

LATE MEDIEVAL EMBROIDERY IN THE CROWN OF ARAGON: FROM ARCHIVAL RECORDS TO PRESERVED OBJECTS

No extensive or exhaustive study yet exists on fourteenth- and fifteenth-century embroidery in the Crown of Aragon as a whole or in any of its Iberian territories (Catalonia, Aragon, Majorca and Valencia). Late in the nineteenth century, scholars such as Josep Puiggarí began to publish archival documents relating to embroiderers and took an interest in a number of outstanding works, such as the ensemble of the altar frontal and liturgical vestments of the chapel of the Palau de la Generalitat in Barcelona.¹ Needless to say, the attention of scholars was also soon attracted by a masterpiece of Florentine embroidery imported into Catalonia in the fourteenth century, namely the altar frontal by the embroiderer Geri di Lapo. A study of the associated documents revealed the identity of this work's Catalan patron, Ramon Saera.² Nevertheless, throughout the twentieth century, interest in embroidery in the Crown of Aragon on the part of art historians was highly sporadic, a state of affairs which becomes no more encouraging—indeed, quite the contrary—if we consider the other Christian territories on the Peninsula, that is, the Crown of Castile and the kingdoms of Navarre and Portugal. Even so, the major contributions made by a number of scholars who conducted research into the archives should be highlighted: a solid, though underexploited, foundation is provided by the numerous documents on embroidery and embroiderers published by José Sanchis Sivera in Valencia, by Josep María Madurell and Agustí Duran Sanpere in Catalonia and by Gabriel Llompart in Majorca.³

During the first half of the twentieth century, historians published a number of general studies which are still regarded as essential works of reference, such as Antolín P. Villanueva's book on sacred ornaments (1935) and Antonio C. Floriano Cumbreño's volume on the history of embroidery in Spain (1942).⁴ However, as they are based mainly on the technical and stylistic study of a limited selection of preserved pieces, these books take into consideration only a small part of the archival documentation that had been published at the time, thereby leaving a large number of gaps unfilled. Furthermore, this tendency persisted in the equally general studies conducted during the period stretching from the second half of the century down to the present day.⁵ At the

1 PUIGGARÍ 1879, 130–34; PUIGGARÍ 1880. 2 SOLER 1918–20; SALMI 1930/31. 3 SANCHIS 1917; MADURELL 1946; DURAN 1955/56; LLOMPART 1979/80. 4 VILLANUEVA 1935; FLORIANO 1942.

5 See, for example, ALCOLEA 1975 and MARTÍN 1978.

same time, the monographs devoted to singular works, to important historical collections or to specific centres of production offer a meagre, fragmented and uneven panorama in which a localised, isolated perspective on the different *nuclei* of peninsular embroidery prevails. Certainly, the many publications by Rosa Maria Martín Ros constitute a notable contribution to knowledge of Catalan embroidery,⁶ while, conversely, studies of pieces preserved in Aragon and Valencia are few and far between. This situation contrasts strikingly with the dynamism and substance of historical analyses of other forms of artistic expression of the time, above all of painting on panel. But since this is a well-known bias, not only in this region but also in other parts of Europe, there does not seem to be much point in dwelling on its causes here.

Whatever the case, localism and the absence of a systematic approach are not the only basic elements that characterise the scarce historical studies on embroidery in the Crown of Aragon. Certainly, little effort has been made to integrate the wealth of written information contained in our historical archives with the study of preserved objects, which are also very abundant, at least in territories such as Catalonia and Valencia. My own exploration of the archives of Barcelona has convinced me of the need to continue along these lines, since in the near future this will certainly provide us with a very substantial volume of hitherto-unpublished material, as well as allowing us to engage in a new reading of documents that have so far only partially come to light. But even in the case of preserved embroideries, it is still necessary to draw up a systematic catalogue that takes into consideration not only the works still preserved in these regions, but also the considerable number of pieces that were exported at the turn of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, only too often with no mention being made of their Spanish provenance. In both cases, the territory that remains to be explored is truly vast. What follows below is merely a brief, modest overview through which we may glimpse the potential that the history of embroidery on the Iberian Peninsula still offers, particularly in its eastern regions.

EMBROIDERERS IN THE CROWN OF ARAGON: FOREIGNERS AND NATIVES, MEN AND WOMEN

We have few accounts of embroiderers before the second half of the fourteenth century. It is therefore only from this point that we may begin to sketch out an overall picture of the identity, background and condition of embroiderers in the former Crown of Aragon. Indeed, accounts begin to multiply after the mid-fourteenth century, when we note that the work of local professionals was conducted alongside that of an influx of foreign embroiderers, which must have had a decisive impact on the general development of embroidery in the lands of the Crown of Aragon. Although we find the occasional Italian or German, it is clear that most of these immigrants to the Iberian Peninsula came from the north of France and the Low Countries, namely Flanders,

⁶ It would be impossible here to mention this author's entire output. Among her latest contributions, see MARTÍN 2008b; and DE DALMASES et al. 2008, 370–72, 384–400, 425–27, no numbers (Rosa Maria Martín Ros).

Brabant or even Holland.⁷ The network of trade relations and the diplomatic and dynastic links between the courts of kings and princes both contributed to this migration.

In 1354, for example, a certain “Crestià de Lloany, who works with gold thread” was working for Peter the Ceremonious and later, between 1356 and 1366, so was Enric de Lloany, who must have been the same person.⁸ Even if, in an earlier publication, I proposed interpreting “Loany” as a Catalanised transcription of a French name,⁹ I must now correct this hypothesis in favour of Leuven (Louvain) and hence a Brabantine origin. Apparently, Enric was married to an embroideress named Cristina Bruna, who was also in the service of the royal court and was the sister of Gerard Bru (presumably Bruyne), chapel master of the royal chapel, chaplain and almoner of King Peter the Ceremonious. We also know that Bru was a native of Diest in Brabant.¹⁰ But the embroiderers with the longest careers in the service of King Peter and his children were undoubtedly the Flemish Jaume Copí I and Jaume Copí II, allegedly father and son, whose identities have generally been confused. Both applied their work mainly to the garments of members of the royal household and often to their saddles and horse trappings.¹¹ Jaume Copí I is documented in Barcelona from 1360, and a notarial deed dated 10 March 1378 documents that Caterina was his widow, meaning that he must have died not long before, perhaps around 1377.¹² Thus, his alleged son, documented up to 1415, inherited the position of embroiderer at the royal court. He must have had a particularly privileged relationship with Queen Yolande of Bar, as some documents describe him as “a chamberlain and embroiderer in the Queen’s household.”¹³ In any event, most of the embroiderers and most of the tailors and shoemakers working for the kings and queens of Aragon during the second half of the fourteenth century and the early decades of the fifteenth century were either Flemish or Brabantine.

There are well-known documents that refer to three Brabantine embroiderers who, in 1388, were in the service of King John I and were said to be “very good and skilled.”¹⁴ They informed the king of the excellence of a painter called “Jaco Cuno” who lived in Paris and who may be the same person as the famous, but enigmatic Jacques Coene. Through his ambassador in Paris, Ramon de Perellós, viscount of Roda,¹⁵ the king tried

⁷ CORNUDELLA 2012. ⁸ Barcelona, Arxiu de la Corona d’Aragó (hereafter: ACA), Arxiu del Reial Patrimoni de Catalunya (hereafter: RP), reg. 337, fol. 105v (December 1354); reg. 338, fol. 114 (June 1356); reg. 471, fol. 57 (March 1357); reg. 473, fol. 68v (April 1358); reg. 476, fol. 67v (September 1360); reg. 344, fol. 80v (February 1362); reg. 481, fol. 113 (December 1362); reg. 352, fol. 73 (February 1266); documents published by DURAN 1955/56, 77–78. ⁹ CORNUDELLA 2012, 32. ¹⁰ I owe this information and the opportunity to correct my error to the kindness of Stefano Cingolani. See ACA, Cancelleria, CR Pere III, Caja 43, carta 5327 (9 June 1354); this document will be published in a collection of documents in the context of the project *Ioculator seu mimus (MiMus): Performing Music and Poetry in Medieval Iberia* (ERC-CoG-2017-772762). ¹¹ So many documents have come down to us regarding these embroiderers that we cannot mention them all here. See DURAN 1955/56, 63–65, 67–68, 72–76; and the recent contribution by AYMERICH 2016, where the confusion of father and son remains. ¹² Barcelona, Arxiu Històric de Protocols de Barcelona (hereafter: AHPB), 29/51, Joan Eiximenis, *Llibre de procures*, 1375, December, 13–1378, April, 8 (10 March 1378), fol. 223r. ¹³ ACA, RP, reg. 519, fol. 98v (June 1392): *Jacme Copí, cambrer e brodador de la senyora reyna*. ACA, RP, reg. 522, fol. 89v (November 1394): *Jacme Copí, cambrer et brodador de casa de la senyora reyna*; published by DURAN 1955/56, 75. ¹⁴ ACA, reg. 1954, fols. 73, 85; published in PUIGGARÍ 1880, 79–80. ACA, reg. 1870, fol. 73v; published by RUBIÓ 1921, 311–12, doc. CCCXXI. ¹⁵ On the role of Ramon de Perellós and of his other relatives at the court of John I, especially as regards the consumption of art, see CORNUDELLA 2016, 89–92, with earlier bibliography.

to persuade the famous painter to come and work for him, although we do not know whether this actually came about. The documents from 1388 do not mention the names of the three embroiderers, but it is tempting to identify them as three embroiderers documented in Barcelona in 1390: Gerardus Vriese, Matheus Sevanien and Andreas Viclart.¹⁶ Later, in 1438, there are accounts of two other embroiderers from Brabant working in Barcelona, Llorenç Esbol and Joan Till (or *Til*).¹⁷ Till declares himself to be a native of Brussels in his will, dated 3 July 1441 and published the following day.¹⁸ Without exploiting all the data at our disposal, we might add that records from 1416 tell of the activity in Barcelona of a Dutch embroiderer, Nicolau Alchmar, who hailed from the diocese of Utrecht and, to judge from his surname, was probably from Alkmaar.¹⁹

In some cases, it is difficult to discern the origin of the artisans and artists, but their surnames, more or less Catalanised in the documents, suggest they might be foreigners. This could be the case of the embroiderer Francesc Clar, with a long career documented in Valencia from 1397 to 1404²⁰ and in Barcelona from 1405 to 1435.²¹ None of the known documents tell us where he was from, but from his surname we can venture that he was of Netherlandish or French origin.

In comparison with the French and Netherlanders, there were fewer Italian embroiderers in the Crown of Aragon, but some of those who came could have been highly competent and influential professionals. We know of a Venetian embroiderer, Lodovico di Giovanni, documented in Valencia in 1412 and 1440, who worked for the bishop and the cathedral canons, which suggests he spent some time in the city.²² Another Italian, also in Valencia, the master Contí del Castell, served Alfonso the Magnanimous as “embroiderer to the King’s Household” from 1426 to 1432, alongside two other Italians the king trusted, the goldsmiths Guido Antoni and Giovanni de Pisa. Established in a house next to the Royal Palace, Contí del Castell directed a team of up to ten local embroiderers.²³

Lastly, other embroiderers active in Barcelona or Valencia came from the Crown of Castile. In Barcelona, for example, we know of the presence of various embroiderers from Seville, where there was an important tradition in embroidery. In 1406, we find

¹⁶ AHPB, 29/3, Joan Eiximenis, *Manual*, 1388, September, 10–1390, November, 21; fol. 134v^o (14 October 1390); published in PUIGGARÍ 1880, 278; see also Cat. Barcelona 2009, 152–57, no number (Guadaira Macías Prieto and Rafael Cornudella). ¹⁷ AHPB, 155/3, Pere Devesa, *Manuale in numero sextum instrumentorum*, 1438, December, 16–1441, May, 15 (18 June 1438), fol. 17v. Salvador Sanpere Miquel mentions this document, but erroneously dates it to 1427; see SANPERE 1906, vol. 1, 76. I am able to make this correction thanks to the kindness of Stefano Cingolani, who has located the original document. ¹⁸ AHPB, 165/98, Antoni Vilanova, *Llibre de Testaments*, 1434, July, 29–1455, January, 28 (23 July 1441): “Johannes Til, brodator auri et cirici, habitator Barchinone, oriundus vero ville de Bruxellis in ducatu de Barbant”; mentioned also in Cat. Barcelona 2009, 152–157, no number (Guadaira Macías Prieto / Rafael Cornudella i Carré), here 156. ¹⁹ AHPB, Pere Granyana, *Vicesimum quartum manuale*, 1415, April, 8–1416, July, 9 (20 April 1416); quoted in Cat. Barcelona 2009, 152–157, no number (Guadaira Macías Prieto / Rafael Cornudella i Carré), here 156. ²⁰ COMPANY et al. 2005, 433, doc. 793; 475, doc. 897; LLANES 2012. ²¹ Francesc Clar is first documented in Barcelona on 9 November 1405; AHPB, 82/3, Mateu Ermengol, *Quartum manuale*, 1405, September, 19–1406, October, 19, fol. 12. I have found him documented in Barcelona after this date with a certain degree of regularity. He was still living and working in the city on 3 March 1435; AHPB, 113/40, Bernat Pí, *Manual*, 1435, January, 27–1435, July, 28, fol. 21. He is recorded as deceased on 26 April 1438; AHPB, Gabriel Terrassa, *Decimum septimum manuale*, 1437, January, 9–1439, July, 31, fols. 44r–44v; see also the documents published by LÓPEZ 2004, 90, doc. 87; STOJAK 2013, 569. ²² SANCHIS 1917, 212–13. ²³ SANCHIS 1917, 216–17; GARCÍA 2007, 368.

Pedro Sánchez, who had connections with Francesc Clar, mentioned above,²⁴ in 1409, Fernando Rodríguez,²⁵ and in 1426 a woman, “Juana of Seville, embroiderer.”²⁶ In Majorca, in 1449, we find one “Rodrigo of Seville.”²⁷ In 1381, an embroiderer named Martín Alfonso, “from the city of Burgos,” received payment for embroidering some pieces of a velvet dress for Queen Elionor.²⁸ In other cases, the documents do not mention the origin, but the names suggest they could be subjects of the king of Castile.

Although the influx of foreign embroiderers seems to have peaked at the end of the fourteenth and the beginning of the fifteenth century, this did not prevent local embroiderers—Catalans, Valencians, Majorcans and Aragonese—from securing plenty of commissions, including prestige jobs for the royal court, although certainly at that time none of them received anywhere near as many commissions as Jaume Copí I and Jaume Copí II, mentioned above. In any case, from the documents we have, some local embroiderers emerge who, to judge from the size and number of commissions they received, must have enjoyed considerable esteem. At the same time, just as in other professional spheres, the craft was often handed down from father to son, so that many of the native embroiderers belonged to family lineages that, in some cases, lasted for several generations.

In the case of Barcelona, which is currently the best-known, Joan Bertran stands out (documented between 1394 and 1434).²⁹ He must have been related to another embroiderer of the same period, Pere (or Perico) Bertran (documented between 1409 and 1415).³⁰ Several embroiderers with the surname “Soler” are documented from the end of the fourteenth century and during the first third of the fifteenth century. It may be that more than one family of embroiderers bore this surname, since it is a very common one in Catalonia. Hence, the existence of several homonymous embroiderers still poses certain difficulties when it comes to specifying their identities and family ties. Between 1376 and 1395, we find documented activity on the part of one Francesc Soler, embroiderer, who was the son of the saddler Francesc Soler.³¹ At the end of the same century, from at least 1386, the name of Jaume Soler, embroiderer, begins to appear.³² Late in 1405, one Francesc Soler, son of the embroiderer Jaume Soler, became apprenticed to the embroiderer Miquel Sadurní.³³ It is evident, therefore, that this cannot be the same Francesc Soler who was already working in 1376. Could the Jaume Soler docu-

²⁴ AHPB, 29/47, Joan Eiximenis, *Liber comunis* ... XXXXVI, 1405, March, 27-1407, March, 19, fol. 86 (18 August 1406). ²⁵ AHPB, 66/2, Joan de Pericollis, *Manuale quartum*, 1407, November, 10-1409-September, 13, fol. 61r-61v (5 January 1409). ²⁶ AHPB, 133/2, Francesc Ferrer, *Manuale comune secundum*, 1426, February, 18-1432, January, 22, fol. 9 (31 December 1426). ²⁷ LLOMPART 1979/80, 214, doc. XXX. ²⁸ ACA, RP, reg. 510, fol. 157v (23 December 1381); published in DURAN 1955/56, 69. ²⁹ See, above all, MADURELL 1946, 106-08. I have found what appears to be the earliest documentary reference to Bertran, not known to Madurell, dated 26 February 1394, when he acted as witness to a notarised statement; AHPB, 29/5, Joan Eiximenis, *Manual*, 1393, September, 26-1395, September, 1, fol. 43v. ³⁰ MADURELL 1946, 108. ³¹ ACA, RP, reg. 615, fol. 51 (27 January 1376); published in DURAN 1955/56, 84. AHPB, 29/4, Joan Eiximenis, *Manuale*, 1391, July, 27-1393, September, 23, fol. 38 (4 March 1392). AHPB, 29/6, Joan Eiximenis, *Manuale*, 1395, October, 13-1398, March, 22, fols. 171-17v (20 December 1395). ³² RUBIÓ 1921, 307, doc. CCCXVI: this was an order of payment dated April 1388 for a piece executed in 1386 for King Peter the Ceremonious. See also ACA, RP, reg. 386, fol. 172v (5 August 1387); published in DURAN 1955/56, 84; and ACA, RP, reg. 386, fol. 174 (18 March 1388); published in DURAN 1955/56, 71. ³³ AHPB 58/35, Bernat Nadal, *Manual*, 1405, September, 5-1406, January, 26, fol. 58 (14 November 1405); quoted by STOJAK 2013, 53 and 365.

mented at the end of the fourteenth century have been his father? Further complicating matters, we also have information about an embroiderer named “Jaume Ribera, alias de Soler,” who drew up his will on 25 September 1422 and passed away a few days later.³⁴ As universal heirs, he designated his two prepubescent children—Francesc and Felipa—and mentioned a nephew of his who was also an embroiderer, Joan Soler, a name that appears in the known documentation as late as 1462.³⁵ Finally, I have not yet been able to discern what relationship the above-mentioned homonymous embroiderers might have had with the Jaume Soler who was embroiderer to Queen Mary of Castile, the wife of Alfonso the Magnanimous (“Her Majesty’s embroiderer”), and who is documented until at least 1436.³⁶

However, the most abundantly documented family we know of in Barcelona is, without question, the Sadurní family, which began with Miquel (documented between 1403 and 1454) and went on with his two sons, Francesc (documented between 1437 and 1473, died before 21 December 1475) and Antoni (documented between 1446 and 1494).³⁷ In any event, it was Antoni who played a central role, since he signed the largest number of contracts, although Francesc also signed some on his own account. Antoni Sadurní’s prestige even received a kind of twofold official approval, when Barcelona’s municipal government made him “city embroiderer” in 1457³⁸ and the following year he was appointed “embroiderer to the General,”³⁹ that is, to the *Diputació del General* or *Generalitat* (a permanent delegation of the *Corts* or of the Parliament of Catalonia). To what do we owe Antoni’s apparent pre-eminence? It is not yet certain which of the two was the elder brother, but, in the documents known to us, Francesc appears first along with his father, and on 31 May 1446, when his father made his two sons his proxies, he mentions Francesc first.⁴⁰ It is therefore possible that Antoni was younger, but gained his position thanks to the high quality of his work and his entrepreneurial skills.⁴¹ In addition, Francesc died between 1473 and 1475, some time before Antoni, who continued his feverish activity until the end of the century. We know, of course, the names of other embroiderers who worked in Barcelona in the middle decades of the century. From the documentation available, it seems that the main figures, at least judging by the importance of the commissions they received and the duration of their activity, were Gabriel Brunet (documented from 1426 to 1480)⁴² and Joan Pere (documented between 1435 and 1474).⁴³

Although much research is still needed before we are able to obtain a complete picture of how embroidery developed in Catalonia, we learn from documentation that

³⁴ AHPB, 113/98, Bernat Pí, *Primus liber testamentorum*, fols. 122r–23v (25 September 1422; published 1 October 1422). ³⁵ For example, on 2 June 1456 Joan Soler paid his colleague, the embroiderer Joan Pere, the monies he owed him for the liquidation of a partnership they had formed for the exercise of their profession; published by GARCIA / MADURELL 1986, 218, doc. 139. ³⁶ Cortes de los Antiguos Reinos de Aragón 1914, 82–83. ³⁷ See above all MADURELL 1946, 88–97. ³⁸ Manual de Novells Ardits 1893, 277–78 (26 November 1457). ³⁹ Dietaris de la Generalitat 1994, 140–41 (3 March 1458); PUIGGARÍ 1880, 91. ⁴⁰ AHPB, 155/5, Pere Devesa, *Manual*, 1446, May, 30–1449, March, 8, fols. 2r–2v (31 May 1446); cited by MADURELL 1946, 93, note 243. ⁴¹ Regarding Antoni Sadurní, see here the essay by Guadaira Macías and Rafael Cornudella, pp. 349–74. ⁴² The earliest documentary reference to Gabriel Brunet that I have found is AHPB, 113/27, Bernat Pí, *Manual*, 1426, July, 17–1427, March, 27, fol. 56v (30 December 1426). Other documents are registered in José María Madurell Marimón’s handwritten index cards at the AHPB. ⁴³ See Madurell Marimón’s handwritten index cards at the AHPB.

in the middle decades of the fifteenth century local embroiderers seem to have dominated the market. At the same time, the foreign embroiderers apparently lost ground in comparison, without in any way disappearing. However that may be, both the contribution by the latter, whose presence in the last decades of the fourteenth and the first decade of the fifteenth century must have been decisive, and the subsequent technical and aesthetic *aggiornamento* undertaken by the local masters seem to have ushered in a Golden Age of embroidery in Catalonia, one that extended to other parts of the Crown of Aragon, particularly to the kingdom of Valencia.

At the same time, it is important to note that men were not the sole protagonists of this flowering of embroidery work; the contribution of women must also be taken into account, although documentary records provide us with scant information with which to gauge its extent. It is well known that embroidery was one of the activities traditionally seen as appropriate for women. In the late Middle Ages, when embroidery became established as a highly specialised and valued professional activity, women continued to work in this field. In the 1350s and 1360s, for example, several women embroiderers in Barcelona were working for Queen Eleanor of Sicily, wife of Peter the Ceremonious.⁴⁴ Some of them were Catalan, while others were foreign, including the Sicilian Bonaventura d'Alafranco (documented 1355–1358),⁴⁵ the aforementioned Cristina Bruna from Brabant⁴⁶ and Isabel Botellera (documented 1362),⁴⁷ who was of Flemish origin. Furthermore, there are accounts that by order of the queen some of these skilled embroiderers taught the slave girls in her household to embroider.⁴⁸ It is also interesting to note that at least one of the embroiderers working for Queen Eleanor was a nun, the Aragonese sister Maria de Taust, of the Dominican convent in Zaragoza.⁴⁹

Many female lay embroiderers were married or otherwise related to master embroiderers, so that their work, which was undoubtedly important, tends to remain hidden, as it was the men who signed the contracts. However, work by women surfaces every now and then in the documentation. The aforementioned Caterina, wife of Jaume Copí I, seems to have also been an embroiderer and shared tasks with her husband, as can be deduced from a payment dated January 1374 for work on a saddle for Duke John (the future king).⁵⁰ Joan Alcarac was an embroiderer living in Valencia, whose wife, Caterina, was also an embroiderer. In 1452, she received 27 *lliures* (*librae*) for the orphreys made for a new cope of black brocade, and in 1461, now widowed, she received payment for “a gold orphrey with figures, very well finished [...] for a chasuble for the King’s chapel,” the king in question being John II of Aragon.⁵¹ In fact, it is often only in widowhood that these women embroiderers appear in the documentation. But they also appear sometimes in the partnership agreements between two or more master embroi-

⁴⁴ DURAN 1955/56. ⁴⁵ ACA, RP, reg. 474, fol. 54 (August 1358) and fol. 75 (November 1358); reg. 470, fol. 100 (December 1356); documents published by DURAN 1955/56, 69. ⁴⁶ ACA, RP, reg. 466, fol. 70v (March 1355); reg. 473, fol. 68v (April 1358) and fol. 90 (June 1358); reg. 475, fol. 90 (June 1360); reg. 488, fol. 108 (June 1366); documents published by DURAN 1955/56, 70–71. ⁴⁷ ACA, RP, reg. 481, fol. 58v (August 1362); document published by DURAN 1955/56, 70. ⁴⁸ ACA, RP, reg. 474, fol. 49 (August 1358); reg. 475, fol. 47v (February 1360) and fol. 56 (March 1360); reg. 478, fol. 102 (December 1361); reg. 485, fol. 64v (August 1364); reg. 486, fol. 143v (June 1365); documents published by DURAN 1955/56, 76, 81. ⁴⁹ ACA, RP, reg. 471, fol. 66 (April 1357); document published by DURAN 1955/56, 85. ⁵⁰ ACA, RP, reg. 588, fol. 70r (January 1374); document published by DURAN 1955/56, 72. ⁵¹ SANCHIS 1917, 214–15.

derers. The agreement between Joan Gay and Joan Llobard signed in Majorca in 1468 was also endorsed by their respective wives.⁵² This indicates they must have been embroiderers, even though the text does not explicitly say so. In another agreement of this sort, signed in 1491 by two embroiderers from Valencia, Narcís Martí and Joan Llorenç, it is explicitly stated that “the wife of the aforementioned Arcís [sic]” would also work as an embroiderer and receive the corresponding salary.⁵³

EMBROIDERERS’ PROFESSIONAL MILIEU, WORK ORGANISATION AND PRODUCTION

On the basis of this brief, incomplete overview, we can conclude that, in the Crown of Aragon, the sphere of embroiderers was a very open one, in which professionals of widely differing origins not only competed but also cooperated with each other, which undoubtedly fostered an enriching exchange of technical knowledge, of repertoires and of aesthetic principles. In particular, payments issued by royal households during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries reveal that the kings, queens, princes and princesses (*infantes* and *infantas*) of Aragon employed a large number of local embroiderers—that is, Catalan, Aragonese, Majorcan and Valencian—as well as others from abroad, above all from northern Europe, and from other parts of the Iberian Peninsula, mostly the Crown of Castile.⁵⁴ As one might expect, embroiderers congregated primarily in the most densely populated and prosperous cities, such as Barcelona and Valencia, although other capitals like Perpignan (the north of Catalonia, now belonging to France), Zaragoza and Majorca also provided the setting for a continuous tradition of embroiderers. In Valencia, for example, from at least the fifteenth century onwards, there was a street called *Carrer dels Brodadors* (“Street of the Embroiderers”), which indicates the physical concentration of the profession within the city.⁵⁵ Even so, surviving documents only allow us to sketch out a very incomplete panorama of a situation that would have embraced other, less important, centres, as well as the output from (above all female) monastic communities, which is currently hard to evaluate.

At the same time, the available documents provide us with a wealth of information on the professional relations between embroiderers and the practitioners of other associated crafts: saddle-makers, silk-weavers, tailors, goldsmiths, painters and book illuminators. Needless to say, such affinities have much to do with the use of the same materials, the kinds of items produced and complementarity between techniques. Above all, the traditional affinity—even confusion—between saddlers (*sellers*) and embroiderers should be noted. Without doubt this was due to the fact that the technique of embroidery was often applied to saddles, horse-trappings, and other equipment for riding. It is thus that we understand that Jaume Copí (the elder?) and Francesc Soler, normally identified as “embroiderers,” were occasionally described as “saddlers,” for example when, in January 1376, they received payment for certain items they had made for the queen.⁵⁶

⁵² LLOMPART 1979/80, 215–17, doc. XXXIII. ⁵³ SANCHIS 1917, 221–22. ⁵⁴ For the fourteenth century, see DURAN 1955/56. ⁵⁵ SANCHIS 1917, 201–02. ⁵⁶ ACA, RP, reg. 615, fol. 51 (27 January 1376); published by DURAN 1955/56, 84.

While from thirteenth- and fourteenth-century documents we learn that embroiderers had close professional relations with saddlers, the same applies to embroiderers and “pearl workers”. Jaume Rossell, who is documented as having worked at the royal court between 1338 and 1347, is normally referred to as a *perler* or an *obrer de perles*, not as a *brodador*, although we know for a fact that he embroidered with silken, gold and silver thread, as we often learn from descriptions of his work and from what he was paid for the materials he used.⁵⁷ And once again, we have Jaume Copí I, who appears in the records not only as a *seller* but also as an *obrer de perles, d’or et de seda, mestre de obres d’or et de perles* and so on.⁵⁸

Therefore, the close kinship or complementarity between a number of professional specialisations led to considerable fluctuation when it came to designating the profession of the same individual. A highly illustrative case would be that of Martí Mayol, a Majorcan who in most of the documents that have come down to us is described as *aurifex* (“goldsmith”), although on one occasion he is referred to as *sutor auri* (synonym for “embroiderer”),⁵⁹ specifically in the will of Margarita, widow of the *argenter* (“silversmith”) Pere Rosell, who had appointed Mayol, who was his nephew-in-law, as executor and left him the sum of 50 *lliures*. Furthermore, we learn that one of Mayol’s sisters, who had also inherited a legacy, was married to a painter, Joan d’Àurea (*Iohannis d’Aurea*). Indeed, we know that in 1366 Mayol lived *al Carrer dels Pintors* (“on the Street of the Painters”) in the Almudaina. Mayol, in short, was not the only embroiderer who lived on the Street of the Painters in Palma de Mallorca; the embroiderer Joan de l’Or, active in the first decades of the fifteenth century, and perhaps a relative of the aforementioned painter *Iohannis d’Aurea*, also had his home there,⁶⁰ possibly together with others. Among many other examples, we might highlight at least that of the Catalan embroiderer Francesc Soler, documented at the end of the fourteenth century, who was the son of a saddler, also named Francesc, and the brother of a book illuminator, Pere Soler. Finally, in fifteenth-century Perpignan we should recall the members of the Guàrdia (or *Gardia*) family, although their identities and ties of kinship need to be studied in greater depth: the embroiderer Pere Guàrdia (documented between 1461 and 1480) was apparently the father of the painter Antoni Joan Guàrdia (documented between 1474 and 1516) and of the embroiderer Joan Guàrdia (documented between 1483 and 1490).⁶¹ Nonetheless, Antoni Joan would most probably also have engaged in the same craft as his father and brother, if he was in fact the embroiderer Antoni Joan Guàrdia, “from Perpignan” who was employed at Girona Cathedral in 1475 and 1476.⁶² Often, therefore, such links between related or complementary professions denoted genuine ties of solidarity, friendship or kinship.

Equally revealing is the fact that the profession of painter—like that of embroiderer—is often confused with that of saddler, above all in the earliest documents from the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. As we learn from Marcel Durliat in his study of the Roussillon, the affinities of the painter with the trade of *armerius* (“armourer”) are highlighted, for example, in an ordinance issued in 1284 by the *batlle*⁶³ of Perpignan

⁵⁷ DURAN 1955/56, 82–83. ⁵⁸ DURAN 1955/56, 72–76. ⁵⁹ LLOMPART 1979/80, 203–04.

⁶⁰ LLOMPART 1979/80, 211. ⁶¹ DE PASSA 1850; VIDAL 1897, 302 and 310; DURLIAT 1954, 117–19. Nevertheless, the kinship ties between the Guàrdias mentioned above need to be studied in greater depth. ⁶² FITA 1873, 46; VALERO 2008, 71, note 53. ⁶³ The *batlle* was a royal officer respon-

on the making of shields or pavises, which involved both crafts: “No armourer, painter, or anyone else dared to make shields from the wood called *avec* nor from the wood called *pin*”.⁶⁴ And Durliat goes on to stress that painters normally lived on the *Carrer de la Selleria*, “since their work was not entirely distinguished from that of the saddlers.”⁶⁵ Needless to say, such concomitance between the crafts of embroidery, painting and saddle-making was not exclusive to the Crown of Aragon, since it occurred in a host of other European regions.

It need not surprise us, therefore, that in many cities both embroiderers and painters joined the same major guild, which also included saddlers. The issue of embroiderers’ guild membership in the cities of the Crown of Aragon in the late Middle Ages has yet to be adequately studied; indeed, the surviving documentation promises little, or at least the documents known to us are few and far between. As in other cities, there were two kinds of professional guilds in Barcelona. Those that admitted only masters of the same craft were “highly united” and “possibly the most active in the city,” as Pierre Bonnassie observes.⁶⁶ Guilds of the other type were “veritable trade federations,” like that of Sant Esteve dels Freners in Barcelona, which in theory admitted practitioners of all specialisations related to the production of equipment for military men and their mounts, namely the *arnessers*, *cuirassers*, *freners*, *sellers*, *cervellerers*, *broquerers* y *mandreters*. Also incorporated with these crafts were painters and embroiderers—whose work could be applied to items of military equipment like saddles (in the case of painters and embroiderers) and shields (in the case of painters)—but also practitioners of other crafts that perhaps had little or nothing to do with the making of military equipment, who were not sufficiently numerous to found their own guild. Something similar to the Barcelona guild of Sant Esteve dels Freners was seen in Valencia, where painters and embroiderers also joined the guild of the *armeria* sometimes called that of the *freners*.

A brief, incomplete overview of guild records of the period nevertheless reveals that the number of embroiderers affiliated with these trade federations was invariably smaller than the number of painters. The proportion of master embroiderers in these corporations was modest compared to other professions; indeed, we do not even know whether the majority of professional embroiderers joined them. In any case, embroiderers preferred to join the kind of guilds mentioned above, where they rubbed shoulders with saddlers and painters, rather than the type of homogeneous guilds like those of the tailors or the goldsmiths and silversmiths with which—as we have already seen—they also had affinities by virtue of the materials used, the techniques employed and the nature of the objects produced. It is unclear whether this was because the embroiderers preferred it this way or because such homogeneous guilds were reluctant to accept them, although we may place this tendency within a European framework in which similar trends are documented. Nor do we know of any guild regulations specific to embroiderers in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries or earlier in the geographical area under consideration here.

In some cases, when it came to very large commissions involving many hours of work and the delivery deadline imposed by the client was stringent, the capacity of a

sible for supervising the monarch’s patrimony and material interests. ⁶⁴ “[...] nullus armerius, pictor vel alius sit ausus facere clipeos de ligno quod vocatur avec nec de ligno quod vocatur pin [...]”; DURLIAT 1962, 305–06. ⁶⁵ DURLIAT 1962, 306. ⁶⁶ BONNASSIE 1975, 32.

single master and his workshop proved unequal to the task, so that the cooperation of more than one master could be required. This might have been the case, for example, for certain commissions from the royal household. In March 1347, Jaume Rossell, whom we know was regularly employed by the monarchs as a *perler* or *obrer de perles* “of the household of my Lord King” and “the household of my Lady Queen” was paid several sums for having made a set of *sobresenyals* (trappings with heraldic insignia), both for his work and the materials he used and for “having employed and paid the salaries of several masters who worked on the aforementioned *sobresenyals*.”⁶⁷ As the document reports, this work was done in August and September of the year 1346. In December, the *sobresenyals* were sent to the king of Castile. On other occasions, collaboration between two or more masters took place in conditions of equality, or at least this is what was stipulated in the legal documents. Collaborations seem to have been frequent between master embroiderers, who either established partnerships involving two or more masters, like those we have already mentioned, for a duration of four or five years, or else joined forces on an *ad hoc* basis to execute a specific commission. We need only recall the case of the four embroiderers, Gil Sagra, Domingo de Roda, Miquel Climent and Domingo de la Torre, all from Valencia, who in June 1390 were jointly commissioned by the *majorals* of the professional guild of the *armeria* or of the *freners* to embroider *un drap atzeytoní* (a cloth of satin) with the image of Saint Martin and borders with the images of ten knights interspersed with inscriptions or “tituli of French letters” that would read *L’Armeria*.⁶⁸ At that time, none of the *majorals* were embroiderers, although alongside the *majorals* other members of the guild also signed the contract, among them the painters Llorenç Saragossà, Antoni d’Exarch and Domingo de la Rambla. We wonder whether some of them were also commissioned to supply the patterns from which the embroiderers were to work, as stipulated in the contract.

The formal agreement for a four-year partnership signed in 1491 by the embroiderers Narcís Martí and Joan Llorenç, both citizens of Valencia, defined two spheres of embroidery, depending on whether the work was applied to secular or liturgical items: on the one hand, “pieces for the court and embroidery for garments, accoutrements for mules and any other embroidered work except those for the Church” and, on the other, “items for the Church, that is, copes, altar frontals and other ecclesiastical pieces.”⁶⁹ It is hard to ascertain which of the two sectors generated greater demand for embroidery, since the published surviving documents do not necessarily offer a representative sample of the total output. To judge from notarial documents, however, it seems that liturgical vestments and furnishings were dominant in the case of commissions of a larger scope, in which figurative or “pictorial” embroidery played a fundamental role. In the case of minor works—whether secular or ecclesiastical—the tendency was not to sign contracts in the presence of a notary; consequently, records of these kinds of commissions are understandably scarce.

At the same time, the royal court provides us with a wealth of information on secular output, since this was registered, in greater or lesser detail, in the accounts of the treasury or else was mentioned in other kinds of documents, including correspondence

⁶⁷ ACA, RP, reg. 857, fol. 15 (22 March 1347); published in DURAN 1955/56, 82–83. ⁶⁸ SANCHIS 1917, 203–06. ⁶⁹ SANCHIS 1917, 221–22.

between members of the royal family.⁷⁰ We have already referred to some of the most outstanding among the many embroiderers employed by kings, queens, princes and princesses, applying their craft to secular vestments and, needless to say, equestrian gear. For example, in 1413, Francesc Clar and Joan Bertran were each required to apply half the embroidery to the dalmatic that Ferdinand of Antequera needed for his coronation in Zaragoza—an assignment that caused difficulties since Francesc Clar either did not finish his part of the commission or his work was not up to standard. The problem was solved thanks to the expertise of three masters, who judged the work done at that point, and to Joan Bertran, the king's embroiderer who had to finish it alone.⁷¹

In overall terms, the king and his entourage spent considerably more than the Queen and her less numerous retinue, a difference that was perhaps accentuated in specific periods, for example during the reign of Alfonso the Magnanimous, the firstborn son and successor of Ferdinand of Antequera. By contrast, this monarch's departure for Italy no doubt caused a drop in demand which had previously favoured local artisans. King Alfonso spent great sums on luxury textiles, principally imported ones purchased from Italian merchants established in Barcelona and Valencia as agents of major companies, mostly Florentine though also from Lucca and Genoa.⁷² Tailors strove to fashion these materials into garments that would enhance the figure of the monarch, while embroiderers were required to embellish many of the most sumptuous items. Activity must have been frantic during the time when King Alfonso was in residence in Valencia: to take just one example, in 1426, ten craftsmen worked to embroider twenty-one examples of one of the King's favourite devices, the *siti perillós*, that is, the empty chair at the Round Table, to apply them to "a robe of blue satin with large closed sleeves."⁷³ As opposed to the abundance of documents relating to consumption at the royal household—still insufficiently studied—we have much less information regarding that of the nobility in the territories of the Crown of Aragon—an aspect that has scarcely been studied at all. Luxury and ostentation also tempted members of other well-to-do sectors of society, however, who, without enjoying the status of nobility, did everything in their power to imitate the aristocratic lifestyle. Among these, the urban patriciate—known in Barcelona as *ciutadans honrats* ("honourable citizens")—as well as wealthy merchants and even a number of affluent *menestrals* ("artisans") demanded luxury articles, depending on their financial situation, and provided embroiderers with work. Thus, in 1401, Jaumeta, the widow of a Valencian merchant, Pere Bou, commissioned Bartomeu Mariner to embroider five red velvet curtains for a bed, each of which was to feature her own coat of arms and that of her late husband, as well as the image of a maiden and a beast, presumably a unicorn, beside an oak tree, all this specified in a contract remarkable for its wealth of technical specifications.⁷⁴ While we have few examples of contracts such as this one, authorised by a notary, we can rely on much information provided by inventories, especially *post mortem* inventories, which inform us about all the different social strata—or at least those in a position to purchase these kinds of luxury goods.

⁷⁰ Regarding embroiderers who worked for other European royal or princely courts, see the major essay by MONNAS 2016; as well as GAUFFRE FAYOLLE 2013 and TABURET-DELAHAYE 2017, among others. ⁷¹ SALICRÚ 1995, 729. ⁷² GARCÍA 2007, 359. ⁷³ "[...] una roba de setí blau ras ab les mànagues closes e grans"; GARCÍA 2007, 367. ⁷⁴ SANCHIS 1917, 209–11.

Nevertheless, affluent lay clients, both nobles and commoners, did not just order secular items—occasionally with profane figural motifs—but also commissioned liturgical vestments and furnishings intended for private chapels or for chapels under their patronage in cathedrals, parish churches or monastic churches. Needless to say, in this sphere, the royal court was by far the main secular client of those embroiderers who could count on a large clientele. A host of other commissions came from corporate clients, mostly confraternities (*confraries*), either exclusively religious ones or, more frequently, professional guilds, which had sufficient resources to commission ambitious items, such as altar frontals and other furnishings and liturgical vestments, including funerary palls, which might be adorned with intricate embroidery. We could cite a substantial number of examples in this sphere: We have already mentioned the commission in 1390 from the guild of the *freners* of Valencia to four of the city's embroiderers, who must have belonged to the same guild. We might also recall the embroideries that Antoni Sadurní agreed to execute on a funerary pall (*cuiusdam panni de cossos*) for the Barcelona guild of linen weavers, as stipulated in the contract notarised on 29 May 1464.⁷⁵ Finally, political institutions such as the Consell de Cent (municipal government) of Barcelona and the Diputació del General de Catalunya, with its seat also in Barcelona, ordered major commissions from embroiderers in the field of liturgical vestments and altar furnishings for their chapels. In another chapter, we shall discuss one of these commissions in detail, the one Antoni Sadurní received in the mid-fifteenth century from the Diputació del General for the chapel of Saint George at the Palau de la Generalitat.

However, the greatest number of commissions of this kind came, as one would expect, from the Church itself, for cathedrals, parish churches or monasteries, either as initiatives of a corporate nature—e.g. on the part of cathedral chapters and monastic communities—or else as individual initiatives undertaken by bishops, canons, church elders, abbots and abbesses, monks or nuns. The list of documented commissions would be a long one in the case of the Crown of Aragon—and much research still remains to be done in the archives, which would certainly enrich this documentary *corpus*. As we know, compared to embroidered textiles for secular use, liturgical vestments and hangings are preserved in far greater number. On the following pages, I shall therefore examine a number of examples in this field.

PICTORIAL EMBROIDERY ON LITURGICAL VESTMENTS AND ALTAR FRONTALS: IMPORTS AND LOCAL PRODUCTION

So far, in our discussion the documentary information, we have referred exclusively to work executed within the Crown of Aragon, either by local or foreign embroiderers, both men and women. To date, we have less documentation on imports of embroidery work from abroad. In the Crown of Aragon, as in so many other lands in Christian Europe, various specimens of English embroidery, or *opus anglicanum*, have come down to us,⁷⁶

⁷⁵ AHPB, 207/6, Antoni Palomeres, *Manuale quartum*, 1464, March, 1-1465, December, 23, fol. un-numbered (29 May 1464); published by MADURELL 1946, 96. ⁷⁶ MARTÍN 1998a.



like the mitre of Bernat d'Olivella, archbishop of Tarragona,⁷⁷ the orphrey of the chasuble from the San Vicente set of vestments from Roda d'Isàvena,⁷⁸ the cope of Ramon de Bellera, bishop of Vic,⁷⁹ and the Daroca Cope, which was apparently donated by Antipope Benedict XIII to the Collegiate Church of Santa María de los Corporales in Daroca.⁸⁰ Although we have hardly any information about when, where and in what circumstances these embroideries were commissioned, purchased or received as diplomatic gifts, we may assume that imports of English embroidery were frequent.⁸¹ On the other hand, although there are no written accounts, it would be reckless to rule out the possibility that some English embroiderers also worked in the Crown of Aragon—as did so many foreign embroiderers from France, the Netherlands, Germany and Italy after the mid-fourteenth century. Some items, like the abbot's mitre from the Monastery of Santa Maria de l'Estany, in Catalonia, have raised doubts regarding the place of manufacture and the nationality of the embroiderer, who may have been French or English.⁸²

At present though, we have very little information about the importation of embroidery into the Crown of Aragon. This contrasts with the evidence we have of imports of other luxury textile products, including the large *haute-lisse* tapestries imported from Paris and Arras and later from Tournai and Brussels, which began to arrive in a steady stream in the mid-fourteenth century. In view of this scarcity, one notarial document dated 1405 acquires particular interest. From it, we know that the Pisan merchant Jacopo Pipinelli, a resident of Barcelona, sold to another merchant of the same origin, Tom-

⁷⁷ Tarragona, Museu Diocesà de Tarragona, inv. no. 3701: MARTÍN 1998b. ⁷⁸ Barcelona, Museu del Disseny, inv. no. MTIB 5205: DE DALMASES et al. 2008, 370–72, no number (Rosa Maria Martín Ros). ⁷⁹ Vic, Museu Episcopal de Vic, inv. no. 1430: MARTÍN 1993a; MARTÍN 2008a; DE DALMASES et al. 2008, 386–90, no number (Rosa Maria Martín Ros). ⁸⁰ Madrid, Museo Arqueológico Nacional, inv. no. 52022: MARTÍN 2003. ⁸¹ As regards English embroidery, its European clientele and diplomatic gifts see, among others, WETTER 2012, 30–31; GARDNER 2016a; GARDNER 2016b. ⁸² Vic, Museu Episcopal de Vic, inv. no. 374: DE DALMASES et al. 2008, 425, no number (Rosa Maria Martín Ros).



Fig. 200:
Altar frontal
with the Crucifixion
and other scenes from
the Passion, Geri di
Lapo (embroiderer),
c. 1350, embroidery
with silk and metal
threads, 90 × 330 cm.
Manresa, Museu
Històric de la Seu,
inv. no. 1.

maso di Cassino, two “altar frontals with figures in gold and silk, among which is one of the Virgin with the Seven Joys.”⁸³ We do not know what the buyer intended to do with these items, whether they were for his personal use or to be sold on the Catalan market; nor do we know if these works were imported from Italy, although this is quite possible.

In view of these open questions, we are very fortunate to have in Catalonia one of the most outstanding works of fourteenth-century Florentine embroidery, the altar frontal with the Crucifixion and scenes from the Passion (fig. 200), prominently signed by the Florentine embroiderer Geri di Lapo (*Geri Lapi rachamatore me fecit in Florentia*), which the lawyer Ramon Saera left in his will, dated 1357, to the Church of Santa Maria in Manresa.⁸⁴ Surviving documentation shows that Saera bequeathed two pieces, both for the high altar of the church, and they are identified in his will and in subsequent inventories as a *pallium* and a *frontale*.⁸⁵ It is important to point out here that in Catalan terminology from the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries the object that we would term an “altar frontal” in modern Catalan or English was invariably described as a *pallium* (*pal-li* in Catalan) if it was a textile piece, while in this context the Latin word *frontale* (*frontal* in Catalan) always designated a textile band with a fringe—and often itself embroidered—which complemented the *pallium*, being placed at the top. Thus, the word *frontal* was used to designate the textile piece that we often call *superfrontal* today.⁸⁶ The surviving piece embroidered by Geri di Lapo would therefore have corre-

⁸³ VOLTES 1970, 241. As regards Jacopo Pipinelli and Tommaso di Cassino, see also the index in SOLDANI 2010. ⁸⁴ Manresa, Museu Històric de la Seu, inv. no. 1: SOLER 1918–1920; SALMI 1930/31; DE DALMASES et al. 2008 384–85, no number (Rosa Maria Martín Ros); BREMENKAMP / JAKSTAT 2015/16. ⁸⁵ The clauses in his will read as follows: “Consequenter dimitto ecclesie Beate Marie de Minorisa pallium meum sutum de siricho cum imaginibus quod deconstitit michi centum et decem libris Barchinonensibus. Dimitto eciam eiusdem ecclesie frontale sutum de sirich cum imaginibus [...]”; quoted after BREMENKAMP / JAKSTAT 2015/16, 116, note 73. ⁸⁶ The issue of terminology is definitively cleared up in ALAIX 2015/16. Thus, in inventories from the period the formula *un pal-li ab son frontal* (“a pallium with its frontal”) is often used.

Fig. 201:
Chasuble with
embroidered
orphrey with scenes
from the Passion
(front), embroidery:
Florence (?), second
half of the four-
teenth century,
124.5 × 77.5 cm.
Segorbe, Museo
Catedralicio.



sponded to what the will and subsequent Manresa church inventories identify as the *pallium*, while the *frontal* has not been preserved. In a sacristy inventory dated 1452, the two pieces are described as follows: “First, one beautiful gold antependium worked [i. e. embroidered] with various works, with its superfrontal which is not of the same work as the above-mentioned antependium, which has been given by Ramon Saera”.⁸⁷ Although insufficient attention has been paid to it, this description is interesting because it says that the *frontal* differs in style and/or technique from the embroidery of the *pallium*, which suggests that the *frontal* may not have been Florentine.⁸⁸ Thus, if this *frontal* (or *superfrontal* in current terminology) was, as seems likely, the same one bequeathed by Saera, he might have commissioned it from a Catalan atelier in order to complement the *pallium* by Geri di Lapo.

Apart from the Manresa altar frontal, other items presumably made in Florence must have been imported into the lands of the Crown of Aragon. I would point out, for example, a group of orphreys, conceived originally to adorn copes, but later mounted

⁸⁷ “Primo I bell pali d’or obrat de diversos obratges ab son frontal lo qual no és del obratge del dit pali lo qual li feu en Ramon ça Era”; SOLER 1918–1920, 420, note 6; MASNOU 2007, 310. ⁸⁸ Cf. BREMENKAMP / JAKSTAT 2015/16, 114–19. In this article, the authors argue that the object signed by Geri di Lapo would be not an antependium—which was hung in front of the altar table—but a dossal which was hung behind and above the table. Adrian Bremerkamp and Sven Jakstat contend that the piece now preserved should be identified as a *pallium* and not as a *frontale*. This identification is correct, although it does not constitute evidence to identify the piece as a dossal, as they suppose. Undoubtedly, Bremerkamp and Jakstat adduce evidence of a more iconographical nature to show that the piece preserved in Manresa was originally conceived as a *reredos*.



Fig. 202:
Chasuble with
embroidered
orphrey with scenes
from the Passion
(back), see fig 201.

on chasubles.⁸⁹ Closely related to each other are two chasubles that apparently came from the Carthusian Monastery of Valdecris (Altura, Castellón province), founded in 1385 by *Infante* Martin (the future king). One of them, with embroideries depicting scenes from Christ's infancy and public life, is preserved at the Hispanic Society of America in New York,⁹⁰ while the other, with scenes from the Passion, is in the Museo Catedralicio in Segorbe⁹¹ (figs. 201–202). The decorative frames surrounding the scenes feature intertwining ribbons and acanthus leaves, that are the same on the orphreys of both chasubles. Moreover, in both cases the pictorial models are unmistakably Italian, probably Florentine from the second half of the fourteenth century. The embroideries on the chasuble at the Hispanic Society employ compositions that are also reproduced in other embroideries, today preserved in several collections, including that of the Abegg-Stiftung, studied a few years ago by Evelin Wetter.⁹² The differences in execution—as regards quality, technique and colours—suggest that the same patterns were exploited by more than one workshop during a period that stretched from the mid-fourteenth to the early fifteenth century.⁹³ The existence of other series, equally reproduced by several embroidery workshops, presumably Florentine, is evidence of

⁸⁹ As suggested by the order of in which the scenes are to be read on each of the three sets of orphreys. ⁹⁰ New York, The Hispanic Society of America, inv. no. H3910: Cat. Madrid 2017, 166–67, cat. no. 61 (Constancio del Álamo). ⁹¹ Segorbe, Museo Catedralicio, inv. no. 439: Cat. Valencia 1999, vol. 2.1, 412–13, cat. no. 148 (Carlos Soler d'Hyver); PÉREZ / JAÉN 2011, fig. 2. ⁹² Riggisberg, Abegg-Stiftung, inv. nos. 1845, 155 and 323: WETTER 2012, 93–102, cat. nos. 12–14. See also Cat. London 2018, 126–31, cat. no. 24 (Matthew Reeves and Nicholas Herman). ⁹³ KURTH 1931; CAVALLO 1960; WETTER 2012, 35, 93–108.

Fig. 203:
Chasuble with embroi-
dered orphrey with
scenes from the Passion
(front), embroidery:
Florence (?), second
half of the fourteenth
century, and image
of Saint Vincent, late
fifteenth or early
sixteenth century.
Lleida, Museu de Lleida
diocesà i comarcal,
inv. no. 1340.



the importance of this standardised production, at least as regards pictorial models, whose compositional filiation places them in a Florentine and Giottesque ambient. Thus, the embroideries on the Segorbe Museum chasuble reproduce the compositions of another series of scenes from the Passion, which can also be found on the embroidery on a chasuble from Roda d'Isàvena, in La Ribagorza (Aragon), today at the Museu de Lleida⁹⁴ (figs. 203–204). Although the choice of narratives is not identical, for all those that do coincide, the same models were used, while the framing system is different, with the embroideries from Roda d'Isàvena having simpler frames.

While a number of Spanish art historians have assumed that some of the above-mentioned embroideries may have been executed on the Iberian Peninsula, it seems far more probable that they were imported from Italy. In this context, we should highlight the role of Tuscan merchants in importing this kind of embroidery with standardised formats and iconography. Thus, we know that, in his quest for luxury items, a prominent Majorcan lawyer, Arnau Desmur repeatedly turned to Datini's company, which had an agent on Majorca. Between 1402 and 1403, the Datini account books registered payments to the painter Gherardo di Jacopo, called Starnina—who after a period of residence in Spain had returned to Florence—for a panel painting featuring a Madonna that Arnau Desmur had ordered. Delivery of the piece to the client was mentioned in a letter that Cristofano di Bartolo, the company's agent on Majorca, wrote to Francesco Datini.⁹⁵

⁹⁴ Lleida, Museu de Lleida diocesà i comarcal, inv. no. 1340: MARTÍN 2008b, 381. Clearly the embroidery of the figure of Saint Vincent on the front of this orphrey is substantially later, dating to the end of the fifteenth century or the beginning of the sixteenth century. ⁹⁵ Archivio di Stato di



Fig. 204:
Chasuble
with embroidered
orphrey with scenes
from the Passion
(back), see fig. 203.

However, Desmur also turned to the company agent for textiles and embroideries. On 12 November 1404, he wrote to Cristofano di Bartolo, who by then was living in Barcelona, reminding him that he had ordered “a fine gold orphrey for an ecclesiastical cope, featuring The Last Supper and The Passion” and requesting also that he be provided with a piece of white silk velvet “for a mantle for the sculpture of the Church of Saint John” (“per un mantell de la ymatga de la església de Sant Johan”), as well as two *canas* of *sansastre d’or fi domasquí* which he needed to make a velvet pallium for the altar of Saint Peter at the cathedral.⁹⁶ Two years later, on 12 November 1406, Desmur sent another letter to Cristofano di Bartolo, who was then living in Valencia, asking if he had at his disposal “gold orphreys for copes, fine and well historiated” and, if so, requesting him to send one to Niccolò di Giovanni, who was then the company factor on Majorca.⁹⁷ Lastly, on 22 December of that same year, in another letter to Cristofano di Bartolo (in Barcelona), Desmur once again mentioned the orphrey to be sent to Niccolò di Giovanni. This sort of request suggests that the Majorcan client was indeed seeking a kind of standardised product and that he entirely trusted Datini’s company as a supplier of this kind of em-

Prato, Datini 598, Libro Nero A (1402–1404), fols. 34, 77v, 117; Datini 610, Uscite A, fol. 81v; Fondaco di Maiorca, Carteggio ricevuto dal fondaco, proveniente da Barcellona, 1055.16 (28-12-1403); Datini, Fondaco di Firenze, Carteggio ricevuto dal fondaco, proveniente da Maiorca, 668.8 (8-1-1404). A brief mention of this episode is made by CAVACIOCCHI 2010, 219; 227; 229, note 12; 231, notes 59 and 60. Thanks to the invaluable assistance of Chiara Marcheschi, I was able to complete this episode with other documentary references as well as to find the documents that follow. ⁹⁶ Archivio di Stato di Prato, Datini, Fondaco di Barcellona, Carteggio ricevuto dal fondaco, proveniente da Maiorca, 890.15. ⁹⁷ Archivio di Stato di Prato, Datini, Fondaco di Valenza, Carteggio ricevuto dal fondaco, proveniente da Maiorca, 998.6.



Fig. 205: Altar frontal with scenes from the Life of Jesus, Catalonia, first third of the fourteenth century, embroidery with silk and metal threads, 109 × 237 cm. Girona, Catedral, inv. no. 119.

broidery.⁹⁸ Furthermore, this suggests that Datini's agents were also in a position to sell embroideries to other Catalan and Valencian clients.

It is true that, compared with the lavish examples of *opus anglicanum* and *opus florentinum* that arrived in the territories of the Crown of Aragon, local production in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries is obscure and difficult to assess. One example of presumably local production is the altar frontal with scenes from the Life of Jesus in Girona Cathedral (fig. 205), which was very probably used for the high altar, since its dimensions appear to coincide with those of the eleventh-century gold frontal for this altar (which has been destroyed, but is described with a certain amount of detail in the sources).⁹⁹ This embroidery was probably produced in about the second or third decade of the fourteenth century, and its figurative style corresponds to a period when Catalan painting basically derived from French models, sometimes in cruder and sometimes in more competent versions.¹⁰⁰ However, around 1330, a process of Italianisation in Catalan painting began and, as was to be expected, figurative forms of Catalan "Italianism" can also be found in local embroidery production.¹⁰¹ The altar frontal with the Nativity, the Epiphany and the Presentation at the Temple (fig. 206), also preserved in Girona Cathedral,¹⁰² provides a telling example of local Italianising culture. In this

⁹⁸ On Tuscan merchants in Barcelona, see SOLDANI 2010, specifically on Datini and his agents and partners, 364–74. ⁹⁹ Girona, Museu Tresor de la Catedral de Girona: ESPAÑOL 2005, 219; BREMENKAMP / JAKSTAT 2015/16, 99, 101 with fig. 8. ¹⁰⁰ There is extensive literature on late thirteenth-century and early fourteenth-century Catalan painting. See, for example, the contributions from several authors in ALCOY 2005a, featuring earlier bibliography. ¹⁰¹ On fourteenth-century Italianising Catalan painting, see also ALCOY 2005a, in which the preceding bibliographical references are gathered. For a somewhat different viewpoint, see FAVÀ / CORNUDELLA 2011 and CORNUDELLA 2014. ¹⁰² Girona, Museu Tresor de la Catedral de Girona. For images see CALZADA 1995, 76.



Fig. 206: Altar frontal with the Nativity, the Epiphany and the Presentation at the Temple, Catalonia, second half of the fourteenth century, embroidery with silk and metal threads applied to velvet. Girona, Catedral, inv. no. 110.

Fig. 207: Nursing Madonna, probably from an altar frontal, Valencia, early fifteenth century, embroidery with silk and metal threads, 76 × 54 cm (embroidery). Segorbe, Museo Catedralicio.

case, a Catalan painter provided the models for the embroiderer or embroiderers in the second half of the fourteenth century. What seems to be a slightly later version of this Italianism can be found in an embroidery depicting the Nursing Madonna, probably from an altar frontal and now kept in the Museo Catedralicio in Segorbe, in what was then the kingdom of Valencia¹⁰³ (fig. 207). The way in which the composition of the architectural structure of the throne is developed and the light calligraphic deployment of the cope at the base of the figure suggest that this is a late example, datable to around 1400, when the earlier tradition of Italianism lived alongside more recently introduced pictorial models of northern origin in what is called the “International Style.”¹⁰⁴

Several surviving works of great quality confirm what the archival sources suggest, namely that in the transitional period from the fourteenth to fifteenth centuries, when the “International Style” emerged, embroidery entered an enormously fertile and dynamic phase. As we have suggested, the contribution by embroiderers arriving from the Netherlands may have been important to this impetus in embroidery. Documentation concerning the three embroiderers from Brabant in the service of King John I and the king’s steps to recruit the painter Jacques Coene testify to a wish to combine the highest standards of embroidery with excellence in pictorial invention. In Catalonia, the best surviving example of this association in quality of execution and design is the altar frontal of Christ and the Evangelists from the Monastery of Sant Joan de les Abadesses, a masterpiece of needle-painting (fig. 208). It bears the heraldry of Abbot Arnau de Vilalba, who headed the monastery from 1393 to 1427, the year of his death, so its dates are compatible with those of the three Brabantine embroiderers and those of other embroiderers from the Netherlands.¹⁰⁵

Surviving examples of presumably royal patronage from the last years of the fourteenth century or the first decades of the fifteenth century include an altar frontal now in the Victoria and Albert Museum,¹⁰⁶ with three embroidered royal coats of arms applied to a pink and gold silk fabric (fig. 209). The decorative forms that spring from the coats of arms are similar to other Catalan embroidery of the time and could therefore be the work of an embroiderer living in Barcelona or Valencia. The altar frontal in the Victoria and Albert Museum is therefore a rare example of the rich liturgical assets commissioned by the king and queen of Aragon at this time, like those documented in the inventory of Martin the Humane’s estate drawn up following his death in 1410.¹⁰⁷ Nonetheless, another surviving piece could also have been donated by the king during his lifetime to a church or monastery under his protection. Specifically, I am referring to a chasuble preserved at the Museo Catedralicio in Segorbe, with an orphrey displaying the coats of arms of Aragon and Sicily. These have been associated with Enrique de Aragón (1445–1522), known as the Infante Fortuna, who may have donated this piece

¹⁰³ Segorbe, Museo Catedralicio: Cat. Segorbe 2001, 282–83, cat. no. 21 (Lourdes de Sanjosé Llongueras). ¹⁰⁴ For a recent comprehensive overview of the “International Gothic Style” in Catalonia, see Cat. Barcelona 2012a, with an extensive listing of earlier bibliography. On painting from this period in Catalonia, see RUIZ 2005a. On painting in Valencia, Catalonia and Aragon, see MACÍAS / FAVÀ / CORNUDELLA 2011. ¹⁰⁵ Vic, Museu Episcopal de Vic, inv. no. 1951: Cat. Barcelona 2009, 152–57, no number (Guadaira Macías Prieto and Rafael Cornudella). ¹⁰⁶ London, Victoria and Albert Museum, inv. no. 792-1893: KING 1970, 56–57 with fig. 3. ¹⁰⁷ This inventory is transcribed in MASSÓ 1905.

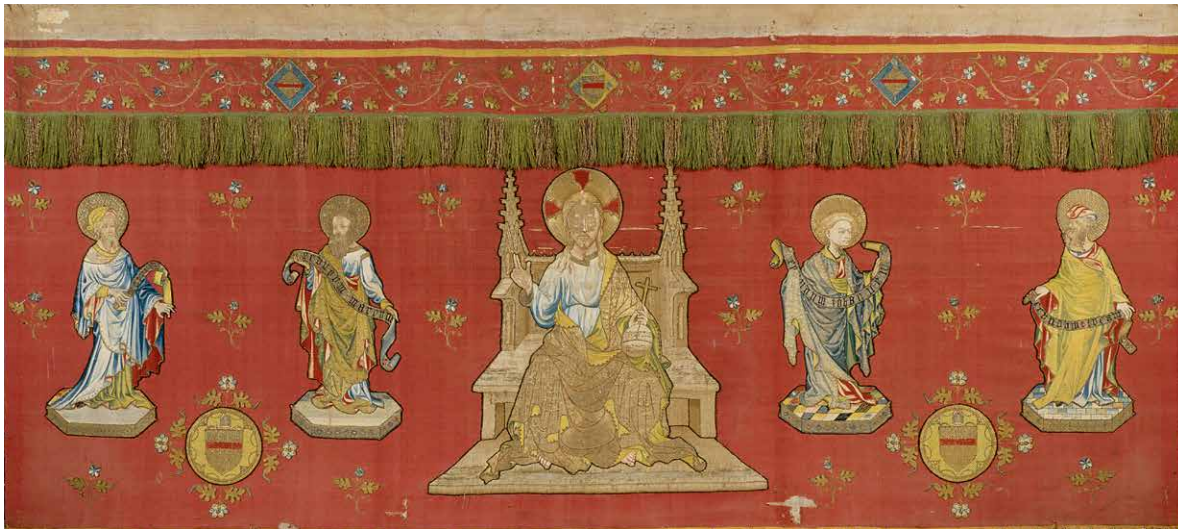


Fig. 208: Altar frontal of Christ and the Evangelists from the Monastery of Sant Joan de les Abadesses, Brabantine embroiderers working in Catalonia (?), c. 1400, 110 × 240 cm. Vic, Museu Episcopal de Vic, inv. no. 1951.



Fig. 209: Altar frontal of a cloth of gold with the embroidered royal coats of arms of Aragon, Catalonia or Valencia, c. 1400, 89 × 208 cm. London, Victoria & Albert Museum, inv. no. 792-1893.

to the Monastery of Nostra Senyora de l'Esperança, which he had founded.¹⁰⁸ Nevertheless, the style of the embroideries seems to date from around 1400, which suggests that the chasuble was commissioned either by Martin the Younger (king of Sicily 1390–1409) or else by his father Martin the Humane (king of Aragon 1396–1410; king of Sicily 1409–1410). Both could have used the arms of Aragon and Sicily, and one of them may have donated it to the Carthusian Monastery of Valldecrust, which is also near Segorbe.

¹⁰⁸ Segorbe, Museo Catedralicio: Cat. Segorbe 2001, 374–75, cat. no. 61 (Lourdes de Sanjosé Llongueras).

Fig. 210:
Altar frontal of the Three
Kings from Tortosa Cathe-
dral, Joan Figueres, Joan
Alcaraç and Gabriel Ros
(embroiderers), c. 1417–1435,
embroidery with silk and
gold threads applied
to velvet, 86 × 356 cm.
Private collection.



Without a doubt, one of the most remarkable and best-documented pieces of the first half of the fifteenth century is the altar frontal of the Three Kings from Tortosa Cathedral (in southern Catalonia), which was sold in 1929, although we do not know for the moment who purchased it at that time. Indeed, Spanish art historians were for many years unable to ascertain the whereabouts of this piece, though in 1991 Leonie von Wilckens mentioned it as belonging to the Thyssen-Bornemisza Collection in Lugano.¹⁰⁹ Recently it came to the art market and was sold to another private collection¹¹⁰ (fig. 210). Fortunately, in this case the contract, dated 1417, has survived and was rediscovered by Josep Eixarch in the Diocesan Archives of Tortosa. The contract for the execution of this frontal for the high altar, was signed by Ramon de Vilafranca, *sotsca-bíscop* of the cathedral, and Joan Figueres, described as “embroiderer to the Queen of the Kingdom of Aragon,” that is to say, Mary of Castile, wife of Alfonso the Magnanimous.¹¹¹ The price of the altar frontal was set at 280 Aragonese florins and a deadline of two years was established for its delivery. The contract describes the iconographic content in detail and specifies that the altar frontal had to be made in crimson red satin of the best quality that could be obtained and of the same dimensions as another altar frontal of the cathedral known as *lo pali major de les ymages* (“the great frontal with images”) which also served for the high altar. Nonetheless, a document from 1435 reveals that, at this date, there were several embroidered elements yet to be made, in particular “three horses and a page,” “three camels with loads,” “two heads of the Kings,” “a hand” and “the old king’s crown” among other details. But all were completed by two other embroiderers, Joan Alcaraç and Gabriel Ros, both of Valencia.¹¹²

¹⁰⁹ VON WILCKENS 1991, 254, fig. 288; Evelin Wetter kindly brought this source to my attention.

¹¹⁰ I publish it here for the first time with colour photography, kindly provided by S. Franes Ltd., for which I am very grateful. ¹¹¹ EIXARCH 1999; ALMUNI 2007, vol. I, 175–76; MUÑOZ 2011, 285–86; VIDAL 2015. ¹¹² VIDAL 2015, 46.



There is documentation telling us that before the signing of the contract in 1417, Joan Figueres had already worked for the Cathedral of Tortosa. In other documents, his surname is written “Figuera,” but it seems evident that they refer to the same embroiderer. We do not know the location of his birth. However, the first documentary references place him in Barcelona. Thus, on 20 November 1413, the embroiderer Joan Figuera, “citizen of Barcelona,” signed a contract in accordance with which he took on a seven-year-old boy, son of a linen weaver, as an apprentice.¹¹³ In June 1416—that is, shortly before signing the contract in Tortosa—Figuera was still living in Barcelona, as we learn from another notarial document which he witnessed.¹¹⁴ Even so, Joan Figuera figures as a resident of Zaragoza both in a notarial document signed in Barcelona in 1420 and in the above-mentioned Tortosa document, dated 1435. From this, we are able to infer that it was precisely his move to the capital of Aragon that caused delay in his execution of the embroideries for the Tortosa Cathedral altar frontal. In the protocol from 1420, the embroiderer Bernat Eimeric and counterpane maker Berenguer Ros, both citizens of Barcelona, appointed the embroiderer Francesc Clar as their proxy, to receive on their behalf certain sums of money that Figuera owed them.¹¹⁵ From the same document, we also learn that, in this role as representative of the pair, Clar replaced another embroiderer, Ramon Queralt, who hailed from Valencia. We should recall here that Francesc Clar worked first in Valencia until 1405, when he moved to Barcelona. All of this serves once again to highlight the comings and goings and the close relations between the major embroidery centres in the Crown of Aragon.

¹¹³ AHPB, 56/15, Pere Granyana, *Vicesimum secundum manuale*, 1413, February, 23–1414, April, 3, fols. 64v–65r (20 November 1413); document mentioned in STOJAK 2013, 438. ¹¹⁴ AHPB, 66/4, Joan de Pericolis, *Manuale septimum*, 1415, September, 2–1417, July, 20, fol. 56 (9 June 1416); unpublished document. ¹¹⁵ AHPB, 93/4, Gabriel Terrassa, *Manuale [nonum]*, 1420, February, 14–1422, May, 17, fol. 16r (21 May 1420); unpublished document.

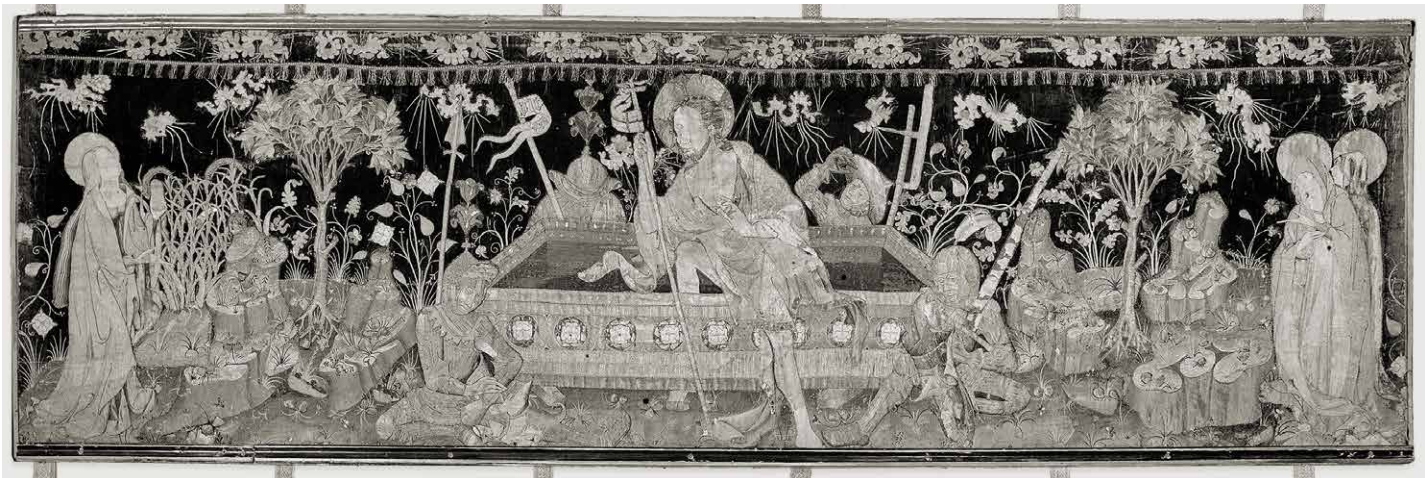


Fig. 211: Altar frontal of the Resurrection from the Church of Sant Feliu in Girona, Catalonia, early fifteenth century. Girona, Museu d'Art de Girona.

Somewhat better known than the Tortosa altar frontal, though insufficiently studied, is the altar frontal of the Resurrection from the Church of Sant Feliu in Girona¹¹⁶ (fig. 211). Dora Heinz aptly compared its ambitious embroidered composition to a Franco-Flemish tapestry at the Musée de Cluny in Paris, with the same theme of the Resurrection, though in this case without the subject of the holy women visiting the tomb.¹¹⁷ This *rapprochement* shows the pictorial goals of the two techniques, embroidery and *haute-lisse*. The taste for *mille-fleur* motifs, for example, not only dominates the landscape in the tapestry but also plays a prominent role in the Girona embroidery, which shows an obvious dependence on French and Flemish pictorial culture during the period of the “International Style.”

Much less known is an altar frontal belonging to the Rothschild Collection at Waddesdon Manor, in England, generically catalogued as “Spanish”¹¹⁸ and whose precise Catalan origins we have been able to establish (fig. 212). In fact, an old photograph from the late nineteenth century shows a series of artistic objects exhibited in the cloister of the convent of Cistercian nuns of Vallbona de les Monges, and among these items we see our altar frontal of the Annunciation embroidered in the centre and two pairs of shields on the sides (fig. 213).¹¹⁹ Thanks to the link to Vallbona made possible by the discovery of this photograph, we can now identify the heraldry on the shields as that of an abbess from the Caldes family (at the top, with an abbess’ crozier) and that of a member of the Guimerà family (at the bottom, without a crozier). The convent had two abbesses from the Caldes family, but the pictorial style of the embroidery dates the frontal to the abbacy of the first of them, Blanca de Caldes, who led the community from 1422 to 1446. A certain Francina de Guimerà was also abbess in the same century (documented as a nun from 1458 and as abbess from 1479 to 1503), but her dates seem

¹¹⁶ Girona, Museu d'Art de Girona. ¹¹⁷ Cat. Vienna 1962, 419–21, cat. no. 535 (Dora Heinz).

¹¹⁸ Waddesdon Manor, The Rothschild Collection, inv. no. 346.1995; E2/38/6: Cat. Waddesdon Manor 2013, 30–31, cat. no. 3. ¹¹⁹ The photograph is reproduced and commented on in FAVÀ 2009, 63, fig. 4; and 81, notes 14 and 15.



Fig. 212: Altar frontal of the Annunciation from the Monastery of Vallbona de les Monges, Catalonia, c. 1420-1440, 199 × 94 cm. Waddesdon (Rothschild Family), inv. no. 346.1995; E2/38/6.

too late.¹²⁰ Thus, the shield must have been added later, although probably before Francina was elected abbess.

The former kingdom of Valencia also has some remarkable early fifteenth-century embroidery to offer, though surviving examples are not as common as in Catalonia. One example is the altar frontal with the Virgin and Child, Saint John the Baptist and Saint Michael the Archangel, from the parish church of Nuestra Señora de la Asunción in Benassal (in Castellón province), with the heraldry of two lineages, apparently the Castellà family and the Ferragut family¹²¹ (fig. 214), although these have not yet helped identify who commissioned the object. Nor do we know, in the absence of any documents to refer to, who the embroiderer was. The pictorial models have not yet been convincingly attributed to any painter of the time active in Valencia or possibly Catalonia, as Benassal is a town in the north of the kingdom of Valencia. In the course of restoration work, a preparatory drawing on cloth corresponding to Saint John's face was discovered.¹²² This drawing was made on a linen support different from the one upon which the motif was embroidered; we are therefore in the presence not of an underdrawing as such but rather of a fragment of the cartoon that the makers exceptionally decided to leave under the embroidery.¹²³ On the other hand, the divergence between the drawing and the embroidery is indicative of the wide margin of freedom the embroiderer enjoyed when it came to interpreting or "translating."

To round off what is no more than a selection of important works, it seems worth mentioning the two embroidered altar hangings that belonged to Valencia Cathedral and that were lost at the start of the Spanish Civil War. One depicted the Passion, in a

¹²⁰ On these abbesses, see PIQUER 1990, 155-60, 164-66, 171-74. ¹²¹ Cat. Sant Mateu 2005, 332-35, cat. no. 46 (Matilde Miquel Juan). ¹²² For a photograph of the drawing, see Cat. Sant Mateu 2005, 332-35, cat. no. 46 (Matilde Miquel Juan), here 333; and MONTERO 2013, 316. ¹²³ Cf. MONTERO 2013, 309-17.

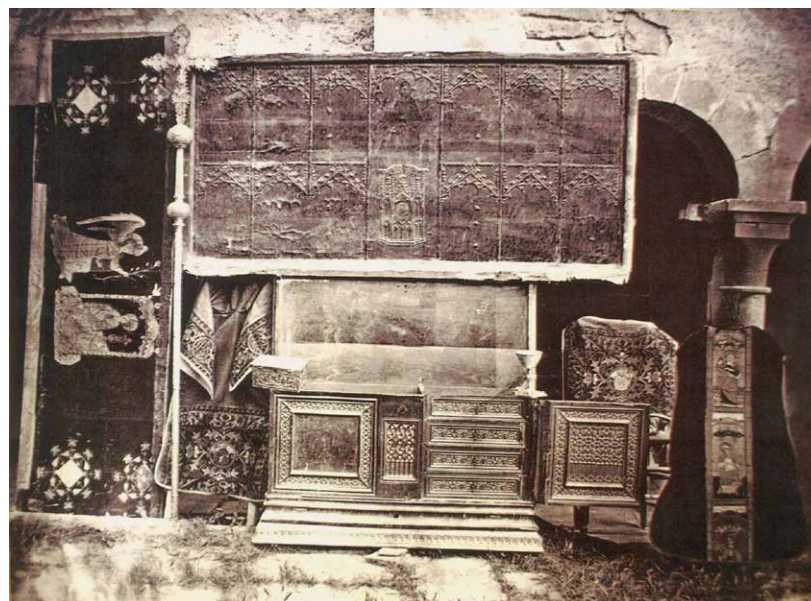


Fig. 213: Late nineteenth-century photograph showing a series of artistic objects exhibited in the cloister of the convent of Cistercian nuns of Vallbona de les Monges. On the left side the altar frontal of the Annunciation, see fig. 212.

set of five scenes, and the other the Resurrection, featuring Christ's Descent to Limbo, the Three Marys at the Tomb and the Resurrection itself (figs. 215–216).¹²⁴ Although Spanish art historians tend to identify both as “altar frontals,” perhaps we should not rule out the possibility that they served as a frontal and dossal.¹²⁵ We know that the two hangings were donated to the cathedral by Vicent Climent, canon and *paborde* of Valencia Cathedral, before his death in 1474. Thanks to his will, we also know he had a master's degree in theology from Oxford University and, at his death, besides his posts in Valencia, he was also archdeacon of Huntingdon and Winchester in England, as well as major archdeacon of Tortosa.¹²⁶ It would be difficult not to relate these two splendid pieces of embroidery to Flemish painting, which in turn suggests that the embroideries could have been made in the Low Countries. In this sense, we should remember that Climent lived in England for much of his life, that he made several trips to the Continent—as ambassador of the king of England and as papal legate—and that, in his will, he expressly mentions the city of Bruges in Flanders as one of the places where he held properties and interests. This therefore suggests that Climent may have commissioned or purchased these items in England or Flanders. However, most Spanish historians, some perhaps moved by patriotic bias, have assumed they were embroidered in Valencia, where several notable embroiderers were certainly active, including some foreigners. A few years ago, José Gómez Frechina, in support of this idea, proposed that the pictorial models could be attributed to Lodewijk Allynbrood, the painter from Bruges

¹²⁴ See in particular GÓMEZ 2001, 90–103, which contains the exhaustive previous bibliography for these major items. ¹²⁵ In the catalogue for the exhibition *El arte en España*, held on the occasion of the 1929 Barcelona International Exposition, the measurements given for the *Frontal de la Pasión* are: 318 × 94 cm, while the other parament was very similar in format; see Cat. Barcelona 1929, 263, cat. nos. 21 and 22. ¹²⁶ For the surprising international career of Vicent Climent, FERNÁNDEZ / TATE 1956–1959 is fundamental.

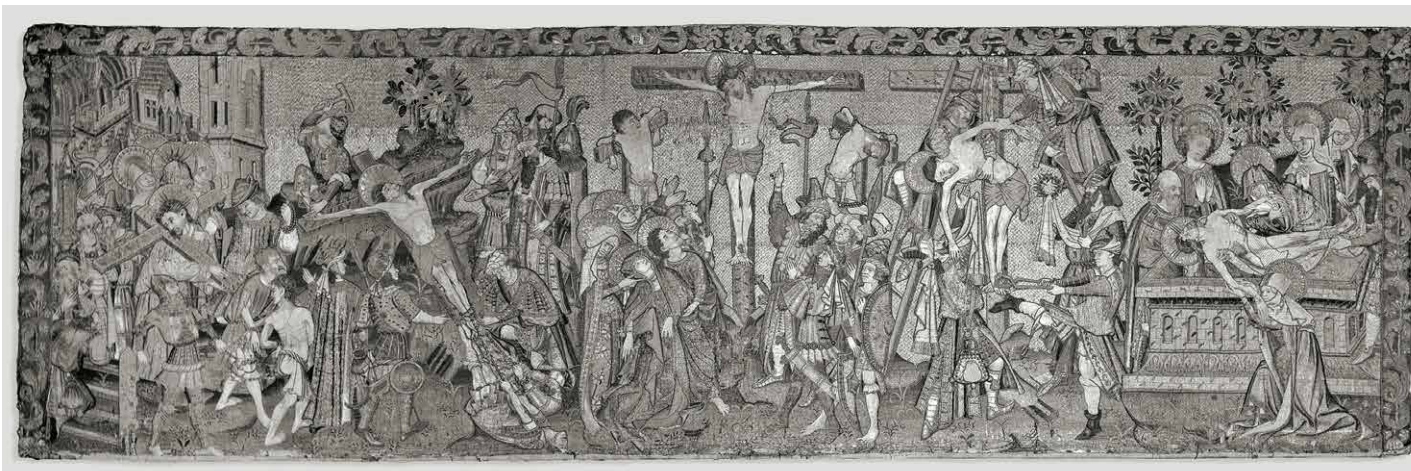


Fig. 214: Altar frontal with the Virgin and Child, Saint John the Baptist and Saint Michael the Archangel, Valencia (or Catalonia), first half of the fifteenth century, 82 × 259 cm. Benassal (Prov. de Castellón), parish church of Nuestra Señora de la Asunción.

who settled in Valencia in about 1437–1438. At least three surviving paintings have been attributed Allynbrood, among them the *Rois de Corella Triptych*,¹²⁷ which provides us with a sufficient basis to compare his style with that of the embroideries. Thus, it must be admitted that the works we attribute to Allynbrood display a realism derived from the early phase of Jan van Eyck, without excluding links with Hubert van Eyck and even Robert Campin, while the embroideries show an essentially pre-Eyckian language. Therefore, we cannot rule out the possibility that the pictorial models and the embroidery were both done in the Netherlands during the 1420s or early 1430s. I believe that the pictorial models are the work of a single artist and that the two paraments must have been embroidered in the same workshop. We should not be misled by the differences due to the size of the figures and the character of the narrative themes. Be that as it may, it seems likely to me that the two pieces must have been imported from the Netherlands by the canon Vicent Climent.

The role of the painters was fundamental, as they usually provided the patterns (*mos-tres*) for the embroiderers to reproduce—or rather, translate—with their needles and their

¹²⁷ Madrid, Museo Nacional del Prado, inv. no. P002538.—I therefore disagree with the arguments put forward by Susie Nash, who attributes the *Rois de Corella Triptych* not to Allynbrood but to the Collins Master; see NASH 2014. I do not have sufficient space here to fully defend my stance, although I should at least point out that the main drawback in Nash's contention is that she does not take into consideration the other two works hitherto attributed—correctly in my view—to Allynbrood, namely the *Calvario* from the former Bauzá Collection and the *Piedad* now in a private collection (made known by Liana Castelfranchi Vegas); see GÓMEZ 2001, 85. While I believe nobody could deny the stylistic affinities between Allynbrood and the Collins Master, which Nash points out, in my opinion, the explanation for this might be that the Collins Master, like Allynbrood, may have trained in Bruges. One might even contemplate the possibility that Allynbrood was a pupil of the Collins Master. Whatever the case, Allynbrood's preserved works reveal an Eyckian influence which is only vaguely perceptible in the illuminations by the Collins Master. The fact that the support and the frame, in Baltic oak, are typically Flemish and that in the preparation of the ground chalk rather than gesso was used might indicate that Allynbrood executed the *Rois de Corella Triptych* in Flanders, before travelling to Spain. In my opinion, however, we cannot rule out the possibility that, having recently arrived in Valencia, he may still have used a support made in Flanders and applied a Flemish technique.



Figs. 215 and 216: Dossal (?) of the Passion and altar frontal of the Resurrection from the Cathedral of Valencia, Southern Netherlands, c. 1420–1435, 94 × 318 cm. Destroyed in 1936.

silk, gold and silver threads. There is no shortage of documents in the Crown of Aragon telling us the names of these painters, who in general were the same ones who painted the numerous retables in the region at the same time. We can highlight here the case of Bernat Martorell, the leading painter of his generation in Barcelona. On 20 September 1437, Martorell was paid 77 *sous* owed him by the presbyter Bartomeu Collell, chaplain of both the Cathedral of Barcelona and the Monastery of Pedralbes, “for painting the orphrey and hood of a cope.”¹²⁸ Read literally, this certainly seems to refer to the painting, probably on silk, and not to models for an embroidery. However that may be, soon afterwards, Martorell supplied the cartoons for some embroidery work that Gabriel Brunet was to execute. In 1438, Brunet signed the contract with the overseers (the *cònsols*) of the guild of goldsmiths and silversmiths for the embroidered orphreys of a chasuble and apparels of two dalmatics, depicting a rich cycle of the life of Saint Eli-gius, the patron of the guild, for the price of 200 Aragonese gold florins. It is interesting

¹²⁸ “[...] quia depinxi quandam fressaduram unius cape cum eius capucio vel capero”; DURAN 1973–1975, vol. 3, 119; GRIZZARD 1985, 87–88, 377; MACÍAS / CORNUDELLA 2011/12, 35.

to note that the overseers required the embroiderer to return the models or cartoons (*la mostra de dita obra*) once the embroidery was finished. A receipt dated 4 October of the following year finally reveals the artist behind these models, namely the painter Bernat Martorell, who charged 7 pounds and 14 sous for them.¹²⁹ Unfortunately, nothing seems to have survived of these liturgical vestments, which are forerunners of what we shall be looking at later, that is the embroidery on the altar frontal, the cope, the chasuble and the dalmatics still in the chapel of the Palau de la Generalitat.¹³⁰ For these items, the author of the embroidery is documented as Antoni Sadurní, while the lost models are attributed to Bernat Martorell based on an analysis of their composition and style.¹³¹ Antoni Sadurní was presumably younger than Martorell; he certainly outlived him by many years, as his activity is documented until 1494. It is reasonable, therefore, to assume that his needles also translated the creations of other painters, including the well-known Antoine de Lonhy, who hailed from Burgundy.¹³² Indeed, three notarial documents dated 4 May 1464 tell us, among other things, about the collaboration between the embroiderer Antoni Sadurní and the painter Antoine de Lonhy (*Anthonius Llonye*), whose multifaceted output, including altarpieces, manuscript illumination, stained glass, is well known today thanks to the fundamental critical contributions of Charles Sterling, François Avril, Giovanni Romano and Philippe Lorentz. Once again, nothing seems to have survived of the embroideries that Sadurní presumably executed on the basis of the patterns that Lonhy supplied him according to the documentation mentioned above.

The documentary evidence and the works I have mentioned on the preceding pages are only the tip of the iceberg. The archival documents and the medieval embroideries preserved in the territories of the former Crown of Aragon—especially in Catalonia—are of an extraordinary richness, as well as being largely unknown, which undoubtedly constitutes a challenge for historians of art. I believe I am not mistaken in contending that, at present, embroidery constitutes the main open question when it comes to the study of the art of this period, in view above all of the striking disproportion between the treasure that remains to be uncovered and the dearth of studies hitherto devoted to it. This is certainly a direct consequence of the radical asymmetry between the importance embroidery enjoyed among the luxury arts of its own day and its almost marginal position in the canon of taste and the study priorities of the twentieth and even the twenty-first centuries. Even so the symptoms—or the evidence—of a resurgence of interest in the study of fourteen- and fifteenth-century embroidery are becoming more and more obvious.

¹²⁹ DURAN 1973–1975, vol. 3, 120–21; GRIZZARD 1985, 379, 385; MACÍAS / CORNUDELLA 2011/12, 35–36. ¹³⁰ See Guadaira Macías and Rafael Cornudella, pp. 349–68. ¹³¹ Cat. Barcelona 2012a, 208–11, cat. no. 37 (Guadaira Macías Prieto and Rafael Cornudella); MACÍAS / CORNUDELLA 2011/12. ¹³² MACÍAS / CORNUDELLA 2011/12, 47, in which the previous bibliography figures.

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