

## Manuel Mundó (1923-2012)\*



Dr Manuel Mundó (Barcelona, 1923-2012), who died last Christmas, entered the school of the monastery of Montserrat at a young age (1932), where his uncle, Antoni Maria Marcet, was the abbot. He took his oaths as a monk at Montserrat and remained there until 1967. The education he received at the monastery was decisive in revealing

his vocation as a researcher of

late antiquity and the early Middle Ages. This vocation was further confirmed in Rome, where he studied palaeography and diplomacy at the *Scuola Vaticana* (1949) and earned a doctorate in Church history from the *Pontificia Università Gregoriana* (1950) and a Bachelor's in Archaeology from the *Pontificio Istituto di Archeologia Cristiana* (1955). He then furthered his education in Paris (1950-1951) and Munich (1954).

In his early days, he taught ancient Church history, Latin palaeography and historical methodology at the *Pontificio Ateneo Sant'Anselmo of Rome* (1952-1959) and at the monastery of Montserrat (1959-1965).

After leaving the monastery, he went to teach at the *Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona* (1968), where he landed the Chair in Palaeography and Diplomacy (1981). In parallel, he served as a professor at the Library School of Barcelona (1974-1981).

He examination for and earned a position in the state civil service that authorised him to work in archives, libraries and museums, leading him to serve as the archivist at the *Arxiu Reial de Barcelona* (ACA: 1969-1978). He was also the founder and director of the General Library at the *Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona* (1978-1983) and the director of the Library of Catalonia (1987-1990).

He was a member of the *Reial Acadèmia de Bones Lletres de Barcelona* (1960), the *Instituttet for Sammenlignende Kulturforskning of Oslo* (1961), the *Comité International de Paléographie Latine* (1975), the *Institut d'Estudis Catalans* (1975), the *Société des Antiquaires of France* (1980), the *Medieval Academy of America* (1986) and the *Real Academia de la Historia* (1992).

The government of Catalonia awarded him the Cross of St George in 2000.

Among Dr Mundó's written oeuvre, which far surpasses 200 titles, there is a select group of books and a vast number of articles published in scholarly journals in a variety of countries.

In the late 1960s, and this is a personal memory, among us history students at the *Universitat de Barcelona* who were specialising in mediaeval history, a rumour went round on the research of a historian from Montserrat who was familiar with Visigothic epigraphy and was capable of reading the invisible letters of the 7th century palimpsest and decipher Visigothic slates. We found this extraordinary and intriguing.

Manuel Mundó was a great historian of monasticism and of its origins and expansion. Within Europe, his studies revolved around ancient abbey synods, Saint Benedict and his relics, the age and authenticity of the Rule of St. Benedict and the figure of Cassiodorus. In Spain, he issued a critical edition of the work of the philosopher and travelling monk Baquiari and generally studied Visigothic monasticism.

He was also an expert on the history of Carolingian Catalonia and the age of the countships of Catalonia. This can clearly be seen in his studies on the dates of the documents from this epoch, the 10th century abbots of Sant Cugat, the polyptych of goods and censuses of Vilamajor and the writings of Abbot and Bishop Oliba. Because of his accomplishments, the *Institut d'Estudis Catalans* commissioned him and Josep Maria Font i Rius to supervise *Catalunya carolíngia*, a work begun by Ramon d'Abadal. Under his stewardship, which he exercised with precision, volumes IV, V and VI of this collection were published, which examined respectively the countships of Osona and Manresa; Girona, Besalú, Empúries and Peralada; and Rosselló, Conflent, Vallespir and Fenollet.

However, his most important work was in the field of codicology, which he viewed as a discipline that transcended the study of manuscripts as physical items and fully fell within the history of culture. His extensive knowledge of palaeography, the Bible and the writings of the Church Fathers enabled him to make extraordinary strides in identifying lost manuscripts from the Bible and from sacramentaries and martyrologies through simple excerpts conserved as the covers to manuscripts. Likewise, in the field of codicological research, he performed studies on the Isidorian codices of Ripoll and the 10th century codices from Sant Cugat, and on the liturgical manuscripts of Languedoc from the Carolingian period.

Worth special mention is his study of the Bibles of Ripoll, the National Library of Paris and the Vatican. Between 2002 and 2010, he made a two-volume facsimile edition of them accompanied by an extensive third volume (more than 400 pages) which contains Manuel Mundó's stylistic, historical and iconographic study. This is, without a doubt, his crowning achievement.

Still within the field of codicology, we should mention Mundó's important contribution to the team study on the *Liber iudicum popularis*, the Catalan version of the Visigothic legislative code dating from around 1011. Mundó's hand can clearly be seen in the two volumes published by the Department of Justice and Interior of the Generalitat de Catalunya in 2003 and 2008: he was charged with stud-

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ying the only manuscript preserved from the *Liber* in its entirety, fragments of manuscripts from the same code that are still preserved, and the study by Judge Bonsom, of which was the author, and some of the manuscript's complementary texts.

Finally, as proof of Manuel Mundó's extraordinary erudition and historical instincts, we must cite the book on the ivory Christ figure of Montserrat. He posited, with proof and arguments that have not yet been refuted, that this is a work of the young Michelangelo.

Seen in retrospect, from the end of the road, the knowledge amassed by Anscari Manuel Mundó, as he was known among historians, was extraordinary. Even more remarkable, he carried this knowledge with modesty, perhaps even humility. This could be seen in his personal dealings, which were open and cordial, and in his intellectual generosity. In our view, this is the teacher and friend we have lost.