

Romanesque mural painting in Catalonia

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ABSTRACT

The Romanesque mural painting in Catalonia which was saved from despoilment and dispersion in 1919, when the Junta de Museus (Board of Museums) of Barcelona embarked upon a major campaign of purchase and removal, is a unique heritage of universal value. Even though the mural paintings from the Romanesque cathedrals or the great abbeys like Ripoll no longer survive, what has been conserved is quite notable both stylistically and iconographically. The surviving frescoes were mainly inspired by the art of early Christian Rome and that of the Gregorian reform, yet also by Byzantine sources and by Lombard and Germanic styles and prototypes, all translated into highly original programmes of images. The most emblematic works are conserved at the Museu Nacional d'Art de Catalunya (MNAC), such as the apse from Sant Climent de Taüll, a *capolavoro* of European Romanesque painting, and the apses from Sant Pere de la Seu d'Urgell and Santa Maria d'Àneu, both boasting outstanding quality, along with the paintings from Sant Joan in Boí, Sant Quirze de Pedret, Sorpe and el Burgal. Together with the frescoes at the Museu Diocesà i Comarcal de Solsona, the Museu Episcopal de Vic, the Museu d'Art de Girona and the Museu Diocesà d'Urgell, along with the numerous murals and remains of paintings conserved *in situ*, many of them discovered in recent years, they enable us to envisage the scope of this Catalan Romanesque art. Of these discoveries, perhaps the most noteworthy are the paintings from Sant Vicenç d'Estamariu, as well as the new images on the triumphant arches of Sant Climent de Taüll. This article summarises the most important part of this mural painting heritage as well as the most recent literature on the subject.

keywords: Romanesque painting, iconography, style, apse, images, fresco

Even though the interest in Catalan Romanesque painting began with the *Renaixença* generation in the late 19th century, its fate was decided in the summer of 1919, when the Junta de Museus of Barcelona embarked upon a major campaign to purchase, remove and transfer the Romanesque murals in Sant Quirze de Pedret, Sant Climent de Taüll, Santa Maria de Taüll, Sant Joan de Boí, Santa Maria d'Àneu, Sant Miquel d'Engolasters, Sant Miquel de la Seu d'Urgell, Santa Maria de Ginestarre, Sant Pau d'Esterrri de Cardós and Santa Eulàlia d'Estaon to the Barcelona museum. This collection, which features examples of exceedingly high quality, is the only one of its kind; nothing comparable is preserved anywhere else.¹

Everything started when the Junta de Museus of Barcelona, through the painter Joan Vallhonrat, who had been sent to Santa Maria de Mur upon the proposal of Josep Puig i Cadafalch, discovered Italian restorers Franco Steffanoni and his helpers Arturo Dalmati and Arturo Cividini removing the paintings. They had been hired by Ignasi

Pollak, an Austrian Jew² with dual nationality. The recipient of the frescoes was Lluís Plandiura, an industrialist, collector and antiques dealer, who in the end sold the fresco to the Fine Arts Museum in Boston. The inability to legally halt the sale led the Junta de Museus to organise a major campaign to save the other murals. This consisted of purchasing them, having the same Italian restorers who had mastered the technique remove them and then having them transferred to the Barcelona museum. The person who masterminded the operation and was at the helm of it the entire time (1919-1923), a period ridden with difficulties, was Joaquim Folch i Torres, a curator of mediaeval and modern art and museum director, who was acting with the support of the Junta de Museus and Puig i Cadafalch, his teacher.³ The loan to purchase the paintings taken out from the Banca Fàbregas i Recasens was favourably endorsed by its counsellor Pere Coromines. Plandiura agreed to display the transferred to canvas fresco from Mur for the Junta de Museus in order to show the quality of the results, and the Board simultaneously hired Pollak, worked on securing the loan and requested permission from the respective bishops. Folch i Torres sent Emili Gandia, curator of museums of Barcelona, to monitor the work of the Italians, and he was the one who supervised the removals in Boí and Santa

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Maria de Taüll and actually transported the paintings to Barcelona.⁴ With the collection of Romanesque paintings thus purchased, the halls of the Museu de la Ciutadella opened to the public in 1924. In 1934, they were moved to their current location in the Palau Nacional, which became the site of the Museu d'Art de Catalunya, the present Museu Nacional d'Art de Catalunya. Shortly thereafter, the two exhibitions held in Paris in the year of the International Exposition (1937), "L'Art Catalan du x^e au xv^e siècle" (Jeu de Paume) and "L'Art Catalan à Paris" (Maisons-Laffitte), proved to be the definitive international catapult for Catalan Romanesque painting.

THE MAIN ENSEMBLES OF PAINTINGS

The oldest set of Catalan Romanesque murals is the one from Sant Quirze de Pedret, which is conserved at the Museu Nacional d'Art de Catalunya (MNAC) and the Museu Diocesà i Comarcal de Solsona. Because they are directly related to the masters of San Vincenzo in Galliano, they

could be considered a Catalan extension of Lombard Romanesque painting. We do not know whether, just as in Berzé-la-Ville with respect to Cluny, Pedret may have informed us about the painting of Ripoll, but even though it cannot be proven, the hypothesis is not so implausible if we bear in mind that the church in Sant Quirze, built in the times of Wilfred I in lands that had just been reconquered, seem to have been built as a *cella memoriae* of a child just before Ripoll, the pantheon of counts and the cradle of the national lineage, was founded. The date of the Romanesque murals, which were superimposed upon the 10th century wall paintings, is usually cited as the second half of the 11th century; however, both judging from their relationship with Galliano (1007) and for historical reasons, they quite likely date from a little earlier.

The definition of the Pedret style, which boasts exceedingly high quality, can be recognised primarily in the faces of the figures, with eyes that gaze intensely imbued with a profound, powerful and vigorous Byzantine quality.

However, the style is not the only thing that is extraordinary in Pedret; so is the iconographic programme.⁵ The



Figure 1. The wise virgins in the southern apse of Sant Quirze de Pedret, MNAC (© MNAC – photographers Calveras/Mèrida/Sagristà).

decoration of the three apses and the wall that opens the main one is conserved, although the murals are now split between the Museu Diocesà i Comarcal de Solsona and MNAC. We can note the use of models from early Christian Rome, such as the empty throne occupied only by the Book of Revelation, an image which can be found over the window on the front wall of the apse (which is rectangular in shape), with the adoration of the elders (the *Maiestas Domini* with the tetramorph, quite faded, is in the vault). On the south wall, Saint John in Patmos is portrayed⁶ on a wooden stool in the typical thinker's pose; his presence, though common in illuminated manuscripts, is quite unusual in murals. Next to him are the four riders of the Apocalypse which correspond to the opening of the first four seals of the Book of Revelation magnificently painted in a Roman manner, three of which survive. Across from them, on the north wall, are the souls of the martyrs ready for the celestial liturgy and the angel lighting incense on the altar, which correspond to the opening of the fifth seal. And on either side are the blessed, led by angels and seraphim. The east wall, where the apse opens, portrays the sacrifice of Abraham and the martyrdom of Saints Quirze and Julita under a Greek border with busts of interspersed saints and blessed running along the upper part of the nave walls.

The Epistle apsidiole depicts the parable of the wise and the fatuous or foolish virgins (Matthew 25:1-13). The prudent ones are crowned and their lamps lit, and they are seated at the table in the house of the Lord, while the foolish ones have been left out with their empty lamps. Next to them is the personification of the Church, a crowned woman seated on a temple. In the vault is a bust of Mary with the Christ Child within a clypeus or medallion, and the evangelist Matthew is seated at his desk on the intrados of the arch. The remains of a hunting scene can be seen on the faux curtains on the base. The Gospel apsidiole contained a depiction of the mission of the apostles gathered in an assembly around Peter, who was seated on his chair in the middle. There is also a panther drinking from a spring on the draperies painted on the base, which are rendered with total freedom and mastery of the brushstroke.

In Catalonia, the Pedret style spread far and wide, as can be proven by the vast number of works in which it can be recognised, as well as by the repercussions it had on the painters of subsequent generations. In Romanesque Catalonia, there were other painting styles, many remains of which still survive, such as the style by the Master of Osormort, yet none had the same repercussions or transcendence. Pedret is a clearly Lombard style, which before, during and after its time can be found in Lombardy, its home, in Galliano and Milan, the archbishopric that had such close ties with the papacy and the Empire.⁷ This, however, does not negate the influence of Roman and Byzantine iconography in Pedret, which clearly exists and is very ancient and prominent.

In Catalonia, the Pedret style reappears in an entire series of churches whose decoration dates from the end

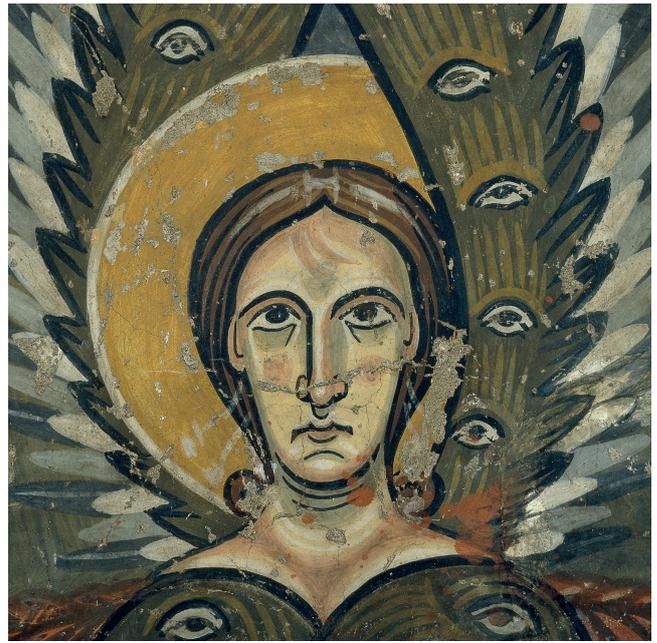


Figure 2. Close-up of the seraphim in Santa Maria d'Àneu, MNAC (© MNAC – photographers Calveras/Mèrida/Sagristà).

of the 11th and beginning of the 12th centuries. These churches include Santa Maria d'Àneu (MNAC), Santa Maria de Cap d'Aran (The Cloisters, erroneously cited as being from Tredós), Sant Pere del Burgal (MNAC), Sant Serni de Biaisca (*in situ*), Sant Pere d'Àger (MNAC) and Sant Lisièr in Coserans (*in situ*), a total of six groups of paintings from both sides of the Pyrenees and their environs. In all of them, the style of the dogmatic figures is solemn and hieratic, but when the personage depicted has no connotations of ecclesiastical status or sanctity, that liturgical *pathos* disappears and the body attitude is much more naturalistic. We could mention yet another example discovered recently, the paintings in Sant Vicenç d'Estamariu, which are like a bridge between the "classic" Pedret style and the more expressionistic styles of Orcau and Argolell.

The iconographic programme of Santa Maria d'Àneu,⁸ which was the centre of one of the districts in the Diocese of Urgell, is unique and grand in scope, mainly because the image is a synthesis of two prophetic visions, Isaiah's (Isaiah 6:1-3, 6-7), with the purification of the lips of the prophets, and Ezekiel's, with the incandescent wheels of fire of Yahweh's chariot (Ezekiel 10:1-22). To represent the fulfilment of the prophecies, the apse vault shows the Virgin Mary with the Christ Child, enthroned as a *Maiestas Mariae*, in the centre of the Epiphany scene. On the sides are the archangels *advocates* Michael and Gabriel, which are characteristic of both Lombard and Roman painting. And in the hemicycle is a third archangel, Raphael, facing two presbyters portrayed as donors, one over the other, at the opposite end of the composition. This painting could be dated sometime after 1088, when the temple

was returned to the Church of Urgell after having been usurped by Count Artau of Pallars.

The Marian theophany in the vault in Àneu has a very clear stylistic parallel with the paintings of Santa Maria de Cap d'Aran,⁹ where the wall of the semi-cylinder depicts the Apostolic College, of which only the figure of Saint Paul has survived. This figure, just like the dove of the Holy Spirit on the keystone of the triumphal arch and the Milanese martyrs Gervasius and Protasius on either side, is now held in private collections. On the arch of the presbytery was the *Maiestas Domini*, only the lower half of which still remains (Museu Maricel in Sitges). The story of these frescoes from Cap d'Aran echoes the fate of some other sets of murals which were sold in pieces to different buyers during the Franco dictatorship.

In the frescoes in Sant Pere del Burgal,¹⁰ which are clearly invocative, we can once again find the reference to Galliano in the prophets near the presiding *Maiestas Domini*, who prostrate themselves in reverence, asking for grace. The apostles are depicted on the apse hemicycle, and with them are John the Baptist with the Agnus Dei and Mary with the chalice, iconography common to and characteristic of Catalan Romanesque painting, which identifies the Virgin as the figure of the Church. This image appears in many other churches in the bishopric of Urgell (Argolell, Ginestarre, Esterrí de Cardós, Sant Climent de Taüll, Estaon, Sant Romà de les Bons, Santa Coloma d'Andorra and on the altar of Martinet) and has been interpreted as an adhesion to the ideals of Rome in the dispute between Gregory VII and Berengar of Tours over the real presence of the body of Christ in the Eucharist.¹¹ The decoration in Burgal is notable primarily for the portrait of several members of the founders' family, the Counts of Pallars Jussà, including Countess Lucia, identified by the remains of an inscription ("...IA ...NMITE-SA"); she is depicted with a lit candle in her hand over the draperies of the base. Two more portraits, still *in situ*, have recently been discovered over the pilaster next to the Gospel apse. In them, we can see the faces of a young woman and a young clergyman next to each other, both with red hair, and both closely resembling the Countess. The presence of these lay figures in such a prominent place enables us to identify them as Lucia's children and also leads us to believe that across from the Countess' portrait in the apse, there must have been a portrait of her husband, Count Artau I. The paintings in Burgal, an invocative programme with an Eucharistic meaning, cannot be dissociated from the desire of the family of the Count (who died, excommunicated, for having usurped goods from the Church of Urgell) to return him to the Christian communion. For this reason, they can be dated from just before the time that Ot or Otto, the son of Artau and Lucia and most likely the young clergyman portrayed in Burgal, was bestowed the bishop's mitre of Urgell between 1095 and 1097.

But there is yet another portrait in Burgal. Above the two we just examined, *in situ*, in a kind of palimpsest, is a

lady in an attitude of offering with a serious expression on her face. Once again the written and visual sources seem to favour the hypothesis on the identity and dating of the figure. It may be Countess Eslonça, the daughter of Count Martín of Castile and the wife of Count Artau II of Pallars Sobirà, who in around 1111 made a significant donation to the Church to ask that her son Artau, who would later become Artau III of Pallars, be released from captivity in Zaragoza, where he was imprisoned when he tried to conquer the city from the Saracens with the army of King Alphonse the Battler of Aragon. The style of this portrait is similar to other paintings from Urgell from the early 12th century, even in its colouring.

Later paintings from two other churches, Sant Pere d'Àger and Sant Lisièr in Coserans, are in the same style as the paintings of Pedret. The latter,¹² one of two cathedrals in the ancient Church city, was consecrated in 1117 by the Bishop of Coserans and the Bishop of Roda, Ramon de Durban. As we shall see below, this is the same prelate who would later consecrate the churches in Taüll, the son of one of the most prestigious families among the Coserans and in Occitania, and perhaps the patron of the painted decorations of Sant Lisièr. The painting from the apse hemicycle remains almost intact (the vault was repainted during the Gothic period). Under arches festooned with decorative and Greek borders from the classical tradition, the College of Apostles and the prophets are depicted between columns. Above them in the peaks between the arches is a series of heads, the martyrs of the Agnus Dei flanked by moving fish, a motif signifying the Eucharist which can also be found in Galliano. And separating the images of the Apostles from the lower part is a cornice of corbels in perspective with female heads between them. According to John Ottaway, they would be the theological virtues or beatitudes, the children of Jerusalem from the Song of Songs in a kind of wedding court of faith. Below them is yet another figurative register, the Nativity series, which appears not in chronological order but in an exegetic system starting with the Gospels of Matthew and Luke.¹³ Thus, on the left, after the first vanished scene that might have been the journey of the Magi, the Magi before Herod and the Epiphany are portrayed, and to the right is the Annunciation, the Visitation and the Nativity.

Sant Pere d'Àger, founded by one of the most powerful leaders in the Catalan Reconquest, Arnau Mir de Tost, was the spiritual centre of his extensive domains and directly accountable to Rome. On the semi-cylinder of the church in Àger, just like in Sant Lisièr, where the Apostles¹⁴ so similar to the ones in the cathedral of Coserans that by force they must be not only by the same artist but also from around the same date, which, in both cases, leads us to the second decade of the 12th century, prior to 1117.

The paintings in Sant Serni de Baiasca,¹⁵ nestled in a hidden away spot today, a small valley that opens into Noguera Pallaresa at the entry of the Vall d'Àneu, were discovered in recent decades and can also be related to the powerful Byzantine style of Pedret. On the vault is a par-

tially-conserved theophany with angels (which seem to bear the symbols of the evangelists, as we shall later see in Engolasters), archangels and seraphim. The most notable is the head of Saint John, one of the apostles depicted in the apse semi-cylinder, where holy doctors and fathers of the Church, such as Ambrose and probably Augustine, are also prominently portrayed.

An even more recent discovery is the fresco in Sant Vicenç d'Estamariu,¹⁶ also *in situ*, surely the most important find in recent years. Its art, which evinces two related styles, represents a boundary between the highly classical Lombard style of Pedret and the style of its followers in Orcau and Argolell, which is more expressionistic. All of these paintings can be dated from the early decades of the 12th century. Other influences can also be detected in Sant Vicenç de Rus, the handiwork of this other generation of painters as well.

On the apse vault in Estamariu was a Christ in Majesty, the lower half of which still remains, surrounded by the tetramorph and with an angel and archangel on either end. In the semi-cylinder, the apostles appear anchored by the figures of the Virgin Orans, quite frequent in palaeo-Christian and especially Roman iconography, and Saint Paul, the apostle of the Gentiles. And, between the theophany and the apostles is a large, significant frieze made up of what look like waves, with portraits or masks alternating between them and fish facing each other with tiny symbolic animals underneath. It depicts the sea of glass of the Apocalypse, while the heads portray the martyrs of the Agnus Dei, readily identified by the inscription interspersed near each of the heads: "EX / MAGNA / TRIBV / LACIO", which corresponds to the quotation "Isti sunt qui venerunt ex magna tribulatione et laverunt stolas suas et dealbaverunt eas in sanguine agni" (Revelation 7:14). That is, they are the host of the saved, the martyrs of the Lamb, the ones who come out of great tribulation and have washed their robes in the blood of the Lamb. For this reason, they are before the throne of God, who will lead them to the springs of living water and wipe away every tear from their eyes (Revelation 7:15-17). The meaning of this frieze, which resembles the sea of glass or crystal which the Book of Revelation says is under the throne of the Lord (Revelation 4:6; 15:2), is related to the eschatological meaning of the theophanic vision of the Second Coming of Christ.

Parallel to this entire pictorial world, other styles also developed in Romanesque Catalonia which represent other artistic and cultural influences. However, they have neither the homogeneity nor the breadth of the Pedret style, and despite their importance, they are sometimes only represented by a single work. One of the most monumental and significant examples, and one that is extremely important artistically, is Sant Pere de la Seu d'Urgell,¹⁷ one of the churches in the cathedral complex of Urgell near the cathedral and its cloister. It is a very notable example featuring vast chromatic vividness which evokes French painting, and it has been related to such diverse works as the altar-

frontals in Tavèrnoles, Ix and La Seu d'Urgell, which also boast extraordinary quality. However, the predominant artistic influence in La Seu d'Urgell comes from Rome. The church vault depicts a theophany whose iconography encompasses and permits two interpretations of the image on the vault, the Ascension and the Second Coming, in a synthesis of vast theological and doctrinal depth based on the Acts of the Apostles (Acts 1:11). The inscription below it, which can still be read, albeit with a bit of difficulty, says: "[...]-DO QVAE SVMPSE MEMBRA VEHENDO / [I]NDE RECESSVRVS [I]N VDEX S [...]", that is, "...the form I have taken in ascending / whence I shall return as a judge..."¹⁸ reinforces this identification. This synthetic vision, which can also be found on the facades of Notre-Dame de Poitiers and in the cathedral of Angulema, also appears in Sant Julià d'Estavar (*in situ*, Haute Cerdagne, France) and on the altar-frontal of Martinet (Worcester Museum of Art), which seems to come from the hermitage in Llers, in its district.

The semi-cylinder of the church of Sant Pere de la Seu d'Urgell depicts the Apostolic College with Mary. The apostles are shown in pairs, as if they were engaged in dialogue. The Virgin is next to John, who is portrayed with a veiled hand and a crown in his hand, referring to Revelation 2:10: "Be thou faithful unto death and I will give you a crown of life". We are only aware of one other similar example provided by Anke Wunderwald¹⁹ which appears on the portable altar in Begon from the treasure of Sainte-Foy de Conques, an abbey to which it was donated in 1100 by Bishop Ponç de Ribagorça, a highly influential figure in his day with close ties to Rome and Popes Urban II and Paschal II. The paintings in La Seu d'Urgell can be dated from around the same time, surely during the episcopacy of Saint Otto (1095-1122), whom we already mentioned when discussing Burgal, a figure with close ties to the papacy and the Gregorian Reform, especially to Urban II, whom he accompanied to Rome when the Pope was returning after preaching the Crusade in Clermont (1095).

A different matter entirely are the frescoes in the church of Santa Maria de Mur,²⁰ a pantheon of the Counts of Pallars Jussà, whose history we discussed above. Also very monumental, with rich colouring featuring vivid blues and yellows, and with the figures standing out starkly over a white plaster background, they have been related to French painting and especially to the painting from Roussillon, such as the murals in the Chapel of the Angels in Sainte-Marie d'Arles in Vallespir (consecrated in 1157), though not with those from Sant Salvador de Casesnoves,²¹ but also with those from St. Martin de Fenollar, which Pere Ponsich has related to the Viscountess Mahaut de Castellnou, meaning that they must date from prior to 1131.²² The paintings in Mur, however, are older, from the early decades of the 12th century. The stylistic prototypes of these paintings in Roussillon may be Saint-Polycarpe in Rasez and the former Benedictine monastery in Sainte Marie d'Alet in the Aude region. A certain kind of angel with unusual wings can be found in both Mur and in these other two



Figure 3. The Virgin Orans and Saint Paul and the “sea of glass”, with the quotation from the Apocalypse in the apse of Sant Vicenç d’Estamariu, *in situ* (© Centre de Restauració de Béns Mobles de Catalunya. Photo: Carles Aymerich).

sites, which also relates them to the paintings in Sainte-Marie de la Clusa, the ones in St. Martin de Fenollar and the severely damaged remains in Sant Quirze de Colera in the Alt Empordà, which have only recently been discovered and are still unpublished. However, except for this primordial relationship, the frescoes in Mur would still be a *unicum* if the ones in Sant Miquel de Moror,²³ a church which depended on the canonic church of Mur, had not been conserved, albeit in a highly fragmented fashion.

This painted decoration in Mur also reflects historical circumstances and very specific expectations, namely the

violent death of Count Ramon, most likely in an encounter with his neighbours and enemies, the host or army of Count Artau II of Pallars Sobirà, with whom he was engaged in an ongoing war. This is suggested by the fact that after his death, Bishop Ot of Urgell (repeatedly cited in this paper), who was the son of the Counts of Pallars Sobirà and therefore a cousin of the deceased, made his nephew, the son and heir of the deceased, the new Count Pere Ramon of Pallars Jussà, vow peace and truce. He also made his men take this vow in Catalan, the spoken language, perhaps to ensure that nobody could violate the

oath and undertake the revenge on his account, claiming that he had not understood the vow.

The painted decoration of the apse of Mur stresses this intention: that justice should be entrusted to the hands of all-powerful God. And this is depicted strikingly in the *Maiestas Domini*, the absolute Lord of time and history, with his seven torches or golden candelabra hanging from his throne, which are the ones that burn before the Son of Man in the vision from the Book of Revelation (Revelation 1 and 4). The tetramorph is arranged around him with the inscriptions from Sedulius' *Carmen Paschale*. Below, on the semi-cylinder, the Apostolic College is the militant Church at the service of the history of the Redemption, with a series on Christ's childhood depicted on a lower register, as in Sant Lisièr de Coserans. And, highly important in this context, in the windows, the Fratricide and the condemnation of Cain, the killer, are depicted after the offerings of Cain and Abel. That is, the recent history of the Counts of Pallars Jussà fell within universal history, in which only God, the omnipotent judge, may impart justice. This painted decoration in Mur seems to once again be attributed not so much to Ot as to the influence of Bishop Ponç of Roda (1097-1104), a rival of the Bishop of Urgell on territorial disputes who, along with the papal legate, managed to ensure that the church of Mur reported directly to Rome, thus removing it from the ordinary diocesan jurisdiction, which would have been Urgell.

Let us now turn to another series of paintings, the one in the churches in the Vall de Boí, which can be divided into two stages.²⁴ The murals in Sant Joan de Boí²⁵ date from the first stage, which is slightly before the aforementioned

paintings but not before those in La Seu d'Urgell, situating them at around 1100. They are closely connected with the painting style of Aquitaine and the Court of Poitiers. They capture a highly interesting and original iconographic programme²⁶ with a monumental bestiary in the intrados of the arches unheard of in murals, which even includes a sinful man. This syntactic imagery, which also occupied the lower part of the lengthwise walls and represented the universe or created world, contrasts with the imagery of the Holy City, or celestial Jerusalem, on the upper part of the walls. On the side naves at least, an entire series of saints and apostles is depicted either alone on the wall above the columns, or in pairs conversing on the lengthwise walls, all of them flanked by towers. This imagery also included the most prominent and notable image in the series, the Lapidation of Saint Stephen, as well as a monumental minstrelsy scene with three figures, clearly a celebration of joy and praise. It is included in the same pictorial universe as the saints and like them is painted over a background of bands of colour bounded above by a magnificent floral border and below by a zigzagging ribbon. No paintings remain from either the apses, two of which have disappeared, or the central nave, but on the west wall was a rendering of the Final Judgement, the seven-headed dragon of the Apocalypse of which remains, with a hint of the ten horns, as well as the remains of the bosom of Abraham, which represented Paradise, and of Hell. The painted decoration of the south façade of this church also remains, with different polychromy and style, a later work which can clearly be related to the other paintings in the Vall de Boí. There is a theophany centred on the monogram of Christ borne by four angels and an elderly saint on one side of the doorway showing us



Figure 4. Lapidation of Saint Stephen from Sant Joan de Boí, MNAC (© MNAC – photographers Calveras/Mèrida/Sagristà).

the book that inspires the vision, and other younger ones gathered at the other side.

The second stage of the paintings in the valley can be situated in around 1123, the date when the churches of Sant Climent de Taüll and Santa Maria de Taüll were consecrated by Bishop Ramon de Ribagorça, because of the inscription, which is painted on the column.²⁷

The *Maiestas Domini* or Christ in Majesty in Sant Climent is an emblematic image of Catalan Romanesque painting, a work of vast artistic quality, polychromy and streamlined technique in which, with a masterful and highly original artfulness, the Lombard tradition is synthesised with the tradition of sculpture from Toulouse, without departing from either the Byzantine or the expressionistic component. As a whole, this yields a highly powerful language. The colour is of exceptional quality in terms of both the pigments used, some of them imported, like cinnabar, derived from mercury, for red, and the skilful technique with which it was applied, which corresponds to what was described in the treatise *Diversis artibus* written at that time by the monk Theophilus, such as in the application of the blue over a layer of dark grey or *veneda*, almost black.

The apse of Sant Climent de Taüll is the *capolavoro* of an entire school of painting that reappears, albeit with its intensity dimmed, not only in the neighbouring church of Santa Maria de Taüll but also in other places: in the Saint Augustine chapel in the cathedral of Roda d'Isàvena, perhaps the version that is stylistically the most similar to Sant Climent, and, in a more distorted fashion, in Santa Eulàlia d'Unha in the Vall d'Aran (old Comenge diocese). In turn, the Santa Maria style is echoed in different churches on the right bank of the Duero River, in Castile, in the zone conquered by Alphonse the Battler of Aragon (who was married to Urraca of Castile, which is why he reigned over these lands), where the influence of Bishop Ramon of Roda (who consecrated the churches in Taüll) must have been felt: San Baudelio de Berlanga,²⁸ Santa Cruz de Maderuelo and San Miguel de Gormaz.

In the apse of Sant Climent de Taüll a theophany is depicted based on the Apocalypse and other Biblical sources, in which the *Maiestas Domini*, with the book of life where the inscription refers to his divine nature, "EGO SVM LVX MVNDI", is surrounded by the symbols of the tetramorph, which is depicted with extraordinary iconographic richness. It seems as if the Lord appears in his chariot, whose wheels bear the symbols of Mark and Luke and the angels that accompany them, as if they had been captured in full motion. On either end of the vault is a seraph and a cherub. On the semi-cylinder is the Apostolic College, with the Virgin with the chalice and Saint John the Evangelist in the centre, the latter a prominent figure showing the book that inspired the vision.

Other emblematic images in Taüll include the hand of God blessing Abel (remains of which are conserved *in situ*) and the Apocalyptic seven-eyed lamb on the keystones of the triumphal arches. Also noteworthy is the poor Lazarus from the parable in Luke (Luke 16:19-24) depicted by the

gate of the rich man's house, with a dog licking his open sores, as in the *Codex Aureus* of Echternach. Right across from this scene is a depiction of the wealthy man's banquet with an ostentatiously large table, still conserved *in situ*.²⁹ Unlike the door of Ripoll or the cloisters of Sant Cugat and the cathedral of Girona, where the parable is depicted in four scenes, in Sant Climent only the first two appear. Their eschatological meaning should be considered in relation to the other images that compose the homily painted in the apse, so that together they form a single discourse. Next to poor Lazarus was a portrait of a seated nobleman dressed richly and in a grieving pose, by himself and with his back turned to the theophany. This figure, the grieving nobleman with his back turned on the Revelation, can also be found in Santa Maria de Ginestarré (MNAC) and in Sant Andreu de Baltarga (Museu Diocesà d'Urgell, MDU). Having rejected his identification as Jacob, Epulon or Job, among other reasons because of the remains of an inscription located near it, "...RAIM" in Baltarga, it has recently been suggested that this is Ephraim,³⁰ the second son of Joseph, born in Egypt, which prophets cited as synonymous with Israel, who is attributed with the responsibility for the death of Christ (Hosea 12:14). This figure (currently in storage at MNAC) was located across from the Fratricide, a scene recently found *in situ*, where Cain with an axe in his hand is about to slay his brother Abel, whom he is grasping by the hair. The powerful, vigorous, extraordinarily skilful style is the same as the style found in the apse paintings described above.

And finally, on the wall over the apse in Sant Climent there used to be the figure of men playing the horn or the olifant, one of which is now in MNAC while the other remains *in situ*. They are the *missi Dominici*, the envoys of the Lord chosen to herald his triumphal coming. The paintings on the side apse are by a secondary painter whom we know as the Master of the Final Judgement (identified in this scene in Santa Maria de Taüll), which, because of its crudeness, would clearly imply that they were rendered after the 1140 agreement between the Bishops of Urgell and Roda over the possession of several sites, including Taüll, which at the time definitively belonged to Urgell.

The paintings in the Saint Augustine chapel in the cathedral of Roda d'Isàvena, also consecrated by Bishop Ramon of Roda in 1116, are, as mentioned above, the most closely related to the frescoes in Sant Climent, as well as those on the arch in the south apse of Santa Maria de Taüll, which feature an extraordinarily skilfully rendered head of a prophet.

Even though the influence of the school of Sant Climent can be seen in the paintings in this other church in the village of Taüll, Santa Maria parish church, which was also consecrated in 1123, the majority that survive are by other artists. The ones in the chancel are also notable, although they are on a smaller scale. On the vault is a theophany with the *Maiestas Mariae* which shows the Christ Child at the Adoration of the Magi. Very prominent is the figure of Abel, as well as the archangels and the seraphim on the triumphal arch, shown next to the anthropo-



Figure 5. Apse of Sant Climent de Taüll, MNAC (© MNAC – photographers Calveras/Mèrida/Sagristà).

zoomorphic symbols of the evangelists. In all of them, one can note a certain classical influence from Lombard painting. The decoration in the nave, which was painted after the church was consecrated, is by yet another artist, freed from the weight of the Byzantine-Lombard heritage and its ancient naturalism, the Master of the Final Judgement, who imitates the great local masters, both the Master of

Taüll or Sant Climent de Taüll and the Master of Santa Maria, yet is quite distant in terms of his technique and craft. However, his work is very interesting from the iconographic standpoint, and a considerable number of his paintings still survive.

Some of the paintings in Sant Pere de Sorpe (MNAC and MDU)³¹ from around 1125-1150³² can also somehow



Figure 6. The face of Cain in the scene depicting the Fratricide, paintings from Sant Climent de Taüll, *in situ* (© Centre de Restauració de Béns Mobles de Catalunya. Photo: Carles Aymerich).

be related to Santa Maria de Taüll. In these paintings, three different styles converge: a Lombard style, quite different to that of Pedret and yet very high quality; a more expressionistic style; and a third much more rudimentary style, even in the polychromy. They all date from around the same period, which would indicate that painters from different places had joined forces to complete the commission. Something similar holds true in Santa Eulàlia d'Estaon.³³ In Sorpe, the best master is the first one, the author of the Annunciation and the Crucifixion, with a lovely Christ that reflects the mezzo-Byzantine style.³⁴ This artist also painted the Crucifixion in Santa Eulàlia d'Estaon (MDU and private collection),³⁵ which is almost identical to the one in Sorpe, where we can note the use of the same patterns, for example. The second master of Sorpe rendered Saints Gervasius and Protasius and the allegorical images on this church's triumphal arches, including the picture of Mary with the Christ Child between the Church and Synagogue, which has been studied by Hélène Toubert³⁶ (very stylistically similar to the *Maiestas Mariae* in Santa Maria de Taüll) as well as the Bark of the Church and the banquet of the wealthy man from the parable of Lazarus, which is from a chapel located on the first floor of the belfry. Finally, the third master of Sorpe, the most mediocre one, painted the Eucharistic, theophanic and zodiacal figuration of the arches separating the naves, al-

though the sign of Sagittarius is by one of the other painters. Another interesting image in the church is the one showing young men pouring water from jugs which, according to Joan Ainaud, would be the rivers of Paradise or, according to another hypothesis recently suggested, the fountains of River Jordan; this would mean that the baptism of Christ would have been on the pillar across from the Crucifixion.³⁷ We can expect the restoration of the church planned for this year to shed new light on this important set of paintings.

While the reflection of the Master of Santa Maria de Taüll can be found again in one of the images in Sorpe, the reflection of the Master of the Final Judgement, a distant echo of the Taüll School, as mentioned above, can also be found, more stylised and simplified, in the paintings of Sant Iscle i Santa Victòria church in Surp (MNAC, MDU and The Toledo Museum of Art, Ohio) and in the Aragonese churches of Santa Eulàlia de Susín and San Esteban de Almazorre.

The style of the Master of Osormort, who must have lived in around the second and third quarter of the 12th century, should be situated alongside these styles, all of which are related to the tradition of Lombard painting to a greater or lesser degree and intensity (and Taüll with the Toulouse school of sculpture as well, as mentioned above). The Osormort style is characterised by the clear, direct

and undeniable influence of the painting of Aquitaine, specifically the Poitiers School. The style can be recognised in Catalan paintings especially by the very particular configuration of the faces, which are usually shown in three-quarters view with the oval excessively straight.

In addition to the paintings in Sant Sadurní d'Osormort (Museu Episcopal de Vic, MEV), the catalogue of this style includes the paintings in Sant Martí del Brull (MEV), Sant Joan de Bellcaire (Museu d'Art de Girona and private collection), Santa Maria de Cervià (*in situ*, recently discovered),³⁸ Sant Miquel de Cruïlles (*in situ*, with a theme of opposed lions which imitates imperial Byzantine silks), Sant Esteve de Marenyà (*in situ*), Sant Esteve de Canapost (*in situ*)³⁹ and Sant Pere de Navata (*in situ*),⁴⁰ the last conserved somewhat precariously. The Court of Poitiers style must have been introduced to Catalonia either directly or through its relationship with the Kingdom of Aragon at the time of the negotiation that led to the marriage of Count Ramon Berenguer IV of Barcelona with Peronella of Aragon and the union of the two states, the Principality of Catalonia and the Kingdom of Aragon (1137). This is because this style notably appears in the lower church of San Juan de la Peña, the pantheon of the Kings of Aragon, with the depiction of the patron saints of physicians, Cosmas and Damian, a commission by King Peter I of Aragon and Navarre, who was ill and concerned about his health and that of his sons. According to Elena Alfani, these paintings can be dated from between 1094 and 1104.⁴¹ The contacts must have fostered exchanges, as well as journeys by and the hiring of artists.

The frescoes and the round church of Sant Sepulcre d'Olèrdola, which must still be restored, are more difficult to define in terms of both their style, which is archaic or archaizing, and their date. There is a Last Supper and part of a Final Judgement with the blessed ones under arches and a highly particular depiction of Hell. They bear certain stylistic parallelisms with the paintings of the church of Santa Creu in the castle of Calafell.⁴²

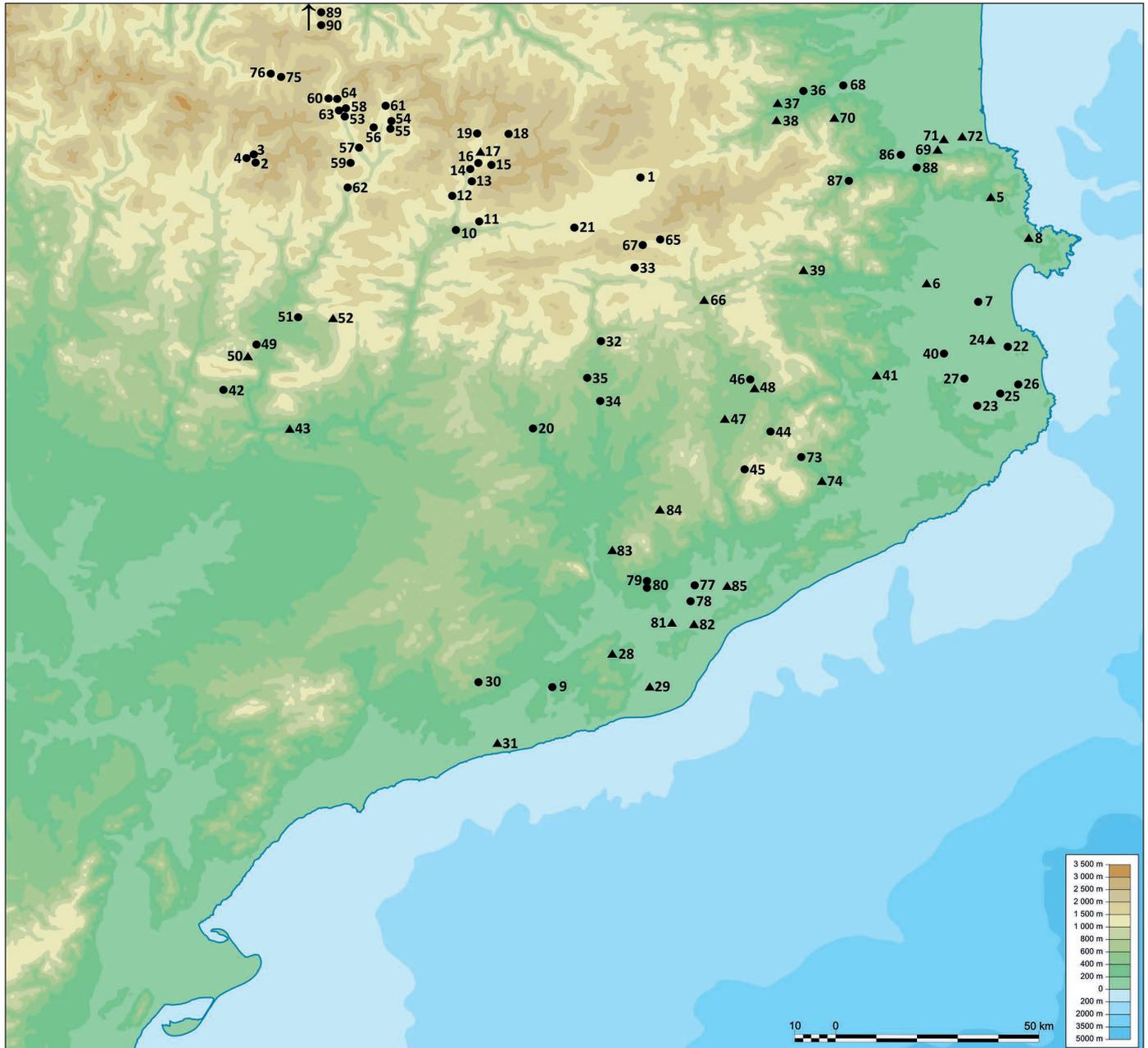
A painter working in the valley of Andorra left his mark in the second half of the 12th century; even though he is clearly the heir to the legacy of Pedret, he does not show the same Byzantine pathos or monumental hieratism and is instead highly dynamic. The very characteristic faces of his figures are easily recognisable. He is called the Master of Santa Coloma after the decoration of the church by that name, his most emblematic work and characteristic of his surviving output, which had been conserved in Berlin for many years but was recently purchased by the state of Andorra.⁴³ The key to dating it is 1164, when one of the churches in the group, Sant Romà de les Bons, was consecrated. On the plinth of its apse is the same decorative theme, executed identically as the one covering the altar where the consecration parchment was kept. Other murals by the same artist include the ones in Sant Miquel d'Engolasters (MNAC) and Sant Cristòfol d'Anyós (whereabouts unknown). In Andorra, we should mention yet another work by two other masters, the Master of La Cortinada

and the Master of Sant Joan de Caselles, who also evince the influence of the Lombard style of Pedret.⁴⁴

Yet another group with a stylistic personality of its own which can also be dated from the second half of the 12th century, in the lands of the Countships of Barcelona and Osona and the Viscounty of Cardona-Osona, is that of the paintings of Sant Salvador de Polinyà (Museu Diocesà de Barcelona and *in situ*), Santa Maria de Barberà (*in situ*), Sant Martí Sescorts (MEV) and Sant Vicenç de Cardona (MNAC).⁴⁵ Their style can be identified by the way the figures are presented, in a three-quarter view and with a curve in the spine that can be quite exaggerated, the round shape of many of the faces except the bearded ones, and hands with abnormally long fingers. There are also compositional and iconographic parallels among the works, such as between the Baptism of the Christ Child in Polinyà and in Barberà, yet this parallel even exists if the subject portrayed is different, such as the *Maiestas Mariae* in Polinyà and the *Traditio legis* in Barberà, flanked by a kind of palm tree in the Roman manner. One prominent and extraordinarily original subject in this church, studied by Lily Arad,⁴⁶ is the depiction of the legend of the invention and exaltation of the Holy Cross by Constantine and Saint Helen. This entire group can be dated from the second half of the 12th century, with a few works closer to the turn of the century.⁴⁷ The fascinating murals in Sant Martí Sescorts also fall into the same group.

The paintings in Santa Maria de Ginestarre and Sant Pau d'Esterrí de Cardós also date from the second half of the 12th century.⁴⁸ In them, one can glimpse the more distant echo of the influence of the great Lombard masters, just as in the paintings of Sant Romà d'Aineto, which are severely damaged and feature the remains of the bosom of Abraham in the triumphal arch.

The last phase in Catalan Romanesque painting, which corresponds to what is called the art or style of 1200 and represents a new humanism, dates in Catalonia from between the waning years of the reigns of Alphonse the Chaste (1162-1196) and Peter the Catholic (1196-1213). The most important feature of this style is the strong influence from Byzantine painting at the end of the Komnenos dynasty (1181-1185), which represents a return to ancient naturalism. Even though the contacts with the court in Constantinople were direct and Alphonse I of Catalonia (II of Aragon) sent an ambassador there in 1176 to negotiate the marriage of a Greek princess, apparently this art reached Catalonia mainly via contacts with Sicily and England and via two fundamental works: the so-called Anglo-Catalan Psalter or Golden Psalter of Paris (BNP), dating from 1175-1190, along with the paintings in the chapterhouse in Sigena (MNAC), a monastery founded by Sancha of Castile, the daughter of Alphonse VII the Emperor and the wife of King Alphonse the Chaste of Catalonia, dating from around 1196. Just like the mosaics in the cathedral of Monreale, but here in mural form, the art of Sigena reveals a new humanism, a new way of conceiving and depicting the human figure with vast expressive power, bodies and



Map 1. Map showing the location of mural painting complexes in Catalonia. The circle (●) indicates the site where the bulk of the murals are conserved or come from, while the triangle (▲) shows where there are remains or vestiges. Abbreviations: CRBMC = Centre for the Restoration of Property of Catalonia; Md'AG = Art Museum of Girona; MDCS = Diocesan and County Museum of Solsona; MDL = Diocesan and County Museum of Lleida; MDU = Diocesan Museum of Urgell; MEV = Episcopal Museum of Vic; MNAC = National Art Museum of Catalonia. Map rendered by Josep M. Palau i Baduell.

1. Sant Julià d'Estavar (Alta Cerdanya), *in situ*; 2. Sant Climent de Taüll (Alta Ribagorça), MNAC, *in situ*; 3. Santa Maria de Taüll (Alta Ribagorça), MNAC; 4. Sant Joan de Boí (Alta Ribagorça), MNAC; 5. Sant Quirze de Colera (Alt Empordà), *in situ*; 6. Sant Pere de Navata (Alt Empordà), *in situ*; 7. Sant Tomàs de Fluvià (Alt Empordà), *in situ*; 8. Sant Pere de Rodes (Alt Empordà), *in situ*; 9. Sant Sepulcre d'Olèrdola (Alt Penedès), *in situ*; 10. Sant Miquel de la Seu d'Urgell (Alt Urgell), MNAC; 11. Sant Vicenç d'Estamariu (Alt Urgell), *in situ*; 12. Santa Eugènia d'Argoell (Alt Urgell), MNAC; 13. Sant Serni de Nagol (Andorra), *in situ*; 14. Santa Coloma d'Andorra (Andorra), *in situ*, Govern d'Andorra; 15. Sant Miquel d'Engolasters (Andorra), MNAC; 16. Sant Esteve d'Andorra la Vella (Andorra), MNAC, Museo del Prado, private collections; 17. Sant Cristòfol d'Anyós (Andorra), location unknown; 18. Sant Joan de Caselles (Andorra), *in situ*; 19. Sant Martí de la Cortinada (Andorra), *in situ*; 20. Sant Vicenç de Cardona (Bages), MNAC; 21. Sant Andreu de Baltarga (Baixa Cerdanya), MDU; 22. Sant Joan de Bellcaire (Baix Empordà), Md'AG, private collection; 23. Sant Miquel de Cruïlles (Baix Empordà), *in situ*; 24. Sant Esteve de Marenyà (Baix Empordà), *in situ*; 25. Sant Esteve de Canapost (Baix Empordà), *in situ*; 26. Sant Pau de Fontclara (Baix Empordà), *in situ*; 27. Sant Andreu de Pedrinyà (Baix Empordà), Md'AG, private collections; 28. Sant Ponç de Corbera (Baix Llobregat), *in situ*; 29. Santa Maria de Sales (Baix Llobregat), *in situ*; 30. Sant Miquel de Marmellar (Baix Penedès), MNAC; 31. Santa Creu del castell de Calafell (Baix Penedès), *in situ*; 32. Sant Quirze de Pedret (Berguedà), MNAC, MDCS; 33. Sant Vicenç de Rus (Berguedà), MDCS; 34. Sant Martí de Puig-reig (Berguedà), *in situ*; 35. Sant Pau de Casserres (Berguedà), MDCS; 36. Santa

faces shaped with a strongly Byzantine naturalism, with extraordinarily interesting contrasts of light and shadow. The echo of this art, which must have had a huge impact in Catalonia at the time, can be found in both panel paintings (altar-frontals in Orellà, *in situ*; Avià, MNAC; Ribesaltes, Abbeig-Stiftung; Baltarga, MNAC; and Rotgers, MEV) and in murals. One notable example of this are the paintings in Sant Martí de Puig-reig (*in situ*), the severely damaged ones in Sant Pau de Fontclara and especially the ones in Sant Esteve d'Andorra la Vella (MNAC and private collections). The latter, which can be dated from 1216-1120, are very monumental and are also related to the art of Alto Adige and the Salzburg School.⁴⁹ In addition to the scenes in the apsidiole, especially the acrobatically posed servant who is filling three jugs at a time, the scenes in the main apse also stand out with a series on the Passion of Christ made up of four major scenes: the washing of the feet, the arrest, the flogging and the mocking while wearing the crown of thorns. They represent a new artistic language that stresses the volumetrics of the bodies, the expression on the faces and the relationships between the figures with stunning dramatic power; in short, a new humanism whose character and origin are Byzantine, which will permeate, to differing degrees, much and probably the most significant part of Catalan painting output over the course of the 13th century.

NOTES AND REFERENCES

- [1] The majority of the mural paintings mentioned appear in *Catalunya Romànica*, 27 vols., Barcelona 1984-1998, with the bibliography, meaning that in addition to the most generic citations below, we shall only mention the most re-

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- VDEX / [SAN] // /.../ ON / VS /.../”, and suggests as a translation: “welche Mitglieder ich durch Auffahrt auserwählt habe” and “woher der Richter neu erschaffen hat”.
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BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

Montserrat Pagès i Paretas is curator of the Romanesque Collection at the Museu Nacional d'Art de Catalunya (MNAC). As such, in 1994 and 1995 she worked on designing and executing the new installation in MNAC's Romanesque Art Room which opened the latter year. This project entailed the transfer and reassembly of the entire collection, including the apses, and the addition of new murals. She is a member of the EMAC research team in the Department of Art History at the Universitat de Barcelona. She is a member of the Societat Cultural Urgel·litana in La Seu d'Urgell and of the Societat Catalana d'Estudis Litúrgics, a subsidiary of the Institut d'Estudis Catalans, and of the Société Nationale des Antiquaires de France. Her first studies examined the art of the Carolingian period (*Les esglésies pre-romàniques a la comarca del Baix Llobregat*, 1980 Fundació Güell Prize, Institut d'Estudis Catalans 1983), while her more recent studies have mainly been oriented at Romanesque murals, along with panel paintings, manuscripts and textiles. Her publications include *Art romànic i feudalisme al Baix Llobregat* (1992), *Sobre pintura romànica catalana* (2005), *La pintura mural romànica de les Valls d'Àneu* (2008), *Sobre pintura romànica catalana, noves aportacions* (2009) and *Pintura mural sagrada i profana, del Romànic al primer Gòtic* (2012), all of them issued by Publicacions de l'Abadia de Montserrat.