

Foreword

Just as in the previous issues of the *Catalan Historical Review*, we are continuing to offer overviews on the issues that have drawn the attention of a large number of researchers, which pertain to a wide variety of topics and eras from the past.

The megalithic monuments built on the islands of Mallorca and Menorca during the dawning centuries of bronze metallurgy have always been enigmatic. Archaeologists' latest knowledge and interpretations of Talaiotic culture is the subject of the first article of this issue. These talaiots are part of the megalithic complexes from the Bronze Age in Europe, such as the famous circle in Stonehenge, twelve kilometres from Salisbury.

In the 15th century, prose in the Catalan language began to yield novels and fictional stories for the men and women of the bourgeoisie and court nobility. What were called chivalrous novels were full of adventures, journeys and loves, and sometimes they contained a realism that was a prelude to modernity. *Tirant lo Blanc* is the most famous novel from this era and the most translated one – Cervantes mentions it in *Don Quixote* – but there were others as well. This issue presents an overview of the results of literature scholars' research into Catalan narrative from the late Middle Ages.

Just like most other borders, Catalonia's northern border with France fluctuated until the wars ended up permanently delineating it in the 17th century. The lands of the Catalan language and culture north of the Pyrenees were not politically separated from the rest until 1659, and just like all border regions, the contacts and exchanges among neighbouring peoples were more important than the conflicts between the kingdoms to which they belonged. The people on either side of the border did not begin to internalise the arbitrary division of the spaces they had shared and would continue to share economically and culturally until the contemporary era. An overview of the research in this field is the subject of another article. The image on the cover is an aerial view of the castle of Salses, the northernmost town in Northern Catalonia. The fortress was remodelled in the early 16th century. Its current appearance is due to the latest reform undertaken by Marshal Vauban, by then under the definitive domain of France after the 1659 Peace of the Pyrenees.

Athenaeums played an important role in cultural dissemination and debate in the 19th and 20th centuries. Even though they started as entities with mesocratic origins in organised civil society, the working classes soon

created their own athenaeums for adult training as instruments of collective social promotion through culture, as well as for their sociability during the manual labourers' scant free time. Even though at first they were pluralistic entities that cut across a broad swath of society, they were also used as circles of initiation, recruitment and coexistence for anarchists, traditionalists and Catholics, who founded their respective athenaeums with an explicit, determined ideological connotation. Before public libraries worthy of this name existed, the members of the athenaeums created their own, and some of them were the means through which new ideas coming from the rest of Europe penetrated Catalan society. Catalonia's current shape, not just cultural but also civic and patriotic, owes a great deal to the athenaeums, which had to use whatever means they could to overcome the restrictions on freedoms imposed by two Spanish dictatorships in the 20th century. The existence of a historiography on the topic that is beginning to become extensive has enabled one article in this issue to closely examine Catalan athenaeums.

A cosmopolitan genius, Dalí nonetheless always retained referents to the region where he was born, where he lived and to which he left his legacy. These referents, projected internationally, are the subject of the last article in this issue.

This issue also includes an obituary on Gabriel Llompart, a corresponding member of the History-Archaeology Section, as well as biographical sketches of Bonaventura Bassegoda, Rafael Cornudella, Josep Maria Gregori, Josep Maria Nolla and Roser Salicrú, new members of this Section.

It could be expected that the historical overviews published in the *Catalan Historical Review* to date, which were primarily written for foreign readers, would also be interesting to local readers. And, in fact, we now have proof that this is so. Recently, the number of views and downloads of articles from the journal by people living in the Catalan-speaking lands has increased, without a corresponding decrease in the number of readers from the rest of the world via the journal's electronic version. Indeed, Catalan historiography is gaining considerable momentum and complexity both at home and abroad, and both need guides to orient themselves and learn more about the common places in the history of the lands and peoples that share the Catalan language today.

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