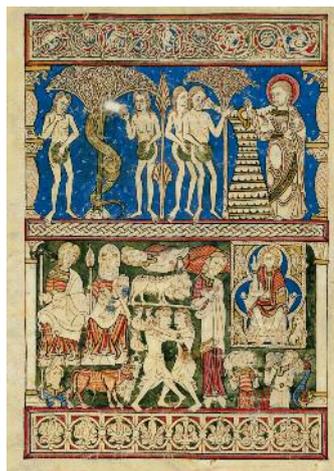


Romanesque Bible of Burgos

Art lovers in general, and especially all of whom are seduced by Romanesque art –an art that is quite fascinating in itself– will have a special reason for satisfaction on discovering this **careful edition by Siloé of the famous Burgos Bible, a true jewel of this important period in the history of art**. This is undoubtedly one of the **most valuable Romanesque codices preserved to date**. Proof of this is the fact that it has been called upon for many of the great art-historical exhibitions of recent times.



It has been said that Romanesque art is addictive. And the expression seems to us to be perfectly appropriate, since few artistic movements in human history are followed with such passion and arouse such interest as everything related to this distant and subjugating period of our past.

As early as the 11th century, Ferdinand I, the most powerful Spanish monarch of the time, managed to break the isolation of the peninsula and connect with the great European trends. Internally, he managed to boost the re-conquest process, and externally, he established privileged relations with the largest and most influential Christian monastic community: the French monastery of Cluny, the jewel of Romanesque art. Royal interests on the one hand, and on the other, the Jacobean route, which was acquiring a renewed and unusual vigour, progressively linked us to France and Europe, and Spanish art would gradually fade its autochthonous character to end up fully connected with the modern style that was already sweeping the continent: the Romanesque.

This is fundamentally true for architecture and sculpture, since as far as miniatures are concerned, the peninsula continues to maintain its dose of originality and Hispanic genius, as can be seen in the aforementioned Beati that continue their evolutionary course, but always with a very particular imprint that is far removed from the European apocalypses. **This Burgos Bible that we present here is unique for its overflowing spontaneity, with characteristics that could be described as expressionist**. And all this despite the doubts that still remain about its origin for several authors.

Indeed, one of the questions still not entirely resolved about this Bible is its provenance.



If for Domínguez Bordona it was unknown, for Professor John Williams it could have its origin in Toledo. However, Professor Joaquín Yarza, one of those who have studied and know this codex best, provides very solid arguments to ascribe it to the monastery of San Pedro de Cardeña, where there was an important scriptorium which, between 1170 and 1180, produced this Bible and the manuscript known as the Beatus of San Pedro de Cardeña.

However, **palaeographer Manuel Zabalza**, who has carried out an extensive and valuable piece of research which we offer here for the first time, **argues in favour of it originating in Burgos, but in the monastery of Las Huelgas**, as he points out in the very title of his article, rather than in the monastery of San Pedro de Cardeña.

We could say, in colloquial terms, that the polemic is there, but as we do not intend to trivialise this issue at all, we believe that, on the contrary, these discrepancies can serve as a spur to future and interesting investigations. Moreover, they provide the study a liveliness and interest that they might otherwise never have had, given the academic nature of the subject.

The Bible, now in the Biblioteca Pública del Estado in Burgos, **may originally have had three volumes, of which only the first has survived**. The two fragments found recently, sewn to another biblical codex from the monastery of Las Huelgas, could witness to the third volume and would confirm this hypothesis. There are still, however, gaps and questions that prevent us from stating this with any certainty. In any case, the fact that only the first volume **survives in its entirety has led us to select the 33 folios that are the most representative** –or contain the most singular elements– of the history and artistic significance of this Bible. For example, the sublime folio 12v, with the **valuable iconographic representation of the original sin and the expulsion from paradise** which, in the words of Professor Yarza, is the most exceptional of all the Castilian biblical scenes of the Romanesque period and constitutes a «unicum» of the European Romanesque miniature.





In addition to the meticulous and faithful reproduction of these selected folios, this volume of studies offers the most ambitious, detailed and rigorous analysis of this important codex ever undertaken. It is a real pleasure for us to be able to present to lovers of Romanesque art with one of the most emblematic pieces of this art in Spain. If, for many, the *Romanesque Bible of Burgos* is one of the most important codices of Hispanic Christianity, for amateurs and experts it is a valuable treasure of the Spanish Romanesque miniature.

It is time to let ourselves be infected by the secrets jealously guarded in the pages of this Bible, which has the power to transport us to a somewhat mysterious and distant era that demands our attention, and which seduces us with its hieratism and simplicity, with its absence of proportions and perspectives.

Once again, the eternal struggle between good and evil, in which man is both a witness and the protagonist, is present in its pages. In these fantastic representations—as in all Romanesque works—the human effort to always remain on the side of good is evident. For this very reason, *supreme good*—God—has to be represented in all his splendour and expressive power. Hence the magnificent proliferation of the *Maiestas Domini* (or the *Maiestas Mariae*, such as the excellent one in this Bible), in which this longing is finally transformed into a veritable explosion of beauty.

Our gratitude goes to all for the considerable interest and sensitivity with which this edition has been received.

