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“The Frame of Death: the Burial of Pedro III the Great of Aragon (1285-1302).”

The sepulchre of Pedro III the Great (1291-1302) is considered one of the most outstanding funerary gothic monuments of the medieval the Crown of Aragon. Ordered by his son Jaime II the Just, the sepulchre parts ways from the desires inferred in Pedro III’s testament.

Jaime II, the former king of Sicily, conceived this majestic construction. Jaime acquired the Aragonese crown after the death of his brother, Alfonso III, king of Aragon who ruled between 1285 and 1291. A moment of political difficulties, Jaime sought to establish his political dominance in a territory where he had had no intervention or jurisdiction in the past. Leaving Sicily and becoming king of Aragon and count of Barcelona created the necessity to demonstrate his lineage and his rightfulness to the Aragonese throne, a factor that brought to the peninsula artistic connections that were present in the Kingdom of Sicily.

An additional angle in which we can frame this sepulchre is that it is the only royal sepulchre of the Crown of Aragon, which was neither opened nor destroyed through history. It was sealed in 1302 and not opened until 2010. 700 years passed when a Museo de Historia de Catalunya project in Barcelona started the restoration of the royal mausoleum. Pedro’s tomb was essentially viewed as a time capsule that has brought different questions into discussion thanks to numerous scientific tests, which had been able to be carried out on the corpse. Questions such as the use of hair dye in medieval times, detachments of body parts, funerary vestments and rituals.