

Foreword

This appearance of this fifth edition of the *Catalan Historical Review* can be viewed as the consolidation of a journey that has been underway for half a decade. For over six years, enthusiastic efforts have been devoted to this enterprise by its contributors and editorial council alike. This issue has continued to follow in the footsteps of its predecessors, offering up-to-date surveys on the most important issues in the history of the Catalan-speaking lands in all their facets and epochs.

The four centuries of Muslim domination in southern and western Catalonia – called *Catalunya Nova* or *New Catalonia* – and the more than five centuries of this domination on the Balearic Islands and in Valencia, left the mark of the culture of *Al-Andalus* – the Arabic name of *Hispania* – on the toponyms, crop watering systems, archaeological remains and architectural heritage. For this reason, the issue of mediaeval Islamic culture in what are today the Catalan-speaking lands is the subject of the first article in this issue of our journal. The successive political fragmentations of Muslim Spain, captured in its Mediterranean periphery, and the temporary reunifications of *Al-Andalus* with North African intervention hardly affected the system of rural nuclei, which had water management systems in order to minimise the risks of shortages. Compared to the thesis which placed the emphasis on the central power in the organisation of the system, for example in the farmlands of Valencia, today it is believed that the order should be inverted and that stability and prosperity depended on the peasant communities' management, with a relationship with the regional power or another more extensive power in the Iberian Peninsula that consisted of little more than paying taxes.

International trade among Catalans, Mallorcans and Valencians from the 13th to 15th centuries is documented in copious, high-quality historiography which has been very comprehensively summarised in the second article of this journal, an effort which has never been made until now. This article traces the evolution of the different commercial regions, the goods, the routes and the presence of Catalan, Mallorcan and Valencian merchants in each site. The subject is so broad and complex that another article in a future issue of our journal will examine the legal framework and the institutions created around this commerce.

The importance of Catalan international trade in the late mediaeval centuries is clear, as is the fact that the demographic and financial decline in the second half of the 14th century scarcely affected it. Indeed, this trade did not begin to wane until the impact of the ruinous Catalan Civil War from 1462 to 1472, a conflict which,

however, did not affect commerce in either Valencia or Mallorca. In the late 14th to early 15th centuries, the Catalan-speaking subjects of the kings of the Crown of Aragon ranked third in Beirut, not far behind the Venetians and Genovese. They were also present in Alexandria, Cyprus and Rhodes. Commerce with North Africa and the Near East, in competition with the Italian merchants, was also very active despite the prohibitions by the popes in Rome, compounded by wars and attacks by corsairs. In the mid-14th century, the Mallorcans reached the Canary Islands, while the Catalans reached Flanders. The extraordinary surge in commercial relations with the Atlantic ports recorded at the end of the 15th century contradicts the thesis of the Catalan merchants' lack of impetus during that period put forth by Jaume Vicens Vives.

Despite its total newness and rupture with the past, 19th century industrialisation had antecedents in the 18th century. Some of these industries fared poorly and never took the step forward to the Industrial Revolution, while in others, such as the industries in Catalonia, mechanisation was preceded by the steam engine and the factory system. This prior stage has been called proto-industrial or pre-industrial, and it is the subject of the third article in this issue. Waterfalls powered cloth and paper mills and forges where metal items were crafted. In the 18th century, the spread and fine-tuning of these facilities ran parallel to the invention of manual machines which multiplied the productivity of textile manufacturing in both Catalonia and England. Of those old mills, just a few remain in operation, such as the one in the town of Capellades, which has been turned into a paper museum. The high-quality paper they produced – and continue to produce – was consumed in a number of far-flung markets. The manufacture of calico (printed cotton fabric) in Barcelona, with the concentration of operators in workshops, has long been considered the bearer of modernisation. However, now the dynamism of the network of medium-sized cities far from the capital with a variety of traditional products is being given its due importance. New cultural and mental attitudes predisposed Catalans to take advantage of the economic opportunities in both the country and the city, in both trade and manufacturing. The use of new techniques and new products for distant markets got underway in the 16th century, particularly in central Catalonia. Therefore, the onset of proto-industrialisation came much earlier than everything that had been studied for the 18th century. Furthermore, the prosperity of some does not seem to have meant the ruin of others; pluri-employment and the complementariness of agricultural and

manufacturing activities enabled workers to overcome adverse economic times.

Modern Catalan theatre began with Àngel Guimerà. His plays, written more than a century ago, are still being performed. His characters quickly became symbols, and several of Guimerà's plays were soon translated into other languages, a clear sign of their quality, yet also of the maturity which Catalan literature was reaching in the *Renaixença*. Guimerà was an irreducible, radical Catalanist. This did not hinder him from being involved with Madrid's theatre world, as noted in the article devoted to him and his oeuvre in this issue of our journal. Guimerà never took the leap to partisan politics and remained in a previous, more generic terrain, with the wear and tear that involvement in politics would have meant, a sphere which, at any rate, did not match his character.

An article in the previous issue of the *Catalan Historical Review* focused on anarchism in Catalonia, noting that the complexity and abundance of the literature required us to divide the topic into two articles: the first one, which stopped at the third decade of the 20th century, and a later one announced for another issue which would examine the 1930s, when the prominence of anarchism, especially in the Catalan-speaking lands but also in the rest of Spain, attracted the attention and curiosity of the rest of the world regarding the role played by the anarchists in the revolution unleashed around the outbreak of the Civil War from 1936 to 1939. Here we stress the morphological heterogeneity – not ideological, but tactical – of a movement made up of affinity groups that shared not only union but also cultural interests, groups with a great deal of autonomy yet linked by coordination that multiplied their capacity for influence on the union headquarters dominated in Catalonia and Valencia in the 1930s by the CNT, the majority of whose members were not anarchists. The anarchist groups' local autonomy endowed them with a vast capacity for resistance, yet it also hindered the unity of the movement at critical junctures, especially because of the insurrectional ventures that took place between 1932 and 1933.

After remaking itself from the dissolution imposed upon it by the dictatorship of General Primo de Rivera, the CNT experienced years of upheaval, during which the split-offs, expulsions and abandonments, along with the failure of several attempted revolts, led its membership to drop among the working class prior to the huge surge during the revolutionary summer of 1936. However, from then on, the CNT had to work in tandem with the UGT, the socialist union, which overcame the anaemia from which it had always suffered in Catalonia, while in Valencia its influence was only strengthened. After having waged sterile revolts against the Republic in 1932 and 1933, the anarchists took up weapons against the military coup in Barcelona and Valencia in July 1936; they also formed militias that went to Aragon and control patrols for the rearguard. By the time the uprising took place on the 19th of July 1936, the anarchists in Barcelona had an organisation capable of handling the soldiers who rose up

against the Republic in Barcelona and Valencia; however, had the forces of public order not been on the side of the democratic authorities, they would have been able to accomplish little, as demonstrated by the case of Zaragoza, another libertarian nucleus that was liquidated. The collapse of the state and the atomisation of power that came afterward fostered the rise of the anarchists, yet they were unable to become an alternative to the republican institutions and soon ended up joining them. However, the anarchists never formed a political party, nor did the union they led manage to become an equivalent.

The anarchists were not the only ones behind the excesses of unbridled repression, but their apparent primacy in the early months of the Civil War led them to be associated with it. The anarchists found themselves serving the Republican cause as regional ministers in the *Generalitat de Catalunya* and as ministers in the government of the Republic presided over by the socialist Largo Caballero. Their responsibilities in collectivised companies and political authorities at all levels implicated them in the process of constructing the state power that the war seemed to require. Remaining mired in the contradiction of those enemies of all states while participating in state power contributes little to understanding the events. All the forces suffered from contradictions, even though the anarchists' were perhaps greater. The fact is that an organisation of the masses like the CNT could not continue too long with one foot in the government and another in the opposition, especially in the context of a war in which the Republic was beginning to lose, and even less if they were dealing with communists who obeyed the instructions of the Stalinists of the day. The anarchists were condemned to face trial by fire in Barcelona in May 1937 – a civil war within the Civil War – since they were determined to keep hold of the parcels of power they held in the control patrols, telephones, transports and at certain border crossings. This contradicted the reconstruction of a unified political power which the anarcho-syndicalists would be part of until the end of the Civil War, even after leaving the governments of the Republic and the *Generalitat de Catalunya* after May 1937 and despite the arrest of some anarchists who had opposed their joining and were accused of crimes in the early months of the revolution. Even after the defeat in 1939, the anarchists still dragged on the controversy between those who wanted to extract the conclusions of a government collaboration of which they approved and those who regarded it as an error and a betrayal of their own ideas. Despite the fact that the anarchists had close ties to the collectivisation of much of the manufacturing and distribution apparatus, they were not the only ones involved in this transformation process. This is a subject to which we wish to devote yet another article in a future issue of our journal.

The article on the libertarians that appears in this issue was written to coincide with the centennial of the founding of the CNT in Barcelona, before the appearance of the survey by Josep Termes, *Història del moviment anarquista a Espanya (1870-1980)*: this historian's last publication

before his passing in September 2011. We have devoted a note here to Termes both because he is our old friend and because of his intellectual capacity, which recently earned him a Prize of Honour in Catalan Letters. This book is the recapitulation of his entire career as a historian.

The cover features a reproduction of the centre of the *Altarpiece of Saint George* by Pere Niçard, dating from 1468 and part of the collection of the Diocesan Museum of Mallorca. It portrays the port of the City of Mallorca, although it does not pretend to reproduce the reality of the place. Still, it bears witness to the mercantile and seafaring activities of the Catalan-speaking lands in the 15th century. The porters unloaded goods carried by boats moored on the beach, where several people can be seen, including two engaged in a swordfight. This landscape with figures appears in the background between Saint George on horseback slaying the dragon and the princess he is saving, who is kneeling in prayer.

In the summer of 2011, Joan Vernet, an illustrious member of the Institut d'Estudis Catalans and prestigious Arabist, passed away, leaving us no time to speak about him in this year's issue. Dolors Bramon has taken his place as a full member of the IEC and as a member of the advisory council of the *Catalan Historical Review*. With her presence, we can count on more subjects related to the Islamic world, a sphere that is rightfully attracting more attention in European and especially Mediterranean countries. This year, we are also currently mourning the loss of historian Géza Alföldy, corresponding member in 1996 and one of the best epigraphists in the 20th and early 21st centuries. Obituaries featuring their work and career have been included.

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