ROMANESQUE CHURCHES OF THE PYRENEES

Photography and Documentation by

William J. Neidinger and Eulah M. Matthews
The Historic Images Series is a collection of photographs, charts, plans and maps from the archives of the Texas Foundation for Archaeological & Historical Research. The purpose of the Historic Images Series is to present the viewer with images on a particular topic that are not easily found available together in other readily obtainable media.

*The Romanesque Churches of the Pyrenees* illustrates examples of 10th through 12th century religious architecture from sixteen sites in Spain, France and Andorra, as shown on the map on the next slide. Sites have been chosen to present a representative cross-section of Romanesque architecture, painting, and sculpture. A brief historical overview of each site is included along with the photographs and plans.

This program may be distributed freely for private or classroom viewing; neither the video nor any of the images contained within may be used for commercial purposes.
Sites Described in this Program

1. Roncevalles
2. Sainte Engrâce
3. San Juan de la Peña
4. St. Lizier
5. Sant Martí de la Cortinada
6. Sant Joan de Caselles
7. Sant Miquel d’Engolasters
8. Sant Climent de Pal
9. Sant Cerni de Nagol
10. La Seu d’Urgell
11. Serrabona
12. St. Michel de Cuxa
13. Santa Maria de Ripoll
14. Sant Joan de les Abadesses
15. Sant Pere de Rodes
16. St. Martin-du-Canigou
SANT PERE DE RODES,
SPAIN
A monastic community was founded at Sant Pere de Rodes in the early 10th century. The church of the monastery was consecrated in 1022. The period of the monastery’s greatest prosperity and popularity was in the 11th - 13th centuries.

The monastery began to decline severely in the 14th and 15th centuries. In 1654, the monastery was actually abandoned for six years, during which time it was sacked and looted. A complete despoliation of the monastery occurred in the 18th century, and it was abandoned finally and forever in 1835. In the 1930’s restoration works were begun on the monastery.
The church has a barrel vaulted nave and two barrel vaulted side aisles. There are two side chapels and a main altar.

The piers which support the barrel vault of the nave are unusual in Romanesque art. They are composed of central pillars flanked by superimposed columns.
Barrel vaulted nave with composite piers and Corinthian-derived capitals.

Sant Pere de Rodes
Capitals derived from the ancient Corinthian style

Composite piers

Sant Pere de Rodes
The cloister lies to the south of the church and at a considerably higher level.

The heightened level is due to the fact that the original cloister collapsed, was filled in, and the present 12th – 13th century cloister built atop it.
Capitals from the Upper Cloister

Virgin and Child and Kings

Capital with vegetal motifs

Monks
Façade of monastery: bell tower and military watch tower

Sant Pere de Rodes
Bell tower, late 11th – early 12th century
Sant Pere de Rodes
Interior of bell tower
late 11\textsuperscript{th} – early 12\textsuperscript{th} century
At Sant Pere de Rodes two reliefs were discovered by the so-called “Master of Cabestany,” a 12th century sculptor whose works can be found in Spain, southern France, and Tuscany.

Christ and the Apostles on the Sea of Galilee

Agnus Dei, the Lamb of God
About one kilometer away from Sant Pere de Rodes a small village called Santa Creu (Holy Cross) grew up in the Middle Ages. Its church, called variously Santa Creu or Santa Helena, dates to the 11th century and is still in use today.
THE PRIORY
OF
SERRABONA, FRANCE
The first mention of a monastic community at Serrabona (the Good Mountain) dates to 1069. In 1082 construction of the church commenced and the building was consecrated in 1151. When the last prior of Serrabona died in 1612, the monastery was abandoned. Reconstruction began in the 20th century.
The church of the 11th century underwent substantial reconstruction in the 12th century. Serrabona boasts one of the best preserved Romanesque tribunes in Europe.
CAPITALS FROM THE PORCH

Fantastic beasts

Serrabona
The tribune, an area reserved for the monastic choir, was modeled after the Roman arch of triumph. The tribune of Serrabona is adorned with low reliefs and its capitals have elaborate carvings of men and fantastic beasts.
RELIEFS FROM THE TRIBUNE

Symbols of St. Mark and St. John

The Agnus Dei (Lamb of God) and the symbol of St. Matthew

Serrabona
CAPITALS FROM THE TRIBUNE: MEN AND BEASTS

Serrabona
Ribbed groin vault of tribune
SAN JUAN DE LA PEÑA, SPAIN
A monastic community nestled itself in this cliff (peña) in the 9th century. Most of the buildings of the community were destroyed in 999. The monastery was quickly rebuilt and in the 11th century became the pantheon of the kings of Aragon. Fires in the 17th century caused the monks to abandon the monastery.

Many of the surviving earlier rooms are below ground level; the cloister with its array of splendidly carved capitals is on the upper level.
The two naves of the Lower Church are divided by a wall in which there are two horseshoe arches, typical of Mozarabic architecture, that is, the architecture derived from the Spanish Christians who had lived under Islamic rule.

Frescoes of the 12th century depicting the martyrdom of Sts. Cosmas and Damian.
The triple-apsed church with blind arcades (the upper church) of the 11th century was where Gregorian Chant was used for the first time on the Spanish peninsula in 1071.
PANTHEON OF THE KINGS OF ARAGON, REBUILT IN THE 18TH CENTURY.

San Juan de la Peña
The cloister dates to the late 12th century. The anonymous sculptor who produced the capitals is referred to as The Master of San Juan de la Peña; his works can be found all across northern Spain. The chapel in the background is the San Voto Chapel, a neoclassical work.
THE CAPITALS OF THE CLOISTER
BY
THE MASTER OF SAN JUAN DE LA PEÑA,
12TH CENTURY.

Cain and Abel

An angel appears to Joseph

The Garden of Eden

San Juan de la Peña

Previous

Next
THE CAPITALS OF THE CLOISTER
BY
THE MASTER OF SAN JUAN DE LA PEÑA,
12TH CENTURY.

The Last Supper

The Marriage Feast at Cana

The woman with the unending issue of blood

San Juan de la Peña
SANTA MARIA DE RIPOLL, SPAIN
The monastery of Santa Maria de Ripoll was founded by Wilfred the Hairy in 880. It served as the pantheon for the House of Barcelona until 1162. The church was commissioned by Abbot Oliba in 977 and consecrated in 1032. The original vault collapsed in 1428. Restoration of the church took place in the 19th century.
GROUNDPLAN OF SANTA MARIA DE RIPOLL

[Diagram of Santa Maria de Ripoll with labels for various parts such as Basilica, Portal, Cloister, and Holy Chapel]
The tower is constructed of a series of superimposed squinches, arches built across the angle of two perpendicular walls to support a higher structure.
Around 1150 a portal was attached to the façade of the basilica. It was constructed in the spirit of a Roman triumphal arch. The various panels have scenes from the Old and New Testaments and the arch has reliefs of the seasons and the lives and deaths of the saints.
THE PORTAL

Cain burying Adam

Angels adoring Christ Pantocrator

King David and four musicians

Santa Maria de Ripoll
January: gathering firewood
February: making cheese

Life of St. Peter
Life of Jonah
Cain and Abel

Santa Maria de Ripoll
THE CLOISTER,
12-13th CENTURY.

Man and woman       Angels
Monkeys                 Sirens

Santa Maria de Ripoll
A monastic community was founded at Cuxa in the late 9th century. As the community grew, its buildings were enlarged and transformed. In 1008 Abbot Oliba undertook a significant rebuilding project. Construction continued into the 12th century. Decline set in during the 17th century. When the monks were expelled during the French Revolution, the monastery was looted.
GROUNDPLAN OF ST. MICHEL DE CUXA

10TH CENTURY
11TH CENTURY
12TH CENTURY
RENAISSANCE & MODERN

CRYPT
CLOISTER
CHURCH
The subterranean Chapel of Our Lady of the Crib was built in the 11\textsuperscript{th} century to house the relic of the Nativity crib. The vault of the circular ambulatory is supported by a central pillar.

The subterranean “Hospice” is a series of vaulted corridors where pilgrims spent the night.
Most of the remaining parts of the church date to the late 10th century. The walls separating the nave from the side aisles are perforated with horseshoe arches.
The horseshoe arches of St. Michel de Cuxa are not true Mozarabic arches; that is, they are not spanned by wedged blocks, voussoirs, supported at the ends and held in place by a keystone. Rather the stones of the arches are corbelled, laid horizontally one course atop the other.
CAPITALS FROM THE CLOISTER

St. Michel de Cuxa
SANT JOAN DE LES ABADESES, SPAIN
Sant Joan de les Abadesses was founded in 887 by Count Wilfred the Hairy as a convent for his daughter, Emma. The church is the third built on the site and dates to 1150.
The window arches of the main apse of Sant Joan de les Abadesses are framed by columns and engaged columns crowned by capitals depicting two-bodied men and animals.
POLYCHROME WOODEN STATUARY GROUP OF THE DEPOSITION, 13TH CENTURY

San Joan de les Abadesses
An alabaster altar screen, called the Retablo of Santa Maria la Blanca, has eighteen scenes of the lives of Christ and the Virgin Mary. It was done by a local artist in the 1340s.
ENAMEL CROWN OF COUNT WILFRED THE HAIRY, 9TH CENTURY
SAINT-LIZIER, FRANCE
The church at Saint-Lizier served as the cathedral for the Couserans area from the 12th-14th centuries. The apse is built of stones of various shapes and sizes, some taken from ancient Roman buildings.
The brick crossing tower, built in the Toulousan style, is a work of the 14th century.
In the main apse of the church are a series of frescoes of the Apostles and scenes from the life of the Virgin dated to the year 1117; they are attributed to the Master of Pedret.
Frescoes by the Master of Pedret, 1117.

Christ enthroned in glory

The Apostles

St. Lizier
The 12th century cloister has promenades on both the upper and lower levels. On the lower level the arches are supported by alternating single and double columns with capitals decorated with floral and geometric motifs and scenes from the Bible.
CAPITALS FROM THE CLOISTER

Cain and Abel

Men in vines

St. Lizier

Unidentified scene

Floral decoration
The transverse and diagonal arches of the groin vaults are brightly painted and the vaults’ mortar itself painted to look like stone work.
LA SEU D’URGELL
The earliest part of the Seu d’Urgell complex is the church of St. Peter. It was built during the bishopric of St. Ermengol, 1010-1035. The tri-apsidal eastern end of the church has blind arches, typical of the Romanesque architecture of the time.
The present *seu* (cathedral) of Urgell was started by Bishop Ot at the end of the 11th century. An architect named Ramon Lambardi came to direct the cathedral works from 1175 to 1182. The apse of the church has an open arched ambulatory, typical of the Italian Lombard churches of this period, leading many scholars to suspect that “Lambardi” refers to Ramon’s place of origin.
Six large windows of the western façade illuminate the church. The upper windows are framed by Lombard blind arches. A bell tower with two tiers of two and three arches crowns the façade.
WESTERN FAÇADE:
Man riding a lion which is devouring a prone man

NORTHERN PORTAL:
Capitals of men and beasts
CAPITALS FROM
THE CLOISTER

La Seu d’Urgell
ST. MARTIN-DU-CANIGOU, FRANCE
A monk named Sclua designed the layout of this monastery in the early 11th century. The church has two levels; the upper dedicated to St. Martin of Tours and the lower to the Virgin Mary.
THE PORCH

The Mermaid
The Ogre

St. Martin-du-Canigou
CAPITALS FROM THE PORCH

Monks at Mass

Men and foliage

Man and beasts

Bishop in hell

St. Martin-du-Canigou
The lower church better preserves the atmosphere of the original 11th century construction, never having been heavily restored in the 20th century, as have other parts of the monastery. Some of the original columns were discovered embedded within the piers of the lower church.
SAINTE ENGRÂCE, FRANCE
Construction on the church at Sainte Engrâce commenced in 1085 and was completed in the early 12th century. The nave is covered by a simple barrel vault with transverse arches.

View from the nave towards the eastern apse.
During the refurbishing of Sainte Engrâce, some of the original paint of the columns and capitals was restored.
Journey of the Magi

Adoration of the Magi

Scene of an uncertain nature

CAPITALS
The chrism is a symbol of Jesus with the chi (X) and rho (P), the first two letters in Greek of “Christ;” the alpha (A) and omega (ω), the first and last letters of the Greek alphabet; and an S, for soter, Saviour in Greek.
SANT MARTÍ DE LA CORTINADA, ANDORRA
Sant Martí de la Cortinada was built in the late 12th century and underwent significant enlargement in the 17th - 18th centuries. During a 1968 restoration frescoes were discovered underneath the church’s whitewashed walls.

Fresco of Sts. Bricius and Martin of Tours, late 12th century
Fresco of Bishop Gilem Gifred of Urgell with various symbols relating to the life of St. Martin of Tours, late 12th century.
SANT JOAN DE CASELLES, ANDORRA
GROUNDPLAN OF SANT JOAN DE CASELLES

11-12th centuries
13-15th centuries
15th century
16th century
The figure of the crucified Christ is built out from the wall with stucco and wicker work. To Christ’s left is Longinus with the lance, and to His right is Stephanton with the sponge.

The Crucifixion, late 13th century

Sant Joan de Caselles
SANT MIQUEL D’ENGOLASTERS, ANDORRA
Sant Miquel d’Engolasters was built in the early 12th century. A generation after the church’s construction a Pyrenean master painter, the Master of Santa Colona, decorated the interior.
ST. CLIMENT DE PAL, ANDORRA
9TH – 12TH CENTURIES

ST. CERNI DE NAGOL, ANDORRA
11TH CENTURY
The pass across the Pyrenees at Roncevalles is where Charlemagne’s rear guard under the command of Roland was destroyed by the Basques in 778. It eventually became a great pilgrimage site on the Road to Santiago.
Legend says that Roland died at this spot and his soldiers were buried beneath. It actually dates, however, to the 12\textsuperscript{th} - 13\textsuperscript{th} centuries. An ossuary within holds the bones of those who died on the Road to Santiago.
The chapel of St. James (Santiago) dates to the early 13th century, a transitional period between Romanesque and Gothic architecture. The chapel served as the parish church of Roncevalles for many generations.