

## Manuel Riu i Riu (1929-2011). In memoriam\*



Doctor Manuel Riu i Riu, Professor of Mediaeval History at the University of Barcelona and member of the History-Archaeology Section of the Institut d'Estudis Catalans, died on the 2nd of January 2011 in Sant Llorenç de Morunys at the age of 81. He was born in Manresa in 1929 to a mother with roots in Sant Llorenç de Morunys.

He studied philosophy and letters with a specialisation in history at the University of Barcelona and graduated in 1951. The person who would most clearly influence his future career, more than Vicens Vives, of whom he was a disciple, was Albert del Castillo, whom he helped from early on in his Chair in Universal Mediaeval History. In 1959, Doctor Castillo, who had been an archaeologist in his youth but one focused on the ancient world, as was traditional, had begun to conduct excavations to study remains from the early Middle Ages. Doctor Riu helped him on these digs, including the greyware pottery workshop and ovens in Casampons (Berga), the 10th century monastery of Sant Pere de Graudescales, the small castle in Viver, the necropolis of slab tombs in Vilafruns (Balsareny), a mediaeval farm in Vilosiu and the village of Jaça (Cercs), Sant Vicenç d'Obiols and the church and necropolis of Santa Creu de Jutglar (Osona). This partnership largely shaped his devotion to a new discipline, mediaeval archaeology, which was just emerging at that time.

His doctoral thesis studied the religious communities in the former bishopric of Urgell from the 13th to the 16th centuries. I remember attending the reading of his thesis, which was a real event for us in 1961. At that time I was his student in a course titled "Mediaeval Sources and Bibliography" targeted at students who wanted to specialise in mediaeval history.

In 1996, he landed the Chair in Mediaeval History at the University of Granada. His sojourn in Granada was extremely profitable because the new specialisation of mediaeval archaeology was spreading around the entire country. He was there only a short time when Dr Castillo's chair became vacant upon his retirement, and Dr Riu was able to return to the University of Barcelona in 1969. He was to spend the rest of his life there. Between 1970 and 1990, he edited the *Índice Histórico Español*, the bibliographic journal founded by Vicens Vives which was and still is so useful. Before that, between 1960 and 1966, he had been the secretary of the journal. Later, in 1980, he became the co-founder and co-editor of the University of Barcelona's journal *Acta Historica et Archaeologica Mediaevalia*, a position he would retain until 1993. He coordinated some of the journal's annexes, one devoted to greyware and popular pottery in mediaeval Catalonia, and another examining its fortresses, towers, watchtowers and castles.

If we examine the specialties he cultivated within mediaeval history, we would have to begin with mediaeval archaeology, a new discipline that he spearheaded not only in Catalonia but throughout all of Spain, in which he was a referent. It is the speciality which he introduced into

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university education and around which he built a school. In Catalonia, he took charge of the excavations in Cauters, an abandoned mediaeval village in the middle of Les Gavarres forest; the excavations in Saldes, especially the monastery of Sant Sebastià del Sull; the digs in Sorba, where the Martyrium of Saint Eudald was excavated and studied; as well as the excavations in Sant Miquel de la Vall (Gavet de la Conca, Pallars Jussà), and the castle of Mataplana (Gombrèn, Ripollès), his hometown of Sant Llorenç de Morunys and other sites, which were later continued by his disciplines.

In relation to archaeology, he studied urban planning in the early Middle Ages, burials, castles and country estates, both fortified and not. In several articles, Dr Riu examined the oldest mediaeval burial sites, which were often right in front of the house or sometimes even inside in the case of children. His acceptance speech as a member of the Royal Academy of Belles-Lettres, entitled *Some Funeral Customs from the Middle Ages in Catalonia*, stands out as noteworthy. He also published studies on specific objects found at the excavations and reports on digs or overviews of the sites excavated. He is the author of numerous syntheses or documents that take stock of mediaeval archaeology: one from 1986, entitled *Current State of Mediaeval Archaeology in the Christian Kingdoms on the Iberian Peninsula*, and the 1989 book *Mediaeval Architecture in Catalonia*. As the most prominent person working in the discipline, he was charged with assessing mediaeval archaeology's contributions to the history of Spain at a congress on historiographic assessments of the 20th century held in Estella in 1998 (*Contribution of Mediaeval Archaeology to the History of Spain*), and even later he published *The Beginnings of Mediaeval Archaeology in Catalonia* (2004-2005). Worth special mention is Dr Riu's major efforts captured in the work *Romanesque Catalonia*. Whenever possible, he tried to back archaeological studies with documentary support and to situate them in their historical context, which is why he devoted several studies to feudalism, and specifically to the feudalisation of the Catalan countryside.

I must also mention an activity on which I worked with Dr Riu: organising an annual course on mediaeval archaeology at the CSIC's Institució Milà i Fontanals in conjunction with the University of Barcelona. We held two: one on mediaeval history and another on archaeology. Each lasted one week, and they were targeted particularly to university students. Dr Riu always coordinated the archaeology course. We held them for 15 years, between 1983 and 1998, and they were quite a comprehensive overview of the issues and results of the excavations. All of Dr Riu's disciples attended these classes, along with other people who were in charge of a number of excavations. Contributions from archaeological materials in general were studied, and analyses were conducted of numerous constructions from the archaeological standpoint: towers, watchtowers and castles, mediaeval homes, glass and ceramic kilns, mills and forges, churches, mon-

asteries and walls, just to cite some of them. Dr Riu also scheduled an underwater archaeology course. Various aspects of rural and urban archaeology, analysis and restoration methods, death and jobs and games were considered through archaeology, ending with an assessment of mediaeval archaeology during the 15 years in which courses were held.

Once this stage of courses came to an end, in 1999 we jointly organised a colloquium on "The Catalan Farm during the Middle Ages and Modern Age (9th to 18th Centuries)". Dr Riu, who was the scientific coordinator, wanted it to be a highly interdisciplinary congress, and he wanted archaeological, historical, geographic, architectural and anthropological aspects of the farm to be studied. He did manage to gather quite a diverse group of people, including architects, anthropologists and geographers, but especially archaeologists and historians specialising in rural history, and others like myself, with my study on the estates, to participate in a project about which he was so enthusiastic. The colloquium was extremely successful, and after it we published the proceedings in 2001, in fact, a very interesting contribution to scholarship in the field.

As can be seen, mediaeval archaeology would be at the core of Dr Riu's activities, but there were also many other subjects that he studied using written sources: the studies on monasteries, started in his thesis, were translated in numerous publications and shared at congresses on monasticism. Also worth noting is his study on adoptionism, a mediaeval legacy that took root in Catalonia in the early Middle Ages. He was also interested in the religious brotherhoods, an interest revealed by the archive of a secular brotherhood, Mare de Déu dels Colls in Sant Llorenç de Morunys, documented from the 13th to the 20th centuries. Curiously, one of his earliest studies and his last one discuss this brotherhood.

For several years, he supervised a research project on poverty and marginalisation in the Middle Ages, a subject that was the target of attention in numerous European countries. His project led to the publication of two volumes which he coordinated, *La pobreza y la asistencia a los pobres en la Edad Media* (1980 and 1982), which are still a benchmark in this field of study.

He was interested in aspects related to rural life, such as seasonal migration and pastures, as well as an early reapers' uprising in the 14th century. He studied local life, particularly in Sant Llorenç de Morunys but also in Berga and Manresa. He devoted several studies, some of them in English as well, to the wool industry, which extended throughout all of Catalonia, in Sant Llorenç de Morunys as well, and on the guilds' regulation of this activity. He also devoted several studies to roadways, to trade, in both the early and late Middle Ages, in this case on forbidden trade with the eastern Mediterranean through licenses that were found in the diocesan archive; this study was later continued by one of his disciples. He took an interest in the history of banking at the end of the Middle Ages in an article published in both English and Catalan. He was

also fascinated by metrology and devoted several studies to this topic. His efforts to catalogue the parchments in the archive of Santa Maria del Mar and his contribution to the restoration of the ones that had been burned during the Civil War are noteworthy; he also assembled a diplomatium of the monastery of Sant Llorenç de Morunys (1981) and another on Vall de Lord (1988).

In recent years, we were conducting a joint project at the IEC to publish the documentation on international treaties and diplomatic negotiations, the first volume of which has already been issued.

Dr Riu's output was quite extensive, with more than 700 publications. Apart from the ones mentioned above, we should also cite the manuals of mediaeval history both around the world and in Spain, and the anthology of texts studying the Middle Ages written in conjunction with other authors. In addition to several books meant for popular consumption, such as *Vida y costumbres en la Edad Media* (1959) and *Historia del cristianismo* (1967), he also published a large number of informative articles in the newspaper *Diario de Barcelona*, the magazine *Destino* and numerous other magazines. Surprisingly, he published several books on industrialisation and transport in the contemporary age, some of them in conjunction with Dr Albert del Castillo.

Finally, we cannot fail to mention his studies on a variety of historians in obituaries or commemorative bio-

graphical sketches, such as the one on Ferran Soldevila (1994).

His merits were recognised by both his appointment as a member of the Institut d'Estudis Catalans in 1990 and his election as a member of the Acadèmia de Bones Lletres in 1983 and as a corresponding member of the Real Academia de la Historia in 1978. He was also a member of the London-based Society for Medieval Archaeology, the Societat Catalana d'Arqueologia and numerous branch organisations of the Institut d'Estudis Catalans. He served on the Advisory Commission of the Generalitat de Catalunya's Archaeological Services. In 1998, the *1st Symposium on Mediaeval Archaeology: Tribute to Professor Manuel Riu* was held in his honour, the proceedings of which have not yet been published. In 1999-2000, colleagues, friends and disciples organised a tribute to him which was published in the journal *Acta Historica et Archaeologica Mediaevalia*. In 2003, he received the Cross of Saint George from the Generalitat de Catalunya. He also received other awards: in 2004 the Signum Prize from El Solsonès, and in 2007 the City of Berga Prize for Culture. In 2007 he was named adoptive son of Sant Llorenç de Morunys, and a street in this village was named after him.

Beyond his research, teaching and all the honours he received, Dr Riu was a good-willed, affable person who always tried to lend a hand. Those of us who knew him will always remember him with affection. May he rest in peace.