

## CLOISONNÉ ENAMELS IN ARAGON AND NAVARRE

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The ivories (1) on the **Jaca bookcovers** (now in the Metropolitan Museum of Art) have often been emphasized for their importance in the history of the art. This is particularly true of the one with the Romanesque figures forming the Crucifix scene because it bears an inscription giving the name of Queen Felicia, the wife of Sancho Ramirez, king of Aragon. Since Queen Felicia died in 1083 it seems likely that the bookcover is earlier in date. The ivories are surely Spanish and the beautiful carving with the subtle expressions have earned these a deserved fame. The metalwork is also fine and Spanish in origin like the ivories. The other half of the cover has a similar frame but a Byzantine ivory in the centre (2).

The first part of the cover has a metalwork frame decorated with **filigree scrolls** interspersed with **cabochon stones** and a cloisonné enamel. The latter appears to be the only one remaining out of eight enamels since there are spaces for eight more like it and of about the same size. This cloisonné enamel is on gold and has a formal pattern in white, red and translucent green. Leguina (3) stressed the importance of these enamels in his book on Spanish enamels and Dr. Hildburgh (4) since this article was first written has mentioned them briefly. They have also been tentatively called Byzantine in origin and Dr. Hildburgh does not dispell this belief (5).

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(1) A. Goldschmidt, **Die Elfenbeinskulpturen aus der Romanischen Zeit.**—Berlin. 1926. IV. N.º 110.

(2) A. Goldschmidt and K. Weitzman, **Die Byzantinischen Elfenbeinskulpturen. II. Die Reliefs.**—Berlin, 1934. N.º 108.

(3) Enrique de Leguina. **Esmaltes Españoles.**—Madrid, 1909, p. 87.

(4) W. L. Hildburgh. **Medieval Spanish Enamels.**—Oxford, 1936, pp. 33 ff.

(5) Hildburgh, **op. cit.**, p. 34. My article was actually written before the publication of Dr. Hildburgh's book. I only release it now because of his hesitancy about the. The origin & the enamels.



Afer having studied mos of the existing Byzantine enamels in the church treasures and museums of Europe and America i can say that I know of no enamels of Byzantine origin like this. Neither am I familiar with any enamels made north of the Pyrenees quite comparable to this little piece. Cloisonné enamelling was familiar in the Asturias as early as the IX century but this fragment does not appear to be very closely connected with them. My conclusion therefore is that we have hare a cloisonné enamel that was probably made in Aragon or near-by. If cloisonné enamels could be made in one section of Spain, as they certainly were in the Asturias, there is no reason why they should not have been made in Navarre.

## II

The description of the golden altar frontal at Santa Maria de Najera by Yepes is all that we now know about what once must have been a sumptuous example of the **goldsmiths art**. Judging from Yepes' words, the altar frontal had considerable importance for the history of the art of metalwork and enamelling and for this reason it seems worthwhile to quote him in full:

"piezas riquisimas que tuvo este convento. La una es un frontal grande del altar de nuestra Senora (**i. e. Santa María de Nájera**), quaxado de planchas de oro, de martillo, yen el mucha imagineria de bullos de oro, que estaba guarnecido con contorze piedras preciosas, veynte y quatro granos muy grandes de aljofar, y veynte y tres esmaltes grandes. Començo este rico frontal el Rey don Garcia, y prevenido de da muerte le acabô el Rey don Sancho su hijo, y la Reyna doña Blanca. Tenia un letrado relevado de oro por toda la orla que dezia estas palabras. **Beato e Mariae quam sine sciret, nequis dubitaret certissime sciat, hoc fecit Rex Garcias. Haec Rex pijsu mus fecit Garcias benignus & Stefania me factum, sue honore Mariae, scilicet Almany decus artificis venerandi.** No se sabia hazer mejor Latin en aquellos tiempos, pero este traduzido, quizo dezir, que este frontal dedicado para nuestra Senora, poique Ninguna dude, sepa con certidunbre, que le hizo el Rey pijsismo; y benignissimo don Garcia, y la Reyna don Estefania, en honor de la mis-



ma Virgen Santa Maria; y el artifice que le obrò fue Alemano venerable maestro deste arte" (1).

From the inscription it would appear that the original donors were Garcia III, king of Navarre (1035-54) and his wife, Estefania. However the completion of the frontal was left to their son Garcia Sanchez IV (died in 1076), generally called "of Najerá". It has been suggested that the golden frontal was really made for Garcia V (1134-50) and his bride the Doña Blanca but since Garcia IV had also a Queen Blanca and since the names of his parents tally with those mentioned in the inscription, we must assign the altar frontal to him. It would have been made early in his reign, before the death of Queen Blanca, but later than 1054 when his father died. Furthermore the metalwork of the XI century is almost always in gold or silver while in the XII century such large objects as altar frontals were rarely in a precious metal but usually in gilded copper. If we compare this description with, for example, that of the lost metalwork on the XI century shrine of the titular saint at the nearby San Millan de la Cogolla (2), there are many comparisons to be made, particularly in the use of crystals, which apparently formed a conspicuous part of the decoration of this reliquary, now partly destroyed. Thus the frontal on other grounds than the names in the inscription seems to have been of the XI century.

Enamelling on gold, too, indicates an XI century, rather than a XII century date. Occidentals enamels in cloisonné on gold are almost unknown, copper gilt **champlevé** enamels being then the vogue. The use of gold for these enamels is almost certain evidence that they were in cloisonné and of the XI century.

The actual words of Yepes in regard to the enamels are interesting. He speaks of them as **veyntes y tres esmaltes grandes** immediately after he has mentioned the twenty four pearls which he described as **muy grandes**. From this it would appear that the enamels were of no great size and that they alternated with the pearls in the whole scheme of the decoration. The same idea we have already found on the Jaca bookcover where the enamel is smaller than many of the **cabochons**. The bookcover as noted was made before

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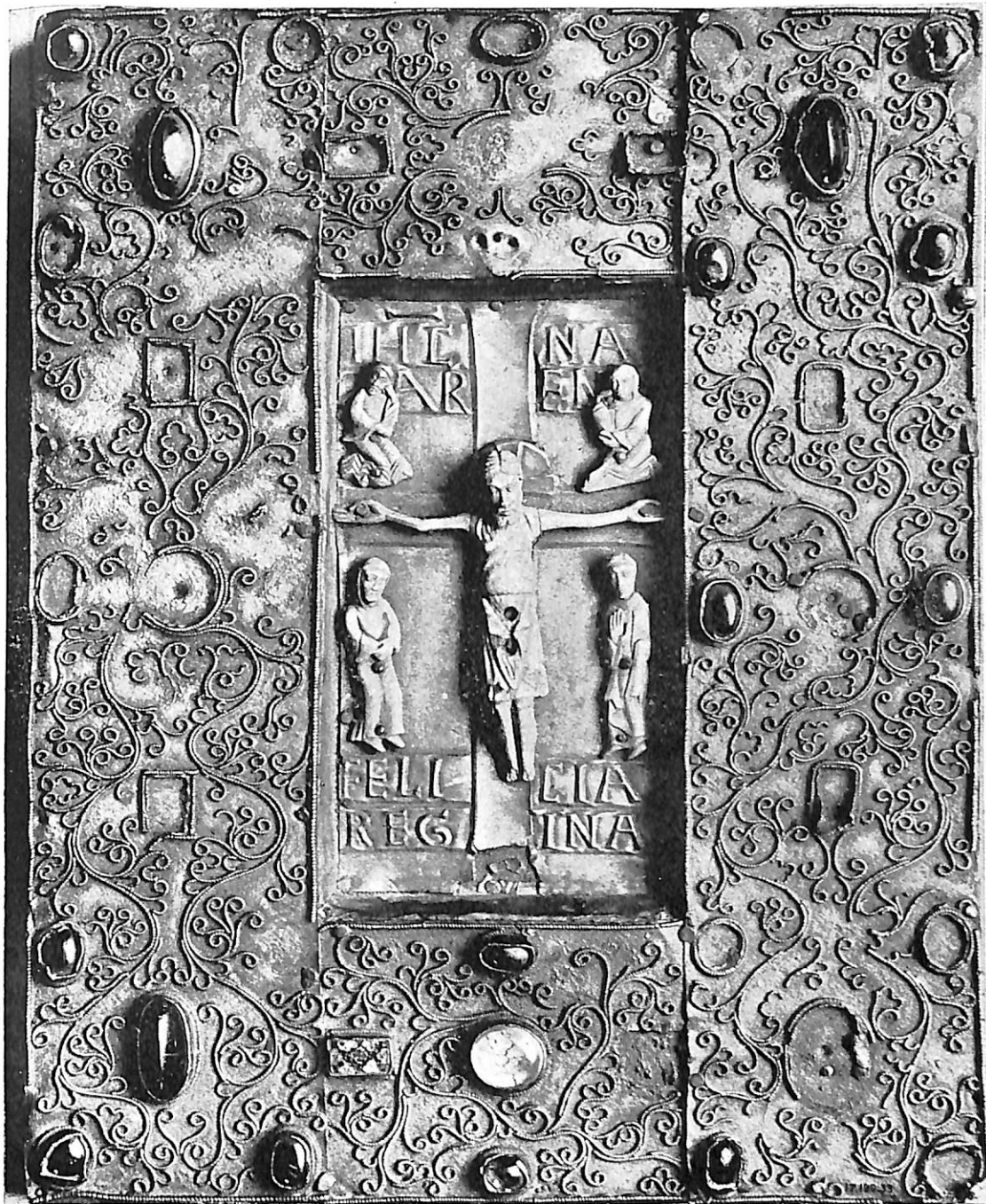
(1) Antonio de Yepes, **Crónica General de la Orden de S. Benito**.—Vol. VI, pág. 124

(2) A. K. Porter, "Leonesque Romanesque and Southern France", **The Art Bulletin**, 1926. VIII, pág. 272, note 6.



1083, the year in which Queen Felicia died, and so separated very little in time from the Najerá altar frontal. Navarre and Aragon were united under Sancho Garcia IV (died 1078) and Sancho Ramirez against Sancho el Fuerte of Castille so that similar enamels and metalwork found in the two states is quite plausible at this period. So the bookcover aids us in reconstructing the altar frontal and gives us a wider picture of metalwork and enamelling in this region in the XI century.

Since cloisonné enamels were employed in numbers in this region of Spain it is quite possible that they were made here. They were made long before this in other parts of Spain, in the Asturias. Besides the one remaining piece on the Jaca bookcover resembles no known enamel from other parts of Europe. The conclusion seems to be that the art of cloisonné enamelling was practiced in Navarre and Aragon in the XI century to a considerable extent although to our present knowledge it was confined to decorative work and did not include **figure subjects**.



LÁM. I.—Nueva York: *Tapa del Evangelionario de la Reina Felicia.*  
Museo Metropolitano de Arte.