

Foreword

Deciphering the meaning of prehistoric cave paintings is a challenge that still occupies researchers. What is clear is that those works that continue to fascinate us have changed our conception of the primitive people who made them. Our admiration of the brilliance revealed within the harshness of that culture of hunters and gatherers, with thousands of years separating us, not only prompts our respect but has also transformed our vision of the history of humanity and of ourselves. Thus, even prehistory is a kind of contemporary history in the sense that it summons us, that it is *our* history. However, we should also recognise that if the change in mindset in which Darwin's theory of evolution played a prime role had not taken place first, rock painting would not have been valued. Back then, magic and art were one and the same, so much so that it is somehow an anachronism to speak about rock art. This issue offers a view of the current state of discoveries and studies on rock painting in the eastern part of the Iberian Peninsula, what are today Catalonia and the region of Valencia. The article takes stock of rock art and demonstrates the value of this remarkable set of works.

Catalan Romanesque painting survived in the Pyrenees and a few other places even after it had disappeared from the churches in other regions. It is one of the most valuable archaeological assets within Catalonia's cultural heritage. Some of the most famous Romanesque works of art are even found in the set of images that are form the Catalan collective memory, as they are representative of the epoch when Catalonia first emerged. In this issue, we provide an overview of the studies performed on those works since the early 20th century, the era when they were being rediscovered. Researchers from the Institut d'Estudis Catalans (IEC) and its circle have played a key role in the revival of interest in Catalan Romanesque painting, beginning with Josep Pijoan, the first secretary of the IEC. The Museu Nacional d'Art de Catalunya, located on Barcelona's Montjuïc, owns one of the most important collections of Romanesque painting in the world, in addition to offering a broad sample of Catalan art from all ages.

Another article in this issue examines the peasants who were tied to the land, the serfs or *remences*, in Catalunya Vella, the northeast part of Catalonia. The Crown was interested in curtailing the nobility's power, but the monarchs' positions on the issue of the serfs fluctuated. They seemed just as likely to support the release of the peasant serfs by making them pay a large sum in exchange for the Crown's intervention as to, conversely, favour the serf lords as a bid to ensure their vote for a subsidy in the Courts of Catalonia, where the serfs were not represented, similar to their plight across Europe. The reasons cannot

solely be sought in vacillation before the highest bidder from the standpoint of monarchs with little royal patrimony and a dire need for resources to fuel their ambitious wars. The monarchy, which aimed to be authoritarian, was grounded upon feudal principles from which it was difficult to extricate itself. It was not an ineluctable bearer of social and political progress, as some historians have wished to posit.

After the vacillating position of Alphonse the Magnanimous with his 1455 ruling, which was favourable to the serfs yet never put into action, his successor John II had the support of the serfs during the Catalan Civil War launched in 1461 but abandoned them when he signed the Peace of Pedralbes in 1472. Ferdinand II, the successor of John II, declared the suspension of *mals usos* ("bad customs") decreed in Alphonse the Magnanimous' 1455 ruling unconstitutional. As a result, there was a second serf uprising in 1482. It was defeated in the open, but the peasant resistance survived in the mountains, and for this reason it was possible to impose Ferdinand II's Arbitral Sentence of 1486, which abolished the *mals usos*, ascription to the land and the lords' right to abuse the peasants yet maintained the seigniorial system and its burdens, even though they were established and limited. Each estate had to pay sixty sous to release them. The Catalan parliamentary institutions had been used by the lords of the peasant serfs to enact laws to keep them subjugated. However, the freedoms that those institutions embodied were incompatible with ascription to the land by much of the peasantry in Catalunya Vella, as shown in the article published in this issue. Its author notes that the Catalan peasant uprising was an exceptional case in Europe as it transitioned from the Middle Ages to modern times, in that the peasants secured an emancipating solution that was, nonetheless, compatible with the survival of the seigniorial system. The peasant serfs included a moderate, relatively prosperous sector which was in favour of negotiations – the sector that ultimately won out – along with a radical, impoverished sector which was in favour of freedom without indemnification and the subversion of the seigniorial system. The denouement of the conflict fulfilled the aspirations not of this latter sector but of the former.

And now we turn to the Modern Age. Can we talk about the Enlightenment in the Catalan-speaking lands in the 18th century? If we rigidly apply the French pattern, the answer may be no. However, the same would have to be said about the rest of Europe. It would be absurd to deny what Italy's *Illuminismo*, England's Enlightenment, Germany's *Aufklärung* and Spain's *Ilustración* share with French encyclopaedism, as they form a diverse current yet one with certain shared features. However, it is

quite clear that almost no other place fits the characteristics of what France represented in the century of the Enlightenment, which preceded the 1789 French Revolution. Instead, the French example, despite its enormous influence, was atypical in a Europe that was beginning to believe in reason and progress while also encouraging experimental methods and promoting the dissemination of knowledge with a determination never before seen. The answer to the aforementioned question provided in this issue enables us to state that we can indeed talk about an Enlightenment in the Catalan-speaking lands without exaggerating the size and scope of the phenomenon.

Deism, agnosticism and atheism were not evident among the Enlightened Catalans, and their Spanish counterparts, and the most representative figures would be classified today as liberal Catholics, although during their lifetimes they were labelled Jansenists by more traditionalist ecclesiasts. They wanted to strip Catholicism of external devotions that they regarded as closer to superstition, and they approved the expulsion of the Jesuits. The Enlightenment in Catalonia, which was more moderate than in England and less irreverent than in France, was more similar to its German counterpart. The volumes of the French *Encyclopédie* could be found in the library of the Barcelona Board of Trade, the bourgeois institution that created the first technical schools in the country. That encyclopaedic work overseen by Diderot could also be found at the Barcelona Military Academy. In any event, the changes did not seem to be limited to progress in medicine, biology, physics and historiography, and the participants in this modernisation included educated minorities in the Catalan-speaking lands, who at that time published only in Spanish. The new moral and political ideas were not unknown before the local liberals strove to apply them after the war against Napoleon, and liberalism was not a mere copy of the ideas and principles of the foreign occupant they were combating, as can be seen in the fact that it was reinforced in 1820 within a hostile continental milieu, and, in fact, it was based on the seeds sown in the 18th century.

The penultimate article in this issue studies the Jocs Florals of Barcelona, a literary competition which starting in 1859 came to represent the social projection and public recognition of what literary creators in the Catalan language were doing to turn the language spoken by the people into a modern literary language. Thus, the Catalan language was recovering the prestige it had had centuries earlier. A bourgeois cultural festivity that was officially apolitical, this literary competition could not avoid the political implications regarding collective identity, to which it contributed, as seen in the late 19th century when cultural Catalanism began to be closely associated with Catalonia's desire for self-governance.

That literary event was full of medieval reminiscences which harked back to its 14th century forerunners in Toulouse and Barcelona. This is a general feature of European romanticism, which lasted longer in Catalonia.

However, almost everyone was aware of its modernity, just like the British Parliament housed within a 19th century neo-Gothic building. The Jocs Florals of Barcelona were held in May, and its slogan indicated the subject of the three ordinary poetry prizes awarded: *patria, fides, amor*. A jury of seven maintainers, who changed each year, granted the Golden Rose to the best poem with a patriotic, historical or traditional theme; the Silver Viola to the best composition on a religious or moral theme; and the natural flower to the best poem on any topic, although love poems were the most common. The winner of the natural flower chose the queen of the festivities. An Artistic Cup was also awarded to the best prose text, and there were other prizes as well. When a writer had earned all three ordinary prizes, they were given the title of "Mestre en Gai Saber" and joined a veritable honour roll of Catalan belles-lettres. The speeches by the different presidents of the Jocs Florals, published along with the prize-winning compositions, serve as an outstanding chronicle of the ideological evolution of the Jocs over the course of seven decades. By 1914, the festival was losing its earlier prestige among the more innovative literary circles. However, its cachet was restored in exile, during the years of the Franco dictatorship, as a testimony to the vitality of Catalan literature, which the winners of the Civil War wished to liquidate.

The illustration on the cover of this issue of the *Catalan Historical Review* shows a poster by painter Ramon Casas rendered for the 50th anniversary of the Jocs Florals held in May 1909. The coat-of-arms of the Jocs Florals of Barcelona has been superimposed over the poster. The example of the Jocs Florals of Barcelona was copied in other towns. From 1879 onwards, Jocs Florals competitions were held in the City and Kingdom of Valencia, organised by the society Lo Rat Penat. Jocs Florals were also held on Mallorca. However, the Jocs Florals of Barcelona also welcomed competitors from Valencia and the Balearic Islands, who won prizes, so the event made an enormous contribution to raising awareness of the linguistic and cultural unity of the Catalan-speaking lands in all the language's different variants.

The purpose of the last article in this issue is to trace Catalanist political groups' identification with other similar European movements that are nationally subjugated but aspire to self-governance, as they are viewed by contemporary Catalans. The quest for concurrent references abroad demonstrated that Catalans' desire for autonomy was not a rarity outside its time and the modern context, while its solidarity with the other national emancipation movements enabled Catalonia's aspirations to be projected beyond its borders. Even though historical roots are wielded as an argument, the Catalanist movement was a modernising, pro-European movement, and as such it cannot fail to be interested – keenly interested – in any similar phenomenon in Europe.

The goal of situating Catalonia within contemporary Europe led it to this pathway until the outbreak of World

War II, immediately after the end of the Spanish Civil War, which for Catalonia signalled the suppression of the modest degree of self-governance it had attained in 1932. To recognise the importance of this issue, all we have to do is recall that the grievances of the European nationalists governed by states of other nationalities were largely the detonators of World War I, although they also played a non-negligible role in the outbreak of World War II as well.

In addition to the list of books and magazines on historical topics published by the Institut d'Estudis Catalans in 2012, this issue also includes obituaries for Jordi Castellanos, an expert in the history of 20th century literature, and Ma-

nuel Mundó, former president of the History-Archaeology Section from 1995 until 1998, as well as Giovanni Lilliu, a corresponding member of the History-Archaeology Section since 1973 and an expert in Sardinian archaeology.

Finally, this issue also features biographical sketches of Dolors Bramon and Jordi Casassas, new full members of the History-Archaeology Section.

ALBERT BALCELLS
Editor