

Foreword

Issue 17 of this journal continues to offer readers from all over the world overviews of different topics in the Catalan-speaking lands from all historical eras. The first article examines the current state of knowledge on the spread of crop and livestock farming in this region from the sixth to the fifth millennia BC, the long period traditionally known as the Neolithic, before the advent of metal implements. That period witnessed a revolution in humanity's means of subsistence which left a deep mark on the peoples of the westernmost coasts of the Mediterranean.

The second article studies the course of relations between the Catalan institution that represented the country on the one hand and the monarchy on the other between the thirteenth and fifteenth centuries. This institution was an assembly called by the monarch; it met on and off and was made up organically and corporatively by the three branches or estates: the Church, the nobility and the one representing the cities with their own governing regime. More than in other European kingdoms, the monarchy in Catalonia was limited by the representation of 'the land', giving rise to what has been called Catalan pactism, which can be considered early constitutionalism, not yet democratic but certainly opposed to unlimited power on the part of the monarch and his officials. The system worked until the conflicts in the fifteenth century, with a civil war which weakened mediaeval constitutionalism. It nonetheless survived within the Spanish monarchy in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, albeit with an armed conflict in the mid-seventeenth century when the Spanish monarchy aspired to become absolute, as were its counterparts in the rest of Europe, the topic of another article in the next issue of the *Catalan Historical Review*. A forerunner of contemporary freedoms but different from political liberalism, the development of this mediaeval constitutionalism is analysed in this issue while also highlighting its organic corporativism, where privilege was compatible with freedoms, just as it was in the rest of Europe.

In the early sixteenth century, this system fell into crisis in the Kingdom of Valencia and in Mallorca, with political and social revolts that challenged the seigneurial regimes backed by the monarchy of Charles I of Spain (Charles V, Holy Roman Emperor and Archduke of Austria), a conflict that took place at the dawn of what is known as the modern age. This article takes stock of the causes and consequences of these movements, which were ultimately thwarted and are not comparable to those in what we call the contemporary age—the nineteenth and twentieth centuries—although they did contain claims related to representation of the common people and improvements in their living conditions.

Regarding the history of Catalonia in the eighteenth century, a period of economic growth which laid the groundwork for the subsequent development that would distinguish Catalonia from the rest of the Iberian Peninsula, there is an ongoing debate about to what extent it was due to Catalonia's internal social dynamism or to the policies of the first Bourbon kings in Spain. The fourth article in this issue examines this topic. Attributing Catalonia's economic take-off in the eighteenth century to the more or less enlightened despotism of Spain's central power is as debatable as positing a similar relationship between Catalonia's economic leap forward in the 1960s and the policies of the Franco dictatorship, which were known in Spanish as *desarrollismo*, or developmentalism. Clearly, in both cases fewer obstacles and hurdles and a limited liberalising tendency in the economy—though not in politics—helped Catalonia to make up for the lost time caused by the destruction and policies of the absolutist regimes imposed by the military victories over Catalonia in 1714 and 1939. However, the internal dynamism of the Catalan economy in the eighteenth century played a more decisive role than the changes in the tax system and state control over trade with the Spanish possessions in the Americas. Catalonia did not benefit from the 1714 defeat, as some Spanish historiography has intimated. Instead, the War of the Spanish Succession and its consequences interrupted and delayed an economic turnaround that had begun in the last few decades of the seventeenth century in the absence of any political factor that directly favoured it. The cover of this issue shows a French engraving of the city of Barcelona and its port during the War of Jenkins' Ear from 1739 to 1748.

Picasso's oeuvre and figure were commemorated in 2023, on the fiftieth anniversary of this internationally renowned artist's death. Even though he was not born in Catalonia and created the bulk of his oeuvre in Paris, Picasso always kept up close ties with the Catalan-speaking lands after his training in Barcelona in the early twentieth century, as explained in another article in this issue of the *Catalan Historical Review*. The artist's last connection with Catalonia is the current Museu Picasso of Barcelona, opened in 1963, which contains more than 4,000 Picasso works lent by collectors like Sabartés and others, and by Picasso himself.

Issue 17 of the *Catalan Historical Review* closes with biographical sketches of four new members of the History-Archaeology Section of the Institut d'Estudis Catalans, along with the usual list of the Institut d'Estudis Catalans' historical publications in 2023.