

HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT OF THE SEE OF EGARA

The See of Egara is an episcopal seat serving as an outstanding record of monumental painting and architecture of the Visigothic era. The creation of the bishopric of Egara (founded around 450 A.D.) marked the start of the golden age in the development of an episcopal complex of outstanding artistic importance for Christian Western Europe. One of the best preserved landmarks of Visigothic Hispania.

The designation of the Episcopal See led to the construction of this great architectural complex, comprising the cathedral of Santa Maria and the baptistery at its feet, the funereal building of Sant Miquel, and the parish church of Sant Pere. Today we still have important remains from the bishopric period, especially the paintings that decorate the apses of Santa Maria and Sant Miquel, as well as the mural altarpiece of Sant Pere.

The Muslim invasions of the Iberian Peninsula from 711 mark the end of the bishopric of Egara. The complex underwent an artistic resurgence in the 12th century, resulting in the construction of the Romanesque naves of Santa Maria and Sant Pere, added to the apses of the episcopal buildings. During this period (c. 1180) the outstanding mural paintings dedicated to the martyrdom of St Thomas Becket, Archbishop of Canterbury, were produced, comprising one of the most ancient records to be preserved of the representation of the Archbishop's martyrdom in the Western Mediaeval world.

The Gothic period did not lead to any major transformation of the Sant Pere complex in terms of architecture. What we do, however, retain are some highly notable examples of painting, both murals and on wooden panels. The main altarpiece of Sant Pere was the first to be installed. It was commissioned in 1411 from Lluís Borrassà, one of the most significant international Gothic painters. The altarpiece of the main altar of Sant Miquel was produced by the painters Jaume Cirera and Guillem Talarn, representatives of late International Gothic. In 1458 Jaume Huguet was commissioned to produce a new reredos for the altar of Sts Abdon and Sennen, also known as Sant Nin and Sant Non, the patron saints of the peasantry.

