

Foreword

Catalan Historical Review continues to focus on historiographic overviews of the major topics in the Catalan Lands' past. The first article talks about the traces left from the Visigothic period in the northeast of the Tarracense. Between the fall of the Western Roman Empire and the Muslim invasion of the Iberian Peninsula, the Visigoths established an unstable kingdom whose capital was briefly in Barcelona, later in Toulouse and finally in Toledo. Spanish historiography identified with Castile and Madrid has painted the reign of the Visigoths as the founding origin of a Spain governed as an independent kingdom from the Central Plateau. However, it was a very fragile monarchy weakened by internecine battles over succession, and its territorial control was tenuous. The Visigoths were a small militarised minority who in no way altered the culture of the Hispanic people. One of the shifts in cities from the late Roman era revealed by archaeology is the size of the episcopal complexes, which indicates that the bishops had attained a level of authority and influence that increased as soon as the Visigoths abandoned Arianism and converted to orthodox Christianity, which was already the religion of the Hispanic-Roman majority. Even though the Visigothic era is considered an epigone of the Late Roman Empire, it is nonetheless fascinating to learn about its legacy, which was later obscured by the Muslim rule before part of the future Catalonia fell under the empire of Charlemagne and his successors.

Within the general European Gothic style from the late Middle Ages, Gothic civil architecture in Catalonia, Valencia and Mallorca has unique features and has left monuments that are part of the region's urban landscape on par with the great religious buildings. Palaces, seigneurial urban homes, hospitals, mercantile exchanges, shipyards, sites of municipal power in autonomous cities and representative headquarters of the Courts, where legislative and financial power was shared with the Crown, all comprise a rich heritage. This legacy deserves special attention among historians, and thus the second article in this issue is devoted to exploring it.

The adventures of the Almogavars, Catalan mercenary infantry soldiers, have long been part of Catalonia's collective imagination. They travelled to the eastern Mediterranean to defend the Byzantine Empire from the Turkish threat and ended up setting up their own domain in the centre of Greece, encompassing the duchies of Athens and Neopatria, in the 14th century. This Catalan rule in Greece inspired the first epic poem in the Catalan language written in the 19th century, is the subject of negative memories in Hellenic folklore, is an element of study

for Catalan historians in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, left its vestiges on Greek territory in the form of several towers and castles, and continues to inspire an extensive body of literature up until the present day. This is why the Almogavars deserve to be the topic of the third article in this issue of the *Catalan Historical Review*.

In the late 19th and first third of the 20th centuries, great artists found posters to be a way to popularise their art thanks to the advances in the graphic arts; the impetus of commercial advertising; the desire to advertise festivals, exhibitions, public events and mass spectacles; and the drive to promote a burgeoning tourism industry. Soon, institutional and political propaganda found posters to be effective instruments as well, especially to mobilise the masses during the Spanish Civil War by disseminating instructions accompanied by powerful images. Nonetheless, all of this happened far before posters became means of advertising and propaganda for cinema and especially television. Barcelona and Valencia were the hubs of high-quality poster production, and Belle Époque Paris was initially a major touchstone, where a painter the calibre of Toulouse-Lautrec cultivated poster art. Barcelona's Sala Parés held the first exhibition of posters by foreign artists in Barcelona in 1896, which served to trigger local production. One sample of this genre has been taken as the cover picture of this issue of the journal. A sample of this genre was chosen as the cover illustration of this issue of the journal. It is a poster by Feliu Elias, who signed his work "Apa", announcing an exhibition in the city of Sabadell in 1915: Art Nou at the Centre Català. This work reflects the Noucentista sensibility which was replacing Art Nouveau. The poster measures 82 x 62 cm, and its author was a sought-after painter and illustrator whose cartoons and caricatures appeared in magazines and newspapers until the 1930s. Alongside commercial adverts and political propaganda, which he developed in the 1930s, we can also find adverts for cultural events, as in this poster. The breadth, depth and historical interest of poster art in Barcelona and Valencia explain why extensive repertoires of posters have been published to extraordinary success, as in the book *Catalunya en 1000 cartells des dels orígens a la fi de la Guerra Civil*, issued in 1994. We thought it was appropriate to offer an examination of posters as the fourth article in this issue of the *Catalan Historical Review*.

The last text in this issue focuses on the topic of resistance to the Franco dictatorship's attempts to marginalise the Catalan language as a marker of the collective identity of a country that was defeated and occupied in 1939. Wielding absolute power, the Franco regime utilised ex-

traordinary means to carry out what had been an ongoing objective of the modern Spanish state: to impose the Spanish language as the only public, prestigious language and to roll back the use of the language of Catalonia, the Balearic Islands and Valencia to the bare minimum. To do so, it had to nullify the progress that linguistic normalisation had experienced throughout the first third of the 20th century, especially in the 1930s thanks to the Catalan regional government during the Republican regime, in spite of the prior anti-Catalan dictatorship of General Primo de Rivera. The most coercive measures in the immediate post-war years too clearly resembled the occupation by arms and had to be abandoned after the Nazi-Fascist defeat in World War II, but the plot to replace the language survived throughout the entire three and a half decades of the dictatorship. The regime was confident that excluding Catalan from schools, newspapers, radio and television would suffice to reduce it to residual usage, the prelude to its extinction. This eclipse of the Catalan language through dictatorial means made it extremely difficult for the new waves of immigrants from the rest of Spain to learn it. Voluntary Catalan classes, the musical movement known as the *Nova Cançó* and the constant rise in the number of books published in Catalan were signs of recovery, yet Catalonia did not emerge from the dictatorship unscathed, even if it did manage to earn back some of its autonomy through democratic imperative. Yet the consequences can still be seen today, 42 years after the end of the dictatorship, in the shortcomings and weaknesses in the use of the Catalans' mother tongue. The last article in this issue is devoted to analysing the in-

struments used to avoid de-Catalanisation. It is an example of a civil society organising itself to counter the State's actions with the tenacity of those who know that they had a recognised human right on their side: the right to be educated, judged, administered in their own language and to express themselves in it in all spheres of life.

As you can see, almost all eras and the most diverse aspects of human activity are represented in this issue, following the usual tone of this journal, which is designed for foreign scholars, although we are told it is quite useful for local scholars as well.

As always, *Catalan Historical Review* includes references to all the historical publications issued by the Institut d'Estudis Catalans during the year, as well as biographies of new members who have joined the History-Archaeology Section and the journal's advisory board. This time there are four of them, and we would like to congratulate all of them with the certainty that they will continue to carry forward the *Catalan Historical Review*, an instrument to internationally disseminate Catalan historiography.

Finally, we want to inform readers that the *Catalan Historical Review* has just been included in the European Reference Index for the Humanities and Social Sciences (ERIH Plus), the benchmark index for the most prestigious academic journals in the humanities and social sciences. This is a major step to improve the dissemination and impact of the *Catalan Historical Review*.

ALBERT BALCELLS
Editor