

Civil Gothic architecture in Catalonia, Mallorca and Valencia (13th-15th centuries)

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Received 21 February 2019 · Accepted 25 September 2019

ABSTRACT

This article is an introduction to the civil or secular Gothic architecture in the Catalan Lands (Catalonia, Mallorca and the region of Valencia) from the 13th to 15th centuries and its spread to Italy under the influence or dominion of the royal house of Barcelona. A general introduction to its formal and constructive features is followed by a sketch of the genesis and morphological diversity of some of the main building typologies, along with a presentation of the most important castles, palaces, urban homes, town halls and government buildings, mercantile exchanges and baths.

KEYWORDS: Catalan civil Gothic architecture, bath, urban house, town hall, castle, Generalitat, mercantile exchange (Llotja), palace

GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS

Just like most old architectures, Gothic architecture is primarily defined and known through religious works, that is, through churches and their associated sacred spaces. There is no question that among all the buildings that stylistically fall within the Gothic, churches represent the peak and boast the most art, but they actually diverge little from civil or secular Gothic architecture. Instead, they share forms and solutions in both their construction and decoration, and thus both sacred and secular architectures comprise a culturally and structurally seamless whole. Civil or secular architecture deserves to be considered a very important part of Gothic architecture, and it encompasses works of extraordinary quality, along with a broad typological repertoire spanning everything from residential and working buildings to roadway infrastructures and military works, always with differing degrees of artistic intensity and elaborateness depending on the purpose and hierarchy of both the building and its developers.¹

There are several geographically, culturally and politically distinct schools within European Gothic architecture, although the geographical divisions that are academically prevalent today are unfortunately more defined by the borders of contemporary states with all their nationalistic baggage than by mediaeval historical realities.

Both religious and secular architecture developed on continental Catalonia and in the region of Valencia, as well as on the Balearic Islands, specifically the island of Mallorca, following quite similar formulations.

Even though this architectural corpus is a subset within what is known as the southern Gothic, it has a very distinct personality which was spread to or influenced other lands to differing degrees by the royal house of Barcelona or the Kingdom of Aragon, alongside strong influences exerted in the opposite direction as well. Catalan Gothic architecture emerged throughout the 13th century and lasted until the shift from the 15th to 16th centuries, when it began to decline, although not suddenly; it gradually languished until almost the 17th century in certain regions and settings.²

The similarity between civil and religious Catalan Gothic architecture is not grounded exclusively on stylistic concordance or decorative unity; instead, it also reflects an architectural, structural and compositional congruence, even though the spaces may be quite different. In fact, all the architecture was based on two essential constructive solutions: the ribbed vault and the diaphragm arch. The buildings made with these features always consisted in a rather simple volume covered with a flat roof in the case of vaults and a pitched roof with wooden beams in the case of diaphragm arches, creating interior spaces free of supports, as most of the weight was transferred to the outer buttresses. The internal space was left open or divided into bays separated by arches or columns in some temples and mercantile exchanges. Horizontality prevailed inside the building, with large, flat façades in which

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the solid space outweighed the openings of the doorways and windows. Severe or contained ornamentation did not disfigure the architectural morphology but instead enhanced it using the linear resources of cornices, mouldings and interplays of planes and protrusions.

Ribbed vaults and diaphragm arches were adopted throughout the 13th century, as Romanesque constructions with barrel vaults waned and then virtually vanished. Ribbed vaults, which transitioned from simpler to more complex stellar vaults as the 15th century progressed, were found in both church naves and small chapels, as well as the halls of Bellver Castle on Mallorca in the early 14th century and the ground floors of large urban hospitals in the early the 15th century. Well into this same century, they were used in a way reminiscent of chapter-houses in the contracting halls of the majestic mercantile exchanges of Mallorca and Valencia, until they reached their peak in the Barons' Hall in Castel Nuovo in Naples. A wide range of buildings had naves covered with ceiling beams over diaphragm or other kinds of arches, from the simplest to the most elaborate ones, in both rural areas and urban nuclei. Naves with diaphragm arches or simple beams can be found in churches, monastic dormitories and refectories, both older ones such as Poblet and Santes Creus and more recent ones such as Pedralbes and Vallbona de les Monges. Yet they also shaped myriad palace or castle halls, including significant examples in the fortresses in Peratallada and Verdú and the court complexes in Barcelona, Palma and Perpignan, in addition to the hospitals in Barcelona and Vic, the naves in Barcelona's shipyards and Valencia's Grau, the audience halls in the mercantile exchange and city hall of Barcelona, as well as endless cellars, warehouses and rooms of all kinds, always corporate or seigneurial.³

The most important civil Gothic architectural monuments in the Catalan Lands are obviously found in the larger cities and include major civic facilities as the expression of the power held by the cities, estates or corporations that ran them; of their commercial power; or of their governing authority and military capacity, expressed in city walls or arsenals. The buildings housing municipal governments, town or city halls particularly stand out in this category. Their utmost expression is found in Barcelona, where a majestic building was erected throughout the last third of the 14th century, dominated by a large rectangular hall covered with flat ceiling beams held up by semicircular diaphragm arches. The façade facing Carrer de la Ciutat was magnified with elaborate ornamentation and painstaking sculptural details, some of which are the handiwork of master Arnau Bargués from the 14th to 15th centuries. On the same street, near Carrer del Bisbe, is the main façade of the House of the General or the palace of the Generalitat. Here, a doorway with a segmental arch was crowned by a stone railing with a splendid medallion depicting the legend of Saint George in the centre, sculpted by Pere Joan in around 1416-1418. The palace was designed to resemble a large patrician home, with

two parallel bodies connected by a slender gallery of arcades on the main floor.

Mercantile exchanges, impressive representations of the power of the mercantile corporations that built them, are the secular buildings where Gothic architecture achieved its most striking expression, and the exchanges in the Catalan Lands are unique in Europe. The most important mercantile exchanges are in Barcelona, Palma, Perpignan and Valencia. Those in Catalonia, which were built in the second half of the 14th century, have a spacious hall at street level with a flat beamed ceiling held up by slender and extraordinarily tall arcades. The mercantile exchanges on Mallorca and in Valencia were built in the 15th century and are much more architecturally and sculpturally elaborate. They consist in a single building occupied by a large hall with ribbed vaults held up by spiral columns, and bays with large windows featuring elaborate tracery. Also noteworthy are the hospitals established in many towns, often with mixed civil and religious purposes, whose construction programmes were more modest or ambitious depending on their importance. They include the hospitals in Lleida, Montblanc and Solsona from the 15th century, built in the style of four-winged patrician homes around a courtyard. Another typology that had developed in the 14th century or earlier consisted in tall naves covered with diaphragm arches, sometimes just a single hall and other times organised into wings around a courtyard. One example of the latter is the huge Santa Creu hospital complex in Barcelona, which started to be built in around 1400 and was never finished, where the large halls were arranged around a ground floor covered with timbered vaults with a cloister around it.

Another of the greatest, most exceptional Gothic creations in the Mediterranean region, though similar to Valencia's Grau, is Barcelona's Drassanes (arsenal or shipyard). From the start, it was designed to be a large open courtyard encircled by a wall with towers on the corners, while the interior installations were temporary. Well into the 14th century, a series of parallel naves began to be built in this interior space until it was entirely filled; they were connected by large arcades with pillars supporting the diaphragm arches that held up the pitched tile roof that rhythmically encloses the space. The original premises were expanded several times from the 15th to the 17th-18th centuries, although they always followed the original Gothic style.⁴ It is further worth noting that the sovereigns had more or less permanent, sumptuous residences in the cities within their kingdom, although the most important ones were in Barcelona, called the Palau Reial Major and Menor (Main and Lesser Royal Palace), which were transformations of Romanesque or even earlier constructions. Both had significant doses of Gothic architecture, such as the spacious, solemn great hall, shaped with large semicircular diaphragm arches. Today what remains is called the Saló de Tinell, built under Peter the Ceremonious by master builder Guillem Carbonell in around 1350-1370.

Urban homes developed different residential typologies, from the simplest to the most unique, monumental patrician homes, which became emblematic of civil Gothic architecture. These houses differed considerably from other urban constructions in both large cities and small villages, which were overwhelmingly made up of humble homes with a single rectangular body two or three storeys tall set parallel or perpendicular to the street. The wealthiest homes had semicircular doorways and several decorated Gothic windows. The exceptional noble residences differed considerably, with up to four different bodies arranged around a monumental central courtyard leading to the first or main floor, which had elegant arcaded galleries that connected the different wings and gave onto uniquely beautiful courtyards. This kind of residence is found in different styles, from late Gothic to Baroque, in all the major Catalan cities and in cities in other countries that were under the influence of the House of Barcelona or the Crown of Aragon. The most noteworthy examples are in Barcelona, Palma, Girona, Perpignan and Valencia, and outside the Catalan Lands in Palermo and Syracuse.

TYPES OF CIVIL ARCHITECTURE

After outlining the main features of Catalan civil Gothic architecture, in order to further explore it formally and constructively, what follows is a description and detailed examination of some of the most representative buildings within the common typologies, some of them the most famous and some the most unique, accompanied by a survey of their typological genesis and morphological evolution both within the regional context and in relation to the overall architectural scene. Different functional types of architecture considered representative were chosen, although this is not an exhaustive survey. Indeed, covering Catalan civil Gothic architecture exhaustively would take up too much space given the enormous breadth of a repertoire which would have to encompass shipyards, hospitals, city walls and gates, mills, farmhouses, bridges and other kinds of secular buildings as well.

We shall survey the evolutionary process and typological diversity of each of the types chosen, regardless of whether they are expressed in common Gothic stylistic features or are exceptionally associated with another artistic tradition. Examples of the latter include architectures that for specific reasons, such as prestige or sumptuousness, incorporate styles with imported Islamic overtones resulting from the Catalan sovereigns' conquest of broad swaths of Al-Andalus, the Hispanic regions governed by Islamic rulers for centuries.

Castles⁵

The origin of the feudal castles common in Western Europe can be pinpointed back to the 10th century, and they developed considerably in both Catalonia and elsewhere after the 11th century. Prior to that, kingdoms and em-

pires had built fortresses from which the military kept watch over lands and guarded their frontiers. However, the essence of the new feudal castles was that instead of being merely redoubts of political and military power, they became fortified residences from which an extensive, fragmented aristocracy exerted its lordship over jurisdictional districts or the castle's territory, from which they drew income and dominated social relations. The new fortresses reflected not the influence of a sovereign power but the military domination of the feudal class, which was highly segmented and at odds within itself. Hence the proliferation and autonomy of these fortresses, which never pursued planned territorial defence or control strategies over the outlying borders, as they could only circumstantially take this on and it was not their prime purpose.

The architectural morphology of the earliest feudal castles in the Catalan Lands and neighbouring regions in the Western Mediterranean was quite simple. It was the outcome of three pieces which have become essential to any fortress since that time, albeit to varying degrees of formalisation, complexity and size, ranging from the most elementary to the most monumental or artistically elaborate. In the preeminent position was the freestanding great or fortified tower, which could be circular or quadrangular and always had a single entrance in an elevated position. The belt of wall was the second piece, flanked by towers and half-towers. The third essential element was the main keep and the residential or service outbuildings within the walls, either freestanding or attached to the walls in an irregular or unsystematic layout. Among these quarters, in quite exceptional cases one could find a hall or rectangular building with a ground floor and one upper storey, with the residential area and audience chamber on the main floor. Sometimes the residential building replaced the great tower and become the main defensive redoubt, like a *donjon*. In some castles, there was even a double hierarchised area whose upper area housed the great tower or keep, while the lower courtyard was occupied by lesser quarters. One common development was when the internal enclosed area, which was originally half-vacant with just a few freestanding pieces, was filled with an increasing number of buildings until it became virtually wholly occupied. As a result of this process, over time only a courtyard remained open; however, instead of being the generative and organising part of the complex, as it might seem at first glance, it was actually a residual space left over from the higher building density inside the walls.

Quite often, the outbuildings were attached to the original tower and formed a continuous conglomerate of bodies with different dates, morphologies and shapes, dominated by the vertical line of the original tower. However, there was not always just one aggregation of pieces within the walled premises; instead, sometimes they were built in discontinuous clusters attached to the outer wall, leaving large vacant spaces. There are many examples of



FIGURE 1. Bellver Castle on Mallorca, primarily built in the first decade of the 14th century. (Image taken from *L'art gòtic a Catalunya*, vol. III, *Arquitectura*, Enciclopèdia Catalana, Barcelona 2003, p. 253).

this type, such as the castles in Calonge, Queralt and Verdú, which have important Gothic buildings that were either freestanding or attached to the walls; these buildings had one or two storeys with large main floors, always using the same architectural resources of diaphragm arches with flat or pitched roofs, usually with polychrome beams and murals.

Alongside these longstanding building processes rooted in the Romanesque, a series of new castles were built in the Catalan Lands between the mid-13th and early 14th centuries following typologies adopted years earlier from other Western European countries. They were fortresses which enfolded the earlier elements of the great tower and hall with other services and quarters inside walled premises. The result was a compact, regular complex, usually with a geometric, polygonal layout, whose sides served as both curtain walls and the outer façades of the wings of a single bay, where the functions that used to be dispersed in independent pieces were brought together in homogeneous buildings. The inner façade of these same wings was the weapons courtyard, which anchored and organised the entire complex, and where the cistern collected the rainwater. At the corners were circular or square towers of similar sizes and morphologies, so the hegemony of the great tower was lost and only occasionally survived, turned into a redoubt that was largely detached from the rest of the complex.

The castles in Balsareny, Bellcaire d'Empordà, Llívia, Montgrí and Perpignan reflect this typology, as does Bellver Castle on Mallorca, where it unquestionably

reaches its peak expression. This round fortress, which dominated the city, the sea and the entire island in a circular radius, not only became the most elaborate example of mediaeval Catalan military architecture but is also extraordinary in Europe. Morphologically, it is related to the Castel del Monte in Pulla (Italy), on the continental lands of the Sicilian kingdom, which was built in the mid-13th century; its layout is octagonal, and it is flanked at the corners by identical towers arranged around a central courtyard. This Mallorcan fortress, which mostly dates from the first decade of the 14th century, was built quickly following a design with rigorous lines and effective simplicity. It is a perfectly circular body with one two-storey bay running around it opening onto the central courtyard, which has a half-buried cistern. The outer façade of the ring is a wall from which three semicircular towers emerge at each quarter-circle, and where the fourth tower should be, it was built separate from the round wall as a freestanding structure to keep watch over the entrance gate.

Beyond these polygonal castles built from the ground up from the 13th to 14th centuries, always on the initiative of sovereigns, royals or counts but never the lower ranks of the feudal aristocracy, unlike the castles from previous generations, no others were built until the union of the crowns of Castile and Catalonia-Aragon led to the absolute monarchy. Between the 14th and 15th centuries, the royalty developed plans to update their castles, especially in Aragon, Catalonia and Valencia on the borders with the kingdoms of Castile or France, depending on the

course of wars, but they never managed to undertake any operations more ambitious than refurbishing the existing castles. The most noteworthy of these castles on the frontier between Valencia and the kingdom of Castile were the ones in Biar, La Mola de Novelda and Petrer; despite their particular divergences, they are all dominated by superb large, tall rectangular towers surrounded by one or more walled premises enclosed by curtain walls interrupted by cubes or square or semicircular towers. Also noteworthy is the impressive fortress in Bunyol built on Valencian lands at a time where there was a Morisco majority, that is, when the Muslim population had remained in the fiefdoms after the conquest of Al-Andalus. Likewise, in addition to strictly military structures, residential embellishments are also noteworthy, such as the sumptuous Montsoriu castle, home of the viscounts of Cabrera, which fully falls within the style described above: a ring of Gothic halls with diaphragm arches attached to the wall looking inward towards a porticoed central courtyard with a cistern at the centre.

From the 15th to 16th centuries, as the absolute Spanish monarchy was coalescing, a series of new fortifications was undertaken aimed at militarily strengthening its political dominion and controlling the frontiers. The new fortresses differed from the feudal castles not only because pyro-ballistics had shifted the *poliorcetica*, but also because their status was actually quite different from the former military redoubts of the feudal nobility. The first major example of this new typology in Catalonia was the castle in Salses (Roussillon, Northern Catalonia) on the former frontier with the kingdom of France. It was constructed in the last decade of the 15th century by the master builder Francisco Ramiro, who had gained extensive experience in the war in Granada. In it, he combined innovative Castilian and Italian influences, yielding a fortress spanning the transition from mediaeval to modern. Despite subsequent transformations, it still stands largely intact.

Royal palaces⁶

Barcelona is the home to an exceptional piece of palatial architecture from the early Middle Ages: the Romanesque count's residence. It is an 11th-century structure which became the core and main element of the Palau Reial Major in the subsequent four centuries and is currently conserved and known as the Saló del Tinell. This large, rectangular mass is attached to the Roman wall that was used to defend the city until the 13th century. Within the complex is the audience chamber and residential apartments, while the annexes in a tower on the wall house the chapel and the treasury. The palace was located next to the cathedral and the episcopal residence in the northern quadrant of the old city. The small countship of Barcelona gradually transformed into a burgeoning political conglomerate of domains, and then into a kingdom in the mid-12th century, and soon it became a powerful monarchy stretching across the Mediterranean in the 13th century, yet no significant changes were made to the old palace. Nor did its relationship to the city vary; it had not been built as a freestanding body, or even less so the opposite, as a militarily self-protected bastion, unlike other royal palaces located in urban areas in Western Europe, which tended to be highly fortified and exercised imposing paramountcy. It seems clear that the monarchy was unable or did not wish to make the Palau Reial Major an anomalous or antagonistic architectural and political statement within Barcelona's urban fabric.

The transformation of the former Romanesque residence into the Gothic Palau Reial Major stemmed from the increasing complexity and size of the royal house and the addition of new residential needs for holding audiences, entertaining and housing the administrative apparatus. The architectural response entailed refurbishing the pre-existing parts and successively adding new ones, albeit without any overarching plan. First, the new constructions, such as the palatial chapel, the archive and the treasury, were placed atop the ancient Roman wall, while



FIGURE 2. Sala del Tinell in the Palau Reial Major of Barcelona, the work of master builder G. Carbonell (c. 1359-1370).

the palace was enlarged to the northwest, where the new quarters were arranged around a courtyard. The lack of planning made the palace a sum of minor, largely unconnected operations, most of them dominated by the shape of the preceding constructions and the urban area around it. There was no substantial change until the first decade of the 14th century, with the construction of the royal chapel of Santa Àgata, which boasts an innovative Gothic design.⁷ Indeed, the monarchy's revamped artistic expression and full adoption of the Gothic should most likely be interpreted as a reaction and attempt to keep up with the magnificent use of this language by the French monarchy, the most powerful in Europe and virtually a continent-wide cultural touchstone. King James II had the new chapel built over a stretch of the Roman wall. Bertran Riquer, the royal officer in charge of construction, not an architect, as is often claimed, was in charge of construction. It is a small yet extraordinarily elegant building comprised of a single nave with a beamed ceiling held up by diaphragm arches, an apse with a ribbed vault and a slender octagonal belltower with large upper windows.

Thereafter construction never stopped, as was common in working palatial residences, and although the royal administration left frequent records of the projects, they are difficult to relate to the architecture given that it has been heavily altered. One notable exception is the well-conserved audience chamber undertaken by Peter III the Ceremonious as part of an overtly political programme of reforms aimed at magnifying royal authority. In 1359, this meticulous sovereign checked the most propitious astrological date to lay the first stone of the reforms which would turn the Romanesque body into a single room, now called the Saló del Tinell. Once the inside had been gutted and only the perimeter walls remained standing, a crosswise sequence of six large pointed arcades emerging from attached pilasters was laid out within the resulting space; the pilasters, in turn, held up a flat beamed ceiling which shaped the large audience chamber that presided over the palace and served as the backdrop of royal ceremony. The master builder was Guillem Carbonell, and he left a commemorative inscription, no longer there today, dictated by the monarch himself: "In the year of the Birth of our Lord MCCCCLXX [1370] his highness Peter the Third, King of Aragon, had this chamber built".

The last construction programme got underway in the first decade of the 15th century during the reign of King Martin I the Humane, before the palace was gradually abandoned. The reports referring to it are as bounteous as they are confusing, and they mention parts that no longer stand such as the courtyard on the northwest, the only remaining part of which is the wing on Carrer dels Comtes, and several drastically altered remains of the main body on the northwest, whose upper part holds significant vestiges of a Gothic chapel. The landscaping of this courtyard with plants and pools dovetailed with the reforms of the kitchens and apartments, as well as with the construc-

tion of staircases and a loge, which may only very approximately resemble the one that has been rebuilt adjacent to the Saló del Tinell. Building materials were imported from Sicily, Mallorcan stone from Santanyí and tiles and coffered ceilings with Moorish handiwork, that is, in an Islamic style, from Valencia, one of which was meant for the chapel or royal tribunal added atop a body near the cathedral and connected by a bridge. In the 16th century, the Palau Reial Major ceased being the sovereigns' dwelling, and the royal chapel was not restored until the mid-19th century, while the grand Saló del Tinell was not reformed until 100 years later.

In Barcelona, King Peter III the Ceremonious turned the former Templars' mansion, built atop the Roman wall like all the grand aristocratic residences from the 11th to 13th centuries, into a new home for Queen Eleanor of Sicily and called it the Palau Reial Menor. Construction was undertaken between 1360 and 1370 and entailed building two large chambers practically identical to the Saló del Tinell. Unfortunately, the building was demolished in around 1860. Besides these two residences, the royal family's other large Gothic homes in Barcelona were either newly built or more or less radical transformations not of the old Latin architectures but of the Islamic architecture in the occupied lands of Al-Andalus. The first case of an adaptation like this in Catalonia resulted from the conquest of the Andalusian city of Balaguer in 1105, when the residence of the Muslim governors became the castle of the Counts of Urgell, one of the seigniorial lines with ties to the sovereign of Barcelona. The addition of this residence falls within a process of feudal expansionism in which the lords and monarchs seized Andalusian or Islamic palaces and fortresses, not just on the Iberian Peninsula but throughout the Mediterranean countries. The sovereigns in the different branches of the House of Barcelona thus secured the Aljaferia Palace of Zaragoza, the Palace of the Almudaina of Palma, the Royal Palace of Valencia and the Royal Palace of Palermo, where they mostly made limited adaptations to their architecture.

It should be borne in mind that the courtly architecture of the feudal West, made of large rooms in freestanding, enclosed buildings like the palaces in the Cité in Paris, Westminster in London and the palace of Barcelona, totally diverged from the Islamic palaces on the Iberian Peninsula. The latter were built around courtyards with pools which arranged a series of open pavilions with profusely decorated arcades modelled on the 10th-century Madīnat al-Zahrā royal complex in Córdoba (Andalusia, Spain). The Andalusian Aljaferia Palace of Zaragoza, which dates from the second half of the 11th century, reverted back to the Aragonese kings first and to Barcelona's sovereign after the second third of the 12th century. It consisted in a vast fortified rectangular area subdivided inside into three smaller rectangles, with a sequence of pavilions and courtyards built only in the central one. The palace was refurbished by King James II and especially King Peter III in the 14th century. Without drasti-

cally altering the previous architecture, new buildings were erected in the areas that previously had none, such as Sant Martí church and the large rooms at the base of the main tower; moreover, the height of this tower was elevated and an Andalusian pavilion was turned into Sant Jordi chapel.

In 1276, the death of King James I the Conqueror split Barcelona's domains into two kingdoms, one of which, the newly created Kingdom of Mallorca, needed royal quarters on par with its political status. Therefore, under the government of King James II, a series of important building or monumental projects was undertaken in palaces and royal castles, all within a broader programme of organising the new kingdom and its apparatus of statehood. In Palma, the monarch turned the main nucleus of the citadel or the Almudaina castle from the Islamic period into the palace. The intervention consisted in occupying approximately the southern half of the walled-in rectangle that defined and was presided over by the large Angel tower. There, three wings of quarters attached to the perimeter of the wall were built, along with a fourth freestanding building which closed off the Andalusian premises crosswise halfway through it. Santa Anna chapel was located approximately at the centre of the resulting square courtyard, which was, in turn, subdivided into two asymmetrical areas, the smaller one holding the queen's residence. The sovereign's chambers were housed inside the Angel tower. A grand double-high hall with diaphragm arches was built at the southern base of this tower. Construction started in 1305 and took around ten years, although it later underwent constant refurbishments.

In Perpignan, currently French Catalonia but at that time part of the short-lived Kingdom of Mallorca, King James II had an imposing new palatial fortress built towards the end of the 13th century, which must have been ready in the first decade of the ensuing century. The structure took on the conventional layout of a quadrangular castle with corner towers, quarters around the perimeter inside the wall and a central courtyard. A main two-storey chapel separated two areas which housed the king's and queen's chambers, respectively, each arranged around a courtyard independent from the central one. This eastern portion was completely different to the other three wings; the main floor of the southern one was occupied by a large audience chamber.⁸ The morphology of the site was fairly similar to other castles built to rule over cities, such as the Tower of London and the Bastille and Louvre castles in Paris, which were always associated with the overall urban fortification system because of their simultaneous dialectic purposes of defence and dominion. We could therefore posit that the reason these formidable fortresses boasting superb, beautiful architecture were built may have been associated with the imposition of a new sovereign from the Kingdom of Mallorca in the lands of Roussillon.

The other noteworthy piece from Catalonia's palatial heritage is an important rustic periurban estate in Andalusian

Valencia, which became known as El Real after the city was conquered by James I in 1238. A lengthy construction process in the 14th and 15th centuries made it into a rather complex compound surrounded by gardens with pools and wild animals. It was unfortunately demolished in around 1810, although the loss was not complete, as proven by the excavations and the archaeological information which make it possible to study the complex, alongside the written and graphic records.⁹ What we do not know is the degree to which the pre-existing building was reused and how the Gothic El Real was designed, although in the small part that has been excavated the solution seems to have been complete continuity between the two periods. In Valencia's El Real, just as in other palaces, there are no reports on construction until the reign of James II, most likely because of the lack of rigour in the records kept by previous administrations, as well as the absence of well-defined refurbishment programmes. There was frequent construction after the second quarter of the 14th century, although it is difficult to evaluate; however, the excavation did reveal the presence of chambers with Mudejar décor with plasterwork and marble columns from Macael (Andalusia, Spain) taken from buildings dating from the caliphate or taifa (10th-11th centuries). That is, significant parts of the new residence built in the 14th century used Islamic art instead of conventional Gothic forms, no doubt adopted because of the sumptuous, ostentatious tone it sought to convey.

Outside the Catalan lands, the action at Castel Nuovo in Naples after King Alphonse the Magnanimous conquered the city in 1442 deserves special mention. The fortress had been built by the French royal house of Anjou two centuries earlier; virtually on the water, it has a trapezoidal layout flanked by cylindrical corner towers and is internally arranged around a courtyard housing the main chapel. Therefore, as an instrument of foreign dominion over the Neapolitan kingdom, it was essentially a military structure that was not openly palatial with a typical 13th-century morphology. This was particularly highlighted by the construction of the magnificent audience chamber, the Barons' Hall, which was added in the centre of the old building between the 1440s and 1450s. It is a thoroughly exceptional piece within the Catalan Gothic which differs radically from earlier courtly spaces in its soaring height and perfectly square layout covered with a stellar vault emerging from eight sectors, a display of the high degree of subtlety achieved by Catalan construction in this advanced stage of Gothic expression. Its author was master builder Guillem Sagrera, who also built the mercantile exchange of Mallorca, and he revealed his mastery and innovative approach in both spaces, where he added the device of complex ribbed vaulted ceiling, until then only used in Catalan architecture in religious spaces, primarily temples or chapterhouses. He did so with great skill, creating extraordinarily significant secular spaces and imbuing them a dignity with clearly sacred overtones.

Urban houses¹⁰

All too often, the conception of housing in Roman cities is distorted by the reductive cliché of a single kind of house with an inner courtyard at the centre that follows a type that was consubstantial with and hegemonic in the Mediterranean countries from the ancient world until the Middle Ages or beyond. However, in reality, everything from large monocentric houses with atria or polycentric homes with peristyles coexisted in ancient cities alongside the simplest houses with few bodies and a secondary courtyard, and even simple *tabernae* which included a workshop or shop and residence on either street level or the first floor. Furthermore, the main residential parts of Greco-Roman houses with courtyards were always on the street, and they primarily grew horizontally, with the most important public rooms on the ground floor. Therefore, they have little to do with the later mediaeval houses with courtyards, especially Gothic houses, in which this central empty space was nestled between tall vertical bodies whose residential quarters were on the first floor, while the courtyard also had an outdoor staircase. This courtyard was not a cloister for horizontal circulation, nor was there a continuous path connecting the upper rooms on the main floor; instead, these rooms were juxtaposed, enclosed, lacking any fluid connection and only partly connected by galleries.

In fact, the houses of the urban patriciate, which were low and sprawling and had a courtyard that arranged the spaces, disappeared from much of Western Europe after the fall of the Roman order, never to reappear. Immediately thereafter, a new and quite different type of aristocratic residence began to spread in both rural and urban areas. In the 9th century, this new type of home can clearly be seen in the middle of Rome itself and in the abandoned Forum of Nerva. They were new buildings made of a single compact body, with a notably rectangular layout extending upward and the main public quarters on the first floor. Instead of having specific uses, the different quarters were versatile, and while the ground floor combined the purposes of storage, stables, kitchens and other services, the first floor was often just a single room, clearly residential and for audiences. Sometimes they were combined with secondary buildings, forming a courtyard which bore no resemblance to the central spaces in older houses. In the Catalan Lands, we could say that there is no archaeological information about the forms of housing in the deurbanisation process of the ancient Roman cities that led to new Carolingian urban nuclei, although it is clear that the patrician homes disappeared and were replaced by others that were extremely morphologically and constructively simple. However, we should also note that in the cities in Al-Andalus, the horizontal house arranged around the courtyard reappeared in around the 10th century, although it was an Eastern model which arrived with the influx of Islam.

In Catalonia during the period of the counts, that is, between the 10th and 12th centuries, the most notewor-

thy piece of residential architecture is the 11th-century Romanesque building of the Barcelona palace and the main nucleus of the Gothic Palau Reial Major or the Sala del Tinell. They fully correspond to the type of aristocratic home explained above, which here was circumstantially adapted to its peculiar location atop the Roman wall between the 10th and 13th centuries, giving it more solidity and significance. These homes occupied the stretch between two fortification towers, and at least one of them was always incorporated into the building. The main floor was located above the stretch of wall; it was expanded with arcades placed between the towers and raised one or more storeys. The Romanesque part of Barcelona's Palau del Bisbe, which dates from the 12th to 13th centuries, fits within this model. In the same city, a 14th-century Gothic version of a house with similar features is the Pati d'en Llimona. The ground floor had the main façade and an open side with semicircular arches, and the main floor was a single two-storey body with lengthwise façades perforated with double or triple gemel windows whose lintels were small trilobate arches. The arcade or garret atop the building had small lengthwise pillars on the two façades which held up the pitched roof. The interior floors of one of the towers from the old wall were integrated into the building.¹¹

This house perfectly encapsulates a model of aristocratic residence that has numerous examples, such as the Gothic home of the Graell family in the town of Cardona, also from the 14th century. Another similar but older building, known as Fontana d'Or, was on Carrer de Ciutadans in the city of Girona. The initial body of this house, which dates from the 13th century, has a row of lengthwise arcades on the street, while the main floor is comprised of a large hall with triple gemel windows with an upper storey above it. Between the 14th and 15th centuries, it ceased being a house with a single body and became a grand, complex residence, first through the addition of other bodies and later by the conversion of the inner courtyard, which was left open in the centre, into a public space leading to the main floor via an outdoor staircase and a loge or a small reception gallery. The house stood out for its exotic façade and this newly created interior space, which was widely celebrated. In its Gothic configuration, Fontana d'Or's new courtyard with its staircase and gallery resulted from overlaying new construction on the preceding complex, where this secondary space had gained organic centrality, representativity and architectural dignity over time. In fact, a survey of some of the most important Gothic homes reveals that the architectural elements shaping the courtyards were generally added to pre-existing buildings, as opposed to being the chief generators of the architectural layout.

The process of forming large homes with courtyards with outdoor stone staircases leading up to an arcaded gallery in one or more wings originated in aristocratic buildings with a single body and an elevated outdoor en-

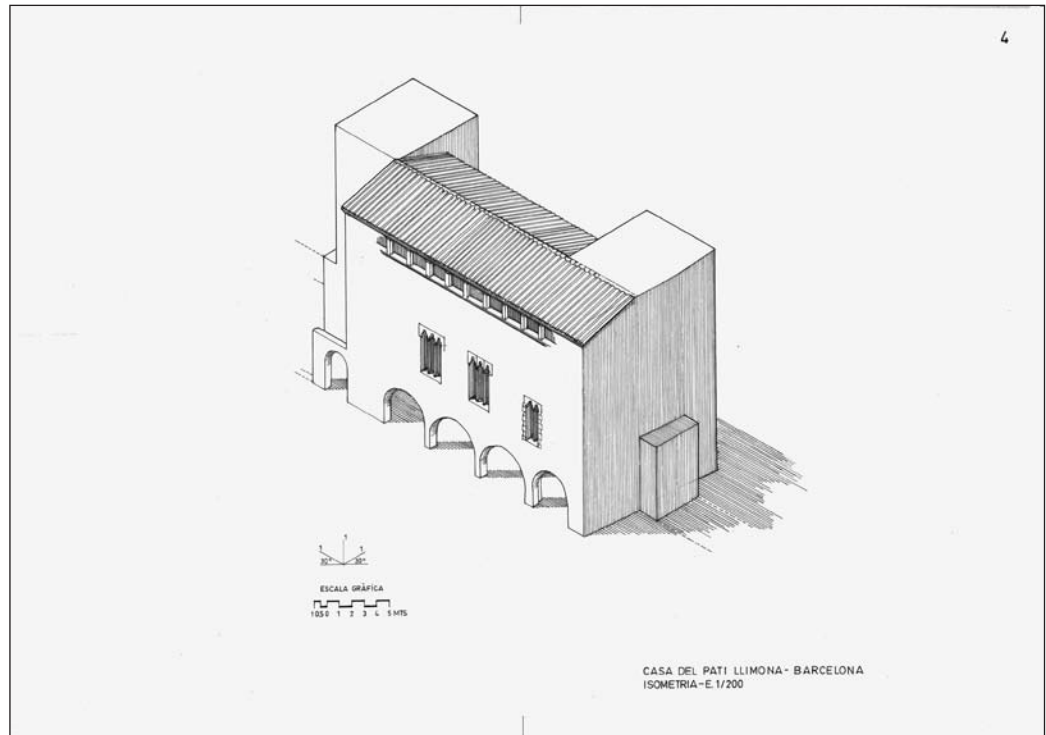


FIGURE 3. *Casa dels Marc*, or *Casa del Pati d'en Llimona*, in Barcelona, built over the Roman wall in the 14th century. (Drawing by E. Riu-Barrera and E. Adell, 2003).

trance, which were joined by a court or courtyard simply by adding different bodies. The latter tended to be identical to the former and became the wings that eventually closed off the complex and left an open courtyard in the centre. After the 14th century, this space became the core of vertical communications and a prime space that horizontally connected some of the four wings on the main floor, although rarely all of them. As the outcome of this process, after the shift from the 14th to 15th centuries, a new model of home appeared whose central courtyards were essential morphological features starting from their very architectural conception.

Some of the top exponents of Barcelona's Gothic courtyards can be found in the houses on Carrer de Montcada. One of the most famous ones is called Casa Berenguer d'Aguilar, today the home of the Picasso Museum. It has a splendid courtyard from the 15th century, when the building adopted the architectural form that it still has today, made of four three-storey wings plus garrets on the main façade and only three on the others. The staircase in the courtyard has two flights, reaches an initial gallery in the back wing and runs parallel to the street. The house was originally far less complex, with a single body that had an associated tower laid out perpendicular to the street, and a noble room on the main floor decorated with splendid paintings depicting the conquest of Mallorca by James I (13th century). Right across from it on the same street is the house of the Marquises of Lió, which was set parallel to the street. It is a unitary structure dating from between the end of the 13th and beginning of the 14th centuries. The ground floor opened inward via a row of semicircular arches, and inside a transversal arcade led the way to the tower. The main two-storey floor and the

tower were a single space illuminated from the street by large triple gemel windows. On the upper storey was the enclosed area of the tower, elevated above the arcade or garret which surmounted the rest of the building. The roof was held up by a series of pillars on the outside and semicircular arcades over late Gothic columns on the other side. Bodies set perpendicular to each interior end of the original body, separated by a courtyard, had been added many years earlier.

Therefore, the large houses with monumental courtyards with outer staircases and galleries on the first floor did not take full shape until the 14th century, or they only did so on an exceptional basis. They had differing degrees of complexity and articulation depending on the layout of the loges where the staircases landed and the upper galleries, comprised of arcades held up with balconies with corbels that were seldom related to the four wings of the courtyard. This space went from an initially secondary position behind the home to gaining pre-eminence and playing a central, organising role, serving as the open staircase which connected several parts of the main floor outside. This formulation became the fully entrenched standard in the 15th century, and it is the model of seigniorial residence which can be found in all the large Catalan cities and those of other Mediterranean countries under the influence of the house of Barcelona with late Gothic, Renaissance and Baroque expressions. The most prominent examples include the houses in Barcelona on Carrer de Lledó and Carrer de Montcada, and Casa Padellàs on Carrer de Mercaders, now in Plaça del Rei; Casa Julià in Perpignan; the Palau Reial in Vilafranca del Penedès; and the Casal de l'Almirall and Casal d'en Bou in Valencia; while outside the Catalan Lands we can cite

the Palazzo Abatellis in Palermo and the Palazzo Bellomo in Syracuse.¹²

Other models of seigneurial residences could occasionally be found, such as houses made of a single body facing the street but with the façade recessed and preceded by a courtyard, along with houses set perpendicular to the street with a courtyard in front. The formula of preceding the main façade of an outdoor enclosed courtyard with a low wall is quite rare in the Catalan Lands, whereas it was used quite frequently in the Gothic mansions in the more northern countries, as exemplified in Paris's Cluny *hôtel*. One exception is the Casa de l'Ardiaca in Barcelona, across from the Palau de la Generalitat on Carrer del Bisbe (circa 1416-1418). All these variations followed the same façade model characteristic of Catalan Gothic architecture, comprised of a flattened rectangle surmounted by the pitched plane of the roof flanked on one side by a single tower. What predominated on the façade was a surface filled with openings, and while the tendency towards symmetry never quite prevailed, the rigid hierarchical order of the different floors was expressed by horizontal rows of windows, sometimes heightened by moulding. Chiselled stone brought sumptuousness to the walls, which had no further decoration than a few details sculpted in the openings. The semicircular doorway presided over but was not at the centre of the ground floor, which was pierced by just a few small openings. The main floor had a series of windows with two, three or exceptionally four arches in a lintel upheld by slender columns. A long gallery ran above and underneath the roof. On one end, a semi-freestanding rectangular tower emerged, slightly elevated over the Arab tile-covered roof whose warm colouring countered the dominance of the stone façade.

It is worth noting that the architectural potency of this model obscures us from seeing other domestic forms and leads us to consider it an individual category unique in the urban Gothic world. Naturally, large seigneurial residences were uncommon, and alongside them were simpler forms of houses in a typological gradation which predominated in cities and were hegemonic in other smaller population nuclei, such as villages and towns. The simple homes of the urban populace bore little morphological relationship with the large seigneurial homes, whereas they could easily be compared to the simplicity of the Roman *tabernae*, which combined the residential area with the workspace in one or more storey. This type of property has sometimes been called an artisan or Gothic house, and at least after the 12th to 13th centuries it was the most common type of urban home in the feudal southwest European countries, where it had a longstanding history. They are homes with a single bay built between solid party walls which grew through parallel additions laid out perpendicular to the street, usually with a courtyard in the back or on the side. Sometimes, the ground floor had an arcade for public circulation that reached the street, and arcaded streets were formed through the addition of long strings of them. This typology can easily be recognised in

countless towns following a wide range of constructive forms, generally far after their mediaeval origin, often because of the intrinsic poverty of the original building, yet they have nonetheless become important Gothic vestiges in many small or medium-sized Catalan villages.

The architecture of municipal governments and the Generalitat de Catalunya¹³

In the central and western Mediterranean, the forms of mediaeval self-governance took shape in a long, conflictive process full of local variations shaped by competition with the ruling feudal powers. In the Catalan Lands they arose in the 13th century, and when the municipal governments reached full maturity in the following century, the first permanent, more or less monumental government buildings were constructed with the aim of carving out preeminent positions for themselves within the urban setting. With no institutional precedents, the architectural solution they adopted was also novel and became common throughout much of southern Europe. Their model was the aristocratic and palatial feudal residences with a single body, with one audience chamber on the first storey that was now used for town council assemblies. They stood out from their forerunners because the ground floors were almost always open with arcades, to be used for the supply and distribution of food. In Italy, where the first municipal regimes appeared, the most archaic architectural expression can be found in buildings like the Broletto in Como, from the second decade of the 13th century, followed by similar ones in the cities of Bergamo, Novara and Milan.

The homes of the Catalan municipal governments, called council houses or town halls, were built in the 14th to 15th centuries, initially following the Italian morphology adapted to the Gothic vernacular, although later, in extraordinarily significant cases, they followed the model of seigneurial house with a courtyard. The town hall in Perpignan, which dates from around 1320, seems to be the oldest of all those still standing. It had an arcade on the street and an upper storey which must have housed the assembly and audience chamber, now disfigured. However, the town hall that best fits the type described is the one in the city of Vic, which dates from the late 14th century and was refurbished one century later. The square building has a commercial loge with pointed arches surmounted by a chamber with a central column. Virtually identical buildings are found in the villages of Catí and Morella in the Region of Valencia, but the majestic town hall of Barcelona is quite different, with its large assembly chamber called the Consell de Cent or Saló de Cent. This unique building dating from around 1373 consists in a cubic main floor whose interior is comprised of a sequence of semicircular diaphragm arches. In the early years of the 15th century, another body was added to house the increasingly complex municipal apparatus; it was given one of the most refined Catalan Gothic façades endowed with rich sculptural decoration by Arnau Bar-



FIGURE 4. Casa de la Ciutat (Town Hall) in Vic, built in the late 14th century, with a window in the Sala del Consell carved in 1509. (Image taken from *L'art gòtic a Catalunya*, vol. III, *Arquitectura*, Enciclopèdia Catalana, Barcelona 2003, p. 189).

gués in around 1400. In the early 16th century, this body was joined with the earlier Saló de Cent via an inner courtyard with formal galleries. Building a magnificent town hall was also the objective of the magistrates or juries in Valencia, and according to their agreement dating from 1416, this city's town hall, which has vanished over time, had to be as "beautiful and costly to make as possible on the counsel of wise master experts".

In addition to town halls, in the early 15th century a singular example of government architecture was built, as unique and novel as the body it housed. It was the Diputació del General or the Generalitat, the delegate of the Courts of Catalonia; it was initially in charge of royal tax collections but soon took on more military and political functions of governing the country, either in conjunction or in conflict with the monarchy. This totally new regional governing authority in Catalonia was established by being delegated the Courts' authority, as opposed to via direct representation. Therefore, its headquarters did not require large assembly halls, as municipal buildings did, but instead housed a series of rooms meant for the magistracies and officials that comprised the administrative apparatus. This fact, perhaps coupled with its heavily aristocratic nature, led it to adopt the model of seignorial house with a courtyard. This architectural type had been prevalent in Catalan architecture since the transition from the 14th to 15th centuries, but it outstripped its original strictly residential function to be used for other pur-

poses, such as hospitals, town halls and the Generalitat. The same typology, albeit in a much simpler and more austere version, was adopted by the Casa del General in Perpignan, which was built from the ground up in 1448-1454 and even today conserves two magnificent façades, although the interior is severely disfigured.

In the early 15th century, the new Diputació del General or Generalitat in Barcelona sought a central site near the Church and noble areas and close to the municipal government. Even though it initially occupied pre-existing buildings, they were soon totally transformed into a new rigorously designed building constructed in the second decade of the 15th century with great ambition and the intention of endowing it with magnificent representative power. The new building was three storeys tall with two rectangular bodies each with a single bay; they were laid out parallel to each other and joined by a central courtyard where the main entrance staircase was located. The main floor housed spaces meant for the Generalitat's business, the Cambra Nova or Cambra del Consell and the Arxiu de Comptes, while on this same level the courtyard galleries were unusually wide on the two shorter sides. More than spaces of connection and circulation, they became large outdoor halls in a completely different configuration, no doubt dictated by the need to host sumptuous ceremonies. The staircase leading up to it, the slender arcades of the galleries and the carved windows on the upper garret make this space the peak expression

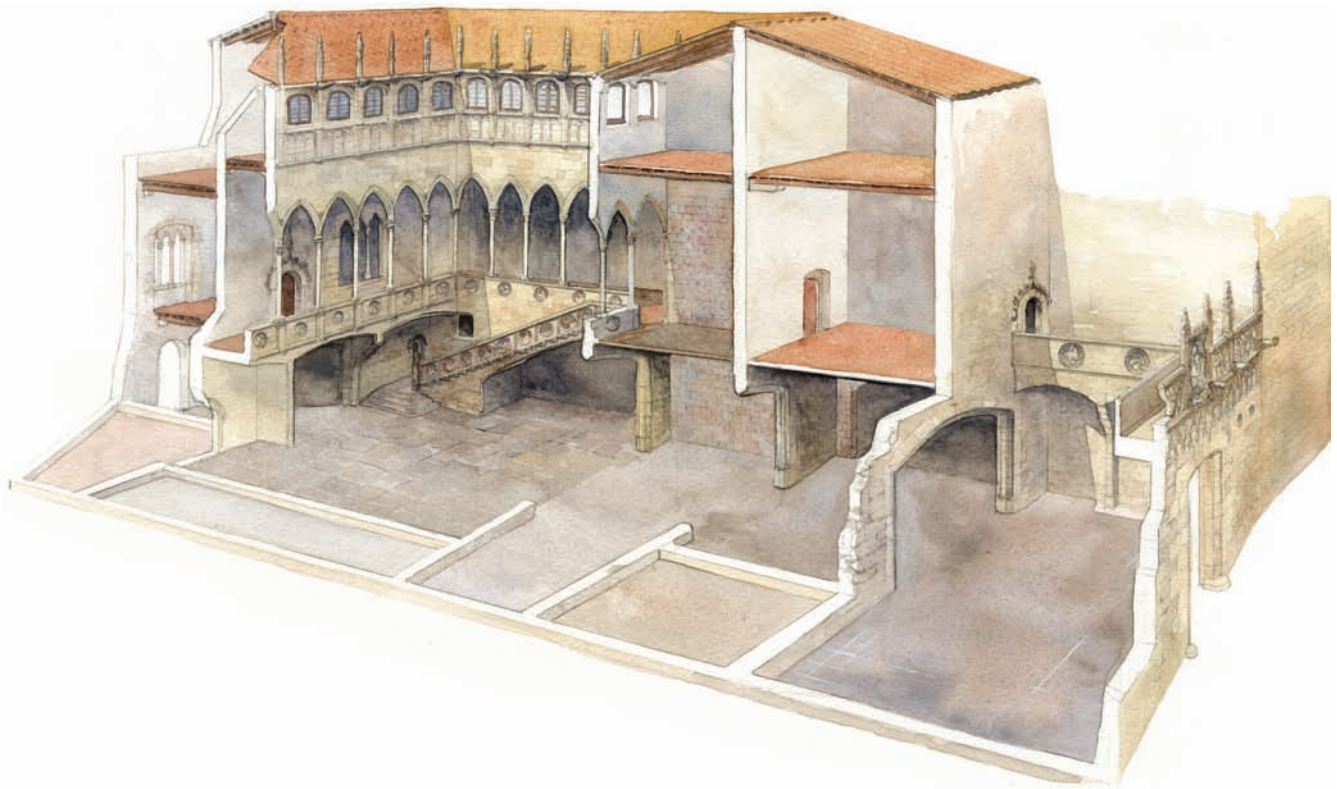


FIGURE 5. Reconstruction of the original Palau de la Generalitat of Barcelona in the mid-15th century. (Drawing by J. Sagrera. ECSA. Image taken from *L'art gòtic a Catalunya*, vol. III, *Arquitectura*, Enciclopèdia Catalana, Barcelona 2003, p. 193).

of its type in Catalonia, built in 1420-1425 by master builder Marc Safont.¹⁴

The layout of the building resembles a notably elongated rectangle steered by a lengthwise axis bookended by the portals of the two façades that open to the public thoroughfares on the short sides of the building. The one on the west side, facing Carrer de Sant Honorat, reflects the characteristics of the façade of large urban patrician homes, while the one on the east side, on Carrer del Bisbe, had a rear outdoor courtyard made of a low wall boasting elaborate artistry. This façade was the main one until the late 16th century, and as stipulated in its contract from 1416, it had to be “appropriate and sumptuous enough for the house where such notable and weighty public acts are performed as the acts of this General”. The composition of this façade is centred by a broad doorway, and the wall is surmounted by an openwork bannister peppered with pinnacles accompanied by gargoyles and presided over by a large medallion in high relief depicting Saint George in the act of slaying the dragon, a work of extraordinary sculptural quality by Pere Joan (1416-1418). One last exceptional part of the palace is the Saint Jordi chapel built in around 1433-1434; it has a square layout and is covered by a rich stellar vault. Its façade is perforated by three openings, a door and windows, similar to chapter-houses. Subtle tracery decorates them, while their intertwined filigrees extend above the surface of the wall sculpted in relief, a feature without peer in the Catalan Gothic.

Mercantile exchanges and architecture

There is no doubt that within Catalan Gothic architecture, the most remarkable manifestations overall were mercantile exchanges (“llotja” in catalan), which have garnered widespread, longstanding recognition. The French government conferred official protection on the mercantile exchange of Perpignan as a monument in 1841, making it one of the first buildings to be safeguarded under this category in Europe, while around 150 years later the mercantile exchange in Valencia was awarded the maximum distinction by being catalogued as a UNESCO Human Heritage Site (1996). The commercial sectors of the major Catalan cities erected these large buildings to house their corporate headquarters and centralise their commercial activity between the late 14th and early 15th centuries. At first, they consisted in two-storey buildings dominated by high-ceilinged halls on the ground floor, which was followed by a new phase, in which the hall became a single, independent body which joined adjacent quarters arranged around an enclosed courtyard. One notable feature of the magnification of the large interior space was the replacement of the flat ceiling by ribbed vaults, which enhanced its formality.¹⁵

The *llotges* were the embodiment of the institution of the Consolats de Mar, where they had their administrative offices, although they were always secondary there until they attained semi-autonomy and left all the pre-eminence to the large contracting hall. Their shape, though not totally unheard of in the Mediterranean architecture of its

day, was entirely unique, and there were no direct equivalents of their formulation in the Catalan Lands. The affiliation of their typology, which has no ancient precedents and developed suddenly, has been questioned, with futile attempts to relate it to Oriental goods warehouses or caravanserais which, in fact, reflect a model with wings arranged around a courtyard. However, due to the corporate nature of the exchanges, their referents should instead be sought more in municipal government architecture than in simple buildings for mercantile uses. It is clear that their formal essence can be found in the open, arched atrium used for different communal or commercial purposes, either alone or integrated into a larger building. In the Catalan *llotja*, these pieces became freestanding and enclosed upon themselves as a large hall made from the aggregate of three equivalent naves which together form a single space. Even though they were secular spaces for commercial activity, their design conferred an ecclesiastic air, which was further accentuated by the sumptuousness and profuse religious references embellishing them, leading these exchanges to verge on the sacred order.

Because of their formal features, only the most powerful mercantile corporations of Barcelona, Mallorca, Perpignan and Valencia were capable of building them. The Barcelona exchange was constructed in the shift from the 14th to 15th centuries and is a single two-storey body with a large, high-ceilinged hall at street level and a small upper storey, the sum of three parallel bays made of two rows of arcades with a flat beamed ceiling. Large windows and slender doors perforated all four façades. Its architectural model is reminiscent of, and most likely derives

from, town halls that had a commercial space on the lower level, but while the preeminent space in town halls was the assembly hall on the upper level, in exchanges it was the lower mercantile level. A landscaped courtyard was attached to it, partly surrounded by rooms, including a chapel. The Perpignan *llotja* was also a single two-storey body with a large hall at street level. Its construction is very poorly documented, and little is known about its architecture, but it was most likely built in the early 15th century. The other two main Catalan exchanges had significantly different internal layouts, as the rooms on the upper storey were eliminated and the entire building existed to magnify the hall. In Valencia, the juries wanted to build a “very beautiful and magnificent and sumptuous [mercantile exchange] that would be the honour and ornament of this city”, and they entrusted the master builder from Girona, Pere Comte (c. 1483-1493), to create a truly exceptional piece. A perpendicular body organised by a lateral courtyard, similar to the one in Barcelona, was added to it in around 1548.¹⁶ At an earlier date, the Mallorca *llotja* had developed a building with a single space that for the first time was achieved not with rows of arcades with a flat coffered ceiling but with stretches of ribbed vaults emerging from helicoidal columns. All four façades had large windows with ogival tracery and solemn doors framed with bays defined by mouldings boasting extraordinary compositional efficacy, flanked on the corners with small octagonal towers in a fantastical reference to castles. It was built by the renowned master builder Guillem Sagrera in the second quarter of the 15th century.¹⁷



FIGURE 6. Gran Sala or Saló de Contractacions (Contracting Hall) in the *Llotja* of Valencia (c. 1483-1493).

Public baths and the adoption of the *hammam*

The public baths in the Catalan Lands from the Gothic era were extremely exceptional within mediaeval architecture in feudal Western Europe in that they were a type of establishment borrowed directly from Islamic culture after it had spread throughout the Iberian Peninsula with Al-Andalus. They connected with the ancient thermal bath tradition only via the *hammam*, which entailed an intermediation and underwent substantial transformation.¹⁸ No other architectural artefact in the mediaeval West is such a complete, direct cultural borrowing. *Hammam*-style bathhouses were always public, and there is no information on other constructions meant specifically for baths, because the thermal baths occasionally mentioned in royal palaces or wealthy urban homes should be interpreted as temporary arrangements, not as deliberate, permanent constructions. It is also unlikely that warm therapeutic baths inspired an architecture of their own, even though very little is known about these spas.

In the different feudal kingdoms on the Iberian Peninsula, the public baths resembled the *hammams* of Al-Andalus, which distinguishes them from the baths in other European countries like Italy, where there is evidence of the continuous use and construction of models from the Roman and Byzantine tradition over the centuries. Beyond the survival of several Roman spas, there is no evidence of ancient hot baths still actively operating or new buildings in that tradition in either Andalusia or the Catalan Lands. The baths in Al-Andalus were evidently brought over from the East; they had been fully adopted by the 10th century and only remotely derived from the ancient models. In Catalonia, there are no reports of baths until the second half of the 12th century, when they were installed in the major cities within the countships of Barcelona and Girona, initially documented in 1160 and 1194, respectively. The then-recent addition of the Andalusian cities of Lleida and Tortosa, which were equipped with these kinds of baths, into Barcelona's fold must have been crucial in the creation of similar establishments in the northern Catalan cities that had been conquered by the Carolingians between the 8th and 9th centuries, where the Islamic culture had not left its mark. However, we still do not know how these *hammams* spread so quickly and were so readily accepted in the urban centres where the social habit of this kind of bath had been unknown until then.¹⁹

It is worth noting that the Catalan baths' typological dependency on the Islamic model has sown a great deal of confusion when attempting to ascribe them chronologically and culturally, and this still survives in the inaccurate description of several baths as "Arab", such as the one in Girona. Abandoned, sometimes with their original use even forgotten, once they were recognised as baths in the first archaeological studies, they were considered works from remote eras in the fleeting Muslim domination of the city in the 13th century, without distinguishing their typological ancestry and historical context. Later, the documental and artistic study confirmed that they were

not "Arab" baths but dated from much later. This same confusion has arisen with some baths in the Region of Valencia which were also built after the Catalan conquest between 1230 and 1240 following the earlier model. Thus, it was not until their archaeological exploration that we were able to determine that the Banys de l'Almirall or the Banys del Carreró in Valencia did not precede the feudal occupation but were built in the early 14th century, in an adaptation of the type known as Late or Advanced Granadan. The same holds true for the baths in the town of Torres Torres in Camp de Morvedre, which had also been assumed to date from prior to the conquest until their excavation revealed they had been built in the 14th century.

The architecture of both consists in a single body which is notably rectangular, compact and solid, made up of a succession of three virtually identical parallel bays of similar sizes covered with barrel vaults. In the Banys de l'Almirall, there is also a vestibule set lengthwise. The three wet rooms were organised in a sequence with the cold one first, followed by the temperate room in the middle and the hot room last, which had a hypocaust underneath it known as *cacau* and hearths known as *escalfadors* on the walls. The heat reached it from a metal boiler with a furnace next to a service courtyard, from which it was fuelled. In Valencia's Banys de l'Almirall, the first two rooms were subdivided crosswise into three spaces with two rows of arcades which support an octagonal dome on squinches in the temperate area. Both this roof and the vaults were punctured with star-shaped glass skylights, the only source of outside light. The water was supplied by a water wheel, just as in the majority of similar facilities. It must have been installed after 1313 as the result of a royal concession to a private individual, as the baths were part of a considerably larger property. Likewise, other members of the royal retinue benefitted from eight new baths in Valencia in the shift from the 13th to 14th centuries, although these baths have nothing to do with their old Andalusian counterparts.

The Banys Nous of Tortosa belong to this same common type found in 14th-century Valencian baths; they were most likely created from the 13th to 14th centuries in a newly-built suburb and refurbished between 1360 and 1380 by the municipal government, which had a monopoly on them and funnelled their revenues into building the wall. Previously, the local code of customs from around 1270 also stated that the baths were public and guaranteed that Christians, Jews and Muslims could all use them, while also stipulating the prices and conditions of service. Furthermore, it allowed private individuals to build baths closed to the public. The Banys Nous of Tortosa seemed to have had four bays, three of which still remain standing, albeit with many changes. They were laid out parallel to each other, were covered with a barrel vault and lacked any unique architectural features. Other cities in Catalonia that had baths which may be partly Islamic in origin are Balaguer and Lleida, while the ones in Perpignan documented in the late 13th century could not be,

nor could those in Montblanc (1303) or Vic (1317), which instead were the outcome of royal concessions to enterprises similar to the one mentioned for the city of Valencia in the same period.

The only baths left to discuss are first the Banys Nous of Barcelona, which no longer exist but are quite well documented in images, and secondly the well-documented, conserved and quite rigorously restored baths of Girona, erroneously called “Arab” in a regrettable remnant of Spanish picturesqueness. The Banys Nous, first mentioned in 1160, did not belong to the Jewish community as often claimed, and according to the information available, their architecture seemed to feature an L-shaped layout presided over by a warm room covered in a dome, which reflects a model that had been well-entrenched in Al-Andalus since the 11th century. In contrast, the baths of Girona are quite morphologically unique, although sometimes they are also erroneously compared to Roman baths. They have series of three virtually identical, parallel bays with barrel vaults comprising one small warm room and two hot rooms, which are preceded by an area that is as large as it is exceptional. The ceiling is an eight-sector vault with a dome in the centre built upon a double colonnade from the rim of the central basin. This room, which is morphologically similar to a warm room and therefore must have presided over the building, is located at the very start of the complex in Girona, to serve simultaneously as the reception and cold room.

It is worth noting that this building poses a classic archaeology problem, namely the lack of concordance between the information in the documents and the artistic categorisation of the building. Thus, according to the former, it must have been built from the ground up between 1294 and 1296, while a few stylistically datable elements seem to date from earlier. Regardless, it clearly reflects the artistic milieu which preceded the onset of fully Gothic forms in Catalonia and most notably stands out for the fact that it repeatedly uses the Moorish arch, which is totally foreign to the Catalan architecture of the day and must have been meant to highlight its Islamic exoticism. In this sense, the architecture of these baths and their counterparts in Barcelona fall openly outside the local artistic languages and allude to the innovative, foreign nature of this kind of establishment in cities that had just adopted them. It is worth noting that because of their extreme uniqueness, it seems fitting to close this brief survey of some of the most significant Catalan civil buildings with a spotlight on this cultural borrowing incorporated into the architecture from the Gothic era in the Catalan Lands, and in Western Europe as a whole

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BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

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