, both in painting and sculpture. Here, it is the exaggerated curving of the body, bent over the right side, which raises questions. This is rarely observed in twelfth to fourteenth centuries Depositions in Spain, France, and Italy, as occurrence leading Francesca Espanõl to conclude that "of all the Iberian examples of this sculpture it is the one featuring greatest gestural dramatism".<sup>47</sup>
- [52] This impressive positioning of the body of the *Cristo de Mont'Iráz*, with the legs bent upwards and the body and head bent downwards, in fact revisits an older typology whose origins most dramatically and expressively rest in the Externsteine bas-relief, dating from the first quarter of the twelfth century.
- [53] In the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, in the main geographical centres of production of Depositions, and especially freestanding variations, the position of the figure of Christ loses limb movement. Indeed, it is mostly the right arm that, loosened from the arm of the cross, falls down; in some cases, both arms hang almost vertically while the body and legs barely register a slight twist, albeit full-facing. The rare exceptions to this observation are the Christ of the Deposition of de Santa Maria de Vicopisano (1210-1220). The dramatism in the disposition of the body of Christ in Depositions returns to Western art iconography in the second or third quarters of the thirteenth century, as seen, in painting, by in the Deposition by the anonymous Master of St. Francis (Galeria Nazionale del Umbria, Perugia), and in devotional sculpture in the ivory Deposition from the third quarter of the thirteenth century at the Louvre (inv. AO 3935).<sup>48</sup> Both present intense expressiveness in the manner in which the body of Christ violently twists and falls. Decades later, the example provided by the iconography of a painting Simone Martini – a Deposition on the reverse of the Orsini polyptych (1330-1334) (Musée du Louvre-inv. 670bis) – clearly reveals a growing taste for dramatism in the treatment of the characters present at the most intense moments of the Passion.

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<sup>45</sup> Gustavo Matos de Sequeira, *Inventário Artístico de Portugal. Distrito de Santarém*, vol. III, Lisbon 1949, 32; Amado, Custódio and Mata, *S. Frei Gil de Santarém e a sua Época*, 154; Serrão, "Tumulária Medieval", 122.

<sup>46</sup> Barroca, "Algumas iconografias. Cristo Crucificado", 18; Espanõl, "Los Descendimientos hispanos", 554.

<sup>47</sup> Espanõl, "Los Descendimientos hispanos", 554.

<sup>48</sup> See Danielle Gaborit-Chopin, *Ivoires du Moyen Âge*, Fribourg 1978, 139 and Danielle Gaborit-Chopin, "103. Group: La Descente de Croix", in: *Ivoires Médiévaux. XIIIe – XVe Siècles*, Paris 2003, 301-316.

- [54] Its dating must not be later than the last quarter of the thirteenth century, or the first quarter of the fourteenth century, as indicated by the delicate and harmonious treatment of the face, with long hairs along naturalistic lines. As far as the location of origin is concerned, there is a strong possibility of a Portuguese manufacture, even though its antecedents, and other sculptures from the period with similar characteristics are unknown.

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### **Final considerations**

- [55] While the study and desired debate on wooden sculptures representing Christ on the Cross, whether Crucified or Deposed, does not end here, but rather departs from here for a wider and deeper vision regarding the production and patronage of wooden sculpture in late medieval Portugal, this study had three goals: 1) to review of previous interpretations for some of the better known objects; 2) to introduce objects less known to an international audience; 3) to argue, whenever possible for a chronological and production contextualisation within the international context of European medieval sculpture.
- [56] This last goal had hitherto received scant attention in Portuguese art historiography. It required the comparison between formal and iconographic elements of Portuguese sculptures and the widest possible number of foreign sculptures of the same period (twelfth to fourteenth centuries), the most extensive undertaking of this article. Hence, it has been demonstrated that extant sculptures in Portugal, whether imported, made by Portuguese sculptors, or itinerant foreign artists in Portugal, carry with them characteristics found in other territories during the same period, and especially in wooden sculpture emanating from Palencia sculptors and workshops, of the former Hispanic Mark, and from some French regions (Pyrenees and Burgundy). This comparative method, as well as the result of laboratory tests made on one of the sculptures presented here, enabled the revision and proposal of new production date, and to better understand the "filiations" of the period. Thus, it becomes possible to slowly understand and integrate their situation in a European context. Evidence has shown that the territorial borders of the twelfth-fourteenth centuries did not circumscribe or limit the circulation of artists, clients, tastes, styles and patronage, as had been thought.
- [57] In the specific case of wooden sculptures from the period analysed here, and in spite of the clear perception of the existence of artistic transference between the works kept in Portugal and others existing in France and other Iberian territories, we can not advance further in the identification of concrete authorship, since the scarcity of documentation during this period is a reality, and differs from what happens for some of the artistic patronage during the late fourteenth and fifteenth centuries.<sup>49</sup> In spite of this, this article

<sup>49</sup> Many of the foreign artists working in Portugal, or Portuguese artists with international training are referenced by Saúl António Gomes, *Vésperas Batalhinas. Estudos de História da Arte*, Leiria, Magno, 1997, 161-233 and, comprehensively, in the case of the Batalha Monastery, in Jean-Marie Guillouët, *O Portal de Santa Maria da Vitória, Batalha e a Arte Europeia do seu Tempo: A circulação dos Artistas e das formas na Europa gótica*, rev. Saúl António Gomes, transl. Cecília Basílio, *Portugalia Sacra*, 1, Leiria 2011.

is a step in the creation of a wider, more integrated, map of artistic creation, which in turn questions existing concepts of centre and periphery.<sup>50</sup>

*Translation by Inês Brandão*

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<sup>50</sup> About de main subject – geographical centre and periphery – see, among others, Carlo Ginzburg and Enrico Catelnuovo, "Domination symbolique et geographie artistique", in: *Actas de la Recherche en Sciences Sociales* 40 (November 1981), 51-72.