

The Construction of the Royal Monastery of Santa Maria de Pedralbes (Barcelona)

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In this paper we examine the construction of the Royal Monastery of Saint Mary of Pedralbes in Barcelona through the analysis of historical records preserved in the monastery's archives. This is also the subject of the author's current doctoral dissertation.

The Monastery of Pedralbes is located on one of the slopes of the Collserola hills that surround the city of Barcelona. Its name comes from the Latin term "petras albas" and means white stones, the colour of the rocks from a local quarry (**figs. 1, 2, 3**).



Figure 1. General view of the Monastery of Saint Mary of Pedralbes.

Pedralbes is considered one of the best examples of Mediterranean Gothic architecture, particularly for its cloister (Lavedan, 1935, p.101) – the largest one preserved from the Low Middle Ages – and for its church (**figs. 5, 8, 9, 10, 11**). With its three floors the cloister is one of the most spacious and harmonious in the world. The sick ward in the southern wing constitutes, in addition, one of the best preserved hospital buildings from the Renaissance (**fig. 15**). In the wing opposite to the church lies the refectory (**fig. 7**) with service rooms such as the kitchen, the larder, and the pharmacy. During the 14th century the North wing was built, consisting of the dormitory and an annex attached on the West side that served as the private residence of Queen Elisenda of Montcada, patron of the monastery.



Figure 2. General view of the façade of the Monastery of Saint Mary of Pedralbes

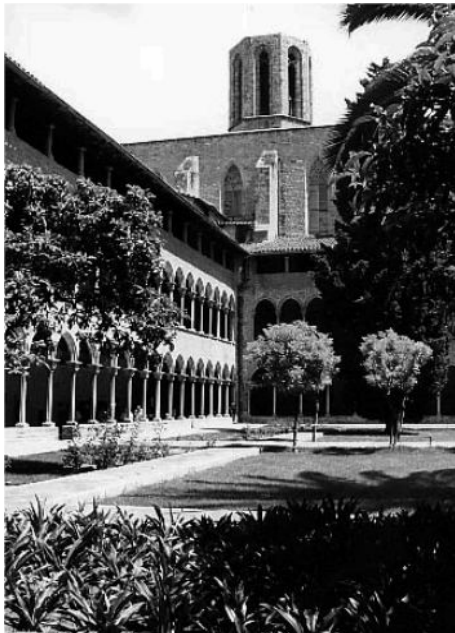


Figure 3. General view of the cloister of the Monastery of Pedralbes.

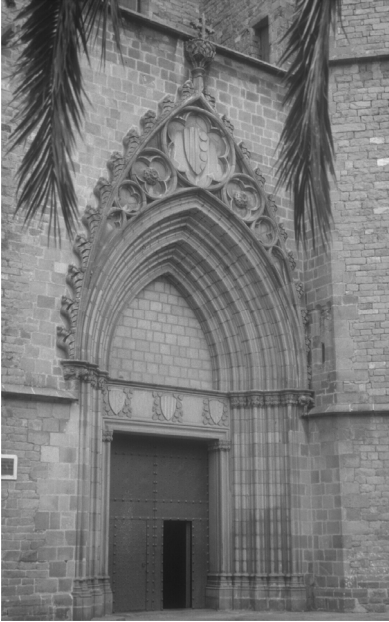


Figure 4. Main entrance of the church

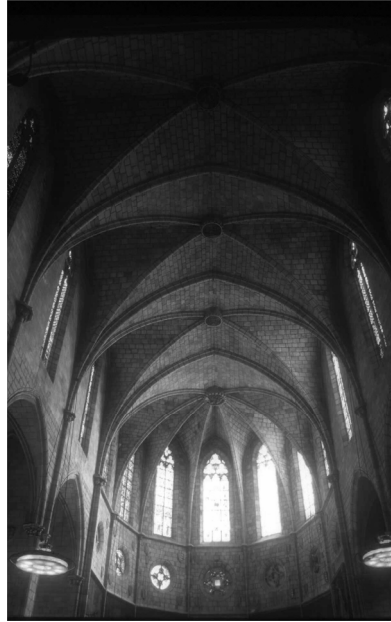


Figure 5. Interior of the church. Vault.

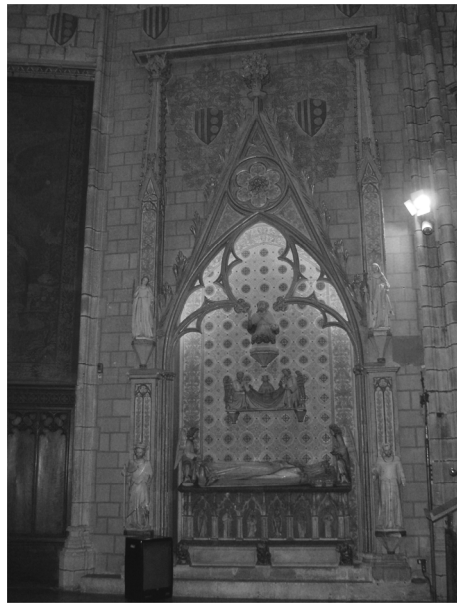


Figure 6. The sepulchre of the Queen Elisenda, This sepulchre has two faces, one views the church and the other the cloister.



Figure 7. The refectory of the monastery



Figure 8. Columns in the cloister made of nummulitic marble.

A special feature of the monastery is the series of individual cells, known as “cells for the day,” located around the cloister and even on top of the roof (**figs. 9, 12, 13**). They were built throughout the centuries, in most cases by using the space between buttresses. One cell that stands out was sponsored by Francesca Saportella, Queen Elisenda’s niece, and second head abbess of the

monastery. It is located between the buttresses of the church's apse and was decorated by Ferrer Bassa in 1346. Bassa's pictures are considered one of the first examples of Italo-Gothic painting in Catalonia. (This cell has attracted the attention of many art historians; the bibliography is too lengthy to list here).



Figure 9. The North wing of the cloister that corresponds to the dormitory.



Figure 10. The South wing of the cloister. The sick bay.



Figure 11. East wing of the cloister. Refectory. In front we can see the Angel Fountain and the cistern.



Figure 12. Private cells built between the buttresses of the dormitory. Cell of the Pieti.

BRIEF HISTORY OF THE MONASTERY OF SAINT MARY OF PEDRALBES

The Monastery of Saint Mary of Pedralbes was founded in 1326 by Queen Elisenda of Montcada, the third wife of King James II. Pedralbes has always been an exceptional structure. This is the case

for many reasons: first, because it has always received enough funding to be self-sufficient despite being ruled by the order of Poor Clares; next, because most of the nuns belonged to noble families; and last, because it has maintained continuous relationships with the royalty and the city council. It is also extraordinary that its architecture has been preserved despite the devastation of wars and deterioration due to the passing of time.



Figure 13: Interior of a cell of the cloister. Cell of Montserrat.

It was the aim of the queen that the nuns inhabiting the monastery were from the order of Poor Clares and were attended to by a Franciscan community that lived in a monastery next to the main building of the nuns, which is known as “Conventet,” or little convent. The first stone was put in the aisle of the church in March 1326, and a little over a year later, in November 1327, the ceremony of consecration of the church took place. This does not mean that the church was completely finished. However, it is probable that the work could have continued quite quickly due to the unity of its construction, the techniques used and its royal financing. Nevertheless, we know that the cloister was not completed up until the 16th century. After James II’s death, the queen ordered the arrangement of some rooms that were already built as part of the complex to become her personal residence. She spent the last years of her life in this improvised palace, adding other areas such as rooms for maids and a private chapel dedicated to Saint Nicolas (ADB, R. Communion (1345-

1348) Vol. 14, fol.134). From this retired palace, she continued living as a queen and maintained her relationship with the court. However, her main duty was to take care of the monastery and ensure the well-being of the nuns.

The queen's role is crucial to understanding the uniqueness of Pedralbes in the ensemble of Poor Clare convents during Low Middle Ages in the Aragon Crown (Giné i Torres 1989, pp. 125-142). Most Poor Clare convents in Western Europe were founded through spiritual and not material wealth, at least not of the communities that resided there (for an extended bibliography see Sanjust i Latorre 2005, p.734, note 11). A large number of communities lived miserably, or better said subsisted, due to several factors. First of all the ideal of poverty lead to an austere, almost a hermitic life. Furthermore, the discrimination against woman in the Low Middle Ages caused female monasteries to depend on male ones, and they were unable to maintain their finances. In some cases the lack of funds reached the point that the nuns were not able to face the damage of plagues or wars and their convents were closed.

Poverty, voluntarily chosen or not, dictated a very simple type of building that reuses previously existing structures. Nuns and friars would follow the example of the saints that founded the orders. Both Saint Francis and Saint Claire rehabilitated half-ruined structures, not only in order to follow the ideal of poverty, but also as a metaphor of their own spiritual reconstruction to a new evangelistic life (Mistretta 1983). As a consequence, the few buildings that have been preserved have also been restored over time. It is thus difficult for art historians today to enumerate the original characteristics of Poor Clares architecture. It is also a challenge to determine whether a renovation addresses either the need of conservation and restoration of deteriorated areas, even to prevent their collapse, or to follow the precepts of the leaders of the order. Therefore, what we call Poor Clare architecture today is a group of largely insignificant buildings that have undergone many renovations.

Even though most monasteries fell to ruin and poverty we can point to exceptions. Some monasteries, such as Saint Mary of Pedralbes, arose thanks to the support of members of the royalty or nobility. Queen Elisenda of Montcada is not, therefore, an isolated case. During the 14th century other queens founded monasteries: Blanche of Naples, James II's second wife, founded the convent of Saint Clare of Vilafranca of Penedès in 1300; Isabel of Portugal, Queen Elisenda of Montcada's sister-in-law and daughter of Peter the Great, founded Saint Claire of Coimbra; Sancia of Mallorca, Robert of Anjou's wife, founded the monastery of Saint Clare of Naples in 1311; Isabel of France, king Louis IX's sister, founded the monastery of Longchamp; and, later, Mary, Alfons the Magnanimous' wife, founded the convent of the Holy Trinity of Poor Clares in Valence. These institutions were the exception for several reasons, ranging from their economic resources to their number of nuns to the importance of their architecture. We can appreciate the great difference between these monasteries and the poorer ones. Most convents had few possibilities and even risked dissolution. Therefore, most could not think of constructing new rooms, not to mention investing in

the building's decoration. But institutions with noble or royal patrons benefited from ongoing structural improvements and new art work.

Among the wealthy religious institutions, the monastery of Pedralbes is a special case. At the time of its founding, the community of Pedralbes was endowed with plenty of rents, incomes and profits to ensure its self-sufficiency. The 14th century was a period of growth and consolidation for the monastery; the 15th century, on the contrary, was a more oscillating period. During the first years of the 15th century the monastery became a centre of power and wealth, following the growth of the previous century. But it was soon affected negatively by various circumstances. First, the Catalan civil war against King John II (1462-1472) led to diminished incomes, and the nuns eventually abandoned the cloister. Second, successive religious reforms sought to reinstate strict obedience in monastic community life. In Pedralbes those reforms triggered a strong controversy between conventual and observant nuns. The same opposition, as a mirror, was reproduced in the convent of friars that tended to the spiritual life of the nuns. The 16th century brought better circumstances. The Catholic Kings had the desire of keeping the religious orders under their control, particularly those of a contemplative character. For that reason, they gave economic support to many institutions and they chose new abbesses or priors for the most rebellious monasteries. In Pedralbes, the increase of resources enabled new restoration and construction projects to commence. These reformations were intended to bring the monastery back to a splendour that it may never have had. The attention given from the monarchy was constant, up until the end of the century.

Paralleling Catalan history, as time passed, the monastery's finances declined. Preservation of the building suffered, and several damages occurred. It must also be noted that, based on its strategic location outside the city of Barcelona but sufficiently near to it, the monastery was the chosen place to lodge soldiers from the 15th century on. As a result, during all the wars that took place in the Catalonia of the Ancient Regime, soldiers settled in the cloister of Pedralbes or its surroundings with the ill-fated and predictable consequences that such occupations cause.

At the end of 18th century the entire building was whitewashed, probably for hygienic reasons. At the same time a baroque altarpiece completely covering the apse of the church was installed. At the end of 19th century, between 1895 and 96, a restoration was undertaken, thanks to the initiative of Sister Eulàlia de Anzizu. This initiative sought to bring the monastery back to its supposed original state by removing the whitewash that hid the walls. Ever since then, renovations to the building have been ongoing. Several institutions have been responsible of those works. First of all the Conservation of Monuments Service from Barcelona's County Council worked in Pedralbes from 1920 to the 1970s. In 1931, the monastery of Pedralbes was declared a Historical and Artistic Monument of National Character. After the architect Joan Bassegoda i Nonell led the renovations, the project was delegated to the Barcelona city council. The municipal technical experts are now in charge of the restoration and conservation of the monastery complex.

SOURCES

The available literature on the construction of the Royal Monastery of Saint Mary of Pedralbes is limited. Documentation of the art collection is also incomplete, despite the monastery museum's recent efforts to compile a scholarly catalogue.

The reference that provides the best general overview of the institution's history and, hence, of its physical development is still the 19th century book written by Sister Eulàlia de Anzizu (1897). This nun belonged to one of the wealthiest families in Barcelona and was connected with the intellectual circles of the day. She belonged to the historicist current of the Catalan Renaissance. She was intimately familiar with the records in the archives of the monastery due to her role in assembling them. Her main book needs to be complemented with the unpublished *Índex General de l'arxiu de Santa Maria de Pedralbes*. In both sources the information is varied, and in certain cases imprecise. In her architectural discussion Sister Anzizu took advantage of the study carried out by the architect Josep Oriol Mestres (1882). To summarize we need to say that Sister Eulàlia de Anzizu's contribution has not yet been superseded.

Other studies are nonetheless noteworthy. The most important architectural resource is the above mentioned work of the architect Josep Oriol Mestres (1882). This text was written for the Catalan Association of Architects, whose president was Elies Rogent, a student of Violet-le-Duc. The most outstanding association members were the well-known architects Domènec i Muntaner and Antoni Gaudí. To understand the importance of Mestres' contribution we have to bear in mind that during the second half of the 19th century major fiscal reforms in Spain (*desamortización de Mondizábal*) caused the church to sell part of its wealth to the state. As a consequence, many monasteries were abandoned and demolished. Faced with this perilous situation Mestres visited and described a whole range of monuments that were at risk of disappearing. His text, therefore, is an analysis starting with a general historical introduction. The author idealizes the Middle Ages, as was customary at the time. Then, he provides a detailed description of the building, establishing comparisons and stylistic relations with other buildings. This report was literally copied by Sister Eulàlia de Anzizu. One of Mestres' hypotheses was that the Monastery of Saint Mary of Pedralbes could be considered a "monasterium duplex", like Fontevraud, because a community of nuns, the Poor Clares, and of friars, the Franciscans settled in the "Conventet", lived together within on the same grounds. Today this theory has been completely ruled out, because it is evident that the two communities pursued parallel but separate courses despite their ongoing relationship. Nonetheless, Mestres' contribution is remarkable, both for his descriptions and for his drafts of the Pedralbes' church.

To date, historical studies of the Monastery of Pedralbes have not focused on the evolution of its construction, with the exception of Sister Eulàlia de Anzizu's work.. Castellano (1998) terminates her investigation in 1409, when the religious reforms began, and she focuses her analysis on the

community of nuns as an institution. Ruiz Olalla (1987) begins her research in 1500 and takes the economy of the monastery as the main subject of her work. These studies provide an insight into the religious and economic operations of the religious institution.

These sources provide an understanding of how the monastery functioned as a religious and economic institution, which is fundamental to comprehending the course of its construction. A more comprehensive study is required, one that uses the historical records as a guide to interpreting the building and its cultural treasures.

The archives of the monastery are preserved *in situ*. Unfortunately, a building logbook is not preserved; we could hypothesize that it was never kept. Any data that we shall get will necessarily not be very explicit and will refer to the construction only indirectly. Therefore, it is very interesting to attempt to match the data found in alternative documents with the building itself, and to use the construction history to date the historic fabric. We have carefully studied the monastery's account books, as well as other legal and ecclesiastical sources.

The reports elaborated by the Service of Conservation and Preservation of Monuments of the City Council as well as the ones from the County Council, preserved in the Heritage Territorial Service of Catalonia are a sources that need always to be consulted. Nevertheless, the reports written just after the Spanish Civil War (1936-39) are very brief. Their only intention is to establish an inventory of the urgent modifications that needed to be conducted and the estimated expenses.

CHRONOLOGY OF THE MONASTERY'S CONSTRUCTION

This third section explains the history of the monastery's construction based on its financial records, particularly its expenses. These records document construction activities, including maintenance and renovations that took place between 1326 and 1577. These chosen dates are significant because in 1326 the monastery was founded, and in 1577 a three year electoral cycle for head abbesses replaces the convention electing abbesses for life. The construction chronology is organized by the tenure of each head abbess. Although these historical periods do not necessarily correspond with construction phases, they provide a helpful organizing framework. Unfortunately we are not able to include the precise documentation of each of the data comment here; we aim to publish those details in our PhD dissertation.

The first head abbess of Pedralbes was Sister Sobirana of Olzet. She was elected on May 3 1327 and died in April 1336. Few records from this period exist. We know that the construction of the building had already begun, because the consecration of the monastery's church took place in 1327. We also know that Queen Elisenda of Montcada, after her husband's death in 1327, retired to a palace within the monastery grounds. However we cannot ascertain the extent to which the church itself or the other quarters of the monastery were finished. The first period saw the commencement

of construction and the demarcation of the monastery's boundaries. The grounds included not only the monastic quarters but also vegetable gardens and vineyards.

The second abbess was Sister Francesca çà Portella (1336-1364). During this period, the construction of church and cloister was probably already underway, but work on the main quarters such as the dormitory, or the refectory had not yet began. There were several calls for visitors to found the construction of the building in exchange for indulgences (small pardons). The most part of the information we have is in relation to the church, and the use of its chapel as a parlour. The historical records show donations made to sponsor masses in several chapels of the church. For example, a memorial donation, called an anniversary, was made for the construction of the altar of Saint Peter and Saint Michel in 1360. We have to point out the decoration of the chapel of Saint Michael in 1345. Built between two external buttresses of the church apse, it was decorated by Arnau and Ferrer Bassa. Those painters are known for introducing the Italic Gothic Style to the Iberian Peninsula. An inventory of the monastery conducted in 1364 shows that the church contained six chapels and a special altar dedicated to Saint Honorat. In 1365 a post-mortem donation funded the construction of a chapel dedicated to the Annunciation. During this period the main activities were the construction of the church, and outfitting several rooms to become the cellar, the kitchen, the refectory, the oven for the bakery, and even a separate room for the abbess. Finally, in 1363, Queen Elisenda requested the permission to construct a door that would connect her private palace to the monastery of the nuns, so that they could take care of her as she approached the end of her life (**fig. 6**).

The next head abbess was Sibilía from Caixans (1364-1375). No data from this period exists but we assume that improvements inside the monastery continued, although they may have proceeded more slowly after Queen Elisenda's death in 1364. We presume that the construction of the main wings of the cloister, the dormitory and other quarters continued. The historical documents refer only to the commission of several altarpieces for the church.

Sister Agnès Çà Rovira (1375-1396) was the subsequent head abbess. We have few documents related to the architecture from this period. The most important evidence is a donation from the city council, in 1393, for completing the construction of the convent's dormitory (**fig. 9**). This dormitory is built with diaphragm arches that are characteristic of Mediterranean Gothic architecture.

The head abbess of the beginning of the 15th century was Violant de Pallars (1396-1409). From historical records, we can determine that construction of the dormitory wing of the cloister had already been completed. A parallel structure, intended to be used as a sick ward, had also been erected in the opposite wing (**fig. 10**). Documents from 1406 record the construction of the roof of that ward. The other data indicate the continuing construction in the cloister and the paving of the church and some chapels in 1409. The rest of the improvements recorded in the account books are smaller projects such as the construction of a porch in the kitchen and a wall to enclose the vineyards.

Sister Isabel March served as head abbess for such a short period (1409-1411), that the improvements carried out are of little significance. They include maintenance such as repairing the church organs, and the changing the rings of the kitchen.

Sister Saurina de Vallseca was head abbess from 1411, but the historical records do not indicate when she died. However, we can determine that she was responsible for commencing construction of the roof on the second floor of the cloister. Several prominent Barcelona architects, called then “mestres de cases” (master masons), participated in the project. The monastery expended a considerable sum of money on the improvement. The presence of these skilled masters may explain other projects completed in Pedralbes during this period. These included a new corridor to access the nuns’ church, a wooden fence, a new window, additional staircases and kitchen facilities. A new chapter house, built in a corner of the cloister, deserves special note. This vaulted space was designed by one of the best master masons of the day, Guillem Abiell, and was completed with surprising speed (**fig. 14**). The chapter house is one of the first examples of a Catalan vault, a masonry technique developed in Catalonia, which relies on quick setting mortar for construction and structural form for strength. A hallmark of the Catalan vault is that it can span large open spaces without need for formwork. The materials used are plaster, which dries very quickly, and thin tiles, which make this technique very economical.



Figure 14. Scale model designed by Hernández Palay in 1978.

We do not know exact when Sister Margarida de Montcada became head abbess, but she is referenced in the historical records from 1423 until her death in 1447. This period saw the construction, or reconstruction, of the walls surrounding the monastery. The records indicate ongoing roof construction and repairs during this period. The roof spaces include the cloister known as the one of the cats, behind the kitchen, and the latrines. During this period the plumbing infrastructure was extended and enhanced. The measures included distributing water for cleaning purposes, constructing a fountain in the middle of the cloister, and improving the functioning of the latrines.

Sister Violant de Centelles (1447-1477), served as head abbess during one of the most conflicted periods of the monastery's history. From an architectural perspective nothing significant was built. During the 1450's construction activities focused on repairing leaks in several roofs including the church, the dormitory or the cloister. In 1467, due to the Catalan Civil War (1460-1477), the nuns abandoned the monastery and took refuge in the Priory of Saint Anne in Barcelona. The buildings of Pedralbes were then occupied by several army troops. It later served as the venue for the signing the peace treaty that ended the war. The last years of the life of Violant de Centelles were dedicated to cleaning and repairing the damages that had occurred during the occupation.

The next head abbess was Sister Violant de Montcada (1477-1495). The first major project she undertook, apart from maintenance activities, was the construction of a private room. As mentioned in the introduction, these small private cells are a unique feature of the monastery. Over 50 such cells were constructed throughout the centuries of the monastery's existence (**figs. 12, 13**). Normally built in the cloister, they profit from the distance between the buttresses of the main wings (dormitory, refectory or nursery) to create a room. The use of those spaces has yet to be studied but we suggest that they were used as secluded private chapels to deepen the spiritual practice of each nun. Some historians believed those spaces had leisure functions. We disregard this conclusion as superficial, although we cannot understand the moral and spiritual life of former nuns, and how they viewed and used those individual cells. Irrespective of their use, the small rooms provide one of the richest catalogues of masonry vaults in plaster available, which are certainly worthy of further investigation. The second major project that Violant the Montcada undertook was the construction of the new visiting room, situated behind the rear of the church in 1490. At that time it may have been considered inappropriate to use a chapel of the church as visiting room.

As head abbess Sister Teresa Enríquez (1495-1507) oversaw the religious reform promoted by the Catholic Kings. They appointed her to bring the discipline and order sought by the reform. With this intention, she pursued renovations that strengthened the boundaries of the monastery. For example she sealed off windows and doors, and reinforced the entrance doors to the grounds. Surprisingly, at the same time, the records show payments to the best stained glass windows makers of the day – the family Fontanet – who restored and redid some of the church windows. At the beginning of the 16th

century construction centred on water supply: several fountains were constructed and a large cistern was excavated to supply the community with clean water (**fig. 11**).

Sister Teresa Enriquez was forced to leave the monastery in 1507 due to the return of her predecessor and adversary, Sister Violant of Montcada. Sister Montcada had little time to care for the building during her brief second tenure (1507-1514), partly due to her advanced age. The accounting records indicate only a single modification to the refectory, where a new beam was placed. In 1514 she was forced to abandon the monastery definitively, because of the pressure from the reform movement begun by the Catholic Kings.

The next head abbess inherited the task of improving and restoring the neglected building. Maria of Aragon, the illegitimate daughter of the king Ferdinand the Catholic, was the appointed head abbess. She went to Pedralbes in 1514 against her will and stayed there until 1520. During this period work on the stained glass window resumed and the dormitory was whitewashed. She expended significant funds to restore the water supply system, especially the fountains, and she had her coat of arms painted in the laundry room. The historical records make brief mention of one important modification to the chapter house roof: a terrace to serve as a lookout point (**fig. 14**). This addition had ramifications on the rest of the structure. It covered the Catalan vaults and may have caused cracks that can now be observed in this area. Additional modifications were made to the parlour and the nun's wheel (which allowed the nuns to receive objects or food from the outside of the monastery without direct visual contact). We interpret these projects as protecting the order inside the monastery walls.

Sister Damiata de Mendoza (1520-1521) died soon after her election as head abbess. However the documents mention that in that period the maintenance problems came from the water supply system in the wing of the cloister dedicated to sick ward (**fig. 10**).

Her successor, Sister Teresa de Cardona (1521-1562), continued maintenance activities in the monastery. The most significant projects were the construction of a third gallery in the cloister and a false ceiling in the dormitory. This structure can help us to understand how wood was used in construction at that time, since few other examples of this kind have been preserved.

The last head abbess for life was Sister Isabel de Cardona, who renounced in 1577. She served long enough time to see the institution's revenues decline and a drop in the population of the nuns. She accepted any help that came, such as royal donations, to keep the building as safe as possible. So in 1569 she started the reconstruction of the sick ward of the monastery. Although there is no data to confirm it, this project may have been sponsored directly by King Philip II. Sister Anzizu (1897, p.144) said that the improvements were financed by 600 golden ducats donated by Philip II. This statement, however, has not been verified by the accounting records. This wing of the cloister fell to

ruin, and required rebuilding. The new room was designed in the Renaissance aesthetic, which is interesting because Gothic techniques were used in Catalonia longer than elsewhere in Europe (Sanjust i Latorre, 2004) (fig. 15).

To sum up, the documents allow us not only to follow the general evolution of the construction of the building, but also they are a very useful tool to approach the day by day of the masonry work. The motivations to do an intervention can be more clearly defined thanks to the detailed data that the account books register.



Figure 15. Interior of the sick ward, covered with a Renaissance vault in 1569.

THE CRAFT OF THE CONSTRUCTION

The major master masons that worked in Pedralbes were native to Barcelona or its surroundings. Due to its prominence and its economic potential, the monastery of Pedralbes could hire the best of the best. Although speculations exist, we cannot verify the name of the monastery's first master mason. However we can hypothesize based on who worked on other high profile buildings in Barcelona. Other master masons that participated in the monastery's construction are worth mentioning. The most relevant one is Guillem Abiell, who constructed the chapter house. He oversaw the construction of the most important parish churches and other very notable buildings of the 15th century in Barcelona and Sicily. He was an expert in the construction of the vaults.

Although the master masons gained recognition, the historical records show that the construction was carried out by bricklayers, carpenters and general tradespeople. Their names may not appear in the encyclopaedia of great masters but it is due to their craftsmanship that the Medieval and Renaissance structures have been preserved to the day. They normally received a salary that was the half of a master's wage, and in some cases they were paid in food.

The monastery of Pedralbes used stone from the nearby hill of Montjuïc, which is famous for its durability. Most prominent medieval buildings in Barcelona, and even Gaudi's "Sagrada Família", are constructed from this white stone. The use of this expensive material shows that the 14th century to the first half of the 15th was a prosperous time in the history of Pedralbes.

The monastery also used the nummulitic stone from Girona. This marble was employed in the columns of the cloister which were cut using quasi-industrial process. This type of building element is seen in almost all Mediterranean Gothic buildings. The remaining of the materials were lime, brick and wood, acquired from the surrounds of the monastery, and brought onsite by horse or donkeys. The delivery of the material was timed in order to avoid damage.

CONCLUSIONS

Although the monastery of Pedralbes has a fascinating and rich history, research on its construction has only just begun. Future investigation will deepen our understanding of the link between historical records and the building's construction activities. We shall also investigate the other examples of Poor Clares buildings to identify similarities and differences with the monastery of Pedralbes, as well as the architectural techniques and styles of each period.

In this article we have provided two lines of analysis to gain a deeper understanding of the construction history of the Monastery. First we have reviewed the historical records and highlighted the main phases of construction activity. Second, we have observed and analysed the present day building structure. It is crucial to offer to the scholarly community a renewed perspective on such an important cultural monument. This is relevant nowadays because the building serves different function: it is a museum. The architects entrusted with the maintenance and modification of the present structure within its new legal context need sufficient information to act freely. The responsibility of maintaining this important inheritance is not only in their hands but also in those of Art Historians.

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