The wooden «Chasuble Madonnas» from Ger, Ix, Targasona and Talló

About the iconography of Catalan Madonna statues in the Romanesque period

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Abstract

Numerous wooden Madonna statues of the Romanesque style have survived from medieval Catalonia, which show the Virgin as sedes sapientiae. The thematized exemplars from Ger (second half 12th century), Ix (last third 12th century), Targasona (early 13th century) attract the attention of today’s viewer by an iconographic peculiarity. Explicitly, they show the enthroned Mother of God, as it will be pointed out, in the priestly chasuble. The chasuble most probably represents Mary’s significance as symbol of the hierarchical or institutionalized church and also alludes to the conception of Mary being interpreted as priest or ministerial priest, which became more and more popular in the 12th century. The throne representations of the statues from Ger and Ix, which refer undoubtedly to the famous episcopal throne from the Girona Cathedral by its formal structure, will be related to this significant meaning, too. The iconographic type of the Catalan «Chasuble Madonna» is not to be found in the art of wood carving first, but in Romanesque mural paintings in the Pyrenean Valleys of North-West Catalonia. The historical and cultural sphere, which could have been responsible for the development and dissemination of this Madonna type respectively, will be discussed in the present article in the context of the 11th and 12th century church reform in Catalonia.

Key words: Romanesque Madonna statues, Catalonia, church reform

Resumen

A Catalunya han sobreviscut nombroses escultures d’estil romànic de la Verge, que la representen com a sedes sapientiae. Els exemplars de Ger (segona meitat del segle xi), Ix (últim terç del segle xi), Targasona (inici del segle xii) i Talló (inici del segle xii) crien l’atenció per una peculiaritat iconogràfica. Explícitament, figuren la Mare de Déu entronitzada, vestida amb casulla. És molt probable que la casulla representi Maria com a símbol de l’església jerarquitzada o institucionalitzada i també al·ludeix al concepte de Maria com a sacerdot o ministeri sacerdotal, una idea que es va estendre al segle xii. Els trons de les talles de Ger i Ix, que per la seva estructura formal es refereixen sens dubte al famós tron episcopal de la catedral de Girona, també es poden vincular al mateix significat. El tipus iconogràfic català de la «Verge amb casulla» no es troba abans en l’art de la talla, sinó en pintura mural romànica de les valls pirinenques del nord-oest de Catalunya. L’ambient històric i cultural que pot justificar el desenvolupament i propagació d’aquest tipus de Verge serà analitzat en el context de la reforma religiosa dels segles xi i xii a Catalunya.

Paraules clau:
Romànic, talla, Verge, Catalunya, reforma religiosa
In the territory of medieval Catalonia there can be found numerous wooden, polychrome Madonna statues of the Romanesque style, which show the Virgin enthroned with the Infant Christ seated in her lap and which appeared since the second half of the 12th century. The thematic exemplars from Ger (second half 12th century, fig. 1), Ix (last third 12th century, fig. 2), Tàrgasona (early 13th century, fig. 3) and Talló (early 13th century, fig. 4), which are regarded as characteristic examples of the Romanesque Madonna sculpture in nowadays Franco-Spanish Pyrenees of the Cerdanya (Alta Cerdanya/ Baixa Cerdanya), excel not only in the aesthetic quality. Furthermore the sculptures belonging to the area of the old bishopric of Seu d’Urgell also attract the attention of today’s viewer by an iconographic peculiarity, which distinguish them from the majority of the preserved Catalan Madonna statues of the Romanesque period. They namely show the enthroned Mother of God —as the research assumes consistently— in the priestly chasuble gathered up by her arms. In addition to the under-tunic a separate veil, falling over the Virgin’s shoulders, characterizes the clerical vestment type of the wooden sculptures.

In the first part of the following article it will be tried —with the support of parament research and comparative examples of the Romanesque art— to verify adequately, that the Marian outer garments of the sculptures are indeed high mediaval chasubles. Previous research on the statues, which are discussed in this article, has not striven to verify adequately —with the support of parament research— the iconographical context, to which the «Chasuble Madonna» being the most characteristic examples of the Catalan Madonna statues in general, reaching back to a not preserved prototype, shall be confirmed scientifically.

After it has been briefly indicated, that —in my opinion—the iconographical context, to which the «Chasuble Madonna» of the Catalan mural paintings belong, meaningfully supports the function of Mary as a symbol of the institutionalized church, there shall be asked for the historico-cultural circumstances, which were responsible for the development respectively for the dissemination of this special Madonna type. Previous research concerning the statues from Ger, Ix, Tàrgasona and Talló didn’t lay great emphasis on answering this question.
Are the Marian outer garments of the Madonna statues high medieval chasubles?

Shape
The chasuble from the 10th to the beginning of the 13th century, which was called planeta or casula in the Middle Ages, had a floor-length, completely closed, sleeveless and hoodless cloak, which had to be rolled up at the sides for the unrestricted usage of the hands at the celebration of the mass. Thus, the chasuble of these centuries was rather a wide bell-shaped cape that wrapped the body of the celebrating priest entirely.

Not only do pictorial representations in art history verify this without a doubt, but also numerous preserved early and high medieval chasubles all over Europe. The Bavarian National Museum is keeping an early specimen (fig. 1), which can serve as an example for such-like shaped chasubles, which are called «bell-chasubles» in the Modern Age. It is associated with the famous archbishop Willigis of Mainz (971-1011) and was made between the end of the 10th and the beginning of the 11th century. The making of such a «bell-chasuble» was a comparatively simple task in this way, that only a roughly semicircular piece of cloth had to be fit up with gaps for the head and had to be sewn together along the straight edge.

When comparing the shape of the «bell-chasuble» of Saint Césaire (fig. 6), in which case the «bell-chasuble» of the cleric falls over his upper arms and forms a round shape in the lap area, too, makes this abundantly clear.

Colour and pattern
During the 10th and 11th century only single-coloured, frequently patterned silk cloths were used for the making of chasubles, which had often been imported from the Orient. Until the 12th century bi- and multi-coloured silk cloths were increasingly used, whereby for example vegetable patterns or half geometrical ornaments could be made, not only by changing

![Image](image_url)

Figure 1. Madonna statue from Ger, second half of the 12th century, provenance: Santa Coloma de Ger, H. 52, 5 cm,Measured, polychrome, Barcelona, National Museum of Catalan Art (MNAC). Illustration from Jordi Camps i Sòria, Montserrat Pagès i Paretas, Llarás Usón, «Marededéu de Montserrat: Esquisses sur un eredem de Messgewänder im Occident» (Edouard Gaborit-Chopin ed.), Regensburg, 2001, p. 9.

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the weave of the damask cloths, but also by different colours of the fabric. At the same time the wide range of colours, which formed the feasible base of the ground colour of liturgical paraments in the previous centuries, was slowly reduced. There was a tendency to prefer the colours white, red, green, yellow, black and violet for the making of liturgical outer garments. Around 1200 however this choice of colour was combined in the tract «De sacra altaris mysterio» by Pope Innocent III. (1160-1216) comprising a liturgical colour canon, which was based on the ecclesiastic feast-calendar. However, this canon still wasn’t binding during the whole 13th century, so that the popular colours blue and grey still were frequently used for the making of liturgical garbs.

In summery it can be postulated, that the colours of the Marian figures’ outer garments from Ger, Ix, Targasona and Talló (green, red, red, yellow) militate in favour of the fact, that the vestments not only depict the Romanesque chasuble very exactly according to the cut, but also show very common respectively popular colours, which were used in the process of making chasubles in the 12th century. Also vegetable, coloured ornaments, which—as for example observed at the statue from Ix (fig. 2)— differ from the ground colour, are not untypical for chasubles of the 12th century.
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Decoration with applied orphrey braids

Up to the end of the 10th century the «bell-chasuble» generally lacked any kind of trimming8. For example, the golden braids from the silken chasuble of Saint Willigis (fig. 5) have been sewn on in later centuries9.

Around about the turn of the first millennium ornamented, woven braids (orphrey bands), which hid for example the frontal seam, came into usage more frequently. Until the beginning of the 13th century, however, these orphrey braids had not at all been submitted under any rule regarding their form or disposition, nor had they been considered as obligatory for the making of chasubles. Both, pictorial representations and the preserved chasubles of these centuries proof this adequately, as Braun has demonstrated convincingly:


As an example for a highly braids-decorated chasuble of the first half of the 12th century, the so-called chasuble of Saint Wolfgang (fig. 7), which comes from St. Emmeram in Regensburg, can be cited. Not only are the opening for the head and the hem decorated with braids, but the middle seam in the breast area of the garment as well. This middle seam is covered with a wide vertical trimming, shaped like a forked cross11.

When connecting Braun’s results of research concerning the orphrey braids of 11th and 12th century chasubles in turn to the Marian outer garments of the Madonna statues from Ger, Is, Targasona and Talló (figs. 1-4), dealt with in this article, it becomes


18. For the decoration of the medieval «bell-chasuble» with applied orphrey braids see Braun, Die liturgische Gewandung im Occident und Orient, p. 229-215.
20. Braun, Die liturgische Gewandung im Occident und Orient, p. 210-211 («Sometimes a trimming surrounds only the opening for the head, another time it also edges the hem or it moves downwards vertically on the front side of the garment. In some cases there is no trimming at all, in other cases the front column and the edging of the head-opening and the hem are joined by a vertical band on the middle of the back side, whereas others the trimmings shape a formal forked cross»; translation: author).
Figure 6. Reliquary-bust of Saint Césaire, second quarter of the 12th century. H. 91 cm, wood, gilded and covered with precious metal, Maurs (Cantal), church of Saint-Césaire. Illustration from Danielle Gaborit-Chopin, Buste de saint Césaire (Cat. No. 293), in: Le France romane au temps des premiers Capétiens (987-1152), Musée du Louvre (Exh. cat.), Paris, 2005, p. 383.

Figure 7. So-called «bell-chasuble» of Saint Wolfgang, first half of the 12th century, H. 159 cm, Byzantine silk cloth with applied braids, Regensburg, Catholic Church Foundation of St. Emmeram. Illustration from Regula Schorta, Sogenannte Kasel des heiligen Wolfgang (Cat. No. 72), in: Reinhold Baumstark (ed.), Rom und Byzanz. Schatzkammerstücke aus bayerischen Sammlungen, Bayerisches Nationalmuseum (Exh. cat.) München, 1998, p. 229.

Figure 8. Tomb effigy of Saint Morandus, ca. 1115, stone, Altkirch (Sundgau), abbey church of St. Morand. Illustration from Joseph Braun, Türcheit und Attribut der Heiligen in der Deutschen Kunst, Stuttgart, 1943, p. 942.
clear, that they correspond to Romanesque «bell-chasubles», which are not provided with decorating braids at the vertical front seams, but at the lower seam and the head-opening only. Suchlike braided chasubles were no rarity in the 11th/12th century, in contrast to chasubles, which show a distinct forked cross upon the front seam, like the one from Regina(Pagès i Paretas, Altar frontal from Sant Serni de Tàrrega26 argasona (figs. 2-3))

In medieval Catalonia of the late 11th and 12th century such simply braided chasubles might have been in frequent usage, as important panel and liturgical paraments. Cf. Morandus als Priester in priesterlicher Messkostüm (Heiligen in der Deutschen Kunst und 12. Jahrhunderts, Ph. Diss. Freiburg/Schweiz, 1974, p. 78).

It is mainly the dominant iconographical motif of the sacerdotal chasuble of the referred high Romanesque Madonna statues from Ger, Ix, Targavona and Talló the ones from Ix and Targavona(figs. 2-3) show both the Infant Christ and Mary crowned, which refers to the conception of Mary as Queen of Heaven, which was fully developed not until that century25. The apple, which identifies Mary as «Altera Eva» (New Eve) and relatively sel-frequent common and became frequently common and begun to dominate the decoration of the chasubles with braided in the following period. Cf. Bouron, Die Kirchenbauten von Occidente und Oriente, p. 510.

The iconographic supplements of the sedes sapientiae Madonna type in the High Middle Ages

In the Romanesque period the sedes sapientiae statues more and more show additional iconographic motifs or attributes, respectively, which reach beyond Mary’s main significance as Throne of Wisdom and allude to other theological aspects of the meaning of the Mother of God. Thus, since the 12th century many statues, as for example the ones from Ix and Targavona(figs. 2-3) show both the Infant Christ and Mary crowned, which refers to the conception of Mary as Queen of Heaven, which was fully developed not until that century25. The apple, which identifies Mary as «Altera Eva» (New Eve) and relatively sel-dom appears on throne of Wisdom statues of the 12th century, is rather characteristic for late Romanesque examples of the 11th century. The same is true of the sceptre and the imperial orb, which, on the other hand, again allude symbolically to Mary’s regal majesty25. It is mainly the dominant iconographical motif of the sacerdotal chasuble of the referred high Romanesque Madonna statues from Ger, Ix, Targavona and Talló(figs. 1-4), which alludes to an important theological aspect of the meaning of Mary beneath the sedes sapientiae conception, as it will be discussed in the following paragraph.

22. Not until the course of the 13th century a trimming, which is shaped like a forked cross—the so-called chasuble-cross—became frequently common and begun to dominate the decoration of the chasubles with braid in the following period. Cf. Bouron, Die Kirchenbauten von Occidente und Oriente, p. 510.


24. Early and high medieval chasubles have not survived in Catalonia. Only fragments of oriental clothes are preserved, which must have been used for liturgical purposes. Cf. Jacques, Catalogue Romano, vol. 2, p. 321.


26. Bachni already has proved the tendency of accumulating different «names» or significan­ces in Romanesque Mariology in his study on Opus See Martin Bucic, Ottocentesche Madonna (Liebighaus Monographie, vol. 15), Frankfurt/M., 1993, p. 54-57.


28. Here it has to be remarked however, that the Marian figures at 12th century Madonna statues...


31. It is possible a Byzantine pallio, which has been wrongly interpreted by the artist, because the paenula wasn’t worn any longer in the 12th century. Even at Carolingian times a paenula-like vestment was still only used as a very coarse raincoat. See for this problem Manuel Teves, Iconografía de la Virgen en el arte español, Madrid, 1946, p. 616-618.


33. It is possibly a Byzantine palla, which had been wrongly interpreted by the artist, because the paenula wasn’t worn any longer in the 12th century. Even at Carolingian times a paenula-like vestment was still only used as a very coarse raincoat. See for this problem Manuel Teves, Iconografía de la Virgen en el arte español, Madrid, 1946, p. 616-618.


Another Romanesque Madonna sculpture, which most probably shows Mary in a contemporary}

The iconographic motif of the sacerdotal chasuble

According to Ilene H. Forsyth the motif of Mary’s chasuble, which not only sporadically can be deter­mined at Romanesque Madonna statues, alludes to Mary’s significance as symbol of the church, which should not be underestimated. Unfortunately, Forsyth cites a 12th century sculpture from the Auvergne (fig. 11) and its regional copies as prime examples for such Madonna statues, which just do not show Mary in the priestly chasuble in con­trast to the ones discussed here (figs. 1-4).29. The depicted outer garment of the Saugues-Madonna (fig. 11) is in my opinion rather a paenula-like vestment, whose hood covers the Virgin’s head. Furthermore the band-like configurations, which vertically mark the garment’s middle on the front and on the back side and which seem to be fixed up beneath Mary’s neck at a collar band of the same quality, aren’t components of a separate bishop’s pallium (pallium episcopale), that, according to Forsyth, additionally underline the Mary-Ecclesia aspect of the Virgin. The reason for this conclu-
Mary is also dressed undoubtfully with a medieval "bell-chasuble" and a separate veil. Nevertheless Forsyth’s interpretation of the sacerdotal garments on Romanesque Madonna statues due to their allusion to Mary’s function as a symbol of the institutionalized church is coherent, as it shall be pointed out in the following paragraph chiefly with the support of the theological exegesis. The same goes for the authors relating to the Catalan «Chasuble Madonnas» and interpreting the sculptures’ chasuble in a similar way. In contrast to Forsyth, who refers to the medieval Mary-Ecclesia concept at least in a footnote, these authors didn’t give further explanations for this problem at all.

In my opinion, a reason for this could be the omission of the authors to identify the Marian outer garments of the statues as realistic representations of Romanesque chasubles of the 12th century.

In the following paragraph of the present article the chasuble of Romanesque Throne of Wisdom statues shall be described in detail as allegorical image for the Mary-Ecclesia parable of the Middle Ages, whose origins go back to Early Christian times already.

Mary as symbol of the hierarchical church

In the theological treatises of the Carolingian times the Holy Virgin Mary was more and more compared with the church, which was personified as Bride of Christ since Early Christian times. From the 12th century on Mary was already described consistently as type of the «Ecclesia Mater». The following lines from the «Rationale divinorum officiorum» of John Beleth (died ca. 1195), written about 1165, to which Adolf Katzenellenbogen refers in his often quoted passage ro an Ecclesia typology see Leo Schef­

34. «La Virgen del Gor» v. (viato 1098), ...: Las mazas eran ntuas de las imágenes de Dios y de los santos. De esta manera, la Virgen y los santos en el arte de la medie­va... 35. (fig. 13). See Gramsch, Romanische Ma­donna der Schweiz, p. 73-79.

36. (fig. 12), ... el coro de la catedral de la ciudad de Gotz (fig. 13). Ver Scharf, Romanische Ma­donna der Schweiz, p. 73-79.

37. See: Forsyth, Die Wandmalereien vom St. Quirin in Prag (1992), p. 120. In fact, I suggest to note the following: The sculpture of the Virgin Mary in the Romanesque chasuble was depicted very often such as the famous Stauffer Madonna in Freiburg (fig. 4). In the middle of the body of the Virgin Mary there is the bell chasuble, which is kept today in the Swiss National Museum in Zurich (fig. 13). See Gramsch, Romanische Ma­donna der Schweiz, p. 73-79.

38. (fig. 11). Madonna statue from Chur, early 12th century, wood, polychromed, (Imatge de la Mare de Déu de Ger, p. 68). Kaufman, Madonna sculpture from Rupolding, p. 148.

39. Since Early Christian times Esclonia was depicted as female figure with imperial traits in the visual arts. The female figures, which are uniformed on the top of a church building, from the mural painting program from St. Quirin of Prag (fig. 21), can be seen as an example for such an Ecclesia personification in Romanesque Catalonia. Cf. Agathe Schef­

40. Mary is also dressed with priestly garments, which are sewed on the outer garment. Forsyth does not cite additional examples for Romanesque Madonna statues, which show Mary in priestly garments. Neither does she refer to the presently discussed Catalan Madonna sculptures (figs. 1-4), nor, for example, to the late Romanesque Madonna statue from Rupolding (fig. 2), where
...and when you look at it precisely, she [the Church] gives birth to Christ, because the baptized are his limbs. ‘You are the body of Christ and his limbs,’ says the Apostle (1 Cor. 12, 27). If she [the Church] therefore gives birth to the limbs of Christ, she is exceedingly similar to Mary.

The following quotation of a Christmas sermon from Augustine focuses this Early Christian typology of Mary-Ecclesia even more aptly:

How could you [the faithful] not belong to the child-birth of the Virgin, when you are the limbs of Christ? Mary gave birth to your Head and the Church gave birth to you. For she [the Church] is also both mother and virgin: she is mother by means of deeply love, virgin by means of the integrity of faith and piety. She gives birth to peoples, but these are all limbs of the sole one [Christ] whose body and bride she is. In that respect, too, she is similar to that Virgin, because in many she is the mother of unity.

As for the equation of Mary-Ecclesia in Romanesque and even in Patristic times the Mother of God thus symbolized without a doubt the primary task of the church institution, which becomes evident mainly by preaching, as already remarked. Due to the fact, that this task of the institutionalized church is above all a ministerial-priestly one, the hypothesis of the Romanesque Madonna sculptures’ chasuble serving as a symbol in order to give in the visual arts a pictorial expression to the significance of the Virgin as type of the hierarchical (priestly) church is, in my opinion, reinforced. According to René Laurentin, however, the concept of Mary as a sacramental priest had already been developed in the 12th century, although the problem of Mary’s ministerial priesthood did not emerge until about 1245 under Albert the Great (1280), when it penetrated intensive theological discussion in the context of the «Systematic Mariology». Among other things, for example, the vision of Elizabeth of Schönau (ca. 1129-1164), which Laurentin is citing, verifies this:

I have seen my Mistress (Dominam mean) in a vestment, which is identical to the priestly chasuble, standing next to the altar.

This interpretation of the chasuble motif of the Romanesque sculptures is also backed up—in my opinion—by the fact, that—according to Alois Müller—Mary already has clear ministe-
That the ministerial-priestly aspect of the Virgin concerning the equation of Mary-Ecclesia of Early Christian times most probably must be lent an even greater importance, than Müller has assumed, shows the fact, that in this period Mary was not only occasionally given a priestly dignity, for the reason of her descent from the line of the Levi Priests of the Old Testament. The Early Christian Madonna representation from Parenzo (fig. 14) reinforces this hypothesis, too.

In my opinion, Marie-Louise Thérèl namely has realized correctly, that the Virgin has to be mainly as a symbol of the church apart from her significance as Thostokos (Des Genitrix), because she gathers together the faithful, which are personified by Euphrasius, the Saints and the deacon with his son, around Christ or around the incarnated Word of God, respectively. In my opinion, this ministerial-priestly function, which Thérèl indirectly ascribes to the Mother of God, is above all clearly underlined by the bishop's pallium, which can be seen beneath Mary's outer garment.

Conclusion

Almost certainly, the chasubles of the Madonna statues from Ger, IX, Tarragona and Talló (figs. 1-4) symbolize allegorically Mary's function as symbol of the hierarchical (priestly) church, as should be pointed out above all by the theological exegesis. The Marian figures embody therefore even the High Middle Ages' theological conception of interpreting the Mother of God as prototype of the sacramental ministerial priesthood, even if in a smaller extent as Christ.

Curiously, just the hierarchical form of composition of Romanesque Madonna sculptures in general backs up, in Laurentin's opinion, this hypothesis, though Laurentin did not seem to realize that some Romanesque Madonna statues show Mary in the chasuble.

In the subsequent paragraph it will be pointed out, that almost certainly the formal-stylistic shape of the throne representations of the

The wooden «Chasuble Madonnas» from Ger, IX, Tarragona and Talló


«Chasuble Madonnas» from Ger and Ix (figs. 1-2) meaningfully backs up Mary’s significance as type of the hierarchical church.

Is the iconographic motif of the throne chair an episcopal cathedra?

During the Romanesque period the ivory throne of Solomon (III Kings 10, 18-20, Vulg.), as described in the Old Testament, has not only been exclusively associated with the theological Marian sedes sapientiae concept, but sometimes also with contemporaneous, secular royal thrones. Because of the fact, that this secular interpretation of Solomon’s throne was commonly used at least since the late 12th century, the throne representations of Romanesque Madonna statues also ought to be more and more alluded to the regal, majestic traits of the Virgin, which—as already noted— were especially emphasized at the Marian depictions not until the High Middle Ages. Due to

Mathias Delcor’s researches mainly, in my opinion, this hypothesis most probably is not true of the concerning wooden «Chasuble Madonnas» (figs. 1-4). As Delcor correctly realized, the throne depictions of the two oldest «Chasuble Madonnas» from Ger and Ix (figs. 1-2) namely show clear analogies to the episcopal throne from Girona Cathedral (fig. 15), dated about 1038. In addition to the similar construction scheme it is mainly the tendril motif of the episcopal cathedra, which decorates the front side of the rectangular throne posts, and which finds clear analogies to the episcopal throne of the sculptures (figs. 1-2) meaningly backs up Mary’s significance as type of the hierarchical church. The throne depictions of the sculptures from Ger with itself with Delcor, however didn’t offer an interpretation of this fact. Because of the fact, that the throne chairs of the sculptures allude to the famous episcopal cathedra from Girona with the utmost probability, they refer, in my opinion, not only to the main significance of Mary as Throne of Wisdom, but also to her function as type of the hierarchical church. The throne representations of the sculptures from Ger and Ix (figs. 1-2) supplement, in contrast to the ones
from the Targasona- and Talló-Madonna (figs. 3-4), therefore particularly this meaning dimension of Mary, which, however, is presented primarily by the concise motif of the priestly chasuble to the viewer.

The iconographic relation between the statues and the Madonna depictions of the Romanesque mural paintings in the Pyrenean Valleys of North-West Catalonia

Until now, research has failed to relate the wooden «Chasuble Madonnas» (figs. 1-4), which are under discussion in this article, to the Madonna depictions of the Romanesque mural paintings in the Pyrenean Valleys of North-West Catalonia (figs. 16-20). Due to the fact that these Madonna depictions show Mary also with a chasuble, as it shall be verified, for example, by the example of the depiction of the Madonna from Sant Joan de Tredós (fig. 16), there must be, in my opinion, a direct iconographical relation between the painted Madonna depictions and the wooden sculptures from Ger, Ix, Targasona and Talló.

The Madonna of the apse conch from Sant Joan de Tréodos (Aran Valley)

The fresco of the apse conch (fig. 16) from the church Sant Joan de Tredós, situated in the Aran Valley, is kept today at The Cloisters (Metropolitan Museum of Art) in New York. According to resent research this mural painting, which is related to the circle of the school of the Pedret Master by stylistic features, has to be dated already to the end of the 12th century. The depiction (fig. 16) is preserved in fair condition and shows in a rigidly frontal pose a Throne of Wisdom Madonna as Majestas Mariae in the context of the Adoration of the Magi. The guardian figures of the archangels Michael and Gabriel, which must be interpreted as Italo-Byzantine motifs, flank the scenery on the left and on the right.


63. The invention of this special iconographical apse-schema, which can be found only in the sphere of the Catalan mural painting, is attributed to the Pedret school. See Karr, The Romanesque in Catalonia, p. 194.

By examining the enthroned Mother of God, which is set on a chest-like seat with cushion, with regard to her clothing it becomes apparent, that she must be related to the Marian figures of the wooden «Chausable Madonna». In addition to the red under-tunic and a separate veil the nimbed Mother of God almost certainly specifically wears a blue «bell-chausable», which is gathered up by her arms. However, it has to be remarked at this point, that the separation of the blue veil from the chausable at the present state of preservation of the mural painting is hardly discernible, even at the original. Thus, graphical structures today can be made out at the right part of Mary’s shoulder only, marking the ending of the veil, which is decorated by a white hem66.

To sum up, you can say, that the uncrowned Virgin from the fresco of the apse conch from Sant Joan de Tredós must be understood as symbol of the hierarchical church, apart from her foremost signification as Theotokos or Throne of Wisdom67, respectively. Mary’s priestly garment suggests this hypothesis.

The Madonna of the apse conch from Santa Maria d’Esterrí d’Àneu (Àneu Valley)

Another depiction of a sedes sapientiae Madonna in the sphere of the Catalan mural painting, though unfortunately heavily damaged, is from the apse paintings of Santa Maria d’Esterrí d’Àneu (fig. 17), which today is kept in the National Museum of Catalan Art (MNAC) in Barcelona. The fresco of the apse conch of these mural paintings from the Àneu Valley, dating back to the end of the 11th century, shows a Madonna edged by archangels and Magi68. Due to its bad condition of preservation no provable statements can any longer be made upon the blue outer garment of the Marian figure. However, research is assuming that the painted apse conch was almost identical with the apse vaulting from Tredós (fig. 16) by stylistic and iconographic features and has perhaps been done by the same master of the Pedret school, as the preserved fragments suggest69.

In my opinion, one might therefore rightfully assume that the Marian figure from Santa Maria d’Esterrí d’Àneu was dressed with a high medieval chasuble, too and had also been received as symbol of the hierarchical church apart from its foremost signification as Throne of Wisdom. It cannot be ruled out that this ecclesiological priestly connotation of Mary is even reinforced possibly by the two donor clerics from the left apse wall consecration of the church is known, the apse frescoes, which on the left and on the right is surrounded by the Virgin’s shoulder only (fig. 10), is also dressed in a blue priestly chasuble70.

The painted central apse from the parish church Santa Maria de Taüll in the Àneu Valley (fig. 18), which was consecrated on 11th December 1123, shows in the apse conch (fig. 19) a frontally arranged sedes sapientiae Madonna in a mandorla, which on the left and on the right is surrounded by the adoring Magi.71 Since the exact date of the consecration of the church is known, the apse frescoes, which today can be seen in the National Museum of Catalan Art (MNAC) in Barcelona can be dated with certainty about the year 112372. The nimbed figure of Mary (fig. 19) is wearing a Romanesque sacerdotal chasuble in addition to a red under-tunic and a separate blue veil, as for example Juan Vivancos Pérez has correctly realized.73 In the opinion of Anne Courtillé it is evident, that this chausable, which is decorated with little stars and a broad breast braid, alludes to Mary’s significance as symbol of the hierarchical church:

Vierge mère, la Vierge de l’Epiphanie est sans doute considérée ici aussi comme Vierge Ecclésia. L’ample chape qu’elle porte, brodée sur le buste d’un large galon sur la longue tunique, peut suggérer en effet un vêtement ecclésiastique.

In my opinion, not only the «bell-chausable» in Santa Maria suggests the hypothesis, that the Virgin from the Marian church at Taüll (fig. 19) must be also considered as a type of the institutionalized church. Additional iconographic motifs of the apse program, which have to be seen in the closest context of the «Chausable Madonna» in the apse conch and which give the program a dominant Eucharistic and ecclesiastical character, must be cited here as well. Thus, in 1974 Flores Deuchler, for example, could prove convincingly, that the apse program is characterized by a dominant idea concerning the sacrificial offering, which already becomes clear by the confrontation of the Adoration of the Magi and the offering scenes of Cain and Abel of the Old Testament on the intrados of the preceding apse arch.74 However, mainly the depiction of the offering of Abel and the depiction of the Lamb of God (Agnus Dei) on the crown of the arch clearly connect the apse program, as Deuchler has realized correctly, with the Eucharist as prefiguration of Christ’s sacrifice (fig. 18).75 A meaningful iconographical linking of this dominant Eucharistic symbolism...
with the institution of the church is, in my opinion, not only achieved by the apostolic college — led by Peter and Paul — but is depicted on the apse wall below the conch, but mainly by the «Chasuble Madonna» in the apse vaulting.

As already mentioned, previous research has missed to link the Marian depiction from Santa Maria de Taüll with the wooden «Chasuble Madonna» (figs. 1-4), which are the topic of this article. Nevertheless, it has to be remarked here, that some authors had already assumed a connection between the Marian figure from Santa Maria and contemporaneous Madonna statues, but didn’t examine this problem further and didn’t bring up the wooden «Chasuble Madonna» from Ger, Ès, Targasona and Talló (figs. 1-4) for discussion. Thus, for example, Courtille curiously thinks, that the mandorla, which frames the Madonna with Child, is an allusion to the candlelight, which usually lightened up medieval Madonna statues in the church building. Recent research in the circle of the National Museum of Catalan Art (MNAC) refers the figure of Mary to contemporaneous wood sculptures, too. According to their opinion, the compositional stiffness of the enthroned Marian figure (fig. 19) suggests this hypothesis and makes it credible, that wooden Madonna sculptures could have served as models for the fresco of the apse conch from Santa Maria.

The Madonna depiction from Sant Pere de Sorpe (Àneu Valley)

Today the fresco fragment with the Madonna depiction from the church Sant Pere de Sorpe in the Àneu Valley (fig. 20) is located in the National Museum of Catalan Art (MNAC) in Barcelona. Originally it decorated the intrados of the first of the two triumphal arches, which separated the nave of the Romanesque parish church from the choir or from the apse, respectively. In addition to a red under-tunic and a blue «bell-chasuble» the nimbed Virgin is dressed with a separate veil that falls widely over her shoulders. On closer examination one notices that the Madonna depiction, which is dated to the middle of the 12th century, refers to the artistically more valuable Madonna depiction from Santa Maria de Taüll (fig. 19) with regard to its formal-stylistic structure. It must be therefore assumed that the Madonna depiction from Santa Maria had been served as a model for the almost contemporaneous fresco from Sorpe, which was done by a late member of the Pedret school. The fresco on the intrados from Sant Pere doesn’t show Mary as Majestas Mariae in connection with the Adoration of the Magi, but shows her enthroned between two little trees. Hélène Toubert has proved credibly, that these representations of the trees refer to the arbore-bona-ecclesia/arbore-mala-synagoga iconography.

The tree with a strong root, dense foliage and coloured fruits stands for the triumphant Ecclesia. The rootless, almost non deciduous, withered tree, which evokes the form of the seven-branched Jewish candelabrum to the left of the Madonna, symbolizes the Synagoga, the allegorical image of the Old Covenant, which had been overcome. In Toubert’s opinion, the enthroned Mother of God must be understood as mediator between the two Testaments, because of the fact, that Mary as New Eve bears Christ and through this founded the New Covenant or the institution of the Holy Church, respectively. The fact, that another symbol of the church — the ship of the miraculous haul of fish — is located below the Madonna depiction (fig. 20), backs up this thesis according to Toubert. These dominant iconographical motifs, which refer to the institution of the church and stand in the closest context of the Madonna depiction, confirm, in my opinion, very plausible the hypothesis, that the Virgin from Sorpe (fig. 20), dressed with the chasuble, must be understood as symbol of the hierarchical church apart from her meaning as Throne of Wisdom.

Conclusion

As it should have turned out in the last part of the article the iconographic type of the Catalan «Chasuble Madonna» doesn’t find its earliest representatives in the art of wood carving, but in the Romanesque mural paintings from the Pyrenean Valleys of North-West Catalonia (figs. 16-20), which must be dated roughly between the end of the 11th and the middle of the 12th century. The Madonna depictions from Sant Joan de Tredós, Santa Maria de Taüll and Sant Pere de Sorpe give evidence to this. Because of this fact, which was overlooked by previous research, Édouard Junyent’s hypothesis, that there must have been most probably very early wood statues of the Madonna, which showed Mary in the priestly chasuble and a separate cover for the head, is backed up. The iconographic Madonna type of the sculptures from Ger, Ès, Targasona and Talló (figs. 1-4) isn’t therefore a iconographical invention of the end of the 12th century, as Noguera i Massà wrongly assumes.

In my opinion, these sculptures furthermore were of special importance in Romanesque Catalonia in contrast to other contemporaneous Madonna statues, which do not show Mary in the sacerdotal chasuble, but in the fully developed habit of the Queen of Heaven. This is manifested by the fact that the type of the «Chasuble Madonna», as the stock of monuments suggests,
plays an important and almost dominant role in Romanesque mural painting of Catalonia regarding Marian depiction. Junienn's hypothesis, that the iconographic motif of the chasuble possibly could have been a feature of all the not surviving Madonna statues of Catalonia in general, must remain unconfirmed up to now. However, it seems to be verified, that the assumed prototype of the wooden «Chasuble Madonna», like the Madonnas from the mural paintings and the Madonna statue from Ger (fig. 1), showed Mary without an additional crown above the veil.

Moreover, this comparison between the matted wooden sculptures and the Madonna depictions of the Catalan mural paintings makes clear, that the Marian figure, dressed with the chasuble must be interpreted most probably as a symbol of the hierarchical church apart from its significance as Throne of Wisdom. It is for the most part the iconographical context of the Madonna depictions from Taüll (fig. 18) and Sorpe (fig. 20), which refers to the institution of the church or the Eucharist, respectively that backs up this hypothesis.

In the following paragraph of the present article it shall be closer examined, if the iconographic type of the Catalan «Chasuble Madonna» has possibly been conceived in the historical context of the contemporary church reform of the 11th and 12th century in Catalonia. At least, Toubert has already related the dominant ecclesiological motifs, which are placed around the Madonna depiction from Sorpe (fig. 20) to the Gregorian reform movement, which tried to renew the institution of the church morally.

The iconographic type of the Catalan «Chasuble Madonna» and the church reform of the 11th and 12th century

In Romanesque art great attention was paid to the iconographic type of the enthroned Madonna. Martin Büchsel associates this development with the Investiture Controversy of the Gregorian church reform, which started at the end of the 11th century and in whose course Mary was made to the sign of the contemporary church reform of the 11th and 12th century.

Im Investiturstreit wurde [...] [die] Legitimation der königlichen Macht bestritten. Die Kirche selber proklamierte sich als die wahre Braut Christi, als die einzige Vertretung Christi. Maria selber wurde zum Inbegriff dieses Kirchenbildes.
In my opinion, it is therefore quite plausible, that the iconographic type of the Catalan «Chasuble Madonna», which alludes to the ministerial church apart from the dominant conception of Mary as God bearer, could have its origin in the context of the church reform movement of the 11th and 12th century. After all, its ideas, which emanated from reform centres in Southern France like, for example, the collegiate church of Saint-Ruf in Avignon or the Benedictine monastery of Saint-Victor in Marseille, widely spread in Catalonia in the second half of the 11th century already. The fact, that the earliest preserved depiction of the Catalan «Chasuble Madonna» at Sant Joan de Tréids (fig. 16) is ascribed to the Pedret school and must therefore be seen in close correlation with the mural paintings of the Romanesque church Sant Quirze de Pedret (Berguedà), also can back up this hypothesis. Agathe Schmiddunser was able to prove convincingly, that the eschatological-ecclesiological program of the mural paintings from Sant Quirze, which originate from the end of the 11th century, had been developed from the historical context of the endeavours of Gregorian reform in Catalonia and impressively glorifies the institution of the church. Thus, for example, the side apse to the right shows a female figure seated at the top of a church building in royal garments (fig. 21), which, as Bride of Christ, is assigned to the depiction of the parable of the five wise and the five foolish Virgins, as a personification of the hierarchical church (Ecclesia). According to Schmiddunser, the Mother of God and the Child, who are depicted in a medallion (fig. 22) in the vault of the same absidiole, belong to this context too.

Maria im Gewölbe fungiert als Vorbild der Jungfräulichkeit und zugleich als «Typus Ecclesiae», wobei der Akzent auf ihre Mutterschaft gelegt ist. Because of the almost complete destruction of the Madonna depiction (fig. 22) it is no longer possible to find out, if the Marian figure of Pedret possibly was dressed in a chasuble, even if the fragments of the Marian outer garment perfectly remind of the shape of the «bell-chasuble», falling over the forearms.

The subsequent paragraph of this article shall face the question, whether the «Chasuble Madonnas» from Ger, Is, Tarscona and Talló (figs. 1-4) could symbolize not only the contemporary church reform in general but also, in a closer sense, could stand for the new priestly ideal of the church reformers of the 11th and 12th century.

98. Here it has to be remarked again, that previous research has not proposed any interpretation for the development of the iconographic type of the Romanesque «Chasuble Madonna» at all. The following attempt at explanation by the present article must therefore be understood as a first approach to this problem.


100. See in this way for example Klein, The Romanesque in Catalonia, p. 194.

of clergy modeled on the Apostles, according to Petrus Damiani (ca. 1006/7-1072), who was one of the leading theoreticians of the Reform Papacy\textsuperscript{114}. As of the end of the 12th century chapters of Augustinian canons were founded in Romanesque Catalonia with increasing frequency, in which such a priestly ideal of life was led in the «vita communis»\textsuperscript{114}. During the 12th century the canonical reform movement maintained its importance, too. This resulted in further foundations of chapters of canons regular\textsuperscript{115}.

Because of these church-historical circumstances the theological concept of Mary as a concrete model for the ministerial priesthood\textsuperscript{116}, which was evolving during the 12th century, suggests the hypothesis, that, apart from their significance as Throne of Wisdom, the Madonna statues in priestly garment had been really conceived as an allegorical image of the reformed priesthood. There is a lot to be said for it when paying attention to the fact, that Petrus Damiani in a letter written in 1069 associated the chastely living of the reformed priest, which was demanded in the first place, with Mary’s Immaculate Conception. In his opinion namely it should be allowed to touch the altar sacrament with chaste hands only, because it was the strength (virtus) of the same life-giving spirit that had overshadowed the divine Virgin, too\textsuperscript{117}.

That the enthroned «Chasuble Madonnas» from Gen. Is, Targasona and Talló (figs. 1-4) could have been actually developed in such a way is reinforced—in my opinion—mainly by a result of the research of Herbert Kurz, concerning the contemporaneous Catalan monumental crucifixes, the so-called «Majestats».

This type of crucifix, which is not widely spread outside of Catalonia shows the Crucified alive in a long-sleeved tunic. The sculpture from the Collection Batlló (fig. 23), which has to be dated to the second half of the 12th century\textsuperscript{118} and which can now be found in the National Museum of Catalan Art (MNAC) in Barcelona, is probably the most prominent exemplar of these monumental crosses. Kurz has proved convincingly, that the «Majestats», which correspond with the iconographic Volto-Santo type from Lucca, show Christ in the liturgical under-garment of the ministerial priest and therefore emphasize the priestly aspect of the Crucified in particular. In Kurz’s opinion this iconographic type of the crucifixes had been developed at the end of the 11th century by the canonical reform movement from Lucca as an allegorical image of the reformed canons\textsuperscript{119}.

Must the wooden statues be related to the contemporary reform of the priesthood?

The distinctive priestly traits of the Marian figures raise—in my opinion—the question, if the «Chasuble Madonnas» (figs. 1-4), which are discussed in this article, even must be related to the closer context of the church reform of the 11\textsuperscript{th} and 12\textsuperscript{th} century, namely with the contemporaneous reform of the priesthood.

In medieval Catalonia this reform was mainly pushed by the canonical reform movement, which was adopted successfully from Italy and which came out against the concubinage of the priests and the usual practice of simony\textsuperscript{120}. The Catalan reformers therefore called for communal life in chasteness and celibacy for the state...
The wooden «Chasuble Madonna» from Ger, Ix, Tarragona and Tallà however, directly to a not preserved predecessor from Lucca, which dated from the second half of the 12th century and which showed the same iconographic type\textsuperscript{111}. The Catalan «Majestats», of which already two exemplars from the first quarter of the 12th century have survived\textsuperscript{111}, must therefore be close to the Lucca sculpture and reflect the successful adoption of the canonical reform in Catalonia as Kurz has made out correctly\textsuperscript{112}. Because of this historico-cultural positioning of the «Majestats» it seems reasonable to assume, that the contemporaneous Catalan «Chasuble Madonna» (figs. 1-4) refer explicitly to the reformed priesthood as well. Nevertheless this special significance of the Madonna statues should not be overrated in my opinion. Even if Mary, because of her function as symbol of the hierarchical church, was increasingly granted ministerial priestly traits, it was first and foremost Christ, who remained the prototype of the current priesthood of the institutionalized church, as the wooden «Majestats» verify. In addition to this it has to be remarked again, that Mary’s significance as bearer of God and Throne of Wisdom, respectively dominates all Madonna depictions of the Romanesque period.

Résumé and prospect

The Romanesque Madonna statues from Santa Coloma de Ger, Sant Martí d’Ix, Sant Sadurní de Tarragona and Santa Maria de Tallà (figs. 1-4) show the figure of Mary — as already assumed mainly by Catalan research — in high medieval chasubles. The iconographic term «Chasuble Madonna», chosen in this article, should have testified to this phenomenon.

The elementary meaning dimension of the wooden sculptures — of which the Ger-Madonna, dated to the second half of the 12th century, has been determined as earliest exemplar — however is the sedes sapientiae iconography, developed in Early Christian times. This iconography first was transferred to the sculptures in the round of the occidental Early Middle Ages and alludes basically to the significance of Mary as Theotokos (Dei Genitrix) or Throne of Wisdom, which had become important since the Councils of Ephesus (431) and Chalcedon (451).

The motif of the sacerdotal chasuble must be interpreted as an iconographical supplement of the iconography of the Early Christian Throne of Wisdom in the Romanesque period. The chasuble represents most probably Mary’s significance as symbol of the hierarchical or institutionalized church. According to the present article it is mainly the popular analogy in the theological exegesis of the 12th century of Mary’s virginal motherhood and the priestly mission of creating goodly peoples by baptizing and preaching, which makes this interpretation plausible. Previous research has not discussed this topic in actual necessary breadth. This is also true for the conception of Mary being interpreted as priest or ministerial priest, which became more and more popular in the 12th century. Again it must be remarked here, that the art-historical discipline — in contrast to theological or religious research — has not closer thematized this special Marian concept, which can partly be traced back to the Patristic age\textsuperscript{113}. The throne representations of the statues from Ger (fig. 1) and Ix (fig. 2), for example, which refer undoubtedly to the famous episcopal throne from the Girona Cathedral (fig. 15) by its formal structure, has for the first time been related to this meaning dimension in this article.

Another important result of the iconographic analysis of the sculptures, which has not yet realized by previous research, is the fact that the type of the Catalan «Chasuble Madonna» can be found in Romanesque mural paintings of North-West Catalonia, which were made between the end of the 11th and the first half of the 12th century. The mural paintings from Sant Joan de Tredós (end of the 11th century), Sant Maria de Taull (figs. 18-19) and Sant Pere de Sorpe (fig. 20) not only support the hypothesis that there must have been statues before the second half of the 12th century, none of which have survived, which showed Mary in the chasuble, a hypothesis, which already had been taken into consideration by the older literature. In addition the prototype of the wooden «Chasuble Madonnas», which is conceivable because of the parallel between mural painting and sculpture,


\textsuperscript{112} See Dussasens and Josep i Pericas, És reixat l’ure romanica, p. 295.

\textsuperscript{113} It can be proved, that two «Majestats» were kept originally in a chapter of Augustinian can­ons regular, Os Kené, Der Vidé Santí vui Lucca, p. 151.

115. Cf. ibid., p. 206. Here it has to be remarked, that the figure of Mary at Masaccio’s altarpiece from Santa Maria del Carmine isn’t dressed in the sacerdotal chasuble.

116. Beside of this question, the Catalan Madonna statues, which don’t show Mary in the chasuble but, for example, in the habit of the Queen of Heaven, shall be examined in my doctoral dissertation project concerning the different iconographic Madonna types in the art of wood carving in Romanesque Catalonia. The contemporary function of the Madonna statues and their position in the context of the fittings and decorations of the church buildings, respectively, shall be taken into consideration by the project, which is directed by Prof. Claudia Rückert (Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin).

showed the figure of Mary, most probably without a crown or diadem above the veil, as observed at the representations of the mural paintings and at the Ger-Madonna.

Another result of this iconographic parallel backs up the assumed Mary-Ecclesia symbolism of the statues. The iconographic context of the Madonna depictions from Santa Maria de Taüll (figs. 18-19) and Sant Pere de Sope (fig. 20), which is characterized by dominant ecclesiological, Eucharistic motifs, mainly verify this. The historico-cultural sphere of the Catalan «Chasuble Madonnas», which could have been responsible for the development and dissemination of this Madonna type respectively, has been discussed in the present article in the context of the church reform of the 11th and 12th century in Catalonia, which has probably made the Mary-Ecclesia symbolism to a sign of its own will for reforming. Like the Catalan «Majestat»-crucifixes (fig. 23), the wooden Madonna statues most probably even have to be located to the sphere of contemporaneous priestly and clerical-reform, respectively. Thus, the statues probably symbolize the reformed priesthood allegorically in a similar way as the «Majestat» do, as it has been tried to point out in this article. Future research, however, has to examine this fact more intense, because up to now it has been assumed, that not until the 13th century did Mary’s role as a model for the current ministerial priesthood come into extensive theological discussion. Previous art-historical research assumed, that this Marian significance could even be identified first at the Marian altar-pieces of the 15th century, on which the priest should orientate himself at the celebration of the mass115. Thus, for example, Paul Y. Cardile identified the grapes of Masaccio’s Madonna depiction for Santa Maria del Carmine in Pisa (fig. 25), being a symbol of the Eucharist, as an evident allusion to Mary’s priesthood115. In addition to this, it has to be remarked in conclusion, that the image of Mary-Ecclesia should be examined more concentrated regarding the direct context of the Catalan church reform in the High Middle Ages, which was disseminated especially from the abbey church of Ripoll, the spiritual-cultural centre of Catalonia116.