

## In Memoriam

### Manuel Ardit (1941-2013)\*



On the 8th of December 2013, a highly esteemed colleague left us forever: Manuel Ardit, a notable Valencian historian and full member of the History-Archaeology Section of the Institut d'Estudis Catalans since 1992. Born in Valencia in 1941, he earned his PhD at the Universitat de València in 1974 with a thesis supervised by Joan Reglà. Ardit first worked as a

middle school teacher. In 1987, he became a full professor of modern history at the Universitat de València. He was the director of such an important publishing house as the Servei de Publicacions of the Universitat de València, and since 1987 he was the director of the essential, emblematic journal, *Afers*. His oversight of the journal began with issue 5 after the death of its founder, Sebastià Garcia Martínez. Manuel Ardit always had an extraordinary deputy editor at *Afers*, Vicent Olmos, a key figure in the publishing house which bears the same name as the journal.

Lately, he was also a member of the Board of Directors of the *Catalan Historical Review*, and he published an overview of studies on the expulsion of the Moriscos in 1609 and its consequences in the second edition of this journal. He was always an enthusiastic member of the Institut d'Estudis Catalans, so much so that even when he was gravely ill last November he still sent in his vote for the latest election of candidates to become new members of the History-Archaeology Section.

There was no synthesis of the end of the old regime in the region of Valencia until Ardit published his book *Revolución liberal y revuelta campesina: un ensayo sobre la desintegración del régimen feudal en el País Valenciano, 1793-1840* in 1977. He bravely chose a sweeping chronological timeframe: from the grassroots anti-French revolt in 1793, the prelude to the one in 1808, to the end of the First Carlist War in 1840, with mention the uprisings in 1794 and 1801. He proved that the revolt against Napoleonic domination was anti-seigniorial and potentially revolutionary in Valencia, and that the occupiers tried to restore the seigniorial fees, which had not been paid since 1808. In this

work, he also examined such a complex issue as the social bases of the anti-liberal revolt of 1822, the prelude to what would become the Carlist insurrection of 1833.

One of Manuel Ardit's merits was his willingness and capacity to revise his theses in light of his own subsequent research and that of his colleagues, which were largely the pathways that he paved. This can be seen in his great book *Els homes i la terra del País Valencià, segles XVI-XVIII* (1993). Ardit went beyond the thesis that the harshness of the seigniorial regime in Valencia, strengthened by the expulsion of the Moriscos and the repopulation, would explain the regional backwardness and even the failure of early industrialisation in the region. However, he also confirmed the exceptionalism of Valencia's irrigated farming system without mythologizing it, indicating that similar examples in the Mediterranean can only be found in the agriculture of Murcia and the Po Valley.

His 2004 monograph on the social evolution of the Marquisate of Llombai (Ribera Alta, province of Valencia) from the 13th to the 19th centuries is an example of the usefulness of micro-history, which over a long period of time can answer the major questions of history in general. The reader does not lose the thread that leads to the conclusions through the complex evolution of the seigniorial censuses, marriage and fertility records, birth and death rates and social conflicts. The research encompasses everything from the establishment of the fiefdom after the conquest to the dissolution of the seigniorial regime. Ardit shows the might of seigniorial power as a taxation system during the Mudejar period, with smallholder subsistence farming. He reports on the shift after the expulsion of the Moriscos towards commercial agriculture – vineyards and mulberries – on the basis of emphyteusis and more adequate farm sizes. It cannot be considered refeudalisation despite the Second Revolt of the Brotherhoods in 1693, the anti-seigniorial bent of the War of the Spanish Succession in the region and the revival of seigniorial incomes in the 18th century before their decline in the last quarter of this century until the revolts just prior to the war against Napoleon's domination.

Other issues in Valencia's history which Ardit examined were Erasmism, the outcroppings of Protestantism, the Inquisition and the expulsion of the Moriscos, as indicated above. In 2001, he issued the book in which he squeezes the most possible from the 1768 census of Aranda, mining it for information on the region of Valencia in a period of transformation: the 18th century.

However, Manuel Ardit, who had announced that he was returning to the topic of the last crisis of the Old Re-

\* Text prepared by Albert Balcells, vicepresident of the History-Archaeology Section of the Institut d'Estudis Catalans. E-mail: Albert.Balcells@uab.es

gime and the dawn of political liberalism, handled himself with the same aplomb in sweeping syntheses as in his archival work. He is an example of a historian with an equal capacity for research as for divulgation, with comparable efficiency in a local monograph and a synthesis that encompasses an entire country (his), a state (Spain) or even all of Western Europe. Proof of this is his contribution to the *Història dels Països Catalans* (1980), in which he wrote everything on the region of Valencia from the 18th to 20th centuries, and through this project I am personally able to attest to how gratifying it was to work with him.

Other subsequent examples of sweeping syntheses were his book *Agricultura y crecimiento económico en la Europa occidental moderna* (1992) and the one entitled *El Siglo de las Luces* (2007), an outstanding social history of the culture where he examines the culture of both the elites and the lower classes in the Enlightenment and

18th-century superstitious in Spain. His most remarkable recent contributions were to the history of the population of the city of Valencia and its outlying area, the Horta, in the history of this city, which he published in 2009.

Manuel Ardit was a translator of classical texts, including several by James Casey and Robert Darnton, as well as the biography of the historian Marc Bloch written by Carole Fink. Regarding tributes to the masters of the previous generation, we should recall that in 2002 he compiled a variety of works by Emili Giralt under the title of *Empresaris, propietaris i vinyaters: 50 anys de recerca històrica*.

Faithful to the language that unites Catalonia and the region of Valencia, a historian bowing to an open concept of the Catalan-speaking lands, and influenced in his earliest works by Joan Fuster, Manuel Ardit was a figure respected by all, a researcher who remained active and published until the end, shortly before a cruel illness deprived us of his aid and his friendship.

## Gregori M. Estrada (1918-2015)\*



The 18th of March 2015 marked the death of Father Gregori M. Estrada i Gamisans, who was born in Manresa on the 28th of April 1918. During his early years, he lived in Mas Rossinyol in the town of Monistrol de Calders, and he continued to spend his summers there until his parents decided to send him to the Boys' Choir of Montserrat, where he

spent six years, from September 1926 until September 1932. That was the era of Abbot Antoni M. Marcet, when there were serious conflicts between the monastery and the Primo de Rivera dictatorship, which accused the Abbot of being a Catalanist. The dictatorship wanted to remove him from the monastery, but a new era dawned with the proclamation of the Second Republic in April 1931, which ended tragically in July 1936 with the outbreak of the Civil War. The war could have had much more serious consequences for Montserrat had it not kept up such outstanding relations with the authorities of the Generalitat, which protected the monastery and helped the monks escape, some of them seeking refuge abroad.

Francesc Estrada – this was his given name – had two outstanding teachers in the Boys' Choir who cultivated his musical talent and set him on a pathway which he would never abandon. They were Father Àngel Roda-

milans, then the prefect of the Boys' Choir, who would later be assassinated in Sabadell in 1936, and Father Anselm Ferrer, the director of the school, with whom Father Gregori would be close with until the former's death in 1969. He also received musical training from other monks who worked with the Boys' Choir, including Father Maur Fàbregas (musical theory), Father Isidor Civil (violin), Father Isidor Fonoll (prefect after Àngel Rodamilians) and Father Plàcid Feliu (also the prefect during the last few weeks of Estrada's stint in the Boys' Choir).

In 1932, when he stopped being an acolyte, Francesc Estrada entered the school for aspiring monks in Montserrat, and in July 1933 he went from being a student to a novice at the monastery, where he took the monastic name of Gregori Maria. On the 6th of August the following year, he took his vows as a monk on Montserrat, and he immediately began to further his music studies, which he had never abandoned. In 1935 and 1936, he embarked upon organ studies at the Conservatory of Barcelona's Liceu Opera House under the direction of Father Josep Muset.

In early July 1936, he was temporarily sent for health reasons to the residence that Montserrat had in Andorra at that time, and there he was taken by surprise by the military uprising on the 17th to 19th of the same month and the revolution which sprang up all over Catalonia. He and other Catalans immediately travelled to Turin, from which, through Genoa and Roma, he joined Abbot Marcet and a group of monks from Montserrat at the monastery of Subiaco. The entourage from Montserrat had had to abandon Barcelona, and along with other young monks – accompanied by Emilià Riu, the prefect of the juniors of Montserrat – they took refuge in the

\* Text prepared by Josep Massot, president of the History-Archaeology Section of the Institut d'Estudis Catalans. E-mail: [direccio@pamsa.cat](mailto:direccio@pamsa.cat)