

Sales, swindles and sanctions: Bishop Sal·la of Urgell and the counts of Catalonia

With this paper I intend to take the audience back into a region and era where sermon literature and preaching barely survive in the evidence. The laymen who are being told their place are therefore in this paper not the preacher's flock, but the rich and powerful with whom our subject, Bishop Sal·la of Urgell dealt in the myriad transaction charters which Catalonia offers to the early medieval scholar. Before I try and give you a sense of this characterful prelate, therefore, I hope you won't mind if I spend a few minutes giving you some background.

Introduction: Catalonia c. 1000

Catalonia around the year 1000 was, it has been argued, a principality cut adrift: previously notable for its stalwart (and costless) loyalty to the distant Carolingians, the succession of Hugh Capet in 987 and, no less importantly, his subsequent inability to exercise control in the south of France left the area under its own masters.¹ First among these were the sons of Count-Marquis Borrell II of Barcelona, Girona, Osona and Urgell, grandson of the man whom later Catalan generations would regard as their nation's founder, Count Guifré the Hairy.² These sons, Ramon Borrell of Barcelona,

¹ Classically, R. d'Abadal i de Vinyals, Els Primers Comtes Catalans, Biografies Catalanes: sèrie històrica 1 (Barcelona 1958; 1980), pp. 327-340; see also M. Zimmermann, "Hughes Capet et Borrell. À propos de l'«indépendance» de la Catalogne" in X. Barral i Altet, D Iogna-Prat, A. M. Mundó, J. M. Salrach & M. Zimmermann. (edd.), Catalunya i França Meridional a l'entorn de l'any mil: la Catalogne et la France méridionale autour de l'an mil. Colloque International du D. N. R. S./Generalitat de Catalunya «Hughes Capet 987-1987: la France de l'an mil», Barcelona 2-5 juliol 1987, Col·lecció Actes de Congressos 2 (Barcelona 1991), pp. 59-64; P. Freedman, "The Symbolic Implications of the Events of 985-988" in F. Udina i Martorell (ed.), Symposium Internacional sobre els Orígens de Catalunya (segles VIII-XI) (Barcelona 1991, 1992); also published as Memorias de le Real Academia de Buenas Letras de Barcelona Vols. 23 & 24 (Barcelona 1991 & 1992), Vol. I, pp. 117-129.

² For the next section see Map 1 and Figure 1 [not included in thesis copy]; I reproduce the former from A. J. Kostó, Making Agreements in Medieval Catalonia: power, order and the written word, 1000-1200, Cambridge Studies in Medieval Life and Thought 4th Series 51 (Cambridge 2001), p. xx, and the latter from R. d'Abadal i de Vinyals, L'Abat Oliba, Bisbe de Vic, i la seva Època, El Guió d'Or (Barcelona

Girona and Osona and Ermengol I of Urgell, would see out the pontificate of our subject, Bishop Sal·la, as Borrell himself had seen it in, but they were not alone on the Spanish March. Another family of Wifredian grandsons, comprising in Sal·la's day Miró Bonfill Count of Besalú and Bishop of Girona, his brother Oliba Cabreta Marquis of Besalú and Cerdanya, and Oliba's sons Guifré Count of Cerdanya, Marquis Bernat I Tallaferro of Besalú and Count Oliba of Ripoll (who would later be Bishop of Osona) ruled several more of the Catalan counties, and in Empúries and Rosselló a third family, which is usually assumed to have been descended from Guifré the Hairy as well although the sources hardly justify this, ruled, headed by Count Gauzfred.³ To the west, the quasi-independent dual county of Pallars-Ribagorça was ruled by four sons of Borrell II's sister, but this dynastic tie would unspin in the course of the next generation.⁴ The secular power network was therefore tangled and unclear.

Sal·la's bishopric of Urgell, to which he succeeded in 981 and in which he died in 1010,⁵ did not map neatly to the county of the same name, but extended beyond its borders to cover Pallars-Ribagorça to the west and Cerdanya to the east. This gave him business with most of the counts of the March just as bishop, and his family's interests stretched still further. Sal·la's father Isarn had been Viscount of Conflent, an area with no count of its own

1948; 2nd edn. 1948, 3rd edn. 1962); repr. as "L'abat Oliba i la seva època" in *idem*, Dels Visigots als Catalans Vol. II pp. 141-277, p. 151.

³ Certainly Guifré's brother Miró did once rule Rosselló, but the evidence to make the subsequent counts in the area his descendants is lacking; it is not even clear that Gauzbert, who saw out most of Sal·la's pontificate, was the son of the long-lived Count Gauzfred who was ruler there as Sal·la succeeded.

⁴ See R. d'Abadal i de Vinyals, "Els orígens del comtat de Pallars-Ribagorça. Els comtes tolosans. La Independència. La divisió de Pallars i Ribagorça", ed. J. Sobrequés i Callicó, in Abadal, Dels Visigots als Catalans, ed. Sobrequés, *Estudis i Documents XIII-XIV* (Barcelona 1969; 1974), Vol. I, pp. 241-260, at pp. 257-260.

⁵ There is no previous focused study of Sal·la as far as I know, but some preliminary data are gathered by C. Baraut, "Els documents, dels anys 981-1010, de l'Arxiu Capitular de la Seu d'Urgell" in Urgellia: anuari d'estudis històrics dels antics comtats de Cerdanya, Urgell i Pallars, d'Andorra i la Vall d'Aran Vol. 3 (Montserrat 1980), pp. 7-166, at pp. 18-19.

whose viscounts therefore seem to have enjoyed considerable independence.⁶ Sal·la's brother Bernat, who inherited his father's dignity, never appears with a count in some thirty documents which feature him, and his son and successor Arnau repeats this feat in an era of far thicker documentary preservation.⁷ The family's interests were not confined to Conflent, which ecclesiastically at least fell under the Bishop of Elna, who in Sal·la's time was Berenguer, the fourth son of Marquis Oliba Cabreta of Besalú.⁸ An uncle of Sal·la's after whom he may have been named was perhaps the greatest frontier magnate in tenth-century Catalonia after the counts, and founded the monastery of Sant Benet de Bages, and the clan was also related, by not entirely clear links, to that of the Viscounts of Osona, whose family also numbered several bishops in its ranks.⁹ If not therefore out of the top drawer, Sal·la, whom we first see as an archdeacon in 974 in what would become his cathedral,¹⁰ was straight out of the next one down.

⁶ On this family see Baraut, "Els documents", pp. 16-18, and M. Rovira, "Noves dades sobre els vescomtes d'Osona-Cardona" in *Ausa: patronato de estudios ausonencs* Vol. 9 No. 98 (Vic 1981), pp. 249-260 at pp. 251 & 253-255.

⁷ Bernat: R. d'Abadal i de Vinyals, "Com neix i creix un gran monestir pirinenc abans de l'any mil: Eixalada-Cuixà" in *Analecta Montserratensia* Vol. 8 (Montserrat 1955), pp. 125-337, ap. 77, P. De Marca, *Marca Hispanica sive Limes Hispanicus, hoc est geographica & historica descriptio cataloniae, ruscinonis, & circumiacentium populorum*, ed. É. Baluze (Paris 1688; Barcelona 1972, 1989), transl. J. Icart as *Marca Hispànica, o País de la Frontera Hispanica: versió catalana* (Barcelona 1965), [hereafter *MH*] ap. CII (which is a forgery), C. Baraut (ed.), "Les actes de consagracions d'esglésies del bisbat d'Urgell (Segles IX-XII)" in *Urgellia* Vol. 1 (Montserrat 1978), pp. 11-182, nos [hereafter Consagracions] 39 & 40 & Baraut, "Documents", nos [hereafter Urgell] 170, 181, 182, 184, 185, 188, 190, 191, 194, 195, 199, 205, 211, 217, 228, 229, 230, 234, 242, 245, 268, 275 & 281. Arnau: Consagracions 51 & Urgell 287, 315, 355, 356, 383, 397, 398, 399 & 886.

⁸ On Berenguer see Abadal, "L'abat Oliba", pp. 149-151.

⁹ Rovira, "Noves dades", pp. 151 & 153-155.

¹⁰ Urgell 168: his other appearances are R. Ordeig i Mata (ed.), *Catalunya Carolíngia vol. IV: els comtats d'Osona i Manresa*, Memòries de la Secció Històrico-Arqueològica LIII (Barcelona 1999), nos [hereafter Cat. Car. IV] 1553, 1556 & 1557; P. de Bofarull y de Mascaró, *Los Condes de Barcelona Vindicados, y Cronología y Genealogía de los Reyes de España considerados como Soberianos Independientes de su Marca. Tomo I: abraza los siete primeros, desde el año 874 al 1035* (Barcelona 1836; 1990), p. 156; Consagracions 34, 39-41 & 43; C. Devic & J. Vaissete, *Histoire Générale de Languedoc avec les Notes et les Pièces Justificatives. Édition accompagnée de dissertations et actes nouvelles, contenant le recueil des inscriptions de la province antiques et du moyen âge, des planches, des cartes géographiques et des vues des monuments*, aug. E. Mabille, E. Barry, E. Roschach, A. Molinier; ed. M. E. Dulaurier, Vol. V (Toulouse 1875; Osnabrück 1973), Preuves: chartes et document no. 146; E. Magnou-Nortier, A.-M. Magnou (edd.), *Recueil des Chartes de l'Abbaye de la Grasse Tome I 779-1119*, Collection des documents inédits sur l'histoire de France: section d'histoire

Sal·la moved in a world in which churchmen and lay magnates could be hard to distinguish. They did not just share families, and sometimes offices, but outlooks; in the year of Sal·la's death, two further Catalan bishops would perish on a fatal campaign to Córdoba led by the sons of Borrell II, one of whom, Ermengol, would also thus meet his end.¹¹ A few years later the young Archbishop Guifré of Narbonne, from the next generation of Guifré the Hairy's descendants, would exemplify the clash between the *mores* of the age in which Sal·la had succeeded with those of the era of the Peace of God, by striding into a council assembled to rebuke him for his bellicose behaviour in his customary full war-gear, dramatically shedding it onto the floor and storming out again, briefly 'reformed'.¹² That council itself might make an interesting study of clerical dictation of lay behaviour, but I have chosen to pick the point before the wave of reform broke, to show you the picture of Bishop Sal·la riding its potential at its peak.

Another 'unreformed' characteristic of the Catalan Church is that it was, as far as we can tell, under the more or less effective control of the counts.¹³ Borrell II took a candidate of his for a new (and ephemeral) Catalan archbishopric to Rome for approval,¹⁴ but his son Ramon Borrell could call

médiévale et de philologie, Série in 8^{vo} 24 (Paris 1996), no. [hereafter La Grasse] 91; *MH* app. CXLIX, CLVII, CLIX & CLXXI; Urgell 171 (probably), 188, 189, 196, 203, 211, 212, 214, 218-220, 224, 225, 232, 233, 238-240, 242, 243-246, 252, 257-259, 263, 271, 276, 278-280, 283, 284, 286, 288, 289, 294, 296, 299, 300, 306, 311, 314 & 483; & J. Villanueva, *Viage Literario a las Iglesias de España tomo VIII: viage á las iglesias de Vique y Solsona* (Valencia 1821), ap. XXVIII.

¹¹ P. Bonnassie, *La Catalogne du Milieu du X^e à la Fin du XI^e Siècle: croissance et mutations d'une société* (Toulouse 1975-1976), Vol. I, pp. 347-351. For the Peace, see most conveniently T. Head & R. Landes, "Introduction" in *idem*, *The Peace of God: social violence and religious responses in France around the year 1000* (Ithaca 1992), pp. 1-20.

¹² Abadal, "L'abat Oliba", pp. 259-260.

¹³ *Ibid.*, pp. 202-203.

¹⁴ R. Ordeig i Mata, "Ató, bisbe i arquebisbe de Vic (957-971), antic arxiprest-ardiaca de Girona" in *Studia Vicensia* Vol. 1 (Vic 1989), pp. 61-97, at pp. 76-78; I believe there was in fact less to this episode than meets the eye, and hope to explain why in a future paper entitled "Archbishop Ató of Osona: false metropolitans on the *Marca Hispanica*", based on one I presented before the EMERGE 2003 Conference in St Andrews, under the title of "Archbishop Ató of Vic: ecclesiastical separatism in Carolingian Catalonia", 13th September 2003.

himself “*inspector episcopii* [sic]” and possibly even “*pontifex*” in his documents,¹⁵ and this was no empty assertion. It is a document of Sal·la’s, which we shall discuss shortly, which tells us that the counts performed episcopal investiture,¹⁶ but the extent to which episcopal office remained the privilege of the comital and vicecomital families shows us that succession was not an open competition. Though the comital will could be contested, mostly by other counts as numerous fracas over the polycomital bishopric of Girona display, but also by less exalted means, such as the assassination of two successive bishops of Osona,¹⁷ the field was limited. Here again, Sal·la seems to have been able to ride both lay and ecclesiastical horses. Catalonia in his time was a world in which the counts told the bishops what to do, not the reverse; Sal·la however excelled in ensuring that he was told what he wanted.

In the Voice of Sal·la: the swindles

One of the reasons Sal·la makes such a good subject is that he is one of the first Catalan figures whose own words we can probably use to give colour to his personality and actions. I say probably, because we have no documents written by Sal·la himself, although he features in some 63 charters of various kinds.¹⁸ On the other hand, some of these cases seem undeniably to ring with the prelate’s own voice, even if carried to us through the medium of dictation. As a first example of Sal·la’s style, and of how he went about dealing with his comital contemporaries, let us therefore take a charter of 995.¹⁹ Here Sal·la was selling a castle, that of Carcolzes, to his cathedral’s

¹⁵ The former in *MH* ap. CLXXII (1014), where Ramon Borrell is also called “*Deo cultore*”; the latter in F. Monsalvatje y Fossas, El Monasterio de San Pedro de Casseras, *Noticias Históricas* Vol. XX (Gerona 1910), ap. I.

¹⁶ Urgell 276.

¹⁷ P. Freedman, The Diocese of Vic: tradition and regeneration in medieval Catalonia (New Brunswick 1983); online at <http://libro.uca.edu/vic/vic.htm>, last modified 16th August 2000 as of 22nd November 2003, p. 20.

¹⁸ See n. 10 above.

¹⁹ Urgell 239.

sacristan Bonhom. Bonhom had somehow raised 500 *solidi*'s worth of produce with which to buy the castle, but the document is more concerned with telling us how Sal·la acquired it. The scribe, a priest by the name of Lleopard, writes as it were Sal·la speaking:

... all these things are in the county of Urgell, and it came to me Bishop Sal·la by charter of compensation from my lord Count Borrell for that half of the castle of Clarà or other amends which might have satisfied me, which he ought to have made to me from the 7th Ides of October up to the first following Feast of Pentecost. In such a way did my lord Count Borrell hand over all the above things thus with this charter of compensation from his right into the power of me Bishop Sal·la for my own, so that if at that same above-said first following Feast of Pentecost in the 5th year of the rule of King Hugh the Great he should not have returned to me that selfsame half of the above-said castle Clarà in stewardship or if by then he had not made other amends which might have been satisfactory to me, I Bishop Sal·la in the name of God might have full and most firm power over the above-said castle of Carcolzes with all the above things to do with as I might wish. And I waited for him up until the aforesaid assembly of Pentecost and I reminded him in sight of good men that he should have returned to me all the above said things or should have made other amends to me, and he did not do this. And I again gave him another plea from the Nativity of the Lord up

till the next Pentecost and ever I reminded him, both through me and my messengers, that he should have returned to me all the above-said things or have made other amends to me, but he did not do this. Again and again I gave to him other pleas and others so that he might keep this agreement about the above-said things or make other amends, but he did not do this and he abandoned all the above-said things to me Bishop Sal·la and allowed it to befall.

It seems fairly clear that Sal·la did not **want** Carcolzes; Clarà, on the frontier of both the principality and settlement, represented a much better investment in terms of opportunity for expansion and aggrandisement, which was of course probably also why Borrell had wanted it. Sal·la's attachment may well have been more personal however, as when his brother Bernat died in 1003, his will bequeathed the **other** half of the castellany of Clarà, revealing that Borrell had by *force majeure* laid hold of a chunk of Conflent vicecomital family property.²⁰ In the event, the sacristan Bonhom did not want Carcolzes either, as within a year he had sold it on, at the same price, to Viscount Guillem of Urgell, who then sold it back to Bishop Sal·la, again for 500 *solidi*,²¹ whereupon Sal·la resignedly donated it to his cathedral, although with the reservation that it should be held by his nephew Ermengol, by then already an archdeacon in the chapter.²²

Nonetheless, the tangled irony of the deals in these charters is not so interesting, to me at least, as the preservation of the dealing with Borrell II, a deal in which Sal·la was unusually worsted by what, and it is surely his

²⁰ Bernat's will is Urgell 281.

²¹ Urgell 243.

²² Urgell 244.

account which Lleopard gives us here, he depicts as Borrell's truculence. By this stage Borrell had already been dead for two years,²³ and it may have been this which made it possible for Sal·la to express such dissatisfaction with the Count-Marquis. Nonetheless, a document of 1003 suggests that he had had his own back already.²⁴ This document is a donation of another archdeacon of Urgell, Sendred, to his cathedral, a donation which the scribe, a priest Durabiles has him recount as follows:

Let it be known to all men present and future that I Sendred, Archdeacon, however unworthy, of the Holy Mother of the See of Urgell and bailiff of the Andorra valley,²⁵ sadly for my sins or some reason, that my lord Count Borrell built a castle against the men of the Andorra valley which is called Bragafols, which he placed in my command. However those men raised siege-works against the castle and took it, and the aforesaid Count flung me in chains and leg-irons and held me for a long time over that castle. And he examined me in his name through his magnates and nobles so that I would agree to give to him that alod of mine which I had in Somont, which I held from the franchise of the men of Andorra and from my parents. I however responded to him: I am not going to give away the alod of my parents before my death at the very earliest! And I sent a message to my lord, to Bishop Sal·la and he himself sought the Count and

²³ C. Baraut, "La data i el lloc de la mort del Comte Borrell II de Barcelona-Urgell" in *Urgellia* Vol. 10 (Montserrat 1991), pp. 469-472.

²⁴ Urgell 286.

²⁵ The term used is "*baiulus*".

said to him: For what reason, my lord, are you holding a cleric and Archdeacon of Holy Mary in chains? The Count answered: If he will not give me that alod of his which he has in Somont I shall not release him. The Bishop responded: That alod which you seek is already the above-named Mother's. As soon as he heard the words of the Bishop and he proved that all this was true, the Count was exceedingly angry and released me from my chains and leg-irons. And on account of this service which Holy Mary the Mother of God and my lord Bishop Sal·la have done me, we, I Sendred son of Centoll and my wife Ermeriga give to My Lady the aforesaid Virgin Mary Mother of God the already-said alod which we have in Somont, with its entrances and exits and with all the things pertaining to it, in this way, namely, so that we or our kinsman may hold the aforesaid alod as long as we may live, in the service of Holy Mary [...] by donation to Bishop Sal·la and his successors..."

This is a particularly fine example of medieval sharp practice. Notable is not only the Marquis's use of a churchman as a castellan,²⁶ and the fact that that castellan had land given him by the very people against whom he had to hold the castle, but also the guile of Sal·la. Sendred minimised the cost of his freedom by ensuring that his family held the land in benefice but Sal·la had still barefacedly appropriated it for the cathedral as the opportunity arose from the Marquis's less subtle attempt to do the same. It is entirely plausible that the land in question was genuinely promised to Holy Mary. But

²⁶ Cf. Freedman, *Diocese of Vic*, pp. 21-23.

that Sendred did not say as much to the Count, whether in his words or the words of the priest who wrote them, and that the actual donation post-dates his release, which is at variance with what Sal·la is said to have told the Marquis, by at least ten years given that Borrell died in 993, suggests that at best Sal·la rather accelerated the act, albeit partly in Sendred's interest. The ultimate beneficiary of course was the Mother of God as represented by Urgell cathedral, but for Sal·la this was a gain for the family.

It may be going too far to generalise from these two documents that Borrell and Sal·la were perpetually at daggers drawn, but it does at least seem clear that Sal·la remembered the Count-Marquis as an opponent, and one over whom he had resorted to underhand means to triumph. Rather more outright was a conflict in which he became embroiled with the young counts of Cerdanya and Besalú.

The sanctions

The comital family of Besalú and Cerdanya, which may also have held the notional rule of Conflent, and certainly ruled the two lesser *pagi* of Berga and the Ripollès in Sal·la's time, had a long history of plural countships shared between brothers.²⁷ In 928 four infant counts had thus succeeded their father Miró II of Cerdanya, under the auspices of their mother Countess Ava, and Sal·la must have known two of them, the Count-Bishop Miró who held the county of Besalú and the see of Girona as Sal·la ascended to the see of Urgell,²⁸ and his brother Count-Marquis Oliba Cabreta of Cerdanya who succeeded Miró in Besalú at the latter's death in 984.²⁹ In 990 Oliba Cabreta,

²⁷ See Abadal, "L'abat Oliba", pp. 149-151.

²⁸ J. M. Salrach i Marés, "El bisbe-comte Miró Bonfill i la seva obra de fundació i dotació de monestirs" in E. Fort i Cogul (ed.), II Col·loqui d'Història del Monaquisme Català, Sant Joan de les Abadesses 1970 II, *Scriptorium Populeti* 9 (Poblet 1974), pp. 57-81, with English summary pp. 422-423.

²⁹ R. Ordeig i Mata, "Dades referents al comte Oliba Cabreta" in Estudis d'història oferts a Ramon d'Abadal i de Vinyals en el centenari del seu naixement, *Estudis Universitaris Catalans* Vol. 30

with whom Sal·la had been a willing collaborator, died in Monte Cassino whither he had retired the year before.³⁰ His three sons (the fourth, Berenguer, being headed for the see of Elna) now likewise succeeded him under the auspices of their mother, Ermengarda. It would seem however that these were also the auspices of two advisors, Arnau and Radulf, for in 991 already Sal·la had apparently been left with no recourse, after the abstraction of several parishes in Cerdanya and Berga by the countess, than to gather at his side Bishop Vives of Barcelona and Bishop Aimeric of Roda and solemnly excommunicate the two counsellors.³¹ The Countess and her children were diplomatically excepted from the interdict over the two *pagi*, which were otherwise to know no priestly ministry until the parishes were restored to Urgell. We have both the Bull by which Sal·la carried out the excommunication,³² and a circular letter in which he communicated it to his fellows, in which he explained himself as follows:

Our tongue cannot tell you, oh most holy fathers, nor letters contain how great and many persecutions have been brought upon us by depraved and perverse men in recent days. However, due to forceful necessity we shall intimate to you a few things of many. For in the present year nine hundred and ninety one of the Lord's ministry, iniquitous men immersed themselves in the sworn destruction of the Church so that they might drive out the agents of princes, who were seen to rule or hold the diocesan lands of the mother of our

(Barcelona 1994), pp. 25-40.

³⁰ Abadal, "L'abat Oliba", pp. 162-164.

³¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 167-169. In English a brief treatment in J. A. Bowman, Shifting Landmarks: property, proof, and dispute in Catalonia around the year 1000, Conjunctions of Religion and Power in the Medieval Past (Ithaca 2004), p. 71.

³² Urgell 224.

Lord, kind Mary... In such a way did their malice grow, that by their persuasion the counts and princes took away from our power, from us and from the Church, to which we administer the benefits of Christ, all the diocesan churches and all tax which by episcopal right ought to be paid to us from two whole counties, namely Cerdanya and Berga, by no blame of ours, but always humbly did we seek satisfaction over this from them. And not only did they steal those suffragan churches, but also those fruits and tithes which the Lord had given them the previous year, and also expelled our ministers from there by force. On account of which we entreat only too much the sanctity of your loftiness that you will not defer from excommunicating those nefarious men who excited the spirits of the princes and counts to this infamy, that is Arnau and Radulf and also their followers as well...³³

Regrettably, I cannot tell you how this affair ended. Sal·la does not seem to have acted in Cerdanya or Berga after 984, but we have only one consecration of his from after 990 anyway.³⁴ He does not appear with any of the young counts, but neither had he with their father and mother except at consecrations.³⁵ A papal Bull of 1001 confirmed Cerdanya and Berga's churches to Urgell with no mention of the dispute, but, given as it was by no less a diplomat than Sylvester II, the Catalan-trained Gerbert of Reims, it might well have been silent on such difficult matters.³⁶ The cathedral was able

³³ Urgell 225.

³⁴ His last appearance there Consagracions 40; the single post-990 consecration Consagracions 43.

³⁵ Consagracions 39-41.

³⁶ Urgell 271, or H. Zimmermann (ed.), Papsturkunden 896-1046. Erster Band: 896-996,

to sell property in Berga in 1004,³⁷ but this need not imply that they, rather than the purchaser, were able to assert direct control over it. Even if we do not know the results, however, Sal·la's actions stand him on the cusp of a changing age; while excommunications of recalcitrant laymen can be found in Gregory of Tour's *Histories* and Joan of Orleans's *Vita Columbani*, the process was to reach a new level of public participation with the burgeoning Peace of God movement in the 1030s.³⁸ Here Sal·la was many years ahead of his time; in a similar dispute twenty years later, for example, the warlike Archbishop Guifré of Narbonne, while he did excommunicate his opponent, also took the chance to personally lead troops to ravage his lands, causing the victim to come to a Church council to ask if an excommunication laid down by such a man were truly binding.³⁹ Sal·la instead opted here for the weapons of the Church,⁴⁰ presumably partly so as to remind his suffragan priests in the affected areas that they had another master as well as the counts.

Sal·la en famille: lands and succession

This then is Sal·la as churchman; high-handed, grand, verbose and sometimes downright sneaky, all in the service of the "mother of our Lord, kind Mary, for whom we are the agent of God".⁴¹ This was not however the be-all and end-all of Sal·la's concerns. Son, brother and uncle of viscounts, nephew of a monastic founder and therefore cousin of a different family of

Österreichische Akademie der Wissenschaften, philosophisch-historische Klasse, Denkschriften 174, Veröffentlichungen der Historischen Kommission III (Wien 1984), no. 399; facsimile editions in P. Kehr (ed.), *Die Ältesten Papsturkunden Spaniens, erläutert und reproduziert*, Abhandlungen der Preussischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, Jahrgang 1926, Philosophisch-Historische Klasse, Nr. 2 (Berlin 1926), no. VIII; *Pontificum Romanorum Diplomata Papyracea quae Supersunt in Tabulariis Hispaniae Italiae Germaniae phototypice expressa iussu Pii PP. XI* (Roma 1929), no. XI.

³⁷ Urgell 289.

³⁸ E. Magnou-Nortier, "The Enemies of the Peace: reflections on a vocabulary, 500-1100", transl. A. G. Remensnyder in Head & Landes, *Peace of God*, pp. 58-79.

³⁹ See n. 12 above; a brief treatment in English in Bowman, *Shifting Landmarks*, pp. 73-76.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 71, n. 48, though I cannot find the text Bowman quotes here.

⁴¹ Urgell 224.

viscounts and indeed of his predecessor as bishop, his family interests are also laid forth for us by the charters in which he was involved. A full treatment of these would be too long for this paper, but a brief summary is worth giving. Most revealing are the documents which record his will, by which the great bulk of his property went either to the cathedral, or to his nephew Ermengol, which as we shall see was much the same thing.⁴² There are however important differences between Sal·la's actual will and its execution, which were drafted some distance apart, and in any case it is doubtful that all his property was covered by either document. Long before his personal property could be thus bequeathed, however, we can see him operating with his brother Viscount Bernat, together either in defence of the family lands at Aigüatèbia in Conflent,⁴³ which seems to have been an ancestral holding of the viscounts, or in a slow and drawn-out process of exchange and division of properties by which, broadly, Sal·la acquired the family's interests in Urgell, while Bernat acquired those in Conflent, and also in frontier Osona.⁴⁴ This is to say that Sal·la spent his dealings with his brother consolidating their holdings around their respective power centres. For Bernat this was the highlands of Conflent; for Sal·la it was his cathedral. And, just as Bernat was to be succeeded by one of his sons, so was another of those sons to succeed Sal·la, and this too by the careful machinations of his episcopal uncle.

We might in any case assume, had Ermengol succeeded Sal·la in documentary silence, that this had been arranged beforehand; Ermengol had by Sal·la's death in 1010 been an archdeacon of the chapter for 14 years,⁴⁵ and the other senior churchmen of the chapter were all long-time colleagues of Sal·la's such as the sacristan Bonhom to whom he sold the castle of

⁴² The will Urgell 287; its eventual execution Urgell 314.

⁴³ Urgell 203.

⁴⁴ Such exchanges and other transactions in Urgell 188, 211 & 245.

⁴⁵ His first appearance as such (and at all) Urgell 244 (996).

Carcolzes.⁴⁶ Sal·la's and Ermengol's family connections probably ensured the nephew the uncle's see, but thanks to Sal·la's fondness for the written word we can demonstrate the process by which this was achieved. Sal·la's strategy had two threads, and the first and more surprising was an agreement with Borrell's son Ermengol I, who had inherited the county of Urgell in 992.⁴⁷ This is documented by an undated parchment couched in the form of a *convenientia*, that is an agreement between two parties such as would later be used so extensively to regulate the feudal relations of mid-eleventh-century Catalonia.⁴⁸ Though it lacks as did such documents a date, it must have been before 1003, the year in which Viscount Bernat, the archdeacon's father, died,⁴⁹ as he is referred to as still living in the course of the agreement. By this pact, Count Ermengol undertook not to obstruct in any way and to support the candidacy of the younger Ermengol for the see on Sal·la's death. He did not receive anything for this, what would have been simony, but did however demand a heavy price for performing the investiture of the new bishop, this being as said our first indication that the counts considered this their right. The fineness of the distinction is no less than we would expect from Sal·la. The price was "100 *pesas*, or equivalent *pesatas*, or bullion worth 200 *pesas* instead of those 100 *pesas*", which he was willing to accept from "Bishop Sal·la or his brother Bernat or any of the kinsmen or friends of that same cleric Ermengol written above", or indeed Ermengol himself.⁵⁰ Since the man who was to become St Ermengol did succeed the sum must have been forthcoming, as must the oath of fidelity the Count demanded "that I may

⁴⁶ Bonhom also appears, often collaborating or transacting with Sal·la, in Cat. Car. IV 1256, 1556 & 1557 & Urgell 193, 201, 202, 206, 209, 214, 216, 219, 233, 238, 239, 243, 259 & 288.

⁴⁷ Urgell 276.

⁴⁸ On which see Kosto, *Making Agreements*.

⁴⁹ To judge from his will in Urgell 281.

⁵⁰ Urgell 276: "... *pesas* .C., aut *pesatas* valibiles, aut *pigdis* valibiles de *pesas* .CC. pro *ipsas* *pesas* .C...."; "... *Sallane* episcopo aut *Bernatus* fratri suo aut aliquis de ex parentibus vel amicis de isto Ermengaude clericus super scripto...".

have faith in him". By the end of Ermengol's episcopacy the tables would be reversed, with Ermengol's eponymous son and successor swearing fidelity to the bishop,⁵¹ but this is beyond our scope. Sal·la's nephew would have his see.

This, however, was apparently not enough insurance for Sal·la. We have one document from Pallars, which records the union of the monastery of Sant Pere de Burgals with the Languedoc house of Notre Dame de la Grasse, and at this assembly we find listed as participants, behind Count Sunyer of Pallars, Bishop Sal·la of Urgell and "Bishop Ermengol his coadjutor".⁵² This was in 1007: Sal·la may have been ill, but if so he was to last another three years and was apparently fit to travel to Pallars. It is hard not to see this too as making sure things went as planned. Ermengol would safely succeed his uncle because his uncle had made sure he was bishop before he himself died. "If you want something done, do it yourself" ...

Fidelity and Feudalism

One last aspect of Sal·la's operations deserves a brief account, before I try and sum up this most ambitious of prelates. There exist a number of documents in the Urgell archive which show how Sal·la operated as a personal lord. Rather than an attachment to the cathedral, another undated oath, this time by Viscount Guillem of Urgell has him profess fidelity to Sal·la himself.⁵³ There is nothing in itself remarkable about this document except that for the most part such written professions are documents of a later age. Though this may partly be down to preservational factors (the numerous early oaths to bishops of Urgell are all preserved only as copies despite the voluminous number of originals in the archive, suggesting that they were not

⁵¹ Urgell 486 & 487; see Kosto, *Making Agreements*, pp. 65-67 for compared texts and discussion.

⁵² La Grasse 91.

⁵³ Urgell 483.

thought important to retain),⁵⁴ and the agreement with Count Ermengol as we have seen suggests that such swearings of fidelity were not new even if recording them were, nonetheless this oath from Guillem to Sal·la is among the earliest, and may actually be the earliest, such document known from Catalonia.⁵⁵

This was not the only respect in which Sal·la was ahead of the feudalising wave. I refer to a series of charters of donation to the cathedral of Urgell from his episcopacy.⁵⁶ These differ from those of previous offices because whereas those had been plain and simple donations, albeit sometimes with a life reservation of usufruct, Sal·la was here giving the estates back to their donors to be held in the service of the cathedral, at a relatively uniform fixed yearly render.⁵⁷ This is a simple benefice arrangement, akin to certain sorts of *precaria* common from Francia and Carolingian Italy,⁵⁸ but such arrangements, though well-known in Francia proper, are almost unattested before this point in Catalonia. This unfamiliarity with the type of transaction is reflected by the fact that the scribes couched the charters formulaically as donations where an Italian scribe would have had a more appropriate formula ready to be applied. Moreover, not all of these documents were even simple *precariae*: one or two further specify that the donors were to have no other lord.⁵⁹ This extra clause draws a link between these documents and the feudal oaths of the later period; by tying the free allegiance of these donors to

⁵⁴ Kosto, *Making Agreements*, pp. 53-59.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 55, Table 1.1.

⁵⁶ They are Urgell 240, 246, 257, 259, 279, 280, 286 & 289.

⁵⁷ Of the above, Urgell 240, 257, 279, 280 and 286 look like grants as of old with a life reservation, though they bear the same uniform render in wax as 246, 259 and 289, which are instead grants or sales of land by the cathedral of lands which the beneficiaries had first given there, in the case of 246 land which had been held by the *aprisio* of the donors' parents.

⁵⁸ See e. g. P. Depreux, "L'apparition de la précaire à Saint-Gall" in *Mélanges de l'École Française de Rome: moyen âge* Vol. 111 (Rome 1999), pp. 649-673 with résumé p. 979, or L. Feller, "Précaires et livelli: les transferts patrimoniaux *ad tempus* en Italie", *ibid.*, pp. 725-746 with résumé p. 980.

⁵⁹ Urgell 246 & 259.

him, Bishop Sal·la was creating seigneurial dependants thirty years before this process is usually thought to have properly begun.⁶⁰ Sal·la's nephew Ermengol was to take this a step further by leading his own settlement parties into the wastelands of the March and explicitly setting up dependants on the land he thus claimed.⁶¹ The cathedral of Urgell could thus clearly have served as a model for other landowners, especially ecclesiastical interests. Wherever Sal·la got the idea from for this change of tenurial arrangement,⁶² he was starting his diocese and others who saw it down a new path.⁶³

Conclusions

The sources do give a very material picture of all Catalan churchmen until the first flowering of the school of Ripoll under Bishop Oliba and the consequent preservation of letters, sermons and liturgical works which give a spiritual balance to this worldly array of transactions.⁶⁴ This may be unfair to Sal·la. His fondness for words may have made him a persuasive preacher, his apparent failing health in 1007 (when as well as appointing Ermengol his coadjutor he also first made his will) may have been due to rigorous touring of his diocese and there is, indeed, nothing to say that despite his engagement

⁶⁰ Bonnassie, *La Catalogne*, II, pp. 575-599, transl. L. K. Little & B. H. Rosenwein as "The Banal Seigneurie and the 'Reconditioning' of the Free Peasantry" in *eidem* (edd.), *Debating the Middle Ages: issues and readings* (Oxford 1998), pp. 114-133.

⁶¹ D. Sangés (ed.), "Recull de documents del segle XI referents a Guissona i a la seva plana" in *Urgellia* Vol. 3, pp. 195-226, no. 1.

⁶² Though this seems to have been new in Catalonia's preserved documents, it was not of course in Europe as a whole. A century and more earlier we can see Hraban Maur, as Abbot of Fulda, doing very similar things at Hunfeld and the unlocated *Swarzesmuore* in central Germany. The relevant documents are E. F. J. Dronke (ed.), *Codex Diplomaticus Fuldensis* (Aalen 1850), nos. 456 & 471; the latter document is discussed at length in an unpublished paper by Matthew Innes, entitled "Land and Freedom in Carolingian Europe", of which he kindly let me see a draft and to which I owe these references.

⁶³ See the perceptive remarks of P. Ourliac in his review of Barthélémy's *La Société dans le Comté du Vendôme* in *Revue Historique de Droit Français et Étranger* Vol. 72 (Paris 1994), pp. 576-579.

⁶⁴ Oliba's and others from Ripoll collected and edited in E. Junyent i Subirà (ed.), *Diplomatari i Escrits Literaris de l'Abat i Bisbe Oliba*, ed. A. M. Mundó, *Memòries de la Secció Històrico-Arqueològica XLIV* (Barcelona 1992), Obres Literaris.

with the world, less as we have seen than some of his contemporaries, he was not a model and moral prelate for his era.

Nonetheless, as we see him, it is hard to separate the interests of the cathedral of Urgell from those of its occupant and his family. Sal·la's entire strategy indeed seems to have been to combine the two interests inextricably. In the course of these operations we see him playing all the cards that his ability, background and station gave him; persuasion, cunning, grandeur, lordly protection, economic bargaining, more-or-less bribery, vassalisation and, when all else failed, collegiate episcopal interdict. Few of these techniques were the preserve of churchmen; despite Sal·la's protestation in 990 that excommunication was the weapon of the Church where the sword was the weapon of the layman,⁶⁵ it seems clear that he would rather have stuck with less drastic, more secular means. Such paths were not closed to him because of his clerical profession; Sal·la had all the tools and methods of the lay world at his disposal, short perhaps of direct military assault, which the actions of his colleagues reveal was a matter of choice rather than constraint. He was in fact a layman plus; he had a full array of lay strategies and then extra, those given him by his office as well as those offered by what seems to have been a fair amount of natural cunning. When it came to telling laymen what to do, Sal·la's options were wider than most, and he made the most of this comfortably dual status.

⁶⁵ Bowman, *Shifting Landmarks*, p. 71 & n. 48; I cannot find this text in Urgell 224 & 225.