



THE SANTA CLARA PASSION PANEL AND THE POOR
CLARES OF PALMA DE MALLORCA:
A PRELIMINARY REPORT

EL PANEL DE LA PASIÓN DE SANTA CLARA Y LAS CLARISAS DE
PALMA DE MALLORCA: UN ESTUDIO PRELIMINAR

Anne Derbes^a
Amy Neff^b

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Abstract: The large panel painting of the Passion in Palma de Mallorca is an impressive but little-studied work. This essay introduces a long-term, collaborative project that will examine the panel's religious, historical, and art historical significance. While earlier scholarship has largely focused on questions of dating and stylistic attribution, we also explore possible explanations for the panel's anomalous style as well as its meanings to the Clarissan nuns of Palma de Mallorca, who, we believe, were the panel's primary viewers. We argue for the importance of this female community in commissioning the altarpiece and determining its key subjects and themes. These Clares shared with their powerful allies, the Franciscan Order, the papacy, and the royal house of Mallorca, a desire to serve and strengthen Christianity throughout their known world. The nuns could not participate in missionary activity abroad, but close to home were the non-Christian residents of Mallorca. For the nuns of Santa Clara, the presence of Jewish neighbors was especially disturbing. The Mallorca panel of

^a Anne Derbes, Professor Emerita of Art History, Hood College. Correspondence: 1022 Sanchez St., San Francisco, CA 79114, USA. E-mail: derbes@hood.edu

^b Amy Neff, Professor Emerita of Art History, University of Tennessee, Knoxville. Correspondence: 2003 Island Home Blvd., Knoxville, TN 37920, USA. E-mail: anef@utk.edu



the Passion was primarily devotional; it does not overtly preach through its pictures a Christian supremacy over “infidels”. Nevertheless, the far-reaching goals of the Church and the Franciscans affect the panel in concrete ways, from its Byzantine-inflected style to its unusual attention to the Jews of the Passion story.

Keywords: Passion of Christ; Convent of Sta. Clara, Palma de Mallorca; Poor Clares; Catalan panel painting; antisemitism

Resumen: La gran tabla de la Pasión de Palma de Mallorca es una obra impresionante pero poco estudiada. Este ensayo presenta un proyecto colaborativo a largo plazo que examinará la importancia histórica religiosa, histórica y artística del panel. Si bien los estudios anteriores se han centrado en gran medida en cuestiones de datación y atribución estilística, se aportan posibles explicaciones sobre el estilo anómalo del panel, así como sus significados para las monjas Clarisas de Palma de Mallorca, quienes, creemos, fueron las principales espectadoras del panel. Se destaca la importancia de esta comunidad femenina en el encargo del retablo y la determinación de sus sujetos y temas clave. Estas Clarisas compartían con sus poderosos aliados, la Orden Franciscana, el papado y la casa real de Mallorca, el deseo de servir y fortalecer la cristiandad en todo el mundo conocido. Las monjas no podían participar en la actividad misionera en el extranjero, pero tenían cerca residentes no cristianos de Mallorca. Para las monjas de Santa Clara, la presencia de vecinos judíos resultaba especialmente inquietante. El panel de Mallorca de la Pasión fue principalmente devocional; no se evidencia a través de sus imágenes una supremacía cristiana sobre los “infieles”. Sin embargo, los objetivos de gran alcance de la Iglesia y los franciscanos afectan al panel de maneras concretas, desde su estilo con inflexión bizantina hasta su atención inusual a los judíos de la historia de la Pasión.

Palabras clave: Pasión de Cristo; Convento de Sta. Clara, Palma de Mallorca; Clarisas Pobres; pintura sobre tabla catalana; antisemitismo

1. INTRODUCTION: PALMA DE MALLORCA, THE CLARES AND THEIR PASSION PANEL

This essay is a preliminary report, intended to introduce our current research on an extraordinary but little-studied panel painting of the Passion made for



the convent of Santa Clara, Palma de Mallorca, and now in the city's Museo Arqueológico Diocesano (Figure 1)¹.



Figure 1. Panel of the Passion, from Santa Clara, Palma de Mallorca.
Palma, Museo Arqueológico Diocesano

The panel is problematic in many ways. Fundamental facts about it, among them the identity of its painter(s) and its patron, the date and place of its manufacture, and its location within Santa Clara, are all unknown. One thing, however, is certain: the panel's impressive presence within the convent. Measuring 1.99 meters by 3 meters (about 6'7" x 9'10"), it would

¹ We wish to thank several colleagues for generously reviewing our work, sharing their research, and stimulating our ideas: Renana Bartal, Joanna Cannon, Rebecca Corrie, Holly Flora, Julian Gardner, Sarah Kozlowski, Kathleen Maxwell, Christopher Platts, Pamela Patton, John Renner, Ellen Schwartz, Maria Vassilaki, and Michaela Zöschg. Special thanks are due to Manuel Castiñeiras, who will collaborate with us on our future, full publication of the Mallorca panel. Biblical citations in this essay are taken from the Douay-Rheims translation of the Vulgate, available online at drbo.com.



have demanded attention, not only because of its size but also because of the multiplicity of its scenes, arranged in four horizontal registers: a total of twenty-four, almost all of them narratives, densely filled with numerous figures and detailed settings. In the top three registers, nineteen scenes relate the story of the Passion, starting with the *Entry into Jerusalem* at the upper left and proceeding chronologically, left to right, to the scene of the *Holy Women at the Tomb*. One last Passion scene is placed at the far right of the lowest, fourth register, the *Noli me tangere*. Before this scene, starting at the far left, are St. Francis of Assisi with St. John the Baptist and St. Peter; the enthroned Virgin with St. Clare and St. Elizabeth of Hungary; two narrative scenes that we have identified from the life of Elizabeth of Hungary; and the martyrdom of St. Stephen².

Despite its large scale and narrative density, most scholars who have taken note of the panel have discussed it only briefly, limiting comments to its attribution and date. Almost all ascribe it to an Italian painter, as does the Museo Arqueológico Diocesano, though one specialist in the Italian trecento, Millard Meiss, thinks the artist was more likely Byzantine³. The dates proposed for its execution span almost half a century, from ca. 1290 until ca. 1335. Determining the panel's probable date and authorship is the first task of our study, for both are crucial to our primary aim, to situate the panel within its historic contexts, both local and global: inside the convent and beyond, from the streets of Palma to the wider Mediterranean, reaching to the Byzantine east. The panel's very appearance points to the complexity of its origins: as we will show, it draws on the visual language and aesthetic traditions not only of Italy but also of Byzantium and the Iberian peninsula,

² The identification of some of these saints and narratives has been problematic; we will discuss them and their textual sources in our future publication. Several scholars note the Clarissan appearance of the second standing female saint but leave her unnamed: Post (1930, 2, p. 184); Garrison (1949/1976, p. 147); Sastre (1993, p. 127); Alcoy (1999, p. 126); Sastre (2006, p. 127); Sabater (2017, p. 191). Post tentatively proposes that the first narrative represents the miracle of Clare receiving a cloak, but in a note raises the possibility that the holy recipient is not Clare but Elizabeth of Hungary. Sastre, Alcoy and Sabater identify her as Clare. Garrison refers to this narrative as an "unidentified scene". Post, Llompart (1978, p. 21), Alcoy, and Sabater link the second narrative with Elizabeth of Hungary, while Garrison calls it the *Disputa of St. Catherine*.

³ Meiss (1941, p. 53 n. 15).



especially Catalonia and thus suggests the web of cultural interconnections typical of the late medieval Mediterranean⁴. Yet for the Poor Clares who saw the panel, these interconnections surely carried more personal significance, serving their daily devotional needs and beliefs, and affirming their ideology of Christian mission.

2. THE CONVENT OF SANTA CLARA IN MALLORCA

From its beginnings, the convent of Santa Clara in Palma enjoyed the leadership of strong, effective abbesses and the support of Mallorca's royal house and nobility⁵. Its first abbess, Sister Catherine, had been abbess of the Damianite⁶ convent of Santa Maria Magdalena in Tarragona before initiating the foundation of a new house in Mallorca. Her letters to Pope Alexander IV and James I of Aragon successfully solicited their support⁷.

Catherine left Tarragona for Mallorca with a small group of nuns in 1256, less than a year after Saint Clare's canonization and only twenty-seven years after James I had wrested the island from Muslim rule. James, called the Conqueror, became Mallorca's first king, reigning from 1231 to 1276. No doubt James sought wealth, prestige, and power, yet he also pictured himself as a crusader, deeply committed to the reclamation of Christianity in lands under Muslim rule. Few Christians lived on Mallorca before the conquest, and the

⁴ The medieval Mediterranean as a contact zone, the site of cultural exchange, cross-fertilization, and conflict among diverse peoples, has generated much attention in the past few decades. See Hilsdale (2014) for a broad overview and bibliography on an extensive range of art historical topics. For several studies focusing on the pictorial arts, see Caillet and Joubert (2012). See also the volumes in the Brill series *Mediterranean Art Histories* (2014-present), edited by Hannah Baader, Michele Bacci, and Gerhard Wolf; and, recently, Castiñeiras, D'Achille, Iacobini, and Righetti (2020).

⁵ For the early history of the convent, see Sastre (1993, pp. 13-47); Sastre (2006, pp. 23-44); Murray, Pascual and Llabrés (1992, pp. 57-60); Novo (2016, pp. 386-402).

⁶ The Damianites followed the Rule written by St. Clare. After 1263, when Urban III wrote a new Rule that replaced Clare's, most Damianite communities became part of the Order of Poor Clares.

⁷ On Catherine (d. Valencia, 1266), see Quiroga Conrado (2017, pp. 23-24); Sastre (1993, pp. 73, 128-29); Sastre (2006, pp. 23-24, 33-35, 38-39, 48-49).



new ruler's aim of establishing a Christian kingdom was clear. Under James and his successors, many Muslims were enslaved, and the population of free Muslims dropped precipitously. The new Christian settlers came primarily from Catalonia, but others were Aragonese, Navarrese, Castilian, Portuguese, French, and Italians⁸.

James the Conqueror recognized the church as his ally in establishing Mallorca's new Christian identity: accordingly, he generously supported the Templars, Dominicans, and Franciscans, whose goals of Christian expansion and conversion dovetailed with his own⁹. The Franciscans arrived in Mallorca at the time of James's conquest or soon thereafter; their Rule and the example of St. Francis himself laid the foundation for the friars' zeal to seek out and convert the "infidel"¹⁰. Strict vows of enclosure, however, excluded female Franciscans from the friars' evangelical missions and preaching. Nonetheless, the Poor Clares' presence on the island, their life of prayer, works of charity, and role in the education of aristocratic women made a substantial contribution to the strengthening and stabilizing of the new realm's Christian identity¹¹. Paramount to understanding the Mallorca panel is the Franciscan focus on Christ's humanity and the desire to follow in his footsteps. Yet in the panel's style and in certain iconographic choices, we also see in the background, figuratively speaking, an ideology that sought to exalt Christianity over others by claiming the authenticity of the faith and vilifying non-believers.

⁸ Abulafia (1994, pp. 56-74); Hillgarth (1995, p. 335).

⁹ For James's recruiting of the mendicants on his crusade against Islam, and a long list of the privileges granted to them, see Webster (1993, pp. 73-102). For his support of the Clares, see Sastre (1993, p. 30); Sastre (2006, pp. 30-34, 351-54); Novo (2016, p. 388).

¹⁰ For the early Franciscan presence on Mallorca, see Webster (1993, 36-37, 125, 230). For the friars' missionary activity, see the Franciscan rule, the *Regula non Bullata* of 1221, which devotes two chapters (14, 16) to this subject: Armstrong, Hellmann, and Short (1999, 1, pp. 73-75; see also the Rule of 1223, chapter 12: Armstrong, Hellmann, and Short (1999, 1, p. 106). There is a vast literature on this topic. See Daniel (1992) and the critique in Roest (2004, pp. 141-42).

¹¹ The nuns distributed the "bread of the poor" and their prayers were invoked in several wills. See Márquez Testa (2019-20, p. 40); Sastre (1993, p. 43). For their role as teachers, see Murray, Pascual, and Llabrés (1992, pp. 60-62).



3. THE PANEL OF THE PASSION

Santa Clara flourished in the early decades of the fourteenth century, supported by gifts and privileges granted by the Mallorcan royal family, not only from the male successors to James I's throne, but also in gifts from James II's wife, Esclaramonde of Foix, and, most likely, her daughter, Sancia of Mallorca. Both were profoundly devoted to the Clarissan Order¹². Perhaps equally important were the sustained material and financial contributions from the Mallorcan aristocracy, whose daughters counted for a large percentage of Santa Clara's nuns. Dowry payments, donations, and royal privileges were essential for the community's sustenance and consolidation. At the same time, the adoption of Urbanist Rule of 1263 allowed the nuns to own and manage property, collecting rents, a radical break with the tradition of poverty established by St. Clare's original Rule. By 1323 Santa Clara housed perhaps 62 nuns, many of whom came from Palma's wealthiest families¹³. The stage was thus set for a time of vigorous acquisition of land and construction of new buildings, spearheaded by the convent's abbesses¹⁴. Plausibly, the commissioning of the Passion panel could have coincided with this period of expansion, but no document survives that might shed light on the matter.

We are left, then, with the panel itself. As mentioned before, several scholars have argued that the painter was not Mallorcan but was most likely an Italian;

¹² Esclaramonde gave generously to the Palma convent: in a codicil of 1316 to her will of 1312, she left an annual bequest to Santa Clara, though the funds seem not to have reached the nuns; see Clear (2000, 119-120). Esclaramonde stipulated that 100 *solidos* of Roussillon be given to the Palma Clares annually, in perpetuity. In contrast, she left 30 *solidos* of Barcelona, also an annual gift, to the Franciscan monastery in Palma. As Queen of Naples, Sancia focused support on her Clarissan foundations in Naples, but she also is thought to have contributed to Santa Clara in Palma. See Bruzelius (1995, p. 82), Bruzelius (2004, p. 146, p. 239, n. 95); Clear (2000, pp. 120-122).

¹³ For the number of nuns in 1323, see Murray, Pascual, and Llabrés (1992, p. 60). Sastre (2006, pp. 179-80) states that there were 9 nuns in 1260, 7 in 1296, and 13 in 1308. Quiroga Conrado (2017, p. 36) points out that including novices as well as professed nuns yields larger totals.

¹⁴ For descriptions of the complex and grounds, see Murray, Pascual, and Llabrés (1992, p. 62); Sastre (1993, pp. 121-124); Sastre (2006, pp. 105-117); Novo (2016, pp. 389-392); Márquez Testa (2019-20, p. 40).



Siena, Tuscany, Umbria, and Venice have all been suggested as primary sources for the panel's style, content, and iconography¹⁵. For good reason, these arguments often compare the Mallorca panel with the reverse side of Duccio's *Maestà*, completed in 1311. Both are large (though the *Maestà* was originally considerably larger, more than twice as high); both present a narrative of the life of Christ in numerous scenes; in both, the artist uses contemporary Byzantine models but recasts them into an original stylistic idiom. However, with the striking exception of Garrison, most scholars have concluded that although Duccio or, more broadly, a Sienese or Tuscan style, may well have influenced our artist, major differences preclude any assumption of a direct connection¹⁶. Rosa Alcoy, for example, notes that Duccio's narrative must be read following an irregular path, unlike the Mallorca panel's straightforward sequence from left to right, top to bottom; there is no similarity in the framing of the individual scenes; and, most importantly, while Duccio reconfigures his Byzantine sources into a new, Gothic style, the Mallorca panel's artist works more traditionally in an Italo-Byzantine style that is closely linked to Greece and the eastern Mediterranean. The artist would have been an itinerant, familiar with Byzantinizing styles seen in Rome and Assisi, and temporarily working in Mallorca in the late thirteenth century¹⁷. Tina Sabater suggests that the panel was commissioned by Queen Sancia of Mallorca and painted in central Italy, ca. 1300-1315, by masters whose roots were in Umbrian and Sienese art¹⁸. Our future publication will include an extensive analysis of this issue, but for now, as an introduction, we focus on what a few images can tell us about the panel's sources and significance.

Why the panel's attribution has been problematic is immediately clear, for its style has little resemblance to what is known from regions near or once

¹⁵ Alcoy (1999, pp. 126-130); Alcoy (2015, p. 30); Alcoy (2017, pp. 40-43); Sabater (2017, pp. 192-196, 200-205); Bacci (2020, pp. 182-183); Bacci (2021, pp. 130-131).

¹⁶ Garrison (1949, p. 145): "Certainly there can be no doubt that the Majorca example depends directly on the *Maestà*." In addition, for the hypothesis that the panel was the work of the young Duccio, see Rosselló Bordoy et al. (1965).

¹⁷ Alcoy (1999, pp. 126-130); Alcoy (2017, pp. 40-43). Llompert (1978, p. 22) also suggests an itinerant painter.

¹⁸ Sabater (2017, pp. 200-205). The completed panel would have been shipped to Mallorca.



part of the Kingdom of Mallorca: Catalonia, Aragon, Castile or Navarre. As Alcoy and others note, the late -thirteenth- and early-fourteenth centuries were a transitional period in the development of a style particular to Iberia, often called Linear Gothic¹⁹. It was a time of innovation, adapting artistic practices from France, England, and Italy. The influence of French Gothic is most obvious in the first decades of the fourteenth century: figures and drapery folds are outlined by thin black lines; there is minimal modelling and often a sense of rhythmic grace. All this can be seen, for example, in a frontal with St. Peter and scenes from his life, ca. 1300-1350 (Figure 2)²⁰.



Figure 2. Detail from a frontal of St. Peter. Peter addresses the Jews; the Angel frees Peter from prison, ca. 1300-50. Barcelona, Museu Nacional d'Art de Catalunya

¹⁹ For surveys of Catalan painting of the late thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries, see Alcoy (1998, 138-168); Alcoy (1999, pp. 126-130); Alcoy (2005, pp. 17-145); Alcoy (2015, pp. 29-32). For the Linear Gothic, see also Melero (2005).

²⁰ Museu Nacional d'Art de Catalunya, inventory number: 004369-000.



Although the figures here are less elegant than those of many French Gothic examples, they are still tall and thin, and the angel gently sways as it looks back to take Peter's hand, leading him from prison. The Santa Clara panel of the Passion uses an entirely different pictorial language, without a trace of Gothic delicacy. Consistently, as in the scene of the *Address to the Apostles*, the architecture suggests three-dimensionality, with shaded recesses and blocky forms, entirely unlike the flat rectangle of St. Peter's prison (Figure 4).

On the Palma panel, the apostles have fully colored and modelled faces, dark shadows around the eyes, and a relatively heavy, often classicizing, solidity, as in contemporary Byzantine art. By contrast, the insubstantial, weightless forms of Linear Gothic highlight the eccentricity of the Passion panel. The panel simply does not fit the dominant profile of contemporary Catalan art – except in two important factors: the architectural framing and, previously unremarked, the tooled backgrounds. Red columns separate each scene; each column supports a narrow tower above and trilobed arches at either side, with rectangular buildings and small sections of crenellated walls above. Comparable forms are unknown in Byzantine icons but are not uncommon in Catalonia and nearby regions in the late thirteenth and fourteenth centuries²¹. For example, in a miniature from a manuscript of the Castilian *Cantigas di Santa Maria*, dated ca. 1280, although the arches of the scenes' frames are pointed, as in Gothic style, the components and placement of the architectural motifs are like those of the Mallorca panel (Figures 3, 4)²².

²¹ Sabater (2017, p. 204) compares the Mallorca panel's trilobe framing to that of the narrative scenes of the Master of St. Francis's altarpiece of the Passion, dated ca. 1266-1275 (Perugia, Galleria nazionale dell'Umbria). Examples from Castile and Catalonia are, however, more like the Mallorca panel, since the trilobes are painted as part of the scene in conjunction with a painted, architectural superstructure. As noted by Alcoy (1999, p. 128), this kind of configuration was common internationally in Gothic art, appearing in several media, for example, in the dedication page with Blanche of Castile and Louis IX from the *Bible moralisée*, ca. 1230 (New York, The Morgan Library & Museum, MS M.240, fol. 8). Close comparanda, with sturdy buildings, can also be found in thirteenth-century manuscripts from England and from Germanic regions, such as the Oscott Psalter, ca. 1265-1270 (London, British Library, Add. MS 50000), or the Golden Book of Hohenwart (Munich, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, Clm 7384), ca. 1230.

²² *Cantigas de Santa María*, ca. 1280. Madrid, Real Biblioteca del Monasterio de San Lorenzo de El Escorial, MS T-I-1, fol. 120r. Other images in this manuscript show tiled roofs or crenellations like those of the Palma altarpiece, for example, on fol. 59r.





Figure 3. Illustration for Cantiga 82. *Cantigas de Santa María*, ca. 1280-1284. Madrid, Real Biblioteca del Monasterio de San Lorenzo de El Escorial, MS T-I-1, fol. 120r.



Figure 4. Christ's Final Address to the Apostles, from the Passion panel.



In both, the columns are slender, with leafy capitals that support an exterior tower, which is flanked by similarly shaped buildings. Even more distinctive are the backgrounds of the Passion panel's scenes. These are tooled in a pattern of curling stems and leaves that are surrounded by somewhat irregular, geometric cross-hatching. Nearly the exact same pattern appears in several examples of the Linear Gothic: the altar frontal of St. Peter, and, seen in a close detail, the Catalan altar frontal of St. Christopher, from the beginning of the fourteenth century, here compared to a similarly tooled close-up from the Mallorca panel's *Crucifixion* (Figures 2, 5, 6)²³.

This is strong evidence for manufacture in part by Iberian artists, yet we are still left with the anomalous style and iconography of the narrative scenes. The traditional attribution to an Italian painter seems reasonable; for example, the iconography of Mary and John seated at the *Crucifixion* is foreign to Byzantine art but is seen with increasing frequency in fourteenth-century Italy, its popularity corresponding to that of the *Meditationes vitae Christi* (Figure 7)²⁴.

Yet a local artist must have collaborated. And, in many ways, the Passion panel is closer to Byzantine art than to Italian. While we are not the first to propose an artist familiar with Byzantine style, we go further, finding an extraordinary number of close borrowings taken specifically from the art of the Palaeologan period.

²³ The Christopher panel (Museu Nacional d'Art de Catalunya, inventory number: 004370-000), is said to have come from the parish church of Sant Cristòfol de Toses (Ripollès). The pattern persists into the mid-fourteenth century, as in an altar frontal of the *Corpus Christi*, ca. 1335-45 (Museu Nacional d'Art de Catalunya, inventory number 009919-000), or a related altarpiece of the *Corpus Christi*, ca. 1335-45 (Museu Nacional d'Art de Catalunya, inventory number 009920-0002). We have not found this technique used elsewhere for the backgrounds of scenes, but its origins were perhaps in Siena. Julian Gardner kindly brought to our attention the use of similar patterns in haloes by Guido da Siena and the early Duccio, as seen, for example, on the *Crevole Madonna*, ca. 1280. See Belting (1982, pp. 15-16).

²⁴ At the end of chapter 78, the author informs us that after the crowd leaves, Mary, John, Mary Magdalen, and the two sisters of Mary "seat themselves near the cross"; Taney, Miller, Stallings-Taney (2000, p. 256). Chapter 79 opens with the same group of five "sitting off to one side near the cross"; Taney, Miller, Stallings-Taney (2000, p. 257). For the iconography of the seated mourners and its possible relation to the *Meditationes*, see Colucci (2005).



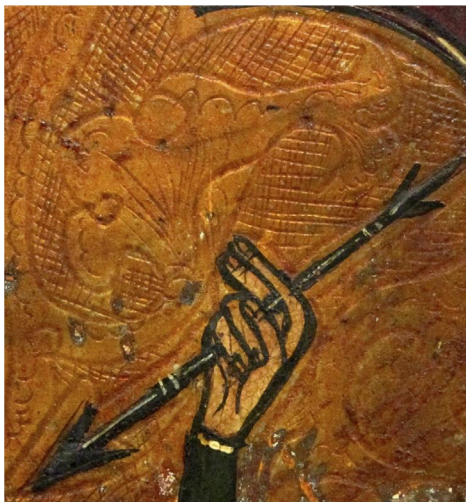
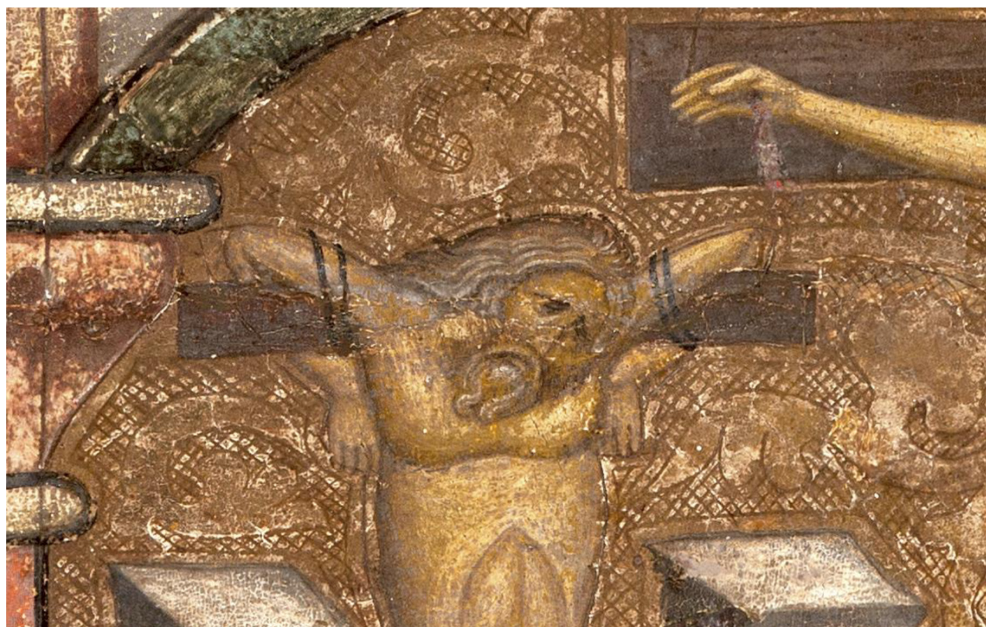


Figure 5. Master of Soriguerola. Detail from an altar frontal of St. Christopher, early 14th century. Barcelona, Museu Nacional d'Art de Catalunya.



Figures 6. Detail of the Crucifixion, from the Passion panel.





Figure 7. Crucifixion, from the Passion panel.

One remarkable example is the image of *Christ's Final Address to the Apostles* (Figure 4). The scene, to our knowledge, is absent from contemporary Catalan art and rare in Italian. Duccio's, on the *Maestà*, is one of the few Italian instances (Figure 8). Christ sits at the left, while, at the right, the apostles are all seated on the floor. The scene seems to have been favored in late Byzantine art, specifically in Palaeologan frescoes on Mount Athos and in Serbia, where four examples all date between ca. 1300 and 1322²⁵. In these Palaeologan examples, as in the Palma panel, Christ ad-

dresses the standing apostles; the iconography is significantly different from that of seated apostles on the *Maestà* (Figures 8 and 9).

The version at Vatopedi, dated 1312, is especially close to that at Mallorca (Figures 9, 10, 11).



Figure 8. Duccio, Christ's Final Address to the Apostles, from the *Maestà* 1308-1. Siena, Museo dell'Opera del Duomo (Wikimedia Commons)

²⁵ The four examples are at the Protaton Monastery, Mt. Athos, ca. 1300-1310; Vatopedi Monastery, Mt. Athos, ca. 1312; St. George, Staro Nagoričino, ca. 1315-1318; and St. Nikitas, Čučer, ca. 1321-1322. According to Zarras (2010, pp. 185-186), the composition, with Christ to the left of the group, appears in the late thirteenth century and remains in vogue only briefly, already fading from view by the mid-fourteenth century.



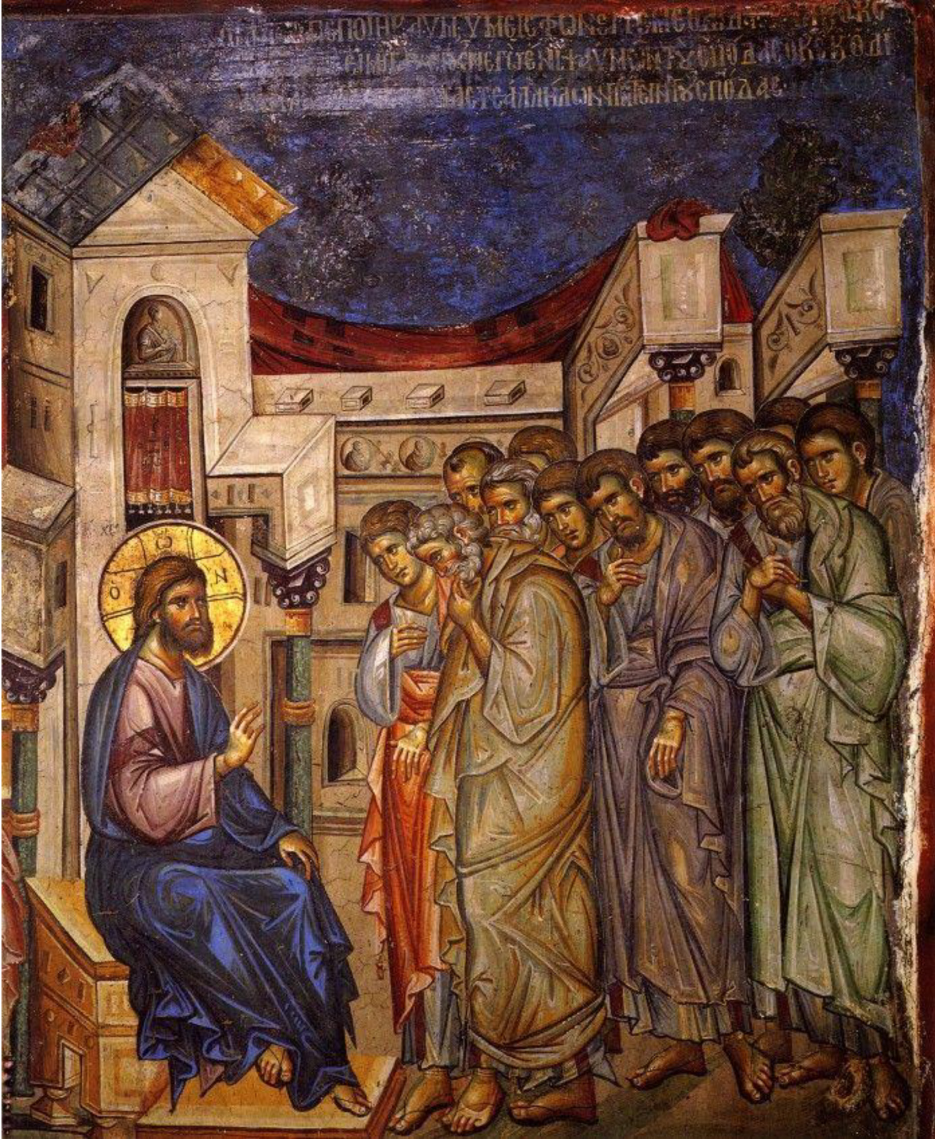


Figure 9. Christ's Final Address to the Apostles, 1312. Mt. Athos, Monastery of Vatopedi.



Figure 10. Detail of Christ's Final Address to the Apostles, from the Passion panel.

In the Palma panel as in these Palaeologan examples, Christ addresses the standing apostles. The version at Vatopedi (Figure 9), dated 1312, is especially close to that at Mallorca: Peter and a young apostle, probably John, stand nearest Christ, with John just behind Peter; Peter and two other apostles stand in the foreground, the others only partly visible behind them. Details are also exceptionally close. The young apostle to the left of Peter also wears similar



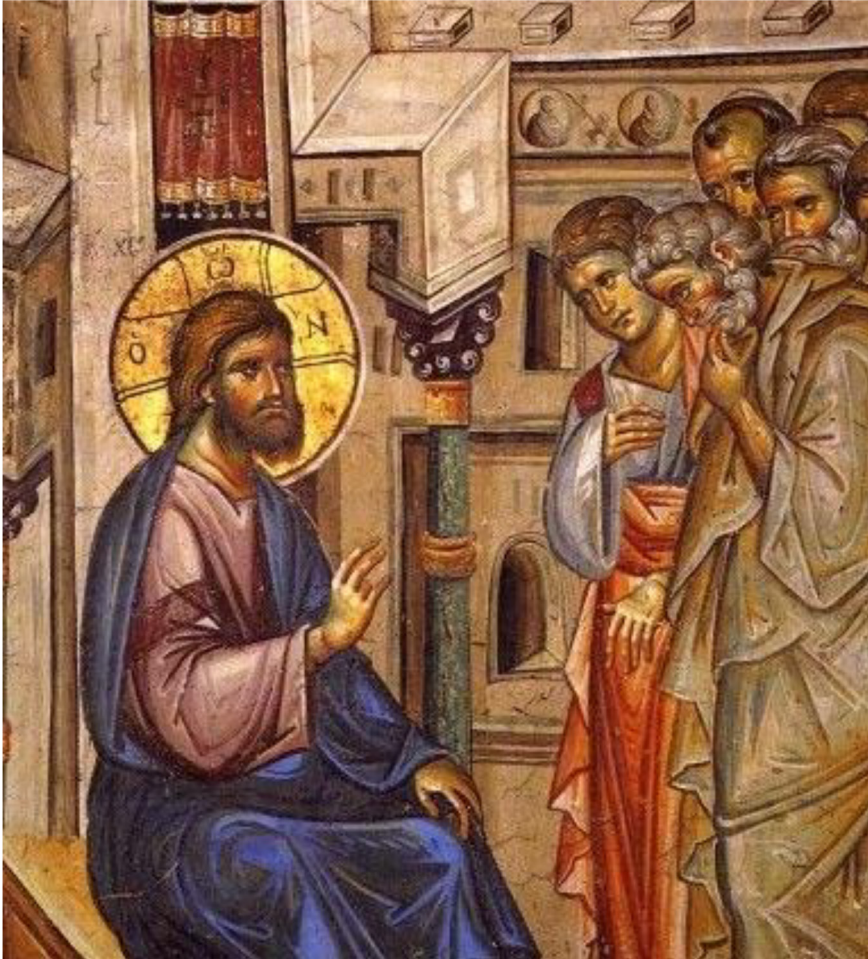


Figure 11. Detail of Christ's Final Address to the Apostles, from Vatopedi.

colors (a white tunic and red mantle at Vatopedi, a white tunic with a pink mantle in Mallorca), and the two gesture similarly. Christ's face in our panel is drawn to virtually the identical pattern seen in Serbia and Mt. Athos, in the overall proportions; the thin, straight nose; the black line separating the mass of hair from the face; and the hair's curving wave behind the ear. The apostles' facial types and gestures are also remarkably similar. Possible explanations

of how these and other unusual Palaeologan features reached Mallorca must await future publication, but with its Italian, Byzantine, Palaeologan, and Catalan features, the Passion panel is truly representative of the pluralism and transcultural interconnectedness of the medieval Mediterranean, yet at the same time visually unique.

While the scene of *Christ's Final Address* reveals our painter's careful study of Palaeologan painting, the very inclusion of this rare subject on the Mallorca panel requires further thought. This speech is of considerable importance in the gospels, recorded by John in three chapters (John 14-17). At the end of the Last Supper, Christ tells the eleven faithful apostles that he will leave them for the Father, that they should love each other, and that he is the true vine. He then warns them that they will be persecuted but should remember that he was persecuted before them: "If the world hate you, know ye, that it hath hated me before you (John 15:18). "If I had not done among them the works that no other man hath done, they would not have sin; but now they have both seen and hated both me and my Father" (John 15:24-25).

These haters were clearly understood to be the Jews. In his commentary on these passages, the preeminent Franciscan theologian St. Bonaventure (d. 1274) first identifies those who hate Christ as "the world," but then explicitly refers to the Pharisees and Jews: "Then the Pharisees going, consulted among themselves how to insnare him in his speech" (Matt 22:15)²⁶. Those who have seen but still hate are "inexcusable" examples of "the malignity of the Jews," prefigured in Scripture by Joseph's brothers and other examples²⁷. Although the *Address* on the Mallorca panel shows no overtly antisemitic imagery, we have reason to believe that Christ's ominous warning might have had a particular resonance for the panel's Clarissan viewers. The *Address* is the next-to-last scene on the top register of the panel. Placed symmetrically to it on the left is the second episode of the narrative, featuring another discussion: the council of the Jews (Figure 12).

²⁶ Karris (2007, p. 780). Bonaventure here cites Matthew's parable of the wedding guest, which is used to bolster Bonaventure's interpretation of the *Final Address* at the Last Supper.

²⁷ Karris (2007, pp. 782-783).





Figure 12. Council of the Jews, from the Passion panel.

While *Christ's Address* depicts his most faithful followers, the *Council of the Jews* shows his most treacherous enemies. Like the *Address*, the *Council* was rarely seen in Catalan art, and requires explanation²⁸.

All four evangelists report that after the entry into Jerusalem, Jewish priests and Pharisees met, alarmed by reports of Christ's miracles and triumphal arrival. On the Mallorca panel, eight men, all bearded and four with heads

²⁸ A few other depictions of the subject are discussed by Patton (2007, pp. 75-78).

covered by prayer shawls, sit in a high-walled interior; their animated gestures suggest a spirited discussion. The Gospel of John leaves no doubt about the topic: they gathered and “devised to put him to death” (John 11:53). Franciscan texts recount the plot in greater detail, often using vivid, polemical language. Bonaventure’s commentary on Luke describes the Pharisees’ anger, envy, indignation, sadness, and blindness. The Lord has incited the Jews, and they take “the opportunity to become inflamed more intensely to hatred, from which God would draw great good”²⁹. The *Meditationes vitae Christi*, chapter 69, decries the “vicious council . . . most evil leaders of the people.” The Jews follow the devil who “inflamed their hearts even to murderous intent against the Lord, to cause his death”³⁰. A fourteenth-century copy of the *Meditationes*, currently thought to be from Perugia, contains one of the few comparable scenes we know of in medieval art, western or Byzantine³¹. Its setting, however, is different, with the Jews sitting under a large stone arch in front of a green, two-story building; there is no thick, crenellated wall or tower.

4. CONCLUSION

In future research, we will continue to explore what seems to us a clear antisemitic bias in a number of scenes of the Mallorca panel. We will also argue that the choice of these uncommon scenes rested with the nuns of Santa Clara, whose attitudes were in agreement with those of their Franciscan advisors³². In particular, the convent’s third abbess, Blanca de Vilanova (documented as abbess 1308-1344), is notable for her persistent antagonism to the convent’s

²⁹ Karris (2004, pp. 1868-1872). See also the lengthy account in Bonaventure’s *Commentary on John* (Karris, 2007, pp. 626-635).

³⁰ Taney, Miller, Stallings-Taney (2000, p. 220).

³¹ Oxford, Corpus Christi College, MS 410, fol. 109v. For an illustration, see Bartal (2014, fig. 5). While the manuscript is often dated to the mid-fourteenth century, Bartal (2021) has recently proposed an earlier date of ca. 1300-1320. See also Bartal (2022).

³² For the Franciscans’ antisemitic activities in the realms of Aragon in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, see Simon (2004); Webster (1993, 130-137 and passim).



Jewish neighbors. The convent of Santa Clara bordered the Jewish quarter, known as the Call³³. In 1309, Sor Blanca complained to the king that Jews owned gardens near the convent, outside the Call. In 1311, she lodged a second complaint with the king, now singling out two Jewish owners of textile workshops that also served as community gathering places; she objected to the “stench” (*fetor*) of the ink and to the tumult (*tumultum*) of those who assembled there, stating that “the divine office was greatly disturbed” (*divinum officium turbabatur*)³⁴. In 1312 she followed with a third petition, which led to the eviction of a Jewish dyer from his home and workshop. Through the rest of the decade, Blanca continued to take action to limit the Jewish presence in the area, insisting that houses owned by Jews be rented only to Christians and buying up Jewish property, steadily expanding the reach of the convent.

These events provide a possible context for the inclusion of the *Council of the Jews* and *Christ’s Final Address to the Apostles*. While the fourteenth century saw the widespread growth of antisemitism in the realms of Aragon and Catalonia – in good part, inflamed by Franciscan preaching – the nuns also had a local target for these sentiments. Perhaps, in the scene of the *Council of the Jews*, we can interpret the unusual detail of the high, crenelated wall to represent the actual wall that enclosed the Call or the wall as the nuns desired it to be: tall, thick, and sturdy, an effective barrier between them and the Jews³⁵.

In this introduction to the Passion panel in Mallorca, we have focused on three areas of research: the panel’s complex artistic sources; its unique connection to Palaeologan art; and the antisemitic tenor of two related narrative scenes. All of these represent complex issues that we intend to explore further, alongside numerous other topics, such as the panel’s unusual, multi-scene

³³ For the establishment of the Call in the late thirteenth century, and the increase in regulations segregating Jews from Christians, see Bernat I Roca (2005); Oeltgen (2012, pp. 53-61). For the convent of Santa Clara’s complaints against the Jews, see Sastre (1993, pp. 45-46, 48, 74); Sastre (2006, pp. 54-55, 177-183); Oeltgen (2012, pp. 59-61).

³⁴ For this document, see Pons (1984, pp. 232-233, no. 43); Oeltgen (2012, p. 60, n. 38). Sastre (2006, p. 82). In 1297, the Franciscans of Palma filed a similar complaint, using similar language: “officium divinum...perturbator”; see Simon (2004, p. 67 and note 35). The friars’ monastery, just north of the Call, was not far from Santa Clara.

³⁵ For the wall enclosing the Call, see Abulafia (1992); Abulafia (1994, p. 85).



narrative format, its significance as a work of art made for Poor Clares, its function in the lives of the Mallorcan Clares, and more, to be addressed.

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