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Image: Anonymous. Vierge Ouvrante. 18th century. Ivory. (detail). Ivani and Jorge Yunes Collection - CIJY, São Paulo. Author's photo.

The Vierge Ouvrante with the Joys of Mary in the Ivani and Jorge Yunes Collection: transculturality and in-between spaces

A Virgem Abrideira dos Gozos de Maria da Coleção Ivani e Jorge Yunes: transculturalidade e espaços intermediários

Flavia Galli Tatsch*

ABSTRACT

This article aims to analyze the Vierge Ouvrante of the Joy of Mary belonging to the Ivani and Jorge Yunes Collection, in São Paulo. The Vierges Ouvrantes of the Joy of Mary are large sculptures that have a type of frontal mechanism that allows them to open their bodies totally or only partially, revealing Marian scenes inside. There are three Iberian specimens, from the 13th and 14th centuries, which are found in collections in the cities of Allariz, Évora, and Salamanca. Despite the themes carved into its interior, the Vierge Ouvrante of the Yunes Collection was created in another temporal and geographic space (in some Iberian possession in the Far East). In the absence of similar examples that could lead the analysis, this research sought to glimpse it in the light of the imaginaries resulting from cultural encounters between Europeans and Asians, such as Indo-Portuguese, Sinhalese, Hispanic-Filipino or Chinese. The enigmas surrounding the factors of its production raised questions about the borders imposed by historiographies — such as taxonomies and ethnocentric categories — and pointed to the need to think about transculturality and “in-between” spaces.

KEYWORDS

Vierge Ouvrante of the Joy of Mary. Ivani and Jorge Yunes Collection. Global turn. Transculturality. History of Art.

RESUMO

Este artigo tem como objetivo analisar a Virgem Abrideira dos Gozos de Maria pertencente à Coleção Ivani e Jorge Yunes, em São Paulo. Virgens Abrideiras dos Gozos de Maria são esculturas de vulto que possuem um tipo de mecanismo frontal que permite abrir seus corpos totalmente ou apenas em parte, revelando cenas marianas

em seu interior. Existem três exemplares ibéricos, dos séculos XIII e XIV, que se encontram em acervos nas cidades de Allariz, Évora e Salamanca. Apesar dos temas entalhados em seu interior, a Abrideira da Coleção Yunes foi elaborada em outro espaço temporal e geográfico (em alguma possessão ibérica no Extremo Oriente). Na falta de exemplares similares que pudessem conduzir a análise, esta pesquisa procurou vislumbrá-la à luz das imaginárias resultantes dos encontros culturais entre europeus e asiáticos, como a indo-portuguesa, cingalesa, hispano-filipina ou chinesa. Os enigmas que cercam os fatores de sua produção levantaram questões a respeito das fronteiras impostas pela historiografia — como taxonomias e categorias etnocêntricas — e apontaram para a necessidade de se pensar a transculturalidade e os espaços “intermediários”.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE

Virgem Abrideira dos Gozos de Maria. Coleção Ivani e Jorge Yunes. Virada Global. Transculturalidade. História da Arte.

Built in 2003 to house some of the sacred art pieces in the Ivani and Jorge Yunes Collection (CIJY), the chapel boasts a large variety of objects, such as fragments from the demolished São Pedro dos Clérigos church in Rio de Janeiro, the interior of which was carved by the Brazilian artist Mestre Valentim (ca. 1745-1813); wooden sculptures from the Baroque in Brazil; oratorios and crucifixes. At the altar, set among silver candelabras, the placement of the ivory carved sculptures stands out. Of these pieces, I'd like to highlight: the Infant Jesus Savior of the World, Our Lady of Navigators, Our Lady of Compassion, Saint Anne and the Virgin Mary with the Christ Child, carved in the eighteenth century in Goa; Saint Vicente de Paulo, sculpted in the nineteenth century and Saint Anne (in wood and ivory), from the twentieth century, both European; and the Virgin and Child in Majesty (Lúzio, 2018), the object of this research¹.

The sculptures of the Virgin and Child in Majesty, also known as *Maestà*, show Mary seated on a throne, holding the Christ Child. The example in the Ivani and Jorge Yunes Collection differs from other similar carvings in the way it is opened vertically along the center of the Virgin

Mary's body, from her neck. This particular piece, a *Vierge Ouvrante*, is a type of sculpture in the round, and when opened, reveals a triptych made up of a center panel and two independent side panels revealing both the images sculpted on the main body and inside the piece.

Between the thirteenth and seventeenth centuries, this type of statuette was produced in certain European regions, under the patronage of royalty or nobility, military orders, monasteries or confraternities. The iconographic programs carved on the interior of the sculptures can be classified into three groups: the Trinity, with the Holy Trinity on the inside of the piece; the Suffering or Passion of Christ; and the Joys of Mary (Fries, 1928-1929:3, Trens, 1947: 481-524; Réau, 1957; Barroca, 2002: 274).

In Portugal and Spain, the Joys of Mary were praised in important *gaudias* and texts such as *Milagros de Nuestra Señora* by Gonzalo de Berceo (c. 1196 - c. 1260) and *Ballada dels gotx de Nostra Dona*, in the *Llibre Vermeil of Montserrat* (Filgueira Valverde, 1996: 58). The exact number of Mary's Joys is unknown varying between five, seven and nine. The first *loor* in the Cantigas of Santa Maria (Canticles of the Holy Mary) - a set of poems accompanied by music written in the Galician-Portuguese language at the request of Afonso X, the Wise One (1221-1284) - depicts seven of the joys received from Christ: the Annunciation, the Nativity, the Adoration of the Magi, the Resurrection, the Ascension, the Pentecost and the Assumption/Coronation (Filgueira Valverde, 1996: 58; González Hernando, 2008: 822). The Joys are mentioned in a fifteenth century hymn as: "Rejoice in your immaculate conception, Rejoice in the sacred birth, Rejoice in the arrival of the Magi, Rejoice in the Resurrection, Rejoice in the Ascension of Jesus, Rejoice in the tongues of fire ascending on the apostles, Rejoice in your Ascension to heaven" (Barroca, 2002: 274).

Experts believe that the *Vierge Ouvrante* with the Joys of Mary were made exclusively in workshops in the Iberian Peninsula (Barroca, 2002: 274), namely in Castile and Aragon (Estella Marcos, 1985: 134; Katz, 2012: 48). It is unknown how many were produced between the end of the thirteenth and

the fourteenth century. We are aware of only three of them: in Salamanca (in The Diocesan Museum of the Old Cathedral), in Allariz (in The Royal Convent of Santa Clara) and in Évora (in The Sacred Art Museum of Évora Cathedral), though there is mention of a fourth in the 1339 inventory of the Cathedral of Sigüenza (Katz, 2012: 75).

The images carved on the interior of the *Vierge Ouvrante* in the Ivani and Jorge Yunes Collection falls into the category of the Joys of Mary. However, the piece was not constructed in the same period as mentioned above; it is also not possible to confirm if it was made in the Iberian Peninsula. Certain details support this assumption, such as the partially closed eyes, full lips, wavy hair, the distinctly Chinese appearance of some of the characters and the presence of Asian architectural elements. These elements are seen in sculptures carved in Asia, more precisely those found in territories owned by Spain and Portugal. Some of the earlier studies on the sculptures in Évora, Allariz and Salamanca focus on the carvings from the Iberian Peninsula and the inclusion of the *Vierge Ouvrante* in gothic statuettes (Barroca, 2002; Estella Marcos, 1984), while others highlighted their particular characteristics (Gudrun Radler, 1990; González Hernando, 2008) or concentrated their research on the circulation, audience, patronage and the medieval body (Katz, 2009 and 2012).

None of these methodologies or theories apply to the *Vierge Ouvrante* in the Ivani and Jorge Collection. Given that we were unable to find another example in museums, its rareness only expands the limits of the research previously carried out, thus proposing new lines of questioning.

This is why the *Vierge Ouvrante* in the CIJY (as it will be referred to from now on) gives us the opportunity to rethink many of the fundamental questions surrounding the discipline of art history, such as the notion of “style”, chronology and the geography of production. In 2010, during a round table on the “global turn” with other art historians, including David Joselit, Christopher Wood, Barry Flood, Mimi Yengpruksawan, Alessandra

Russo and Eugene Wang, Alexander Nagel confirmed: “when objects cross geographical frontiers, they enter into different temporal registers” (Flood, 2010: 7). Some of the issues raised could help support the present research. For example, which temporal interfaces were put into play at the time when the piece of made? How should we treat a sculpture so distinct from those produced as a result of cultural exchanges between Europeans and Asians? Similarly, how does the *Vierge Ouvrante* in the CIJY highlight the danger of “a need to tie all things together into one story” (Flood, 2010: 7)?

This article is divided into two parts. The first provides a brief description of the *Vierge Ouvrantes* in Evora, Allariz and Salamanca. The second focuses specifically on the example in the Ivani and Jorge Yunes Collection. Despite a lack of information or other similar examples that could help decipher the background of its production and intent, the piece invites us to form ideas and encourage discussions surrounding transculturality.

The Vierge Ouvrante with the Joys of Mary

I first came across the *Vierge Ouvrante* with the Joys of Mary in 2014 when preparing an elective subject in the Art History Department at the Federal University of São Paulo. In 2018, they were the object of my lecture at the *3rd International Seminar on the Iberian World: History, Power and Culture* (Tatsch, 2018: 18). The information I presented at the seminar included their materiality, narrative cycles and the different ways in which they can be viewed, given that the interior and exterior cannot be seen at the same time.

The *Vierge Ouvrantes* with the Joys of Mary are small sculptures, in the round, of up to 50cm, which facilitated their mobility. This type of sculpture is used for private devotion, or religious or private orders. The Évora and Allariz examples were constructed entirely in ivory; the Salamanca example

has a wood interior and pieces in ivory.

The maker of the *Vierge Ouvrante* in Allariz is unknown. This piece [Fig.1] would have belonged to Violant of Aragon (1236-1300/01), the wife of Alfonso X, the Wise (r.1252-1284) and founder of the Monastery of Santa Clara in Allariz. All we know from documentation from 1292 is that the Violant left the convent “*todami capiella assi lo que le yo di como ló que yo tengo*” (apud Estella Marcos, 1984: 131). Estella Marcos and González Hernando confirm that this example was carved at the end of the twelfth century, not only because of the donation mentioned above, but also because of the tunic which had a round collar, the cincture and the Virgin’s cape (González Hernando, 2011: 281).



FIG. 1. Anonymous. *Vierge Ouvrante*. End of the 13th century. Ivory Museum of Sacred Art of the Royal Monastery of Santa Clara, Allariz (Orense). Source: http://gothicivories.courtauld.ac.uk/images/ivory/4F6D8FF1_b62c1863.html. Accessed: 25 May, 2018.

The *Vierge Ouvrante* in Évora (the creator of which is also unknown) would have been made around 1300 (Katz, 2012: 80), i.e., in a very similar

time period to the Allariz piece. The first records on the piece are from 1474, when it was donated by Isabel Afonso, a resident in the city at the time, to the laymen known as the Beatas of Santa Maria or *Recolhimento das Galvoas* (after the sisters of the Galvoa family), members of the Dominican Order [Fig. 2]².



FIG. 2. . Anonymous. *Vierge Ouvrante*, ca. 1330, Museum of Sacred Art of the Cathedral of Évora EV.SE 1.0006 esc. Source: http://gothicivories.courtauld.ac.uk/images/ivory/6cc2ca26_63096e51.html. Accessed: 25 May, 2018.

The third Iberian *Vierge Ouvrante* is located in Salamanca [Fig.3]. Contrary to the Évora e Allariz examples, the bodies of the Virgin and Child are in pear wood and their faces, the sphere on the throne and the few scenes that are still visible, in ivory. According to the Cathedral's inventory, the piece dates to the end of the thirteenth century (González Hernando, 2011: 424; Estella Marcos, 2012: 135).



FIG. 3. Anonymous. *Vierge Ouvrante in Salamanca*, end of the 13th century. Source: http://gothicivories.courtauld.ac.uk/images/ivory/11ebf75a_47afa33f.html . Accessed: 25 May 2018.

A short description of the placement of the external and internal iconographic elements in the Allariz, Évora and Salamanca examples will follow. Concerning the external elements, some are common to all three pieces, such as the representation of Mary on the throne (*Maestà*) and “the way in which the gothic Virgins hold the Christ Child on their left knee” (Barroca, 2002: 272). Regarding the bases of the sculptures, the Salamanca example is the only one with the original base (González Hernando, 2011: 218); the base of the Allariz statue is made of ebony and ivory, added at a later date (Estella Marcos, 1984: 133); and the base of the Évora example is made of metal, on which “Ave Maria” is written. The left foot of the Allariz and Évora Virgins is placed on a small animal with a long body and claws, possibly alluding to sin and the evil that Mary overcame (González Hernando, 2011: 218); it is possible that the Salamanca example had a similar scene, but due to poor preservation is no longer there.

In the three sculptures, Mary holds her son with her left hand. The positions of the Christ Child vary: on the Allariz piece, he is making a gesture of blessing with his right hand, and with the other he is holding a sphere; in

the Évora example, he is looking towards his mother, playing with her with his right hand and holding a Bible in the left; in the Salamanca, again poor preservation makes it difficult to assess. Continuing the evaluation of the external features, the front panels begin below the neck, and are separated by a vertical gap that goes through the torso between the legs to the feet. According to Gertsman (2008: 87), this type of mechanism established the idea that Mary was supervising the “drama that unfolded within the temple of her carved body”.

On the inside of the sculptures, the narrative begins on the left panel, towards the body’s cavity and ends on the right panel, always viewed from the bottom to the top. In terms of the Joys on the Allariz example, under the trefoil arch typical of gothic ivory structures, the Annunciation, the three sacred women in the tomb and an angel holding a candelabra are depicted on the left; in the cavity of the corpse, the Nativity (Nursing Madonna), the Ascension observed by the Virgin together with the apostles and the coronation of the Virgin; finally, on the right, the Adoration of the Magi, the Pentecost and an angel holding a candelabra are revealed.

It is possible that the Allariz piece served as a prototype for the Évora example; however, the artist that carved the final version made both esthetic changes and to the order of the scenes. In this case the trefoil arches are no longer evident, and the characters take up the space. The presentation of the seven Joys is shown in ten different compartments. On the left-hand panel: Annunciation, Ascension - “strangely represented by the apostles and the Virgin, who are looking up, to where, from between the clouds, Jesus’s face appears, not his feet as is the norm” (Estella Marcos, 1984: 145) — and the Ascension of the Virgin (Mary being taken to heaven by the angels).

In the cavity of the body: the first scene is divided between the Nativity and the Annunciation to the Shepherds; above this, the Dormition of the Virgin, and finally, the Coronation of the Virgin, flanked by two angels holding candelabras and by another two supporting candle holders. On the

right-hand panel, the bottom register showing the Adoration of the Magi is divided down the middle with the left panel; above this, on the central part, the scene shows the Pentecost with the dove of the Holy Spirit and the apostles; the Visitation is presented on the top register. According to Barroca, the artist took the liberty to change the placement of the scenes for esthetic reasons (Barroca, 2002: 273-274).

González Hernando points out other details, such as the Marian nature given the double presence of Mary in the Pentecost and the Ascension; the double appearance of Christ the Child - in the Nativity scene, with the Virgin Mary, and in the manger, “representing two consecutive moments in the same episode” (2011: 344) -; the inclusion of the Annunciation to the Shepherds complements the Nativity; the Visitation; the exemption of the Resurrection and in substitution, in the center, the Ascension of Christ by the Dormition of the Virgin (González Hernando, 2008: 822 e 2011: 344).

The Virgin’s head in the Évora example is not the original: the sculpture survived a serious fire in the *Nossa Senhora do Paraíso Monastery*, in 1598, provoked by candles lit by the nuns during the cycle of prayers to protect them from the plague that devastated Évora at the time. Only the body of the sculpture and the silk clothing were preserved. Around 1600, the Virgin received a new head, this time sculpted in wood and polychromed, her fair hair entwined in a bonnet made of fine netting, and secured with a silk ribbon (Barroca, 2002: 273; Katz, 2012: 81-82).

The *Vierge Ouvrante* in Salamanca shows traces of gilding and polychrome. As previously mentioned, this piece is made of wood and ivory. According to the art historian Melina Katz, the Salamanca sculpture is a replica of the Allariz model (2012: 75). The base is made of wood, and on it there are only two remaining plaques on which the prophets are carved. Mary is wearing a veil, under which we can see her hair framing a delicate, round face. Her eyes are small, and her eyebrows are high and painted on, the nose is slim and long, the mouth small with full lips.

The opening at the neck reveals the commitment of the iconographic program given the loss of many ivory plaques. The Joys would have been presented in nine compartments, under double arches. On the Virgin's body, from the bottom up, on the first compartment, only one (unidentifiable) character remains, possibly from the Nativity scene. It is most likely that the register above is from the Ascension, since the Virgin is in the middle surrounded by the twelve apostles praying, some looking towards heaven (González Hernando, 2011: 424). The Coronation of Mary takes place above these scenes.

All the scenes on the righthand panel were lost; on the left only the central scene remains, showing six apostles looking up and praying. On the upper part there is a space with nothing, which may have shown an image of the dove of the Holy Spirit, or flames, thus representing the Pentecost.



FIG. 4A-4B. Anonymous. *Vierge Ouvrante*. 18th century. Ivory, 51 x 23 x 16 cm / 44 x 12.5 x 12.5 cm (closed sculpture) / 44 x 24 x 14 cm (opened sculpture) / 7 x 15 cm (base). Ivani and Jorge Yunes Collection - CIJY, São Paulo. Author's photos.

The information above summarizes part of the research I presented at the 3rd *International Seminar on the Iberian World: History, Power and Culture*. Days before the event, convinced about the historiography of only three surviving examples, I was made aware of the sculpture in the Ivani and Jorge Yunes Collection (CIJY), [Fig.4]³ as part of the exposition 'Sacred Ivory: the reverse of the reverse' (2018), at the Museum of Sacred Art in São Paulo⁴.

The Vierge Ouvrante in the Ivani and Jorge Yunes Collection - CIJY

Possibly dating back to the eighteenth century⁵, the Vierge Ouvrante in the CIJY may be a result of the relationship between the use of material and techniques that arose from the Iberian commercial and missionary campaigns in Asia (Purtle, 2011; Meegama, 2017). The Europeans used the skills of the local craftspeople to execute the Christian sculpture based on European engravings and the ivory or wood statuettes brought from Europe or produced in Asia. The carvings resulted in sculptures in the round, composite structures as with the Calvary and Holy Kinship examples, caskets that combined Oriental motifs and Christian imagery, as well as miniature altarpieces (Levenson, 2007)⁶. Since we are dealing with small-sized pieces, they were easily circulated between different points of trade that joined Portugal and Spain to India, Ceylon, China, Japan, Indonesia, the Philippines and the Americas.

The sculpture in the Ivani and Jorge Yunes Collection is rare and an important example of religious figurines. It is possible that it is part of a group of modern *Vierge Ouvrantes*. Melissa Katz highlighted eleven that were created after 1700 in the Canary Islands, France, Venezuela and Spain; however, she does not provide any additional information, descriptions or images with which it would be possible to analyze the typologies (2009: 221).

Sánchez Reyes and González Hernando describe the modern *Vierge Ouvrante* as “hispana” (hispanic), given the “particular configuration which differs from the other European groups, in that it is significantly bigger than the collection in the specialized bibliography, but less well-known since it is mostly found in private collections and peripheral religious groups” (2015: 7).

The group of modern *Vierge Ouvrantes* to which Sánchez Reyes and González Hernando refer to largely presents the iconography of the Immaculate Conception on the exterior and scenes of the Passion on the interior, carved in wood between the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. I will cite just three, as follows: the first, which was discovered in 2005 and can be viewed at the Hispanoamerican Museum in Buenos Aires (González Hernando, 2011: 263); and two others in Mexico, in Gama de la Paz (the municipality of Zacualpan, Mexico State) and in San Juan Chapultepec (Oaxaca). The “discovery” of the modern *Vierge Ouvrantes* consolidated Reyes and Hernando’s hypothesis about the existence of this type of sculpture in the Hispano-American environment. Up until the article’s publication, the authors had been unable to locate other examples (Sánchez Reyes and González Hernando 2015: 7, note 2).

Nevertheless, if these modern *Vierge Ouvrantes* were created in the Viceroyalties, we can assume that the same took place in other geographical areas, such as Asia. I believe this to be the case of the piece in the Yunes Collection. In the absence of well-known Asian examples to guide this research, I began to consider possible parallels with the statuettes created in Southeast Asia, from a typological or iconographic point of view. However, the Virgin in the Yunes Collection does not present the Immaculate Conception iconography, much less that of the Passion. She is also quite different from those that are largely studied by specialists: 1) related to Christology, such as the figure of the Good Shephard, or referring to his childhood in the representations of the Infancy, the Annunciation,

Nativity Scenes and the Holy Family; and 2) those of the Marian devotions, in all their different forms, such as Our Lady Aparecida, The Immaculate Conception, Our Lady of the Rosary (Lopes, 2011: 203); the Tree of Jesse or related to the saints, created in India⁷.

This led me to look for connections with the statuettes created in the Far East. The *Vierge Ouvrante* in the CIJY differs from the group of sculptures of Our Lady standing, holding Christ in her arms, for example those found in the Oriental Museum in Valladolid (MNV) and in the National Museum of Ancient Art (MNAA), in Lisbon (inv. 143 Esc). The first would have been made by a Chinese artist in the Philippines, in the seventeenth century, in a workshop associated to the Order of Saint Augustine⁸; ; and the second in China (Guangzhou?) between the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, during the Ming dynasty⁹. Both are examples of the religious and cultural connections in the South of China, as is the case of the Guanyin (Lopes, 2011: 300; Foxwell, 2010: 331-332), currently housed at the State Hermitage Museum, St. Petersburg, dating back to between the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. In Buddhist theology, Guanyin is the feminine manifestation of the Bodhisattva Avalokiteshvara, representing compassion and misery. The ivory piece in the Hermitage is the same as the *Maestà*, with the child sitting on her left knee.

According to Lopes (2011: 300), the carvings in the Museum of Ancient Art and the Hermitage, both from the Fujian province¹⁰, were based on numerous models of European statuettes or engravings. According to the author, the Virgin and Child in the MNAA represents a “Chinese conception of the face and the delicate nature of the carving”, as with the Guanyin, that “shows similarities to the models with characteristics from the Ming dynasty, namely the large, round face and the draped clothing that identify the Buddhist deities” (2011: 300). However, according to Lopes, “we can presume that the position, seated with the child on her knee, is in accordance with the European models of the enthroned Virgin” (2011: 300).

The enthroned Virgin already circulated in pre-modern societies, endorsed by both merchants and Nestorians and Franciscan missionaries in China (Clarke, 2013). One example are the tombstones of Caterina and Antonio Ilioni, the children of the Genovese or Venetian merchant Domenico Ilioni, discovered in 1951 in Yangzhou, in the province of Jiangsu, China¹¹. The Latin inscriptions show the dates of both Caterina and her brother's deaths, 1343 and 1344, respectively. In the iconographic program of Catarina's tombstone, as well as scenes related to the hagiography of the Saint that she was named after, there is an image of the enthroned Virgin and Child [Fig.5]. Details such as the clothing in the style of the Mongol executioners and the seat on which she is seated, similar to contemporary Chinese pieces, reveal the interrelation between the European and Asian artistic elements (Purtle, 2011; Ilko, 2021, Clarke, 2013).



FIG. 5. . Design based on the tombstone of Caterina Ilioni. Source: <https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:YangzhouKatarinaVilioniTomb1342.jpg>. Accessed: 20 Aug. 2021.

The images representing mother and son were extremely popular in Asia in paintings, engravings, wood, ivory and Dehua porcelain; an example of which is the *Maria Kannon* [Fig.6]¹². Their representations, however, are completely different from the sculpture in the CIJY. Similarities were also not found in the Chinese or Hispanic-Filipino pieces for sale in the art market or at auctions.



FIG. 6. Anonymous. *Maria Kannon*. Fujian, 17th-18th century. Nantoyōsō. Collection, Japan. Oura Catholic Church Museum, Nagasaki. Source: <https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:YangzhouKatarinaVilioniTomb1342.jpg>. Accessed: 20 Aug. 2021.

Thus, based on the examples mentioned, it is possible to confirm that the *Vierge Ouvrante* at the CIJY does not fall into any of these “Asian” taxonomies. It is however undeniable that it was modelled on a statuette in the form of the Allariz, Évora or Salamanca examples. Similarly, there are indications that she was carved by a craftsman in China or the Philippines, since both the Virgin and the Child have similar characteristics to the other sculptures, such as Mary’s partially closed eyes, fuller lips and wavy hair¹³.

In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the largest Christian communities in Asia were outside of China, largely in Macau and the Philippines. Trade with these places, which increased at the end of the Ming dynasty, stimulated the production of Virgin and Child images.

According to Levenson, the Chinese province of Fujian had a strong tradition of producing sculptures and plaques in relief in various materials - ivory, stone, porcelain and wood - to attend the internal market and for export (2007: 141). Clarke argues that the presence of the Spanish in the Philippines would have further stimulated the production of images of the Virgin similar to the “way in which the Songzi representation of Guanyin were produced. The wood sculptures made in Zhangzhou, on the coast of the province of Fujian, are examples of what could result from interactions of this type” (2013, 27).

The presence of the Spanish in the Philippines was not the only possible cause of this production. Many Chinese people migrated to the Islands in the seventeenth century. Around 1639, approximately 30 million of them lived in Manila, where they carried out various jobs, including merchants and artists (among them, those who carved ivory pieces). They were known as Sangleys and lived in an enclave purposely build to keep them outside of the city’s walls. As well as the immigrants, native Filipinos also helped increase the numbers of ivory sculptors in the first half of the following century¹⁴.

The increased geographical span of production is testament to the

popularity of this type of statuette while also making it difficult to identify the exact location in which it was made. We can include in this category the Virgin and Child found in the Victoria and Albert Museum in London, crafted between 1700 and 1720 [Fig.7]. On the Museum’s website, the text that goes along with the image tells us that it may have been commissioned by a member of a religious order in the Philippines, either for devotion in the country or exportation to the Iberian Peninsula. The same difficulty exists in dating the Virgin in the CIJY. This is not necessarily a problem, however, given that it is more important to identify the “routes than the roots”, according to Finbarr B. Flood (2009).



FIG. 7. Anonymous. *Virgin and Child*, ca. 1700-1720. Hispanic-Filipino or Chinese Ivory, 25.2cm. Victoria and Albert Museum, London. Source: <https://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O106771/the-Vierge-and-child-statuette-unknown/>. Accessed: 10 May. 2020.

Based on the available information, I believe the Virgin in the CIJY to be a complex and hybrid object, and the result of cultural exchanges. But,

if on the one hand it is possible to identify the Asian elements, on the other, we must consider that “copies” of the piece by artists from Southern Asia displayed local characteristics. According to Meegama, the Asian artists are not just “passive subjects in a new global market” (2017: 114), since they were aware that they were part of a “larger connected world” (2017: 15).

At this point in the research, I find myself facing a “challenge to theorize about the complexities of cultural interaction without imposing ethnocentric categories such as those that historically defined the discipline of art history”, as Claire Farago wrote in her article in this dossier. Homi Bhabha (1990; 2019) believed the solution to be to approach the research considering the “in between” spaces, created during the process of defining the different cultures, that serve both as places of resistance and collaboration (1990: 216)¹⁵.



FIG. 8. Anonymous. *Vierge Ouvrante*. 18th century. Ivory. (detail). Author's photo .

The *Vierge Ouvrante* in the CIJY is represented as the *Maestà* holding the Christ Child on her left knee. Mary's right hand is pointing towards an open book, and the left is resting on the Christ's left arm. Contrary to Allariz and Évora, her foot is not placed on a small animal, but a dragon that is wound around the sculpture. The open mouth and long teeth appear to be biting the Virgin's left foot [Fig.8]. As is typical of the traditional Chinese style, the animal has scales all over its body, emphasized by thin black lines which are still evident on the ivory.

The throne is not in its original state, with evident signs of alterations made to the original piece. The elements at the top of the columns are very similar to those of the Évora example [Fig.9]. It is not possible, however, to say exactly when and why they were included in the sculpture.



FIG. 9. Anonymous. *Vierge Ouvrante*. 18th century. Ivory (detail).
Author's photo.



FIGS.10-11 . Anonymous. *Vierge Ouvrante*. 18th century. Ivory (details). Author's photo.

Mary's face is oval-shaped and serene [Fig.10]. Her eyes are partially closed and there are remnants of chrome on her pupils. Her partially opened mouth shows a full lower lip; the slim nose adds to elongating the overall appearance. The thick, wavy hair is parted in the middle, frames her face and falls close to her head, to the middle of her back, as seen in many Hispanic-Filipino sculptures¹⁶. Contrary to the Iberian *Vierge Ouvrantes*, this one has a crown instead of a veil.

The Christ Child [Fig.11] is not interacting with the mother nor the observer, but is looking down, at the book. He is seated and wearing a long robe. The Child is holding an orb in his left hand and making a gesture of blessing with his right hand. The ring finger and little finger are both missing; the index and middle finger were glued back on, and the tip of the thumb is damaged. He has prominent cheekbones, a large nose and full bottom lip. The hair is similar to the examples in the Victoria and Albert Museum [Fig.7] and the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York¹⁷.



FIG.12 . Anonymous. Vierge Ouvrante. 18th century. Ivory (details). Author's photo.

When open, the Virgin in the Yunes collection reveals similar elements to the Iberian pieces, together with oriental characteristics and other original ones. On the body, from the bottom up and taking up two thirds of the space, the first scene is significantly different. According to Tirapeli, it may be showing not Jesus's birth but Mary's. He states that, "there is an apocryphal gospel narrative in which Mary has given birth to the Baby Jesus before arriving in Bethlehem, hence the distinct scenography showing the cave and manger" (2018, 84). Three women are bathing the child: one is holding a type of cloth, another holds the child with her left hand and behind them, the third is holding a vase with the water to bathe the baby. Above them, Mary rests on a bed of clouds in the presence of the dove of the Holy Spirit. The inclusion of four angels represents a stylistic element from Asian architecture. As previously mentioned, this is one of the "in-between" spaces, created while connecting the cultural differences.

This same architectural element is seen in the scene that occupies the remaining third of the central section. Unlike the *Vierge Ouvrantes* in Allariz, Salamanca and Évora, this example does not include the Coronation of the Virgin; in its place is Saint Anne enthroned with Mary kneeling at the foot of the throne. Saint Anne, whose left arm is resting on her daughter's back, is holding an unrolled scroll in her right hand that Mary is holding with both hands. The Virgin is wearing a veil covering her head, and is looking at the unrolled scroll, showing her interest in learning. Compared to the Iberian pieces, the difference in the themes of the scenes on the body of the sculpture may suggest that the objective of this iconographic program is to present the different stages of Mary's life, as well as those related to the story of Christ. It is also possible to identify a relationship between Saint Anne's teachings to the Virgin and what is being shown to Jesus when pointing at the book, on the exterior of the piece.

The appearance of the characters on the side panels are distinctly Chinese [Figs. 13 e 14], such as those on the plaque in ivory on the face of the

Our Lady Aparecida from the seventeenth century currently housed in a private collection (Lopes, 2011: 307 and figure 140 to page 529). The absence of carvings on the hems of the clothing, characteristic of the sculptures produced in India or Ceylon for the Portuguese, supports my theory and the attribution of where it was produced.



FIGS.13-14 . Anonymous. Vierge Ouvrante. 18th century. Ivory. (details). Author's photo.

There are only two scenes on the left-hand panels. On the bottom register, the three Magi Kings present gifts to Jesus. The top two registers

reveal the scene of the Pentecost with the 12 apostles, the Virgin and the dove of the Holy Spirit. Here, the faces and cheekbones of most of the characters would strongly indicate that they were sculpted by a Chinese craftsman. On the right-hand panel, from bottom to top, there are three scenes that are not in chronological order. At the bottom is the Annunciation. The middle scene presents the Ascension of Mary raised on a sheet by two angels (psychopomps) as in the Évora example (Barroca, 2012: 274)¹⁸ — this detail and the characteristics of the throne support the hypothesis about the circulation of a statuette like the Évora piece, or one similar, owned by Hispanics in Asia. The upper register shows the star above the shepherd, who is playing the flute and surrounded by lambs, presenting the annunciation to the shepherds.

At this point in the research, certain elements require further analysis. Why is the theme of the Virgin and Child learning presented in the sculpture? Is this related to the work of the missionary catechesis in Asia? What connections can be formed with other sculptures of Saint Anne? The answers, unfortunately, will have to wait until libraries and museums in Brazil and abroad are once again open to researchers.

Nonetheless, we are dealing with a remarkable example of the mobility of pre-modern objects and their coming together in certain locations. If the Iberian Virgins were representative of a determined pre-modern “view of the world”, the sculpture in the CIJY represents an opportunity to extend the boundaries imposed by historiography and demonstrates that this type of sculpture continued to exist, despite the stylistic, spiritual and religious changes, appearing in other regions and temporalities. Its placement at the altar of the chapel at the private residence of Ivani and Jorge Yunes bears testament to this process. It also allows us to consider interpretations that were not analyzed in the studies that consider the *Vierge Ouvrantes* produced as a result of cultural exchanges as part of “one story”, in terms of their creators.

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Notas

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- 1 I would like to thank everyone at the Ivani and Jorge Yunes collection for their support, in particular Beatriz Yunes Guarita, Frances Melvin Lee, Renata Rocco and Rafael Schunk. Unfortunately, the in-house research and access to libraries and other material have been severely affected by the COVID-19 pandemic (SARS Covid 2
 - 2 Little is known about Isabel Afonso, only that she came from a family that was wealthy enough to “bury her husband Nuno Martin[e] in an elegant tomb, but not enough to endow him with a family chapel” (Katz, 2012: 79).
 - 3 The Yunes collection was built over five decades and includes a significant number of pieces in ivory made in Asia, Africa and Western Europe. After its exposition in the collection, the piece was returned to the residence chapel as described at the beginning of this article.
 - 4 The exposition took place between May 19 and August 5, 2018.
 - 5 According to the sales invoice for the piece.
 - 6 It is well-known that the circulation of Christian iconography was related to an attraction to the exotic. In relation to the ivory sculptures, the *Tratado das coisas da China* by friar Gaspar da Cruz, and the ‘Itinerary of the voyage by ship to the East or the Portuguese Indies’ by Jan Huygen van Linschoten, are two good examples of the fascination with the exotic.
 - 7 Most of the research on the images was carried out on the websites of US and European museums. Unfortunately, the websites of Brazilian collections offer poor quality images as a result of a lack of funding.
 - 8 Information accessed on the museum’s website. Available at: http://www.museo-oriental.es/ver_pieza.asp?clave=49. Accessed: 9 Nov. 2019.
 - 9 Image available at: <http://www.matriznet.dgpc.pt/MatrizNet/Objectos/ObjectosConsultar.asp?l-dReg=247204&EntSep=3#gotoPosition>. Accessed: 9 Nov. 2019.
 - 10 With the opening of international trade, Fujian - the coastal province of the Southeast of China - became one of the main centers of production of sculptures in the round or in low relief in ivory plaques.
 - 11 Fujian and Yangzhou are coastal provinces in the east of China.
 - 12 “The reestablishment of Christian missions in Meiji Japan, moreover, led to the unveiling of groups of ‘hidden Christians’ (kakure kirishitan) who had practiced on secret during the Tokugawa era (1600-1868). Among their items of worship were ‘Maria Kannon’ statuettes, typically white ceramic or ivory

figures that had been produced in southern China and contained familiar iconographic elements of Avalokiteshvara in East Asia: feminine or sexually ambiguous facial and body features, a headpiece containing a small image of the Buddha, a white robe, and a willow branch. The child depicted in the figure's lap reflected the Chinese tradition of Child-Granting Gyanyin but could also be interpreted as the child Jesus in the lap of his mother, Mary; in images found among the hidden Christians, the child is occasionally broken or obliterated in an apparent attempt to conceal or deny the figure's Christian identity" (Foxwell, 2010: 331).

- 13 For sculptures of Mary carved in Goa or Sri Lanka, and their characteristics, see: OLSON, M.G. Mary on the Moon. Ivory statuettes of the Virgin Mary from Goa and Sri Lanka. In: HUTTON, D.S. and BROWN, R.M. (edS.). *Rethinking Place in South Asian and Islamic Art, 1500-Present*. Oxford and New York: Routledge, 2017, p. 97-114.
- 14 Informações retiradas do site do Victoria & Albert Museum. Disponível em: <https://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O106771/the-virgin-and-child-statuettes-unknown/>. Acesso em: 10 mai. 2020.
- 15 As Bhabha argued, "new sites are always being opened up, and if you keep referring those new sites to old principles, then you are not actually able to participate in them fully and productively and creatively".
- 16 This type of hair may represent a new version of the images of the engravings from the Netherlands found in Asia, such as the Virgin and Child Crowned by Angels, by Martin Schonguer, 1469-73, owned by the British Museum, 1845,0809.257. Trustees of the British Museum.
- 17 Virgin and Child. Hispanic-Filipino. Metropolitan Museum of Art, Nova York. Available at: <https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/196761>.
- 18 I disagree with Tirapeli here when he describes the scene as the acclamation of the Magnificat (Canticle of Mary). Tirapeli, P. (2018). Ivani and Jorge Yuni Collection: iconography of the images and ivory pieces. In: Lúzio, J. e Coutinho, M.I.L (curators). *Sacred Ivory: the reverse of the reverse* São Paulo: Sacred Art Museum, 2018, 84.

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