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Roda el món i torna al... quilombo: The Travel Diaries of Joaquim Miret i Sans
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Catalan Review, Vol. XII, number 2 (1998), p. 49 – 60

RODA EL MÓN I TORNA AL...QUILOMBO:
THE TRAVEL DIARIES
OF JOAQUIM MIRET I SANS

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Mention today of the name Joaquim Miret i Sans is likely to elicit little more than a muted response or perhaps, at best, a vague gesture of recognition even among scholars of Catalan history or students of Catalan philology. This certainly would not have been the case during the first two decades of the current century when Miret i Sans was well known and respected in some of the most distinguished intellectual circles not only in his native Catalonia but also throughout most of the rest of Spain and much of western Europe, particularly France.

Joaquim Miret i Sans was born into a wealthy family in Barcelona on 17 April 1858, the eldest of four children of Antoni Miret i Nin and his wife Maria del Roser Sans i Cabot. Few details are known concerning the childhood of Joaquim Miret i Sans except that it appears to have been one of considerable privilege and comfort due to the family's socio-economic position which derived from investments. A major part of this fortune was inherited by Joaquim (to whom I shall refer henceforth simply as Miret) upon the death of his parents. It is known, also, that he received through inheritance from his godfather a *mas* of considerable size and importance, known in different periods as *Mas Coll*, *Mas Arolas*, *Mas Bas*, *Torre de Lladós*, and, in Miret's time, as *Can Ramon de l'Ull*, which at the turn of the century was located on the outskirts of Barcelona in the area of Les Corts, approximately where the Corte Inglés department store now stands on the Avinguda Diagonal.

Although Miret received a degree in Law from the University of Barcelona in 1880 and, two years later, a doctorate in Civil and Canon Law from the University of Madrid upon the presentation of a dissertation on the medieval codex known as the *Usatges de Barcelona*, he appears never to have practiced the legal profession. Instead, and given that he had no real need to secure gainful employment, he soon became interested in the study of medieval history, especially that of Catalonia and the former Kingdom of Aragon, and in exploring for this purpose the rich and at that time little-known archives of Catalonia as well as other important manuscript collections in Spain and France. In this regard the historian Francesc Carreras i Candi (Barcelona 1862-1937), a close friend and colleague of Miret, observes that the latter began his research in the archives in 1892 in connection

with a project in which he and Carreras were to collaborate: the preparation of a history of the County of Pallars (44). Two years later Miret traveled alone to the Seu d'Urgell in order to familiarize himself with the manuscripts located in the cathedral archives. And on June 18, 1896 Miret, accompanied by Carreras, embarked on the first of a series of research trips to the municipal and ecclesiastical archives of the old County of Pallars. News of their project and departure appeared on that same date in the periodical *La Renaixensa*:

Avui surten á recorre'ls pobles del antich Comtat de Pallars don Francisco Carreras y Candi y don Joaquím Miret y Sans, ab l'objecte de visitar los Arxius parroquials y municipals d'aquella interessant y poch estudiada regió. Dits senyors están treballant desde alguns anys en estudiar la historia dels antichs Comtes de Pallars y necessitan acopiar datos locals als molts que tenen reunits del Arxiu de la Corona d'Aragó y d'altres Arxius de Madrid y Barcelona (3673).

Unfortunately the project begun by Miret and Carreras was never completed due largely to the demands of other professional and personal commitments. However Miret's initial research in the archives provided a rich source of original materials upon which he was to base a number of important studies that would win immediately the critical acclaim of historians and philologists as well as result in his appointment to such respected academic institutions as the Real Academia de Buenas Letras de Barcelona, of which he served as secretary and editor-in-chief of its *Boletín* from 1901 to 1918; the Institut d'Estudis Catalans; the Real Academia de la Historia; the Real Academia Sevillana de la Historia, among others.

It may be useful at this juncture to mention some of Miret's most notable historiographical publications as well as those of a philological nature, although a clear-cut distinction between these two categories cannot always be made since often those studies on historical themes include transcriptions of documents which are of linguistic interest.

Prior to his appointment to the Real Academia de Buenas Letras de Barcelona in 1900 and the appearance that same year of his address presented before the membership of that institution, *La expansión y dominación catalana en los pueblos de la Galia meridional*, Miret had already published several articles on historical themes in the journals of the Associació Artístico-Arqueològica Barcelonesa and the Centre Excursionista de Catalunya, in addition to the monographs *Relaciones entre los monasterios de Camprodon y Moissac: Noticia histórica* (1899); *Cartoral dels templers de les comandes de Gardeny y Barbens* (1899); and *Noticia històrica del monestir d'Alguayre de la orde sagrada y militar del Hospital de Sant Joan de Jerusalem* (1899). In 1900 he also

published his study of the history of the vice-county of Castellbò: *Investigación histórica sobre el vizcondado de Castellbó, con datos inéditos de los condes de Urgell y de los vizcondes de Ager*, a volume which evidently derived from his early research in the archives of northwestern Catalonia. Additional historical works worthy of mention are Miret's monograph *Los vescomtes de Cerdanya, Conflent y Bergadá* (1901); his fascinating two-volume *Sempre han tingut béch les oques: Apuntacions per a la historia de les costumes privades* (1905-06); and the lengthy *Les cases de Templers y Hospitalers en Catalunya: Aplech de noves y documents històrichs* (1910). It may be of some interest to note that the publication of most of these studies was arranged for and underwritten by Miret himself.

Another area in which Miret was an extremely active scholar was in the discovery and publication of numerous collections of medieval documents, especially from archives in northwestern Catalonia. While Miret was not a trained philologist, as he himself acknowledged, he quickly realized the linguistic importance of many of the documents that his research on historical questions had led him to examine and, in many cases, to acquire personally. Among these manuscripts was that of the famous *Homilies d'Organyà* from the late twelfth or early thirteenth century, an incomplete transcription of which was published by Miret in 1904 in his article "El més antig text literari escrit en català, precedit per una colecció de documents dels segles XI^e, XII^e y XIII^e." Regarding the discovery of this text, Miret states: "[L]a trobada l'he feta en el darrer mes de Setembre (1904), regirant en la rectoria d'Organyà (provincia de Lleida) els pergamins de l'arxiu d'aquella extingida colegiata" ("El més antig text" 30).

Additional studies of linguistic interest include Miret's articles "Patrius Sermo: Documents en català vulgar del temps del rey En Jaume I" (1908); "Documents en langue catalane (haute vallée du Sègre, XI^e-XII^e siècles)" (1908); "Aplech de documents dels segles XI^e y XII^e per a l'estudi de la llengua catalana" (1912); "Pro Sermone Plebeico" (1913-14); "Documents per l'història de la llengua catalana" (1915-16); the two toponomastic studies "Los noms personals y geogràfichs de la encontrada de Terrassa en los segles X y XI" (1913-14) and "Los noms personals y geogràfichs de la encontrada d'Organyà en los segles X y XI" (1915-16); and *Antics documents de llengua catalana i reimpressió de les Homilies d'Organyà* (1915).

Mention should also be made of the fact that nearly all of the manuscripts personally acquired by Miret during his research trips to the Pyrenees and elsewhere, and which number several thousand in all, were donated to the Institut d'Estudis Catalans, many in the last years of Miret's life. From there they eventually were deposited in the Manuscript and Archive Section of the Biblioteca de Catalunya.

A number of years ago I began a research project which included the linguistic analysis of early Catalan documents of a non-literary nature. I quickly discovered that many of the texts which seemed to offer the greatest linguistic interest had been published by Miret in the early decades of this century, albeit in unreliable and often incomplete transcriptions. Anyone who is familiar with Miret's published collections will appreciate the frustration that I experienced in attempting to work with editions not prepared according to philological criteria (as opposed to those Old Catalan texts published at about the same time by Pere Pujol, or, somewhat earlier, by Julià Bernat Alart), and especially when confronted with Miret's frequent use of ellipsis. The latter device, generally indicated by a series of three periods (*punts suspensius*), appears to have been employed by Miret in order to omit certain portions of a document that did not seem especially interesting to him, or, as I suspect, simply to abbreviate a text as much as possible in order to transcribe another one.

A number of Miret's editions of early Catalan documents were retranscribed from the original manuscripts, or from photostats of the originals, and were published by Paul Russell-Gebbett in his well-known anthology *Mediaeval Catalan Linguistic Texts*. Although he was unsuccessful in locating some of the parchments of the Miret collection, those that he did manage to find and to retranscribe employing strict philological criteria revealed sufficient differences when compared to Miret's editions so as to convince me that new, rigorous transcriptions of many of Miret's documents were not only needed, but indeed long overdue. It was in this context, then, that I began in 1989 to examine the Miret i Sans collection of medieval Catalan manuscripts at the Biblioteca de Catalunya and to transcribe or in many cases retranscribe those that were of particular interest for the study of the early development of the Catalan language.

However, upon discovering just how extensive the Miret i Sans collection was, I became intrigued by two questions: 1) Who really was this turn-of-the-century scholar named Joaquim Miret i Sans? And 2) How did he acquire, and later donate to the Institut d'Estudis Catalans, several thousand medieval manuscripts primarily from the northwestern region of Catalonia?

Among the few published sources that provide some details concerning the life of Miret is Francesc Carreras i Candi's article "En Joaquim Miret y Sans" which was written after Miret's death in 1919. In this bio-bibliographical essay Carreras makes frequent reference to Miret's travels throughout much of Europe and elsewhere, whether in conjunction with his research or simply to satisfy his wanderlust. According to Carreras:

[E]n Miret, qui sempre havia permanescut solter y vivia en una independència absoluta, mostrà extraordinària afició als viatges, havent recorregut tota l'Europa, lo Nord d'Àfrica y alguns llocs de la Turquia Asiàtica. Ordinàriament los mesos de Maig y Novembre passava quinze o vint dies a París. Ab molta anticipació senyalava la data de sa partida y l'itinerari a seguir, retornant quasi sempre puntualment en lo día prefixat Se vanagloriava de may haver perdut cap tren y de no sobrevenirli lo menor entrebanch La costúm d'anar a París, que tant arrelada tenia En Miret y Sans, com abans indicàvem, l'encaminà, des de 1892, a ses noves aficions. Se convertí, des de 1895, en constant concurrent de la "Bibliothèque Nationale" Una segona resultancia de les seves estades a París ha estat la col·laboració directa d'En Miret en publicacions editades a França, resultat de relacions establertes ab eximis literats de la nació vehina. L'amistat contreta ab En Foulché-Delbosc, director de la *Revue Hispanique*, lo féu esdevenir constant col·laborador d'aquella publicació a partir del any 1902 ...(41).

At another point Carreras refers to several messages that he received from Miret in 1909 which had been sent from Morocco and from an oasis in the Sahara, near Biskra in Sidi-Okba, in modern Algeria. From the latter Miret sent the following note to Carreras: "Vos endreço aquesta postal des d'aquest Oasis del immens Sahara, perque crech que's la primera volta que d'aquest lloch solitari sortirà lletra en llengua catalana" (50).

In 1995, as I was retranscribing, and in some cases transcribing for the first time, a number of original parchment manuscripts from the Miret i Sans collection at the Biblioteca de Catalunya, I discovered among the library's holdings twelve boxes of personal papers and assorted other materials (working notes, newspaper clippings, bibliographical references, receipts, etc.) that had been donated to the Institut d'Estudis Catalans after Miret's death in 1919. I later learned that these twelve boxes contained only a part of Miret's donation, since much of it was either lost or destroyed after the Institut was shut down following the occupation of Barcelona and the fascist victory over the Spanish Republic in 1939. The papers that managed to survive this period were subsequently deposited in the Biblioteca de Catalunya which was officially called the *Biblioteca Central de Cataluña* during the years of the Franco dictatorship.

Among the aforementioned twelve boxes of materials donated by Miret one, *caixa* 9, was of particular interest, since it contained thirty unpublished travel diaries or journals recorded by Miret during his many travels throughout Europe, Africa, the Middle East and Asia. These are the accounts of thirty excursions made by Miret between the years 1901 and 1918. Several of the diaries, however, are incomplete or represent only fragmentary evidence of the existence of original texts. One, for instance, consists only of a list of travel expenses, while

another is limited to a slip of paper on which are noted the amounts and types of currency taken on a particular journey to France, the diaries themselves apparently haven't fallen victim to the uncertainties of time or to a roving *drapaire*. Those journals that have survived not only furnish information concerning Miret's personal habits and professional activities, but also provide a window through which one may view various aspects of European society during the first decades of the twentieth century.

The thirty travel journals of Miret's that are located in the Archive Section of the Biblioteca de Catalunya and are currently being edited and studied by the present writer are the following:

ITINERARY

DATES

1. Italy, Greece and Turkey	April 22-June 13, 1901
2. Cerdanya and France	July 28-Aug. 29, 1904
3. Nantes and Paris*	Oct. 9-c.Nov. 1, 1904
4. St. Hilari Sacalm and the Catalan Pyrenees	Aug. 1-Sept. 3, 1905
5. Paris and London	May 30-July 6, 1906
6. St. Hilari Sacalm, Switzerland and Italy	July 29-Sept. 15, 1906
7. France, Holland and England.	May 11-June 18, 1907
8. Madrid*	Oct. 21-c.Nov. 4, 1907
9. Sevilla	April 8-May 17, 1908
10. St. Hilari Sacalm, Vic and Berga*	July 30-c.Aug. 20, 1908
11. Zaragoza and France	Oct. 14-Nov. 18, 1908
12. Algeria and Tunisia.	Feb. 27-March 23, 1909
13. France and Germany	Oct. 4-Nov. 3, 1909
14. Caldes de Boí (Alta Ribagorça)*.....	(?) 1910
15. Paris*	(?) 1910
16. Switzerland, Germany and Belgium	Sept. 22-Oct. 24, 1910
17. Valencia, Alcoi and Gandia	May 26-June 1, 1911
18. France	Nov. 2-27, 1911.
19. Spain	May 25-June 15, 1912
20. La Seu d'Urgell	July 12-17, 1912
21. Italy.	Oct. 14-31, 1912
22. Teruel, Calatayud and Madrid	May 20-June 3, 1913
23. Paris and Switzerland	June 22-July 11, 1913
24. Sevilla	March 31-April 23, 1914
25. France and London	June 4-July 1, 1914
26. Sevilla	March 27-April 23, 1915
27. Mallorca	June 6-13, 1916
28. Pamplona and Bilbao	July 2-12, 1916
29. Sevilla*	April 8-(?), 1917
30. Tortosa	May 14-16, 1918.

* Incomplete

In his article on the life and scholarship of Miret, Francesc Carreras i Candi refers on several occasions to the former's methodical personality and his attention to detail, characteristics that are confirmed by the travel diaries particularly concerning transportation, geographical descriptions, and observations on museum collections and theatrical performances, especially the opera, one of Miret's passions. According to Carreras:

En aquests derrers anys extremà lo rigorós metodisme de sa vida: després de dinar descansava 30 minuts; de set a vuyt feya tertúlia ab antichs companys al Ateneu Barcelonès, en quina sala de treball passava llargues hores escrivint; y de deu a onze del vespre, quan no hi havia funció al teatre del Liceo, ahont rara vegada hi faltava, freqüentava altra tertúlia del cafè de Novetats, de la qual n'era ànima son company En Guillem Maria de Brocà (42).

It should be noted, moreover, that Miret was often accompanied on his travels, especially those of a recreational nature, by one or more family members, such as his sister Maria and her companion (perhaps a relative) Manuela Rusiñol, or his brother Tomàs (a resident of Sevilla) and the latter's family. However, when the trip was clearly for professional purposes Miret usually would travel alone or in the company of colleagues such as Carreras i Candi or the first president of the Institut d'Estudis Catalans, Antoni Rubió i Lluch, among others.

All of Miret's travel journals (with the exception of those that are incomplete) share a series of basic structural features: They are always hand-written on sheets of paper which are occasionally folded to make four distinct pages and which frequently bear either the logo of a hotel at which Miret stayed during the journey in question or that of the Ateneu Barcelonès. All begin with a heading or title indicating the destination or the itinerary followed. The languages employed are either Catalan or Castilian with no apparent motivation for the use of either one or the other. On a few occasions, though, Miret switches languages, especially when listing his travel expenses; and in a diary written in Castilian he sometimes employs a Catalan term or phrase that seems to him to express better that which he is describing.

The opening line of the travel journals generally follows a formula of the type "Salgo de Barcelona el domingo dia 9 octubre, 1904, con el expreso á las 6 y 1/2 [de la] tarde...", or "Surtu de Barcelona lo dilluns 14 d'octubre 1912 ab l'express de les 6 3/4 [de la] tarde...." There then follows a chronological narrative of Miret's activities and observations including those involving local means of transportation (*tranvía*, *vapor*, *cotxe* [de cavalls], *el Metropolitano* or *Metro*, etc.); *paseos* or *passeigs* ('strolls') about the city or town; hotel accommodations (with

the precise floor and room indicated); meals and coffee; visits to places of cultural interest (museums, expositions, fairs, etc.); book-buying expeditions; research at libraries and archives; meetings with notable local figures or other distinguished visitors; and entertainment enjoyed at theaters, casinos or taverns. All of the complete travel diaries end with a detailed list of daily expenses including numerous references to those corresponding to *quilombo* "bordello, brothel," which are frequently listed together with other miscellaneous expenditures such as those for coffee, tips, post cards, *quincalla* ('bric-a-brac'), and the like.

The appearance of the term *quilombo* as a constant in Miret's journals is somewhat surprising, since it is not proper to either the Spanish or Catalan lexicon of Spain and in general is not understood there. Rather, it is most commonly associated with the Río de la Plata and Chilean varieties of American Spanish. To my knowledge, Miret's travel journals provide the first examples of the use of the word *quilombo* in Spain with the meaning "bordello, brothel."

Historians and linguists agree that the word *quilombo* is of Western African or Angolan origin and that its original meaning in the Quimbundo (Kimbundu or Mbundu) variety of Bantu was "war camp" or "circumcision camp," a place where young males were prepared to become adults and warriors. A variation of this African institution was carried to the Brazilian backlands by escaped slaves who set up fugitive or maroon communities called *mocambos*, *ladeiras*, *magotes* or *quilombos*, whose social and political structures were adapted from African models. The term *quilombo*, which in Brazil eventually came to designate any encampment of outlaws, is not attested in documents until the middle of the seventeenth century when it is used to refer to any location where blacks gathered. The earliest mention of *quilombo* in Spanish and Spanish American lexicographical sources is that found in the sixth edition of Vicente Salvá's *Nuevo Diccionario de la Lengua Castellana* (1863) in which *quilombo* is glossed as "burdel" and is further qualified as "P[rovincial de la] Am[érica] Meridional" (905). The Real Academia Española's *Diccionario* does not record *quilombo* until the sixteenth edition published in 1939, in which it notes that it has the meaning "lupanar" in Chile and Río de la Plata, and "choza, cabaña campestre" in Venezuela (1056).

A semantic shift from Brazilian *quilombo* "fugitive community, outlaw camp" to Southern-Cone Spanish "bordello, brothel" is easily comprehended. Less evident, however, is how this Luso-African Hispanic term came to be used at the turn of the century in the travel journals of the Catalan historian Joaquim Miret i Sans. Before attempting to resolve this question it may be of interest to examine a few relevant entries from Miret's travel diaries.

In the earliest of Miret's surviving journals, that titled "Viage á

Ytalia, Grecia y Turquía en 1901," which records the author's journey to Turkey via Italy and Greece between approximately April 22 and June 15, 1901, expenses are recorded for *quilombo* on 12 occasions. In addition, within the text of the account Miret notes for Friday, May 31, while in Constantinople (Istanbul), Turkey: "Por la noche paseo por los quilombos de Galata, con grande algazara." And in the list of expenditures which follows the narrative there appear the following entries: April 30 (Rome): "Correo, tranvías, quilombo y café 3,25 [pesetas]; May 3 (Naples): "Tranvia, quilombo y entrada al museo 6,80 [pesetas]." The bordellos of Constantinople seemed to have really been to Miret's liking, since his expense list includes those corresponding to *quilombo* for four of the first five days after his arrival in that city (his normal custom seems to have been to skip a day between visits to *quilombos*): May 21: "Quilombo, tranvia y museo 6 [francos];" May 22: "Correo, tranvia, vapor, quilombo 6,70 [francos];" May 23: "Correo, quilombo, tranvia, caballo y mesquitas 7,50 [francos];" May 25: "Vapor, tranvia, quilombo y café y correo 3,70 [francos]."

In late July of 1904 Miret traveled on holiday to the northern Catalan *comarca* and old county of Cerdanya astride the Pyrenees. He arrived in Puigcerdà on July 31 and from there continued his journey to Luchon and Toulouse, France. The list of expenditures which follows his travel narrative "Viaje á Cerdaña y Francia, Año 1904" includes the following notations for Toulouse: August 29: "Quilombo y tranvia y cartas postales 3,80 [francos];" August 30: "Café, comida, quilombo 2,50 [francos]."

Considerably more interesting and graphic are Miret's notes corresponding to a trip to Algeria and Tunisia in 1909. In Tlemcen, Algeria he writes on March 4: "Veo al regresar á la ciudad el barrio de la prostitucion y hay lindas chicas árabes." And on the following day he remarks: "Visito varios quilombos y unos marchants muy típicos." On March 9, while in Algiers, he states: "Por la tarde recorro la parte antigua [de la ciudad], entrando en varios quilombos..." In Constantine, Algeria he notes on March 11: "Voy á quilombo de rue de l'Echelle. Muy típico." However the most explicit observation is that recorded by Miret in Biskra, Algeria on March 13, where he states: "Estoy en un quilombo árabe; en el suelo se hace toda la operación."

Only three years before his death at the age of 61 Miret was still an avid traveler and *quilombero*. On what appears to have been his only visit to Mallorca, where in June, 1916 he visited a number of villages, churches and museums and met with various local scholars such as Antoni Alcover and Miquel Costa i Llobera, Miret not only indicates in his travel journal that he had occasion to visit several *quilombos* (by his own count three during his six-day visit to Mallorca), but he also mentions their location: June 7: "[A] la nit al quilombo de Carrer de

Camaró, ara dit Calle Velázquez;" June 9: "[Q]uilombo al Carrer de Santañy;" June 12: "[D]esprés de dinar, siesta y visita al quilombo del Carrer de Vilanova, 23."

If, as the evidence suggests, the occurrence of *quilombo* in Miret's travel journals represents the first documented use of this term in Spain, then the question that must be addressed is when and where did Miret become familiar with this word to the extent that he regularly employed it in his travel journals and, perhaps, also in his daily speech, that is in both his Spanish and Catalan.

It may have been in Paris that Miret first encountered the term *quilombo* among fellow Hispanists such as his friend Raymond Foulché-Delbosc, or perhaps in that city's many cafés, salons and cabarets, especially those of Montmartre where the Argentine *Tango* achieved great popularity in the early years of this century. It was, after all, in the *conventillos* ('tenement houses') and *quilombos* of the Río de la Plata area that the *Tango* originated. On the other hand, however, Miret may first have heard the term *quilombo* from sailors or passengers on ships that regularly plied the sea routes between Barcelona and Buenos Aires. Between the years 1890 and 1914 Barcelona was the principal Spanish port of embarkation for emigrants to Argentina (Castro 180).

Whichever of these explanations may bear a greater resemblance to the historical facts, I suspect that Miret, who evidently was quite an aficionado of the *quilombo*, chose to employ this rather exotic-sounding term in his travel journals as a code-word, rather than to use the more familiar designations for this establishment, such as Catalan *casa de putes*, *puteria*, *bordell*, *bagasseria*, *casa de barrets*, or Spanish *casa de putas*, *puteria*, *burdel*, *casa de citas*, *casa de tolerancia*, etc. Moreover, Miret's devotion to the *quilombô* simply underscores a side of human nature that he himself had sought to illustrate in *Sempre han tingut béch les oques*, one of his early and arguably most important studies with reference to medieval society.

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