

VIRTUOUS STONE:  
MEDIEVAL LLOTJAS OF THE CROWN OF ARAGON

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by

Soraya Renteria

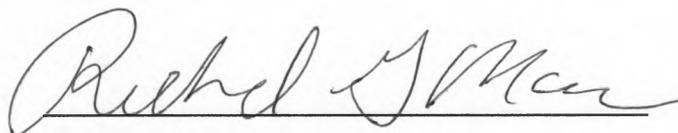
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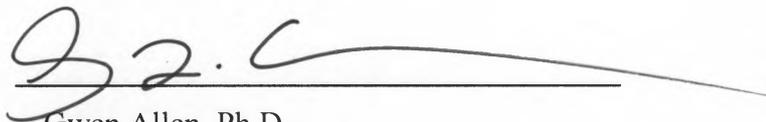
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A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Richard Mann", written over a horizontal line.

Richard Mann, Ph.D  
Professor of Art History

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Gwen Allen", written over a horizontal line.

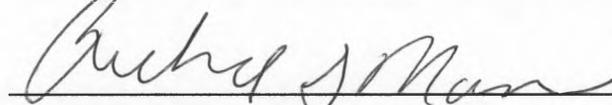
Gwen Allen, Ph.D  
Professor of Art History

VIRTUOUS STONE:  
LATE MEDIEVAL LLOTJAS OF THE CROWN OF ARAGON

Soraya Renteria  
San Francisco, California  
2015

Built during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, the Llotja of Barcelona and the Llotja of Valencia were multipurpose halls for merchants to meet and conduct wholesale trade. These Llotja served as a space where interconfessional relations continued to thrive amidst a society in which Christian homogeneity was becoming linked with moral and spiritual salvation. Both the city leaders and the church had a vested interest in the financial success of these cities as trade centers. Yet the Llotjas represented a political and moral problem for each city's political and religious leaders. This thesis considers the construction and function of the Llotjas through Medieval Christian theological discourses on architectural allegory, aesthetics and materiality. By analyzing the relationship between civic architecture and the theological legitimization of the Barcelona's and Valencia's body politic, this thesis also contributes to the broader discussion on the relationship between medieval civic architecture and virtue.

I certify that the abstract is a correct representation of the content of this thesis

  
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Chair, Thesis Committee

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Date

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## Introduction

Rising from the edge of the sea there is a magnificent and splendid building you would think was a church or a great palace.<sup>1</sup>

- Hieronimus Munzer, *Viaje por España y Portugal, 1494-1495*

Between the thirteenth and fifteenth centuries a series of majestic gothic merchant halls called llotjas were constructed in the Crown of Aragon. Serving as temples of commerce, medieval llotjas signified both the sacred and the profane. Their architecture drew from ecclesiastical styles and allegories while functioning as spaces where everyday trade took place.

A llotja was a multipurpose hall for merchants to meet and conduct wholesale trade. Some llotjas also served as sites for trade consulates and tribunals. The open porticoes that had served in earlier centuries as spaces for people to conduct trade or government matters which resembled the Italian *loggia* developed into enclosed monumental structures in the Late Middle Ages. While these monumental llotjas are often compared to the trade halls of northern Germany, their aesthetic and symbolism is particular to the socio-political and religious context of the Crown of Aragon.

I will focus on the main trade halls of the first and last of these great gothic llotjas: the Llotja of Barcelona (fig. 1) and the Llotja Valencia (fig. 2). Both of these grand buildings were built during the Crown of Aragon. The Llotja of Barcelona's main

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<sup>1</sup> "A orillas del mar se levanta una magnifica y soberbia casa con cupula, que creerias una iglesia o un gran palacio" in Jerónimo Münzer. *Viaje por España y Portugal, 1494-1495*. (Madrid: Ediciones Polifemo, 1991), 7

trade hall was constructed between 1380 and 1392, while the Llotja Valencia dates to between 1482 and 1498.<sup>2</sup>

During his visit to Barcelona in 1494, humanist geographer Hieronymus Münzer encountered the imposing Llotja of Barcelona and compared it to both a church and a palace. This fifteenth century account of Barcelona's Llotja captures the multiple ambivalent meanings signified by the llotja. Was a llotja a civic palace or was it a sacred temple?

I argue that the Late Medieval llotjas of the Crown of Aragon were both: they combined elements of civic buildings and sacred temples, drawing on the architectural conventions and symbolism of both. City leaders built these llotjas as signs of the virtuous and sacred nature of trade in order to justify their vested interest in the city's commerce. In doing so, they attempted to legitimize their rule during a turbulent time period. City leaders hoped to resolve political and social tensions and reinforce the social order of the city, through the use of theological allegories such as the City of God. Moreover, these llotjas functioned as signs of eschatological and moral anxieties. These concerns were manifested, affirmed and contested through each llotja's aesthetic properties.

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<sup>2</sup> The llotja of Barcelona is also known as the Llotja de Mar. The llotja of Valencia is also known as the Lonja de los Mercaderes or the Lonja de la Seda in Castilian. For the sake of clarity, in this these I will refer to them as the Llotja of Barcelona and the Llotja of Valencia.

### Previous Research

The Crown of Aragon's Llotjas have become a popular topic of study. Because of the limited structural and archival sources, the Llotja of Barcelona has not been as widely studied as others. Due to periods of neglect and subsequent renovations of the eighteenth century (fig. 3) in which most of the building was demolished, all that remains of the Llotja of Barcelona is the interior of the original Trade Hall. Thus far most analyzes have focused on the Llotja de Mar's eighteenth century reconstruction. Yet the original interior of the of the Llotja's trade hall provides invaluable evidence of the original appearance of the llotja and its important role in Barcelona's Late Medieval society.

In 1996 the Llotja of Valencia was declared a World Heritage Monument by UNESCO. The Llotja was declared a site "of outstanding universal value as it is a wholly exceptional example of a secular building in the late Gothic style, which dramatically illustrates the power and wealth of one of the great Mediterranean mercantile cities."<sup>3</sup>

The classification of the Llotja as a World Heritage Monument spurred scholarly interest in the building. As a result, several articles and books have been published in the last few years. To date the Llotja of Valencia has been the most studied of the Crown of Aragon's llotjas. Most research on the Llotja has focused on its structural and formal elements. These studies provide a better understanding of how the Llotja was constructed and its original appearance at different stages of its construction and renovation. Salvador Aldana, one of the leading scholars of the Llotja, has applied iconographic methods to the

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<sup>3</sup> "La Lonja de la Seda de Valencia." UNESCO, Accessed January 3, 2013, <http://whc.unesco.org/en/list/782>

Llotja's architectural and sculptural elements, highlighting the Llotja's embedded religious symbolism.

More recent studies more socio-political context for these llotjas. Aldana, for example, places his earlier iconographic analysis within a larger social framework.<sup>4</sup> Other studies have focused on the llotjas within economic or political frameworks, but have ignored the llotjas' theological context. Thus, these llotjas continue to be decontextualized and their historical framework oversimplified. While Aldana and others have argued that the llotjas are a reflection of the socio-political in Late Medieval Aragon, buildings are more than passive reflections. The Llotjas were dynamic spaces that interacted within different discourses of Barcelona's and Valencia's social sphere. They reinforced each city's moral values while at the same time revealing each society's insecurities about what it meant to be a good Christian, a merchant, and a city leader in a new modern world.

Historians have mostly focused on the Llotjas' economic functions. In her dissertation, Elaine Shelley Roff argues that the Llotja of Barcelona functioned as a sign of the economic prosperity of the city. The building, she argues, was built by city leaders in hopes of resolving the city's economic tensions. City leaders wished to create a more economically prosperous city and used the grand aesthetic of the llotja to create the

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<sup>4</sup> Salvador Lara Ortega. *La lonja, un monumento del II milenio para el III milenio*. (Valencia: Ayuntamiento de Valencia, 2000), 103

impression of this prosperity in the face of economic turbulence.<sup>5</sup> While Roff does acknowledge anxieties about the virtue of trade and the relationship between city and religious leader, she limits these associations to the Consolat de Mar, and not the actual building. This analysis while valid, simplifies what was a much more complex socio-political situation and ignores the building's religious signification. I build on Roff's analysis, arguing that both llotjas also functioned as powerful sites of dual signification through which city leaders hoped to resolve socio-political tensions and reinforce the social order of the city. I extend my analysis to include both the Llotja of Barcelona and Valencia, and in addition to analyzing the economic symbolism of the buildings I address the perhaps more important religious symbolism of these llotjas.

Recognizing the architectural dynamism of these llotjas, Rene Carrasco sets a similar thesis to Roff regarding the Llotja of Valencia. He argues that in order to maintain power, the merchant oligarchy misappropriated the church's spiritual values. He states that having a llotja that shared the aesthetics of a city hall and communal church resolved the conflicts between merchants and the Church.<sup>6</sup> This claim insightfully addresses the interests of the body politic in the llotja's aesthetic. Yet it does not consider that the Church and the city's leaders had a complex and often symbiotic relationship.

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<sup>5</sup> Elaine Shelley Roff, "Building Images of Prosperity: The Catalan Merchant Hall of the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Centuries" (PhD diss., Brown University, 2002), 14

<sup>6</sup> Renee Carrasco. "L'architecture à Valence entre urbanité médiévale et violence moderne." In *La violence en Espagne et en Amérique (XVe-XIXe siècles)*. Ed. Jean Duviols, (Paris: Presses de l'Université de Paris-Sorbonne, 1997), 239

Furthermore, Carrasco fails to consider the multiple and often contradictory symbolism of medieval aesthetic allegories.

Drawing on these previous studies, I ground each llotja in a specific place and time by analyzing their ties to the socio-political context of each city. In order to understand how these discourses were manifested by each llotja, I first review the socio-political climate in Barcelona and Valencia during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. This first chapter is organized both thematically and chronologically to provide the necessary historical context for understanding the llotjas' social and symbolic function. An economic overview of both cities is followed by an examination of the natural and political crises of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries and religious anxieties will be analyzed in a historical context.

In Chapter 2, I first summarize the urban and cultural growth that occurred in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries in the Crown of Aragon. Then I trace each llotja's construction chronologically, and analyze each llotja's social function as part of each city's larger urban development program.

Chapter 3 revisits the religious anxieties discussed in Chapter 1, and analyzes the religious function of each llotja's aesthetic by exploring different religious signs that expressed the theological paradoxes of a changing world. Particular attention is given to the relationship between religious and city leaders in their evocation of the City of God. This evocation is analyzed through the llotjas' focus on their materiality, sacred geometry

and sculptural programs. Throughout the chapter I also show how these different religious signs served as symbols of political, eschatological and moral anxieties.

## Chapter 1

### The Crown of Aragon in the Late Middle Ages

In the Late Middle Ages the Crown of Aragon was a turbulent and often paradoxical region. The prosperity and crisis of the citizens of each city impacted each llotja's construction, function and aesthetic. From the fourteenth to fifteenth centuries the Crown of Aragon was one of the superpowers of the Medieval Mediterranean world. The following sections examine the two cities' economies, natural and social crises and religious conflicts in relation to each other and the llotjas of both cities.

#### Economy

The fourteenth century ushered a period of economic prosperity for the city of Barcelona. The city dominated trade within the Iberian peninsula and the entire Mediterranean world during this period.<sup>7</sup> The city was a key port in several important trade routes. Due to this influx of trade, goods people and wealth began to circulate through the city creating the need for new monumental buildings such as the llotja.

Although Barcelona continued to be a major center of finance and banking going into the fifteenth century, by the end of the century Barcelona would cede its domination of trade in Iberia.<sup>8</sup> The decline of Barcelona as the major trade center of the Crown of Aragon precipitated the rise of Valencia in the fifteenth century. Barcelona as the capital of region of Catalonia was severely impacted by the Catalan Civil war that waged from

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<sup>7</sup> Ibid. 169

<sup>8</sup> Thomas Bisson, *Medieval Crown of Aragon*. 169-171

1462 to 1472. The economic troubles caused by political conflict led merchants based in Barcelona to relocate to the Valencia. As a result of immigration and continuous plagues, Barcelona's population dropped from 50,000 in 1340 to 20,000 in 1477.<sup>9</sup> Thus by the fifteenth century Valencia was the most populous city in the crown of Aragon with between 35 to 70 thousand inhabitants, although the exact population is still debated.<sup>10</sup> This is comparable to other important Mediterranean port cities such as Venice which had a population of approximately 50,000 in 1348.

Valencia, which had been attempting to become an important trade center took advantage of this opportunity, positioning itself as the new dominant trade center of the region including constructing a newer greater Llotja than had ever been seen in the Crown of Aragon. As a major Mediterranean port Valencia, like Barcelona, became a place where goods, ideas, technologies and people circulated.<sup>11</sup> All of these items and merchants would have passed through the halls of the llotja at one point or another.

The protection of trade and of the merchant class became two of the main concerns for both Barcelona's and Valencia's government.<sup>12</sup> Moreover, there was a tacit

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<sup>9</sup> Ibid. 165

<sup>10</sup> There has been much debate about the accurate population data for the city during this period. Some sixteenth century records show upward of 100,000 inhabitants, though these have been mostly discounted as exaggerations. Other scholars place the population of the city much lower at 35,000. For more information on this debate see Salvador Ortega, *Las seis grandes lonjas*, 14

<sup>11</sup> Rafael Narbona Vizcaíno, "Valencia, emporio mediterráneo (ss.XIV-XV)," *Actas del simposio reino y ciudad: Valencia en su historia* (2008): 94

<sup>12</sup> David Igual Luis. "Social Rise of the Mercantile Elite in Cities of the Medieval Kingdom of Valencia." In *Urban Elites and Aristocratic Behavior in the Spanish Kingdoms at the end of the Middle Ages*. Ed. Maria Asenjo-Gonzalez. (Turnhout: Brepols, 2013), 168

pact between wealthy merchants and the political leaders such as the Consells.<sup>13</sup> The middle class made up of the city's urban professionals: including merchants, doctors, jurists, functionaries and notaries represented ten percent of the city's population. Some merchants achieved leadership within the city governance through financial means. City leaders wanted to raise the status of merchants for their own good, but were quick to distance themselves from this middle class to protect the oligarchy's integrity and power.<sup>14</sup> This can be seen in the construction of the llotja of Valencia which elevates the status of merchants with its grand scale yet includes a warning about the moral dangers of trade within its walls. This dichotomy will be further addressed in the following chapters.

### Crisis

The construction of the llotjas took place not only during a period of economic prosperity but one of natural and social crises. The Crown's economic prosperity during the Late Middle Ages was tempered by the spread of the Black Death throughout Europe. The plague hit Barcelona six times between 1333 and 1396, killing between two-thirds to three-fourths of its population between 1348 and 1351. During the outbreak in 1348 most of the Consell de Cent died.<sup>15</sup> The plague had similarly devastating effects in Valencia.

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<sup>13</sup> Salvador Ortega, *Las seis grandes lonjas*, 33

<sup>14</sup> Thomas Bisson, *Medieval Crown of Aragon*. 164

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.* 165

In 1339 Barcelona also experienced a great famine as a result of a wheat shortage. The city populace blamed city leaders for this famine. Spurred by a Carmelite friar's sermon claiming that God was permitting the city's populace to suffer because of the wrong doing of the Concell. The lower classes revolted against city leaders, believing the famine was God's punishment for the Consell's bad governance.<sup>16</sup>

Not only did the plague halt construction of llotjas, it caused a social and psychological devastation that spurred the spiritual function of these llotjas. These plagues and famines amplified eschatological concerns which had been present throughout the middle ages. In the face of what seemed to be God's punishment, the salvation of one's soul in the immanent apocalypse became a pressing concern.

Amidst these natural disasters, a socio-political crisis was taking place which would deeply impact the construction of both llotjas. During the fourteenth and fifteenth century the Crown of Aragon was in near constant war with the Kingdom of Castile and regions of Italy and North Africa.<sup>17</sup> In Valencia, Perez Garcia and Debra Blumenthal attribute the city's fifteenth century growing social and economic crisis on the surge in the city's population. With this population boom, all sectors of the population became involved in conflicts over social and political power.<sup>18</sup> Other factors also contributed to

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<sup>16</sup> Elaine Shelley Roff, "Building Images of Prosperity" 35

<sup>17</sup>Some of the military campaigns of this period include the conquest of Naples, battles over the region of Murcia with the Kingdom of Castile and ongoing efforts to establish and maintain territories in North Africa for the purpose of trade.

<sup>18</sup> Debra Blumenthal. *Enemies and Familiars Slavery and Mastery in Fifteenth-century Valencia* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2009), 160.

tensions within both cities. The need to contribute to royal campaigns led to constant public debt in both cities. Likewise, the Trastamera push for centralization led to a decline in Barcelona's and Valencia's political autonomy.<sup>19</sup>

These power struggles are manifested in Llotjas' construction as city leaders attempted to maintain the current social order through the buildings' aesthetics. Ortega argues that the aesthetic of the Llotja of Valencia reflects the chance brought about by Valencia's economic boom.<sup>20</sup> I take a step further in later sections of this thesis and analyze how the llotjas not only reflected but helped to produce the desires and anxieties the cities' economic booms created.

### Religious Conflict

Complicating the tumultuous social, economic and political situations of the Crown of Aragon, were the interconfessional relations between Christians, Muslims, and Jews. The complexities of these relations during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries are beyond the scope of this paper, but it is important to note certain points as they relate to both llotjas' social and symbolic function. Relations between Christians, Muslims and Jews had existed for hundreds of years throughout the Iberian peninsula in what historians refer to as *convivencia*. This term is best understood as dynamic and sometimes

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<sup>19</sup> Enrique Cruselles Gómez, Rafael Narbona Vizcaíno. "Espacios económicos y sociedad política en la valencia del siglo XV" in *Revista d'Historia Medieval*, no.9 (1998): 193-202.

<sup>20</sup> Salvador Ortega, *Las seis grandes lonjas*, 33

violent coexistence.<sup>21</sup> By the time of the llotjas' construction in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, this coexistence was in the end stages of what had been a long process of deterioration. Relations between Christians, Muslims and Jews within the city exacerbated eschatological anxieties produced by the plague and famine mentioned earlier. Conflicts over religious purity and virtue continued to intensify during this period. As spaces of interconfessional relations, the llotjas offer a unique lens onto the way Christian city leaders dealt with these paradoxical interfaith relationships.

This chapter has outlined the prosperity and various crises of the Crown of Aragon during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. The following chapters will examine how the socio-political and religious realities of this period influenced the construction and function of these two llotjas.

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<sup>21</sup> The term *convivencia* was coined by Americo Castro and has since been widely used though disputed term used to describe the symbiotic though hostile relationship between Jews, Christians and Muslims. For a discussion on the term *convivencia* see, David Nirenberg. *Communities of Violence: Persecution of Minorities in the Middle Ages*. (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1996) 8

## Chapter 2

### The Llotjas in the Earthly City

Medieval mercantile cities such as Barcelona and Valencia were bustling, populous cities full of grand churches, lavish palaces and monumental civic buildings surrounding plazas where people came to conduct their daily affairs as well as to see and to be seen. A merchant making his way to the Llotja of Valencia in the late fifteenth century would have entered Placa del Mercat, full of the people, buildings and the noise of everyday life, only to encounter the Llotja's imposing stone façade. Valencia's Llotja as well as the Llotja of Barcelona were buildings designed carefully by city leaders to awe, amaze and to remind the merchant and all others that stood before it. This chapter traces the growth of these two cities and how that growth led to the construction of their llotjas.

The fourteenth and fifteenth centuries saw a rise in the influence of classical writers such as Plato and Aristotle. This influence can be found in the works of writers such as Ramon Llull, Francesc Eiximenis and Saint Vincent Ferrer. Rafael Vizcaino claims that it is difficult to locate the ideas of these classical and medieval writers in the Crown of Aragon's urban life including social and political realities.<sup>22</sup> Indeed. The utopic visions of civilization posed by these writers are difficult to marry with the harsh and often paradoxical realities of medieval urban life. Yet I propose that one place where you can find the ideas of these writers enacted in the social and political fabric of each city is

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<sup>22</sup> Rafael Narbona Vizcaino. "Utopies i realitats. Pensament i acció política en la València d'Eiximenis," In *Eiximenis i la seua obra*. (Valencia: Acadèmia Valenciana de la Llengua, 2010), 172

in each city's architectural projects. The following sections analyze the construction of each llotja within the frame of the urban development of each city.

## Construction

### *Barcelona*

The Llotja of Barcelona's construction was part of Barcelona's expansion in which several monumental buildings were constructed. The city's rising wealth and supremacy in maritime trade during the fourteenth century created the need for a centralized location to conduct maritime trade. Other construction projects included other monumental civic structures such as the royal shipyard (fig. 4) and the Salo de Cent (fig.5).

The original Trade Hall of the Llotja remains much as it was when it was constructed in the fourteenth century. However the outside of the Llotja was altered and subsequently encased in by a reconstruction and expansion headed by Soan Soler I Faneca in 1771. Thus, the following analysis will focus on the main trade hall and is based on Roff's 2002 reconstruction of the original design of the hall. Roff's reconstruction provides the most accurate reconstruction to date since it is based on archeological, visual and documentary evidence of previous scholars along with evidence with new evidence gathered though new technologies that reveal sections of the llotja long buried within the eighteenth century building.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> See Elaine Shelley Roff, "Building Images of Prosperity" 15-22

The growing volume of maritime trade in early fourteenth century Barcelona created the need for a more centralized place for trade and its administration. In a 1339 royal proclamation, Count-King Pere IV (1336–1387) acknowledged Barcelona's need to construct a llotja that was worthy of the grandeur of the city and of the trade activities that took place within its walls:

We, Pere, by the grace of God King of Aragon, of Valencia, of Majorca, of Sardinia and Corsica, and Count of Barcelona, of Rosellon and Sardinia, acknowledge that in the city of Barcelona, such a grand and distinguished city located by the sea in which there are many navigators and merchants that engage in so much trade, there is no convenient nor good llotja in which the *consols de mar* can hold court and the navigators and merchants, who have adapted themselves to this city, can meet and negotiate and make their contracts and business, just as in many other cities which are not so worthy have similar llotjas, even though this city has been made rich and noble more by the sea and by trade than by any other means.<sup>24</sup>

The construction of a llotja on the seaside would provide a convenient location for merchants to dock their boats and process their goods. The llotja would also house administrative offices, a money exchange house, and a maritime consulate, the *Consolat de Mar*, charged with the legal administration of maritime trade.

Plans for construction began as early as the 1340's, but were hampered by political conflicts and the outbreak of the plague as outlined in Chapter 1. Thus,

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<sup>24</sup> “Nos en Pere per la gracia de deu Rey d'arago de Valencia de Mallorches de Cerdanya e de Corcega e Comte de Barchinona de Rossello e de Cerdanya attenents que en la Ciutat de Barchinona jassie gran e insigna Ciutat e situada en maritima e en la cual ha molts navegants e mercaders es fan moltes feynes de mercaderia, no ha lotge covinent nebona en la qual los Consols de la Mar pusquen tenir Cort, e los navegants e mercaders qui en la dita Ciutat se aiusten pusquen convenir e tractar e fer lurs contractes e afers, axi com en altres moltes Ciutats qui no son tan solemnes ha semblants lotges. Jassia que la dita Ciutat se sia feta richa e nobla mes per la mar e per fet de mercaderia que per altre raho.” cited in Elaine Shelley Roff, "Building Images of Prosperity" 78

construction on the Llotja did not begin until 1380, though the main trade hall was completed within twelve years.

The Llotja was built in the Catalan Gothic style, a distinct architectural style that developed in Catalunya during the Middle Ages and quickly spread to other parts of the Crown of Aragon. A variation of the French Gothic, Catalan Gothic is characterized by its horizontality as well as its diaphragm arches. Catalan Gothic buildings balance the height of the building with a similar width. Buildings also have fewer windows because the Mediterranean light is much stronger than the rest of Europe. The walls in a Catalan structure are large, smooth and bare, often topped by flat wooden roofs such as in the Llotja of Barcelona (fig. 7). In contrast to French Gothic, structures such as the Llotja of Barcelona held their buttresses within a thicker wall so the buttress remains hidden within the outer structure of the wall. Catalan buildings also have few sculptural elements compared to other Gothic styles.

The main hall of the llotja is rectangular in shape and spans twenty-one by thirty-two meters (fig. 8). Its northern façade originally had three arched entryways facing the Plaça de Canvis, which had already become a center for maritime trade due to its proximity to the ports and the Ribera district which was one of the most economically active areas of Barcelona. The Llotja's southern façade overlooked the Mediterranean sea. The interior had three bays with two stone arcades each with four semicircular arches spanning the length of the hall. This type of arch, characteristic of the Catalan Gothic, can be found in other contemporary buildings such as the Royal Shipyards. In the Llotja these

arches were held up by slim stone piers, which lent the hall a feeling of openness. The walls were 2.5 meters thick and enclosed characteristic Catalan interior buttressing. The hall was capped by a flat wooden ceiling.

Although most of the Llotja's decorative program is unknown there, the existing structure contains hints of what this decorative program might have looked like originally. For example, the llotja's wooden ceiling was painted, although the exact design is not known. Examining other monumental spaces built during the same period—such as the Saló de Cent the Church of Santa Maria del Mar (fig.6) — suggest that the llotja may not have had an elaborate sculptural program. The llotja is similar to these buildings in its use of horizontal space, even height ceilings and distinct emphasis on the building's materiality. Neither the Saló de Cent not the Church of Santa Maria del Mar, which are considered the best examples of Catalan Gothic, have elaborate sculptural programs. Thus, the Llotja, constructed in this same style would most likely have had a similarly spare sculptural program.

### *Valencia*

In Valencia, as early as 1246, city leaders began changing the Islamic city to fit the needs and vision of a virtuous and prosperous Christian city. The maze like streets of the Muslim city were straightened and widened in an effort to produce a standardized and geometrically perfect city. In this campaign to create the perfect Christian city some

buildings were torn down, while other Islamic buildings were transformed for Christian secular and ecclesiastical use.

The fourteenth and fifteenth centuries in particular saw a rise in new urban projects, as more money from trade began to flow into the city. In the early fifteenth century the Arabic city walls that had enclosed the city were torn down when the city's territory was doubled to accommodate the unprecedented rise in population. Recent studies have located remnants of this Arabic wall below the foundation of the Llotja<sup>25</sup>.

The Consell in Valencia had autonomy to construct within the newly expanded city and may have taken note of Eiximenis' recommendation that "the city should be composed, well ordered and organized by three things: the first that it be spiritually well organized, the second that it be governed by good temporal law, the third that is be well built in its material form."<sup>26</sup> The Llotja was part of the abovementioned urban development that included other civic and religious buildings such as the Casa de la Ciutat, the Palau de la Generalitat and the expansion of the city's cathedral. In addition, other structures were built during the same period as the Llotja including bridges, towers, and the first general hospital.

A small llotja already existed in 1344 within the old Arab city walls. This earlier llotja shared a building with the city's trade council, called the Consolat. The building

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<sup>25</sup> Manuel Jesus Ramirez Blanco. *La Lonja de Valencia y su conjunto monumental*, 121

<sup>26</sup> "la ciutat deu esser be composta co es be endrecada e ordenada en tres coses: la primera que sia be arreglada en l'espiritual, la segonda que sia goremada per bona ley temporal, la terc que sia be edificada en la forma material" Francesc Eiximenis, *Dotze del crestia* cited in Soledad Vila, *La ciudad de Eiximenis: un proyecto teorico de urbanismo en el siglo XIV* (Valencia: Diputacion Provincial de Valencia, 1984), 58

was expanded in 1377 and continued to serve as the city's llotja up until 1483. The llotja was not meeting the needs of an ever-growing trade business, as it was too small to house the amount of merchants coming in to do trade on any particular day.<sup>27</sup> Aware of this situation, the Consell set plans in motion for the construction of a new, grander llotja.

A new llotja would provide a way to centralize trade in the same way as the llotja in Barcelona had done so for maritime trade a hundred years earlier. The new Llotja of Valencia would be placed in strategic location, it would house storage facilities, administrative offices for the Consolat and even its own chapel and jail.

Carrasco asserts that the location of the Llotja was not just a practical choice but also a political maneuver. With the expansion of the Christian city walls, the plaza del Mercat became the center of Valencia's social sphere.<sup>28</sup> All sorts of social gatherings and events took place here including tournaments, exhibitions by guilds and bull fights. It became an important center of the city. The choice to build the llotja in this bustling made its presence, with its synthesis of municipal and religious architectural elements, impossible to ignore to locals as well as visitors. To place the llotja in this city center made the Consell's message of the virtue of trade and of the city's leaders a bold statement written in stone.

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<sup>27</sup> Elaine Shelley Roff, "Building Images of Prosperity" 55

<sup>28</sup> Renee Carrasco. "L'architecture à Valence", 229-230

In 1480, by secret vote, 41 out of 43 Consellers decided to move forward with the construction of this new llotja.<sup>29</sup> The Manual de Consell states, “the said llotja should be constructed ... very beautiful, magnificent and sumptuous.”<sup>30</sup> The llotja then was not just to be larger but more beautiful and magnificent, a building to awe and amaze. In order to create this new llotja that was worthy of representing the city, funds for the llotja’s construction were raised by a new trade tax levied on all trade that occurred within the city walls.<sup>31</sup>

The stone shield depicting the city’s coat of arms on the southeast corner of the building reads that the building was begun in 1483.<sup>32</sup> However, written records show that construction actually began in 1482.<sup>33</sup> The main trade hall of the Llotja would have taken fifteen years to complete and it is likely that both Christian and Muslim laborers as well as slaves undertook construction on the building. Muslim laborers were plentiful during this period and a source of cheap labor. In addition there is evidence in the kingdom’s

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<sup>29</sup> Elaine Shelley Roff, "Building Images of Prosperity" 41

<sup>30</sup> “la dita lotja devre fer e fabricar... molt bella, magnifica e sumptuosa.” Manual de Consell cited in Renee Carrasco. "L'architecture à Valence", 230

<sup>31</sup> Salvador Lara Ortega. *La lonja, un monumento del II milenio para el III milenio.* (Valencia: Ayuntamiento de Valencia, 2000), 43

<sup>32</sup> “la noble ciutathi... de Valencia ab cor de acabar la mia excellencia me ha comenat a cinch de febrer del any que corrent es compta en ver MCCCCXXXIII”

<sup>33</sup> Manuel Jesus Ramirez Blanco. *La Lonja de Valencia y su conjunto monumental* , 33

law code that suggests that slaves were used as laborers in construction projects, some of these Muslim.<sup>34</sup>

Master stonemasons Pere Compte and Johan Yvarra were elected by the Consell as lead stonemasons on the project. Pere Compte, who had previously worked on the Palau de la Generalitat, was paid double the average price 1498 for his work on the llotja.<sup>35</sup> Twenty-five houses were demolished to make room for the original trade hall. The Consell paid 4,110 *libras* for this land, a sizable sum. Some of the houses belonged to wealthy and important members of the community.<sup>36</sup>

The Llotja of Valencia combines the austere materiality of the Catalan Gothic of Barcelona's Llotja with the flamboyant International Gothic style.<sup>37</sup> The construction of the llotja shows a rejection of Muslim and Jewish building traditions for a more international and Christian aesthetic.<sup>38</sup> Although elements such as the spiral column come from Jewish origin, the motif had long been appropriated as a Christian symbol. The vaulted ceilings resembled those used in northern Europe, though simplified to fit the more sober Catalan aesthetic. Moreover, its windows with their dramatic pointed arches

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<sup>34</sup> Debra Blumenthal. *Enemies and Familiars*, 113

<sup>35</sup> Manuel Jesus Ramirez Blanco. *La Lonja de Valencia y su conjunto monumental*, 22

<sup>36</sup> Salvador Lara Ortega. *La lonja, un monumento del II milenio para el III milenio*. (Valencia: Ayuntamiento de Valencia, 2000), 43

<sup>37</sup> The building for the consolat de mar which was added to the existing trade hall in the sixteenth century has a clear renaissance decorative scheme with medallions depicting personalities.

<sup>38</sup> Amadeo Serra Desfilis. "Promotores, tradiciones e innovaciones", 58

were smaller, without windowpanes. This allowed the natural Mediterranean light to flood the building unobstructed.

Recent tests have revealed what the original llotja's painted interior originally looked like.<sup>39</sup> A group of researchers utilizing optical microscopy and x-ray analysis uncovered the original painting of the Llotja's walls. In 1498, Master Marti Girbes painted the vaults blue with gold stars to simulate the sky. This same motif can be seen in the apse of the Cathedral of Valencia which is contemporary to the Llotja. There are remnants of gold leaf traces on the arches, vaults and keystones. There is also evidence of geometric decoration in blue, red and green on the columns, although there is no previous documentation of the polychromy.

When humanist geographer Hieronymus Muntzer visited the city in 1495, the llotja was still being constructed. Upon touring the still unfinished building he writes, "They are constructing there a magnificent house they call llotja, where merchant come together to conduct their business. It is a tall house, constructed of cut Stone and svelte columns... much more airy and beautiful than the Llotja of Barcelona."<sup>40</sup> Munzer, who had previously traveled to Barcelona and compared its llotja to a palace or a great church,

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<sup>39</sup> M.j. Ramirez, B. Saiz-Mauleon, J. Curiel-Esparza, J. Llinares, M. Soriano. "Polychromy of Late Gothic Civil Architecture: a World Heritage Monument Case in Spain" *Mediterranean Archaeology and Archaeometry*, Vol. 13, No. 2 (2013): 123.

<sup>40</sup> "Están edificando allí una casa magnífica que llaman lonja, donde se reúnen todos los mercaderes, para tratar sus asuntos. Es una casa alta, construida de piedra cortada y de esbeltas columnas...sera mucho más airosa y más bella que la Lonja de Barcelona..." in Jerónimo Münzer. *Viaje por España y Portugal, 1494-1495*. (Madrid: Ediciones Polifemo, 1991), 42

placed Valencia's still unfinished Lonja above Barcelona's. What was it about this building that captivated its viewers thus?

In order to experience the Lonja as a fifteenth century viewer would have, one must use the existing sources guide one's imagination of this experience. Entering Placa del Mercat, much as the merchant at the beginning of the chapter, the Llotja's imposing façade would have stood extant from its neighbors. The exterior was austere, the flat surface of its limestone walls glistening in the afternoon light. High up above the main gate with its flanking trefoil windows a series of gargoyles and grotesques looked down upon the square. Upon entering through its north gate under the tympanum depicting the annunciation, one would enter the main trade hall of the Llotja. The llotja's rectangular shape was broken up into fifteen equal sections with twenty-four spiral columns decorated with green, red and blue geometric designs. These slender twisting columns soared above the cacophony of trade and widening into eight veins that supported the vaulted ceiling which depicted the heavens as a blanket of blue with golden stars.

The plainness of the wall is broken up by a band of writing eleven feet up, which stretches across the top of the Llotja's walls. In this band the building addresses the viewer in the first person. The inscription reads as follows,

“I am a famous house which was built in fifteen years. Fellow citizens, try, and see how good is trade whose words are without fraudulent intent, that swears to its neighbor and does not fail him, that does not give up its money in usury. The

merchant who lives in this way will abound in riches and in the end will enjoy eternal life.”<sup>41</sup>

Here put in words was the political and religious new ethical code. Trade, if done truthfully and virtuously could give one riches in this life, and more importantly eternal salvation.

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<sup>41</sup>.” “Inclita domus annis aedificata quindecim. Gustate et videte concives quoniam bona est negotiation, quae non agit dolum in lingua, quae jurat próximo et non déficit, quae pecuniam non dedit ad usuram eius. Mercator sic agens divitiis redundabit, et tandem vita factur aeterna.” Translation in Amadeo Serra Desfilis. “Promotores, tradiciones e innovaciones,” 56

## Chapter 3

### The Llotjas in the City of God

The previous sections have established the socio-political and urban function of the llotjas. In this section I will explore how these buildings also had a deep spiritual function. The following sections will analyze the llotjas through the lens of theological ideas and allegories that would have been well known and popular during the fourteenth and fifteenth century. This spiritual function needs to be unpacked through the lens of theological discourse of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. I will be drawing mainly from St. Augustine's influential *De Civitas Dei*, Eiximenis's *Crestia*, as well as Biblical passages to illustrate how ideas concerning beauty, geometry, materials, and geometry were manifested in the llotjas of Barcelona and Valencia.

#### City of God

Practicality and beauty went hand in hand for medieval thinkers. Since beauty was seen as a manifestation of God, buildings that served a functional purpose such as the llotjas needed to be beautiful in order to honor God. For buildings and cities were built with to honor God as this passage by Eiximenis explains, "Here appears the first reason why the city was built it was for the honor and glory of God...like Saint Pual said this should be our principal reason and purpose for all our projects."<sup>42</sup> Thus

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<sup>42</sup> "Qui posa que la primera rao perque fonch edificada ciutat si fonch a honor e gloria de Deu... com du San Pau aquesta deu esser la nostra principal e fi special en totes nostre obres." Francesc Eiximenis Dotze del *Crestia* ch. 5, fol. 9 cited in Soledad Vila, *La ciudad de Eiximenis: un proyecto teorico de urbanismo en el siglo XIV* (Valencia: Diputacion Provincial de Valencia, 1984), 55

Knowledge of God was not just a theological problem, but also an aesthetic one.<sup>43</sup> One important instance of theology's close connection to aesthetics and architecture in particular is the concept of the City of God. The City of God was the heavenly Jerusalem described in Revelations and elaborated in Saint Augustine's *De Civitas Dei* and other medieval theological treatises. Throughout the Middle Ages there was a desire to recreate this heavenly city on the earthly plane in the shape of the New Jerusalem. As St. Augustine states in *De Civitas Dei*, "We have learned there is a city of God, and its Founder has inspired us with a love which make us covet its citizenship."<sup>44</sup>

It was believed that in recreating the city of God on earth its citizens would live under God's divine light. The heavenly city was associated with salvation. In Revelation, John has a vision in which he sees the celestial city descend from heaven. This heavenly city is what the Consells attempted to recreate in their urban projects, and in particularly through the llotjas. Thus the Llotjas of Barcelona and Valencia can then read as a manifestation of the Consells' desire to recreate the City of God.

The concept of the City of God would have been well known to city leaders in Barcelona and Valencia as it would have been well established dogma in the Late Middle Ages, taught at universities and expounded in sermons and writings of religious leaders. Frances Eiximenis' theological writings, many of which written while living in Barcelona

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<sup>43</sup> See Alfons Puigarnau. "Fiat Lux': Iconology and Theology of Time in Medieval Catalonia" in *Time and Eternity: The Medieval Discourse* ed. Gerhard Jaritz, Gerson Moreno-Riano (Turnhout: Brepols, 2003), 428

<sup>44</sup> Saint Augustine, *The City of God*, ed. Marcus Dods (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2009), 310

and Valencia, are full of references to the City of God. In the *Dotze* he writes, “the well-ordered world is image and form of the celestial city and which it represents in this life as if it were a beautiful reflection”<sup>45</sup> This mirrored heavenly city affirmed the divinely ordained social order of the city, with the Consell as its head. In the Middle Ages God was sometimes depicted as architect is depicted creating the world.<sup>46</sup> In the same way, city leaders positioned themselves as creators of the heavenly city on earth.

The heavenly city was also associated with both the Temple and Palace of Solomon. Scholars have linked the llotjas to both these structures. In particular Aldana sees the spiral columns of the llotja of Valencia (fig. 8) as an attempt to replicate the Temple of Solomon<sup>47</sup>. Desfilis on the other hand, argues that these columns allude to the Palace of Solomon instead of his Temple.<sup>48</sup> Both Palace and Temple were popular metaphorical devises, and I argue that they were both being invoked in the design of the llotjas. For the Llotjas were meant to signify both palace and temple.

The Consells of both cities, legitimized through the theological signs of the Llotja, could lay claim to not only their own souls’ salvation but to the virtuous nature of their cities’ mercantilism. In this way the llotjas becomes signs of the moral virtue of trade and

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<sup>45</sup> “de lo dicho se ve como las ciudades fueron edificadas para vivir virtuosamente: por consiguiente fueron edificadas para un alto fin: por razon de lo cual los ciudadanos merecen en el final de su vida aspirer a la soberana ciudad de dios” Francesc Eiximenis, *Dotze del crestia* ch.4 fol. 8v cited in Soledad Vila, *La ciudad de Eiximenis: un proyecto teorico de urbanismo en el siglo XIV* (Valencia: Diputacion Provincial de Valencia, 1984), 54

<sup>46</sup> Keith D. Lilley. *City and cosmos*, 43

<sup>47</sup> Salvador Aldana Fernandez. *Simbolo y espacio*, 27

<sup>48</sup> Amadeo Serra Desfilis. “Promotores, tradiciones e innovaciones,” 21

those whom control and regulate it.

Through this invocation of the heavenly city, the Consell also positioned the Lonja and its activities a vital component of the City of God. As Eiximenis writes “Of what has been said it is apparent how cities were built to live virtuously: therefore they were built for a higher purpose: for which reason its citizens deserve at the end of their lives to aspire to the sovereign city of God”<sup>49</sup> In this way the Consell was bringing the city of Valencia closer to the divinity of God. Furthermore, by attempting to recreate the beauty of the City of God in the Llotja, the Consells were attempting to achieve divinity itself.

Buildings were one of the favored ways of visualizing ideological systems. The invocation of religious signs in architecture was often achieved through allegorical means. Furthermore, Medieval systems were not closed but where instead open to interpretation by their viewers.<sup>50</sup> Thus Medieval buildings often had polyvalent meanings. As Medieval philologist Friedrich Ohly states, “man can in microcosms of buildings survey the universal cosmos of time and space and value.”<sup>51</sup> Because of this polyvalent signification, there is always a danger to assigning specific allegorical

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<sup>49</sup> “per co que dit appar com les ciutats foren edificadas per viure virtuosament: per consequent foren edificadas per fot alta fi: per rao de la qual los bons ciutadans merexen en la fi de lur vida pujar en la sobirana ciutat de Deu.” in Dotze del Crestia cap. 38 fol34 Francesc Eiximenis, *Dotze del crestia* ch.4 fol. 8v cited in Soledad Vila, *La ciudad de Eiximenis: un proyecto teorico de urbanismo en el siglo XIV* (Valencia: Diputacion Provincial de Valencia, 1984), 53

<sup>50</sup> Friedrich Ohly, *Sensus Spiritualis: Medieval Significs and the Philology of Culture*, ed. Samuel P. Jaffe (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005), 155

<sup>51</sup> Ohly, *Sensus Spiritualis*, 143

meanings to any particular sign. However, given the city leaders' association with the mendicant orders, these leaders would have been familiar with certain theological allegories and eager to deploy them whether for pragmatic or ecstatic reasons.

### The Consell and Religion

City and ecclesiastical leaders had a complex relationship in late Medieval Aragon. Both ecclesiastical and municipal authorities competed for power in what was a highly stratified society. The medieval world was ordered so as to mirror the celestial hierarchy.<sup>52</sup> Religious leaders held great amounts of power as God's voice on earth. The body politic received their authority from god for working for the common good with the king's enforcement.<sup>53</sup> The relationship between these top social groups was deeply influential in the llotjas' allegorical program.

Although originally concerned with the morality of monetary exchange and trade in general, mendicants ultimately came to provide moral justification for merchants and city leaders.<sup>54</sup> While wealthy merchants donated vast quantities of money and artwork to the mendicant orders, religious leaders in turn began to praise the business of trade as virtuous. By the fourteenth century, with church leaders' support, the Consellers of cities

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<sup>52</sup> Keith D. Lilley. *City and cosmos the medieval world in urban form*. (London: Reaktion Books, 2009), 34

<sup>53</sup> Ibid. 67

<sup>54</sup> Taryn E. L. Chubb, and Emily D. Kelley. *Mendicants and Merchants*, 27

such as Barcelona and Valencia projected themselves as ideal Christian cities.<sup>55</sup> Some mendicants, such as the Franciscan Francesc Eximenis, developed a symbiotic relationship with Barcelona and Valencia's body politic.

Eiximenis was originally from Girona but spent most of his life in the Crown of Aragon. He lived and worked in Barcelona for several years before moving to Valencia in 1382 where he spent the next twenty years. During his stay in the Valencia he became a mentor for city leaders and a supporter of urban life. Both the Consells in Barcelona and Valencia had copies of a good part of Eiximenis's books in their collection and Valenica's Consell even named him an advisor to the council.<sup>56</sup>

Eiximenis had a vision of the ideal city that at once echoed concerns of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, while at the same time addressing the particular concerns of contemporary urban life in the Crown of Aragon. Vizcaino describes Eiximenis' writing as a synthesis of religious and urban signs.<sup>57</sup> Having studied at the major universities of Europe including Paris and Oxford and having lived in the growing cities of the Late Middle Ages, Eiximenis was familiar with the scholasticism of the previous centuries as well as early theologians such as St. Augustine. Eiximenis was deeply interested in defining what constituted a virtuous city. His *Lo Crestia* draws heavily from St. Augustine's *City of God*, applying Augustine's words to the particular situation of

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<sup>55</sup> Mark D. Meyer "Reino de Contradicciones," 14

<sup>56</sup> Rafael Narbona Vizcaino. "Utopies i realitats", 141

<sup>57</sup> Ibid. 138

the Crown of Aragon's mercantile cities.

Eiximeni wrote *Lo Crestia*, a twelve tome collection of theological teachings written in the vernacular, to show the path of salvation through messages tailored to the city's rulers. He also wrote *Regiment de la Cosa Publica*, a treatise centered on the proper administration of a city and dedicated it to the king, the nobility and city leaders. City leaders hold a place of particular honor in this dedication, since he tells both king and noble they need the Consellers to properly run a city.<sup>58</sup>

Although he did not write in depth about the arts, in *Lo Crestia* he gave advise on the proper aesthetics of Valencia's Gates of Serrano in the following passage: "that it be tall, beautiful and noble and made excellently"<sup>59</sup> His advise that the Gate be grand and tall shows Eiximenis considered monumental architecture to be an important part of creating an ideal city.

Eiximenis helped create a new ethical code which would have appealed to city leaders because of its acceptance of modern city life and trade. As shown above, trade was one of the most important factors of urban life in Barcelona and Valencia. Eiximenis writes of trade, "so that everyone should have what they need it is necessary that some contract others and that they sell and buy diverse merchandise"<sup>60</sup> This clear support of

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<sup>58</sup> Rafael Narbona Vizcaino. "Utopies i realitats", 141

<sup>59</sup> "que sia alta e bella e nobla e feta excel-lentment"alta, bella, noble y hecha excelentemente." Francesc Eiximenis cited in Amadeo Serra Desfilis. "Promotores, tradiciones e innovaciones", 68

<sup>60</sup>"per rao daco per tal que tots hajen bastantament co quells es necessary cove que los uns contracten ab los alters e facen deverses mercaderries e vendes e compres." In Francesc Eiximenis in cited in Soledad Vila

trade contradicts other religious sentiments about the immoral nature of commerce such as that of Vincent Ferrer. Eiximenis, then gave the Consells the religious legitimization for their support of trade.

Regarding merchants, Eiximenis writes, “should be favored over all secular people of the world...and they are a treasure of the public sphere...without merchants, communities fall, princes become tyrants...Our Lord God gives them special mercy especially in death and in life”<sup>61</sup> By giving merchants this exalted position in God’s eyes, Eiximenis places trade and those who govern it, the Consells, as virtuous and vital components of the ideal city.

Thus Eiximenis’ writings provide a glimpse into the relationship between the body politic and religious discourse concerning the City of God. Yet how was this City of God invoked? A close examination of the Llotjas’ materiality, sacred geometry and sculptural projects will shed light on the way the City of God was invoked and contested.

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*La ciudad de Eiximenis: un proyecto teorico de urbanismo en el siglo XIV.* (Valencia: Diputacion Provincial de Valencia, 1984), 75

<sup>61</sup> “deuen ésser favorits sobre tota gent seglar del món, car... e són tresor de la Cosa pública...sens mercaders, les comunitats caen, los prínceps tomen tirans, ...Nostre Senyor Déu los fa misericórdia especial en mort e en vida.” Francesc Eiximenis *Dotze del Crestia* cited in Soledad Vila *La ciudad de Eiximenis: un proyecto teorico de urbanismo en el siglo XIV.* (Valencia: Diputacion Provincial de Valencia, 1984), 152

### Sacred Geometry

Geometry gave order to the medieval world. As the Book of Solomon states “thou hast ordered all things in measure and number and weight”<sup>62</sup> Thus, properties such as straightness, symmetry and proportion became reorientations of God’s beauty on earth.<sup>63</sup> Saint Augustine defined the quality of divine order is rooted in mathematical relationships.<sup>64</sup> This use of sacred geometry can be observed in the city planning of Barcelona and Valencia, but more importantly it is found in the architectural properties of these cities’ llotjas.

The merchant hall of the Llotja of Valencia is rectangular and has fifteen equal square spaces delineated marked off by the pillars. These spaces trace the shape of a cross. The central square has rays that delimit the fundamental square, the *mundis*, that was made out of purple stone. The four corners of the earth were believed to mark the shape of the true cross.<sup>65</sup> The placement of this central square and the thick dark marble delineation of the llotja’s sections into squares could symbolize the human, everyday world, often represented by the square, as part of the greater City of God, here represented by Christ’s presence in the form of the true cross. Thus, the geometry of the llotja’s floor was meant to place Valencia as part of the heavenly City of God.

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<sup>62</sup> Robert A. Scott, *The Gothic Enterprise*, 123

<sup>63</sup> Keith D. Lilley. *City and Cosmos*, 34

<sup>64</sup> Robert A. Scott, *The Gothic Enterprise*, 123

<sup>65</sup> Salvador Aldana Fernandez. *Simbolo y espacio*, 6-7

The heavenly city of Jerusalem was at times depicted as rectangular or square shaped.<sup>66</sup> The rectangle also represents stability and provided a link between heaven and earth. Yet, the llotja was not just a rectangular building like any other. Its measurements are based on medieval mathematic principles such as the number five, the number of doorways in the llotja, which related to Pythagoras and symbolizes the microcosm of man or the sensible world. Similarly, the eight free standing pillars relate to the number eight could stand for Christ's resurrection, often associated with the number eight. The columns are like palm trees of paradise their foliage reaching up into the heavens. In this way the Llotja also stands as a microcosm of God's earth.

In the Llotja of Barcelona the longitudinal design of the building is comparable to the design of contemporary churches. Although there is no central nave in the llotja, the arcades provide the same sense of length. This length may be read as an allusion to the history of salvation. In an analysis of a church, Ohly points out how spatial length was often interpreted as temporal. Churches were often built with the shape of the cross in mind. According to Hugh of St. Victor, the length of the body of Christ represented the beginning of the world to the end of days. This anthropomorphic symbolism, Ohly argues, was meant to be seen as temporal movement through space.<sup>67</sup> This temporal movement through the nave of the church was linked to the history of salvation. I argue that the same allusion can be seen in the design of the Llotja of Barcelona. As a person walked through the main gate of the llotja and made their way through its arcades they

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<sup>66</sup> Keith D. Lilley. *City and Cosmos*, " 45

<sup>67</sup> Ohly, 146

would experience that same temporal movement they experienced in their local church. This association would bring sacredness of the history of salvation to this space of trade.

Beauty was a logical and orderly thing and this is what they strove to recreate in the Llotja's geometry. Whether through numerical, allegorical or spatial and temporal analogies, the Llotja's geometry attempts to evoke the City of God.

### Materialism

The allegory of the City of God was also embodied through the llotjas' material signification. The aim of the Gothic building was to evoke astonishment and awe.<sup>68</sup> This goal was achieved in great part through the allegorical use of a building's materials.

The focus of the main trade hall of the Llotja of Barcelona would have been on the vast expanses of glistening white stone. This prominence of the walls and minimum decoration places emphasis on the solidness of the stone, thus drawing attention to the materiality of the building. Medieval buildings could convey their sacredness through their materials in the same way as devotional objects of the same period such as statuary or reliquaries. Medieval theologians believed that visible objects could reveal the divine and that through contemplation of the material one could experience the divinity of God. Philosopher John Scotus Erigena, an early Christian theologian, contended that one can

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<sup>68</sup> Robert A. Scott, *The Gothic Enterprise: A Guide to Understanding the Medieval Cathedral*. (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, Ltd., 2003), 163

only understand a piece of stone when God is perceived in it.<sup>69</sup> For the stone does not just signify God's divine presence, it discloses God's power to the viewer.

For medieval thinkers, matter was changeable and powerful. It was alive and forever in motion. Matter offered salvation through its capacity for change. It had the possibility of transmutation, which paradoxically also made it threatening to salvation.<sup>70</sup> The Llotjas' stones then, where conveyed God's divinity through their transformation from rocks. At the same time though its unstable nature, its ability to change from one state to another; the stone manifested the instability and anxieties of the period. The Llotja consequently invokes the divinity of God through its emphasis on its materials. This invocation and association with God brings his divine presence to the space of trade.

Similarly to the Llotja of Barcelona, the material substance of the Llotja of Valencia disclosed its sacredness through its materiality. However, in contrast to the llotja of Barcelona, the Llotja of Valencia the focus of the main trade hall of the Lonja was on the painted stones of the llotja's interior. However, the paint was not used to disguise the stones of the llotja for paint was not used to represent paradise in a realistic way. Walker uses the example of polychromed statuary to show that artists did not aim for naturalistic mimetic depictions, instead they focused to exalting the materiality of the statue by making its materials, textures, and colors obvious to the viewer.<sup>71</sup> The painting of the sky with stars of the llotja's ceiling was not meant to be a realistic

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<sup>69</sup> Robert A. Scott, *The Gothic Enterprise*, 122

<sup>70</sup> Caroline Walker Bynum. *Christian Materiality*, 35

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.* 41

depiction, but rather it was meant to show the beauty of God's creation, the paint, the gold leaf, and the texture of the painted stone. Thus, paint was used to manifest the significance of Paradise and God as found in the physical, tangible world of the llotja.

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### Sculptural Program

This section will focus on Valencia's llotja.<sup>74</sup> Joaquin Arnau Amo states that there are two sculptural programs found in the llotja, one political-institutional the other

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<sup>72</sup> Robert A. Scott, *The Gothic Enterprise*, 122

<sup>73</sup> Caroline Walker Bynum. *Christian Materiality*, 35

<sup>74</sup> As mentioned in Chapter 2, the sculptural program of Barcelona's llotja is unknown.,the llotja in Valencia's sculptural program is much better preserved.

religious-economic. The political institutional program is found in the shields and royal insignias, the other in the Christian motifs of the doorways and thee allegories of wealth such as cornucopias.<sup>75</sup> I argue that while these two programs are present in the Llotja they are not separate. Buildings such as the llotja aimed to create, in St. Augustine's own words, "the true city Jerusalem eternal in the heavens hose children are all those that live according to God in the earth."<sup>76</sup> The sculptural elements of the llotja are therefore part of a larger program that can be tied to the Consell's desire to recreate the City of God.

This overarching sculptural program revolves around the conflict between St. Augustine's earthly city and City of God, the "Two cities, one of which is God's, the other this world's, in which, so far as mankind is concerned, the former is now a stranger."<sup>77</sup> These two allegorical cities parallel the conflict present in fifteenth century Valencia between Medieval virtues and the modern mercantile city.

The sculptural elements of the Llotja in Valencia are the most obvious connection to the building's manifestation of the City of God. The hall had four portals. The western facade had the Portal of the Annunciation, while the East was the Portal of Redemption. The northern facade held the Portal of Vices and the Southern side held the Portal of the Evangelists.

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<sup>75</sup> Salvador Lara Ortega. *La lonja, un monumento del II milenio para el III milenio*. (Valencia: Ayuntamiento de Valencia, 2000), 104

<sup>76</sup> Saint Agustine. *The City of God*. Ed. Marcus Dods. (Peabody, MA.: Hendrickson Publishers, 2009), 450

<sup>77</sup> Ibid. 472

Aldana and Amo have meticulously traced the religious iconography of these religious sculptures and identified it as an important part of the Llotja's religious symbolism. Yet the allegorical importance of the building's gargoyles and smaller allegorical figures has only been superficially linked to allegories of sin such as lust and greed. For example, the Llotja's gargoyles depict a variety of scenes from fantastical creatures to grotesques of men and women involved in all sorts of sexual acts.

There are several theories regarding the original function of gargoyles on gothic buildings. The one most applied to the Llotja of Valencia is that Gargoyles were didactical reminders of the horrible things that could happen to sinners. Thus, the gargoyles on the Llotja's facades could be a warning of the danger outside of the City of God, a virtuous and sacred space the Consell had created within the walls of the llotja. Yet, the gargoyles are also placed so high up on the building that there have been doubts that anyone could have been able to fully grasp any didactical meaning put forth.<sup>78</sup>

I argue the gargoyles were an expression of the concerns regarding the salvation of the city and of its citizens. The gargoyles were representations of the earthly city of Valencia's everyday life, full of the grotesque realities of everyday life such as bodily functions and death. It is also the earthly city of sinners that would be punished by God in the end of days. This can be found in the monstrous animals often depicted eating or penetrating the human figures.

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<sup>78</sup> Salvador Aldana Fernandez. *Simbolo y espacio*, 22

Although it may never be known if the Lonja's stonemason's indeed had the creative autonomy to express the anxieties of living in such an uncertain world, the Consell did approve of the building's design and would have been aware of the sculptures. That the gargoyles were approved by the Consell, who had so much invested in the aesthetic of the Lonja, opens up the possibility that these gargoyles could represent the Consell's own anxieties and fear of their own salvation. For as Augustine explained, "the lord came down to see the city and the tower which the sons of men built"...which we call the earthly city... that city was not previously being seen as God made it be seen when He showed how offensive it was to him."<sup>79</sup> In building the llotja, the Consell attempted to create a temple of commerce which would not only validate their position as virtuous leaders in the eyes of the populace, but more importantly in the eyes of God.

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<sup>79</sup> Saint Augustine. *The City of God*, 426

## Conclusion

The llotjas of Barcelona and Valencia are important buildings for many reasons. They serve as magnificent examples of the development of the Catalan Gothic in the Late Middle Ages. They also speak to the political might and economic prosperity of the cities that built them. Though perhaps most importantly, these llotjas provide a window into the desires, fears, and preoccupations of the people that built them.

In this thesis I have analyzed the socio-political and spiritual symbolism of the Llotjas of Barcelona and Valencia. My argument, building and synthesizing previous scholarship, is that these llotjas functioned as both civic buildings and sacred temples becoming temples of commerce. I have shown that city leaders used the llotjas, as a way to ease social, political and religious problems that existed in each city. By filling the llotjas with allegories and architectural signs of the City of God, the Consell also reveals their eschatological and moral anxieties.

In order to unpack the meaning behind the llotjas' stones, the historical context of each city was reviewed to see how economic, religious, and social issues affected the construction of these buildings. Then each llotja's construction was considered within this larger historical framework. The construction of these llotjas was a part of each city's urban renewal and expansion project. In this context, the llotjas fulfilled an economic and political function as places of trade and symbols of political power. Yet, as this thesis shows, the llotjas were more than grand civic structures; they were dynamic spaces where city leader deployed the allegories of the City of God. They did this through the use of

sacred geometry, a focus on the buildings' materiality and through their sculptural program.

This thesis thus provides a glimpse into a moment in time when these llotjas were utilized as symbols of the virtue of a Medieval world that was coming to an end. In these llotjas, the allegories and concerns of the medieval world confront the concerns of a new urban Renaissance world. As the fifteenth century drew to a close, there was a shift in the importance of trade to the Atlantic from the Mediterranean.<sup>80</sup> The revolt de les Germanias extended from 1519 to 1523, started by the artisans of Valencia extended to other regions of the Kingdom, damaging the local economy.<sup>81</sup> The decline of commerce of the Crown was due in part to the influence and financing of the inquisition in. From 1500 to 1530 more than 2,500 people were processed by the inquisition in Valencia. Of these, 90 percent were from the professional classes, including local and foreign merchants.<sup>82</sup>

Through these socio-political and religious changes, the Llotjas continued to be expanded, renovated and reimagined as each city's landscape changed. Further research is needed to better understand how the theological and political signs of each llotja changed over time through to the Renaissance. The interests of the King, of merchants and of stonemasons in the construction of the Lonja also needs to be examined as they became more important players in the political scene of each city. Other potential

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<sup>80</sup> Salvador Ortega, *Las seis grandes* 16

<sup>81</sup> Manuel Jesus Ramirez Blanco. *La lonja de valencia y su conjunto monumental*, 167

<sup>82</sup> Salvador Ortega, *Las seis grandes* 15-16

avenues for research also include the relationship between the llotjas and other civic buildings in within the Crown of Aragon and elsewhere.

Yet, even though the function and symbolism of the llotjas has changed dramatically through the years, their original symbolism continues to be important today. This thesis sets the cornerstone of what is a larger project to understand how civic buildings were viewed and understood in the Late Middle Ages. But perhaps more importantly, given the realities of today's world, it provides an opportunity to understand how a diverse and dynamic society coped with the changes of the modern world.

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**Figures**

Figure 1. Trade Hall, Llotja de Mar, Barcelona 1380-1392.



Figure 2. Trade Hall, Llotja of Valencia, Valencia. 1483-1498.



Figure 3. Exterior of Trade Hall, Llotja de Mar, Barcelona. 1778.



Figure 4. Salo de Cent, Barcelona, 14<sup>th</sup> century



Figure 5. Royal Shipyards of Barcelona. Barcelona. 1328-1390.



Figure 6. Santa Maria del Mar, Barcelona, 1329-1383

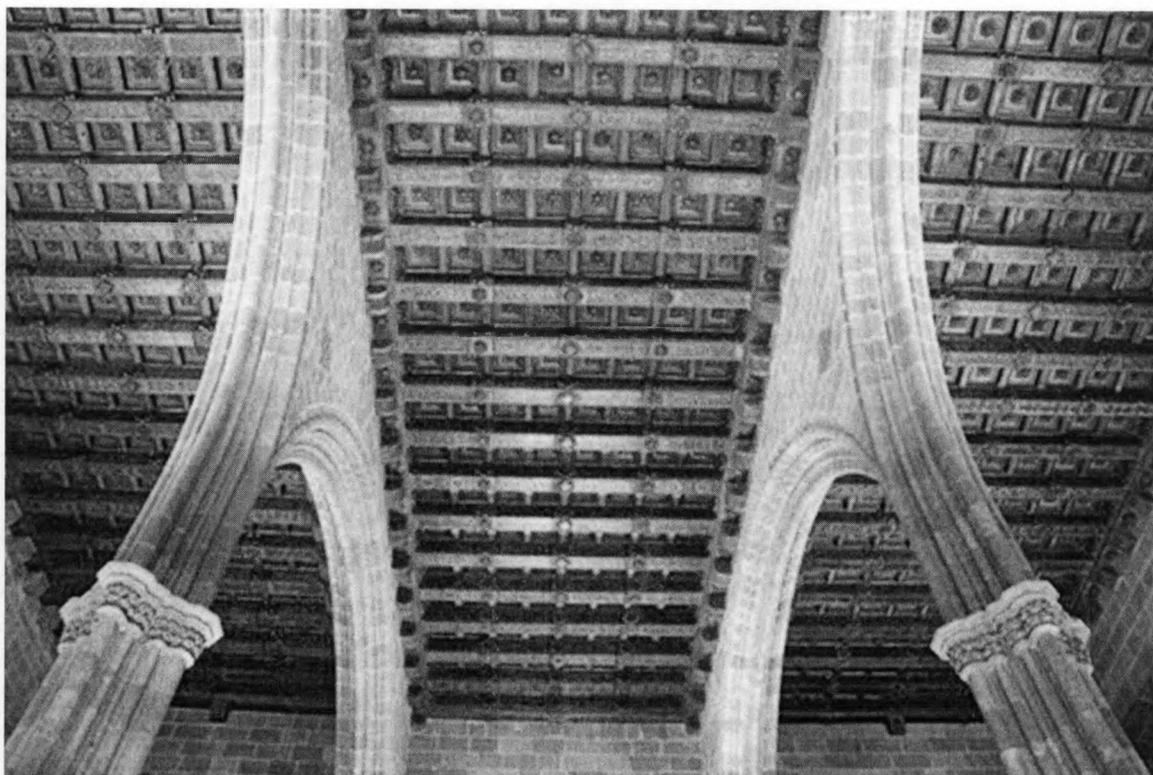


Figure 6. Ceiling of Trade Hall, Llotja de Mar, Barcelona 1380-1392.

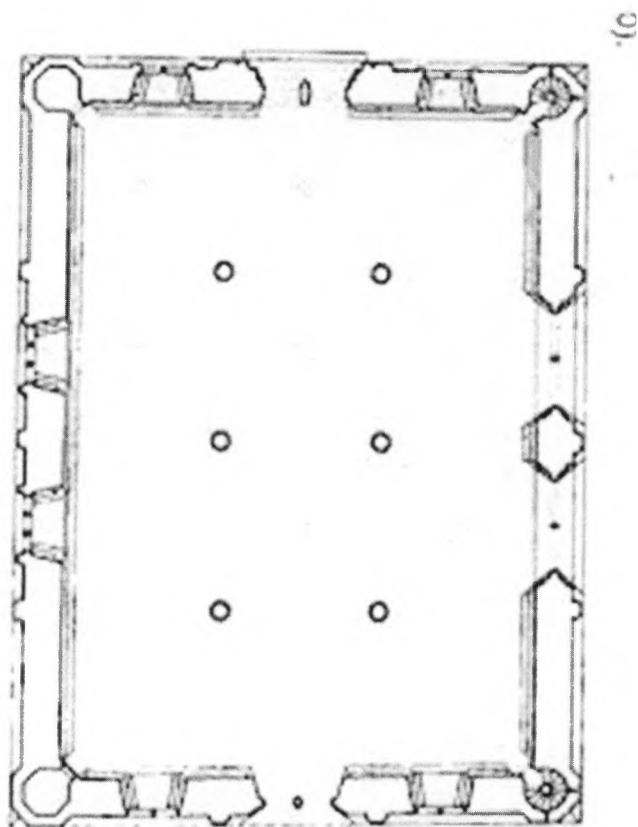


Figure 7. Floor Plan for Trade Hall, Llotja de Mar, Barcelona

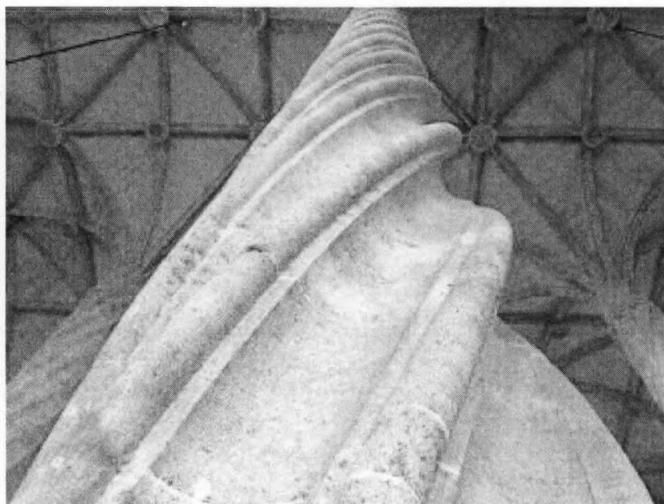


Figure 8. Column of the Trade Hall, Llotja of Valencia, Valencia. 1483-1498.