

Catalan domination in Greece during the 14th century: History, archaeology, memory and myth

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ABSTRACT

In this article, we present one of the most mythicised episodes in the history of Catalonia, first the cooperation and later the clash between the Catalan Company, led by the intrepid Roger de Flor (also known as Roger von Blume and Rutger Blume), and the Byzantine emperor Andronikos II Palaiologos and his son and co-regent Michael IX. We also discuss their settlement in the duchy of Athens in 1311, which later expanded to the duchy of Neopatria, where the Catalans remained a constant presence for more than 70 years. Special attention is paid to the meagre archaeological remains (especially towers and castles) still surviving from that phenomenal adventure in continental Greece, the negative memory this episode has left in Greek folklore, and the conversion of the Almogavar adventurer into a national myth in both Greece and Catalonia, albeit from diametrically opposed positions.

KEYWORDS: Byzantium, Catalonia, House of Aragon, Catalan Company, archaeology, folklore, literature, myth.

Few episodes have left a deeper imprint in the historiography, literature, folklore and ultimately collective imagination of the people who participated in it as the Catalan presence in the eastern Latin lands during the 14th century. Moving almost 7,000 men – the vast majority of them infantry soldiers, some of the best of the era – from Sicily to Constantinople with the goal of halting the unstoppable advance of the Turks, who were a serious threat to the eastern frontiers of the Byzantine empire; their successful military campaigns in the far-flung cities and territories of Anatolia; their leader's death from treason, most likely upon the orders of the son of the man who had hired them, emperor Andronikos II Palaiologos; the unfortunately famous Catalan vengeance, which ravaged broad regions of Thrace, Macedonia and Thessaly; their victory against all odds over the *crème de la crème* of the French cavalry in the Battle of Halmyros; and the consequent occupation and domination of the duchy of Athens and later the duchy of Neopatria for more than 70 years, overcoming all sorts of internal and external threats, are sufficiently compelling ingredients to elevate that military campaign to the status of myth. We shall examine the main facets of the Almogavar myth in both Greece and Catalonia in the second part of this article, although first it is imperative to briefly outline the main milestones in the Catalan military presence in the lands of Hellas.

ONE PRESENCE, TWO STAGES

The misnamed Battle of Cephissus, which, as the historian David Jacoby demonstrated years ago,¹ took place on 15 March 1311 near the city of Halmyros in southeast Thessaly, not in Boeotia, signalled a turning point in the Catalan presence in Greece. From the arrival of Roger de Flor, a former Knight Templar turned mercenary, and his Almogavars in Constantinople in 1303 until that memorable battle, the Catalans played a key role in the history of the Byzantine empire. Their mission was to save it from the Turkish peril which was becoming an increasingly dire threat to its eastern frontiers, although in the end the Almogavars would become the mortal enemies of Byzantium, as we shall see below. And precisely for this reason, both Ramon Muntaner, who carefully monitored that memorable adventure until the summer of 1307 in his capacity as administrator of assets of the Company, and the leading Byzantine historians of the day (primarily George Pachymeres and Nicephorus Gregoras) spent reams of paper on them, not holding back any blows, such that the Catalan and Greek sources are at once complementary and opposite, as will be discussed below. However, after the battle of Halmyros, which unexpectedly secured them land where they could settle (the duchy of Athens, which was joined by the duchy of Neopatria years later) and put an end to the errant life they had led for almost ten years, the Almogavars ceased being of interest to the Greek chroniclers, who no longer saw them as a danger to the

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survival of their Empire. Likewise, with just a handful of exceptions, the historical sources condemn them to silence, only broken by the obscure records of the chancellery, which bear the memory of their sedentary life in that sort of Promised Land. Nonetheless, as demonstrated by the scant material remains which still survive today, their life there was not free of constant dangers and threats.

1303-1311: PACT AND RUPTURE WITH THE EMPIRE

The arrival of the Catalan Company to Byzantium in 1303 was the outcome of the coincidental convergence of two circumstances that occurred on either side of the Mediterranean. In August 1302, the Peace of Caltabellotta was signed in Sicily to put an end to what was known as the War of the Sicilian Vespers, which was actually a series of wars that started with the insurrection of the Sicilian Vespers in which the people of Palermo revolted against and Angevin garrison in the city. This peace prompted Peter the Great of Aragon to disembark on the island in 1282 and put an end to the clash between Frederick II of Sicily and the Angevin monarch Charles II of Naples over control of this important Mediterranean island, which then fell within the orbit of the Crown of Aragon. Regardless, being the mercenary military corps it was, the Catalan Company, which had been hired by Frederick, was left without work and its leader, Roger de Flor, felt the need to seek new battlefields and a new lord to serve. This chance came to him unexpectedly when he found out that the Byzantine emperor Andronikos II Palaiologos (1282-1328) needed troops like the ones Roger led to face off with the Turks, who were drawing dangerously close to the Asian shore of the Marmara Sea and had already conquered a good number of cities in Asia Minor. Roger and the Byzantine emperor signed treaties and reached an economic agreement which led the Catalan Company move to Constantinople, where it arrived in the autumn of 1303 with around 1,500 horsemen, around 4,000 infantry soldiers and around 1,000 seamen according to Muntaner, who may have slightly inflated the figures.² They were accompanied, indeed, by Ramon Muntaner, who served as the chancellor, the Master Rational and the administrator. Muntaner left a firsthand account of events, at least until 1307, when he returned to Catalonia because his squabbles with his then-boss, Bernat de Rocafort. As we shall see, his vision of deeds often contrasts with the accounts of the same events inherited from the Byzantine historians and chroniclers.³

Despite the elderly emperor's efforts to ingratiate himself with Roger and his undisciplined troops – as evidenced in his appointment of Roger as grand duke and his marriage to Maria Asenina, the daughter of the deposed tsar of Bulgaria, Ivan Asen III, and Andronikos' niece, Irene Palaiologina – dissensions quickly ensued. In the early days of the Almogavars' sojourn in Constan-

tinople, there was a major altercation with the community of Genoese merchants in the Galata neighbourhood, who were allies of the empire and held a series of commercial privileges, such as a total exemption from tariffs. The first military action worth reporting here took place in what was known as Artaki Peninsula, on the Asian shore of the Bosphorus, where the emperor had moved the Almogavars not only to drive away the Turkish troops besieging the region but also with the secret intention of keeping them away from the imperial capital. They lived in the city of Cyzicus the entire winter, where they successfully dealt with the Turkish troops, albeit at a very high cost for the local Greek people, whom they treated as true vassals of war, causing them to suffer from all manner of humiliations according to Pachymeres. Another very serious incident broke out in this city which ended up having tragic consequences for Roger de Flor one year later: the bloody clash with the emperor's other corps of mercenaries, the Alans, a Scythian people from north of the Danube and the Black Sea, which ended in many deaths, including the son of their leader, Gircon (called Girgan by Muntaner and Georgus by Pachymeres).

The campaign in inland Anatolia the following spring did manage to reconquer many of the fortresses which had fallen into the hands of the Turks and restore the garrisons in the cities which had suffered from their incursions the previous year. It also inflicted severe defeats on the Ottomans near the city of Aulax (whose exact location we do not know) and at the foot of Taure mountain (currently Toros, on the border of the Christian kingdom of Armenia), although that campaign, too, was not free of all sorts of excesses against the Greek population – if, indeed, it was ever waged, as some modern historians cast doubt on it and regard it as the fruit of Muntaner's overactive imagination. In his *Historical Relations*, Pachymeres, always willing to downplay the unquestionable merit of the Almogavar victories, reports on all these iniquities, most likely with a dash of exaggeration: "It was something to see, the property of the Romans [the Greeks] plundered, the maidens and women dishonoured, the elderly and the priests taken into captivity, suffering from ever-new punishments that the merciless hand of the Latins [the Catalans] imposed on them, with the axe always ready to fall on their necks if they did not reveal their treasures and their wealth" (II, 7, 3). This unedifying behaviour against those they were supposed to liberate, coupled with acts of arrogance perpetrated by two Almogavar captains who had joined the expedition, Berenguer d'Entença and especially Bernat de Rocafort, acts which were intolerable in Byzantine eyes, led to further deterioration of their relations with Andronicus, and especially with his son and co-emperor, Michael IX. Indeed, both of them, but particularly the latter, who had become Roger de Flor's mortal enemy, never ceased seeing him as the head of incorrigible troops who respected nothing and nobody, and who were never free of the suspicion of having come to Constantinople with the secret intention of conquering it for

the sake of Charles, Count of Valois and Provence and King of Sicily, who in 1301 married Catherine of Courtenay, the granddaughter of Baudouin II, the last Latin emperor of Constantinople.⁴ In April 1305, these hostilities, which were by then totally overt, and this increasing mutual mistrust led to the treasonous murder of Roger de Flor by a gang of Alans in the palace of Adrianople, where he had gone to bid Prince Michael IX farewell before heading towards Anatolia to take possession of the lands conquered the previous year. The ambitious young Michael – whose disagreements with his father Andronicus, who always showed infinite patience with Roger and his men, were legendary – did not seem to be unaware of the Alans' plans to assassinate Roger to avenge the death of their leader's son one year earlier. Therefore, they were no more than the executors of the crime that was to radically change the history of the Catalan Company and its relations with the Empire.

The treacherous murder of Roger de Flor on 30 April 1305 was the spark that kindled the famous Catalan vengeance, which the Byzantine historians painted in the bleakest colours. It was unleashed after this act, and more importantly after the dismemberment, in the Thracian city of Rhaedestus (currently Tekirdağ), of the ambassadors of the Company who had gone to Andronicus to officially declare war, following the Catalan custom of submitting a list of grievances and disassociating themselves from the authority whose subjects they were.⁵ The anti-Catalan anger did not even leave unscathed Admiral Ferran d'Aunés, who had married a Greek noblewoman who was a distant relation of the emperor himself and had converted to the Orthodox religion. Both he and his family were attacked by the muntinous throngs, and it is sure that he, at least, died. Pursued by their former protectors, the Almogavars took refuge in Gallipoli (currently Gelibolu) in the Dardanelles Strait, which became the Company's strategically invaluable stronghold. They remained there two years (1305-1307), during which they openly clashed with the troops of Michael IX, whom they thoroughly trounced near the Thracian city of Apros in June 1305. Indeed, they devastated the entire region to such an extent, as Muntaner himself acknowledged, that "*que res no s'hi collia*" (there was nothing to be harvested there) (*Crònica*, ch. CCXXXI).⁶ Once they had devastated all of Thrace, the Company embarked upon its fatal march southward, to Macedonia, "*e pensaren de consumir aquella encontrada, així con haviem fet a aquella de Gal·lípol e de Contastinoble e d'Adrianople*" (and they planned to consume whatever they found, as we had done in Gallipoli and Constantinople and Adrianople) as Muntaner reported (ch. CCXXXIII). Indeed, far from questioning the violent reactions of his comrades-in-arms, he considered it a wholly deserved response to the wicked deeds of their former allies. From their base of operations in Macedonia, located on the Kassandra Peninsula, where they remained two years (from the summer of 1307 to the spring of 1309), they unsuccessfully attacked the city of Thessa-

lonica (the Empire's second stronghold), which was protected by a sturdy wall that the Catalans, lacking the arms needed, were unable to bring down. Their attacks on the monasteries of the monastic community on Mount Athos bore more fruit: immense riches from generous donations from the Byzantine imperial family, the sovereigns of the Balkans and, in general, all the nobility and clergy from the orthodox states. The grim memory of the Catalans persists in this monastic community even today, and traces of it still remains in the Serbian historiography as well.⁷

Once all of Macedonia had been devastated and the siege of Thessalonica lifted, the Catalans, pursued mercilessly by a skilled Byzantine General by the name of Khandrinos, crossed the imposing Mount Olympus and Mount Ossa and descended onto the fertile plain of Thessaly, which they also mercilessly ravaged with their destructive raids. If we believe the Greek monk Theodulus in his unwieldy and somewhat exaggerated version of events, the destruction caused by the Almogavars in this region exceeded all the horrors experienced until then: "Everything disappeared, everything was consumed, everywhere was full of the dead, of corpses, victims of the most dreadful and horrible carnage. The flowing blood that replaced the water in rivers everywhere lay stagnant in the valleys, and even after thoroughly saturating the sand, it flowed – oh! – into the sea, dragging with it human bodies for fish to feast on, some half-dead, others long dead, some deceased, others aware of their suffering, a sad and thankless spectacle for the eyes."⁸ And precisely when they were camping comfortably in the despotate of Thessaly, which was governed at the time by the pusillanimous John II Angelos Doukas, they were hired in 1310 by the Frankish Duke of Athens, Walter V, Count of Brienne, to help him achieve his aim of extending his domains northward. However, soon thereafter disagreements broke out between the two sides (partly because of the duke's refusal to pay them the agreed-upon salary and his decision to release much of the Company after only two months of service), and the Almogavars and Walter ended up clashing on the Halmyros plain in the memorable battle that would herald the start of the Catalan domination of continental Greece for over 70 years.

CATALAN GREECE: INTERNAL ORGANISATION OF THE DUCHIES

The Battle of Halmyros signalled the sudden end of the Burgundian domination of Greece and the transformation of the Catalan Company – until then a military force in constant motion – into a political entity with a territorial base and a stable population. On the days immediately after the battle, meeting hardly any resistance, the Almogavars occupied the main castles in the duchy, those in Thebes, Livadeia and Athens, which were inhabited by what we would today call the civilian population and by the wives and children of the Frankish noblemen whom

they had killed in that battle. What is more, according to Muntaner: “*així partiren-se la ciutat d’Estives [Thebes] e totes les viles e els castells del ducat, e donaren les dones per mullers a aquells de la Companya, a cascú segons que era bon hom, e daven a tal tan honrada dona, que no li tanguera a ell que li donàs aiga a mans*” (They thus split the city of Thebes, and all the villages and castles in the duchy, and they gave the women as wives to the men of the Company, to each according to whether he was a good man, and they gave him such a distinguished lady that he was not to worthy to hand her water to wash her hands) (ch. CCXL). From Muntaner’s words we can glean the vast difference in rank between the Almogavars and the noble Franks, whom they had practically annihilated in that memorable battle, against all prognostications. The meaning of the Catalan chronicler’s words is clear: under normal circumstances, the wives and children of the Frankish noblemen would not have accepted the Almogavars, who often ended up being their new fathers and husbands, even as servants.⁹ The Company had no representatives from the upper nobility, and for this reason they offered the duchy they had just secured, by turn, to the only two Frankish noblemen who had survived the carnage: Boniface of Verona and Roger Desllor (or Deslaur). The former, the lord of one-third of Negroponte (Euboea), was defined by Muntaner as a “*molt prohom e bon*” (very influential and good) man, who “*tots temps havia amada la Companya*” (had always loved the [Catalan] Company) (ch. CCXL). However, he refused the offer, perhaps to avoid crossing the powerful Republic of Venice, which had major interests on the island of Euboea, as well as the other enemies of the Catalans: the French barons from the principality of Achaea, the sebastokrators from Thessaly and Epirus and the Byzantine emperor himself. The Catalans then offered the duchy of Athens to the second highest-ranking captive whom they had taken prisoner in that battle, the knight from Roussillon Roger Desllor, who ended up accepting it and received the castle of Salona (Amphysa) in the Phocis region in compensation. He also accepted the hand of the widow of its last occupant, Thomas III d’Autremencourt (or Stromencourt), who had died in Halmyros alongside his companions the Duke of Athens; Renaud de la Roche, baron of Damala; Alberto Pallavicini, lord of Vodonitza; and George I Ghisi, baron of Euboea and lord of Tinos, Mykonos, Keos and Serifos. The French nobility had been completely erased from central Greece, and the efforts of Walter’s widow, Joanna of Châtillon, to resist the Catalan invaders from Athens’ Acropolis and their son, Walter VI, to win back his father’s duchy with the assistance of the papacy and the French and Angevin monarchies failed miserably.

In any event, the conquerors of the duchy of Athens, until then members of an errant army, were admirably skilled in administratively and militarily organising that new fiefdom, a skill “which might not be expected from a band of freebooters”,¹⁰ in the words of the English historian Peter Lock. The administrative and military organi-

sation of the duchies clearly differed from what we can find in the Frankish period, in which the duchy of Athens was organised as a traditional, heavily centralised feudal state, with the Frankish population concentrated in the two most important cities, Thebes and Athens, and almost completely segregated from the local population, who played no prominent role in the government and defence of the cities. In contrast, when the Almogavars occupied the duchy, after they had split the land and properties earned by conquest – with the exception, as Jacoby accurately stated, of certain lands and castles, which remained the collective property of the Company¹¹ – the cohesiveness of the army, strengthened over time and constantly tested by the numerous enemies it had had to confront, was replaced by a decentralised territorial organisation. The conquerors created a commune (*universitas*) in each of the cities they occupied, which used the Company’s seal – the famous seal with the emblem of Saint George and the new inscription “*Exèrcit de Francs a la regió de Romània*” (Frankish Army in the Region of Romania) – while their leaders (trustees) had the right to grant privileges. Likewise, instead of the army general assembly which met regularly during the Company’s travels, a central council was established, made up of the representatives of the different communes, who took important political decisions and enacted laws. For example, this corporation sent its first leader, Roger Desllor, to the Court of Frederick II of Sicily in 1312 to ask him to accept it under his jurisdiction and protect the duchy that they had just conquered. Even though by doing so the Company lost some of its independence, it still existed as an independent corporation under royal sovereignty until the duchies fell into the hands of the Florentines and Turks.

With the de facto occupation of the duchy of Athens, and later the duchy of Neopatria, the south of Euboea and the island of Aegina after the vicar general Alphonse Frederick, the illegitimate son of Frederick II of Sicily, married Marulla of Verona and successfully waged his military campaign through Phthiotis and Phocis in 1318–1319, the Catalans’ domination of the duchies of Athens and Neopatria was secured. They remained associated with the Sicilian branch of the House of Aragon – officially after 1312, with the appointment (more administrative than effective) of the five-year-old Manfred, son of Frederick II, as the first Catalan Duke of Athens – until Frederick III’s death without male descendants in 1377. This association with the Sicilian monarchs ended in 1380, when the municipal councils of the main cities in the duchies jointly appealed to King Peter III the Ceremonious to accept them under his jurisdiction. The conditions that the trustees and councillors of the Catalan duchies of Greece laid down in order to recognise Peter III as their sovereign were put into writing in what was called the *Capítols d’Atenes* (Articles of Athens), an extensive Catalan-language document written on that city’s Acropolis on 20 May 1380 and ratified by the Catalan-

Aragonese king in Lleida on 1 September of the same year.¹² This exceptional document, which was tantamount to a true constitution, established norms such as making the *Usatges* of Barcelona the public and private laws of the duchies. It further stipulated a ban on marriages between Catalan women and Greek men (although marriages between Catalan men and Greek women were tolerated), as well as the need to prevent public or private assets from being given to the Church. However, by that time the duchies had been greatly weakened as a consequence of the civil clashes they had experienced in the 1360s, and especially because of the occupation and siege of Thebes and Livadeia in 1379 by the Navarrese Company led by the knight Juan de Urtubia. This expedition was financed by the able Florentine merchant Nerio Acciajuoli, who had already snatched Megara from the Catalans and would end up occupying Athens' Acropolis (called the "Castle of Cetines") on 2 May 1388, after a siege that lasted more than one year, despite the fierce defence of that outstanding monument by the government of the city and captain Pere de Pau, who was actually awaiting the help promised by John I, the new monarch who had succeeded his father, Peter III, on the throne of the House of Aragon one year earlier. In the ensuing eight years, Nerio spread his domain to the remaining cities and villages in the Catalan duchies (Neopatria, the capital of the duchy by the same name, may have fallen into his hands in 1390), such that by 1394, only the island of Aegina remained under the power of a Catalan family, the Caupeñas, as we shall see in the following section.

We know little about the internal life and administration of the duchies during Catalan domination, since the chancellery documentation which mentions it (and this is the main source) tends to be limited to appointments to different administrative, judicial, religious and military posts (chancellors, notaries, attorneys, vigeriates, *agutzils* [minor town officials], bishops, archbishops, captains and castellans, some of whom, especially the religious ones, never officially performed their jobs); private affairs like wills and donations; and resolutions of disagreements, both internal and external, primarily with Frankish and Venetian neighbours. The *Diplomatari de l'Orient Català* by Antoni Rubió i Lluch, which compiles more than 700 documents, most of them related to the Greek duchies, is extraordinarily important in this regard.

In terms of the relations between the Catalans and Greeks, during the Catalan domination we can witness a kind of relaxation of the strict rules from the earlier Burgundian period which banned mixed marriages, excluded the Greeks from the right to citizenship and prevented them from inheriting or bequeathing assets. As Setton has amply proven, there were countless exceptions to these rules during the Catalan period.¹³ Of the many Greeks who played a prominent role in the Catalan administration of the duchies and the city of Athens in particular, Dimitri Rendi occupies a prime place. He and ten or twelve other Greeks who appear in the chancellery records

were given the right of free citizenship and all the privileges this entailed, and he was compensated with numerous properties in Athens and Thebes in gratitude for his services as a soldier in Megara, which he had courageously – albeit unsuccessfully – defended from the attacks by Nerio Acciajuoli, and as a notary in the Catalans' Castle of Cetines. Ultimately, many Greeks participated alongside the Catalans in the municipal council of the city of Athens (as well as on the councils of other cities), as Peter the Ceremonious inadvertently revealed in a document when referring to the "*síndichs e prohomens e universitat de Cetines, axí franchs com grechs*" (trustees and prominent men and all the inhabitants of Athens, both Franks and Greeks).¹⁴

Despite the poverty and deprivations suffered by the Catalan settlers of Athens, the Catalan language remained alive in this city, as revealed in the aforementioned *Capítols*, which were written in Catalan, as well as the majority of correspondence between Peter III and his son John I and their subjects living in the Greek duchies, and with different dignitaries from the Morea and continental Greece. There is proof that Catalan was the most common spoken language in Athens – and in the remaining cities in the duchies – in a document issued by the royal chancellery in Sicily on 6 April 1368, in which it claims that the bylaws of the Company had been written, years earlier, "*in vulgare sermone catalano ydyomate*" (in the Catalan language).¹⁵ Another document, which bears the date of 7 January 1372, confirms a privilege of exemption from certain easements "*in carta videlicet de pappiro et vulgari catalanorum eloquio, secundum usum et mores civitatis eiusdem*" (in a document written in the language of the Catalans, according to the customs and mores in their city of origin).¹⁶

In that small, impoverished city of Athens during the Catalan period, we can also detect the pulse of a minimal cultural life which belies the image we get of it from the Byzantine historians (and the coeval Greek folklore and literature, as we shall see in the last two sections of this article), which present it as a wasteland in the throes of incessant barbarism. As the Greek historian Spyridon Lambros stressed more than 100 years ago, at least three manuscripts containing works by ancient authors (one-third of which are documented in this city before the fall of Constantinople) were copied in Athens during the Catalan domination.¹⁷ And here we cannot fail to briefly mention the famous praise to the Acropolis, whose text, written by Peter the Ceremonious on 11 September 1380, was located by Rubió in the Archive of the Crown of Aragon. This praise, which is relatively brief, commented on the monarch's decision to send a guard of a dozen men-at-arms, which he said had to be crossbowmen, "*hòmens de bé, que sien bé armats e bé aparellats*" (prominent men, who must be well armed and well equipped) to protect the Castle of Cetines (Athens' Acropolis), which he defined as the "*la pus richa joya qui al mont sia*" (the richest jewel in the world).¹⁸ As Rubió stated in the mono-

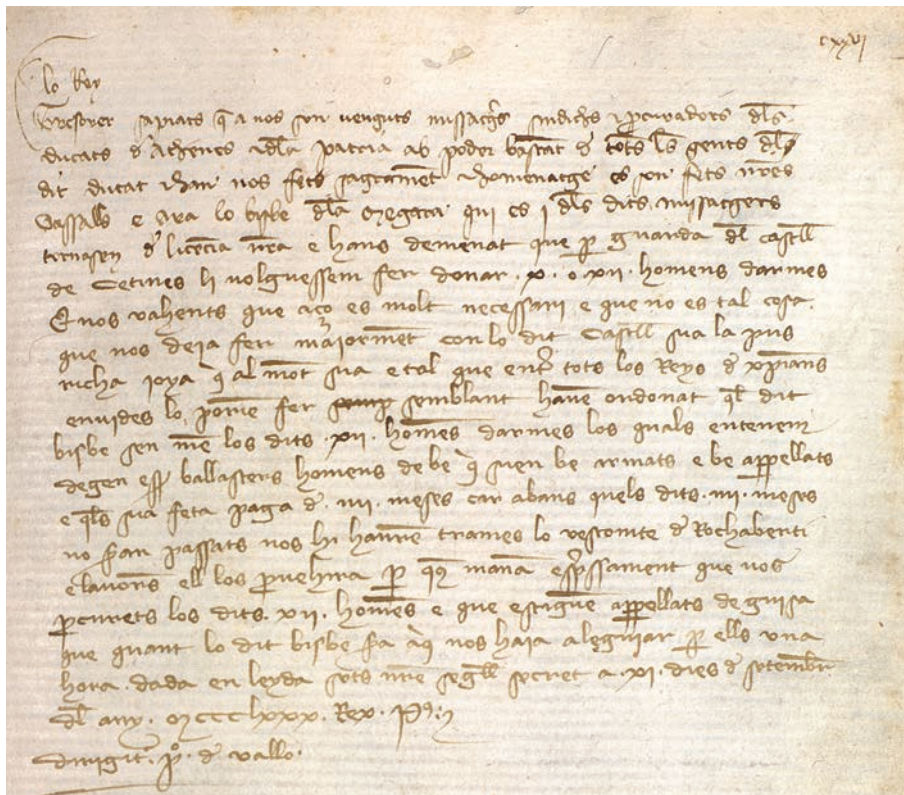


FIGURE 1. Praise to the Acropolis by Peter the Ceremonious, 11 September 1380 (Ministry of Education, Culture and Sport, *Archive of the Crown of Aragon*, Royal Chancellery, Record 1268, sheet 126 r.).

graphic study he devoted to it almost one century ago, these words – which precede the glowing praise by Cyriacus of Ancona (or Ciriaco Pizzecolli) by more than 50 years, by then fully immersed in the Renaissance spirit – have extraordinary aesthetic value and cast a ray of light that briefly illuminates the dark mediaeval world.¹⁹

MATERIAL REMAINS OF THE CATALAN PRESENCE IN GREECE: TOWERS AND CASTLES

After discarding the Catalan origins of the two artistic and architectural works that have traditionally been associated with our ancestors' sojourn in Pericles' city for over seven decades (first, the fresco of what is called the Virgin of the Catalans, located in the mid-19th century amidst the remains of the church of the prophet Elias, in Athens' Plaka district, and today on display in the Byzantine and Christian Museum of Athens, and secondly, the Frankish Tower on the Acropolis, which presided over the Propylaea and was torn down in an untimely fashion in 1874), and after acknowledging that the Catalans living in Athens, Thebes, Livadeia, Amphysa, Lamia, Ypati and other cities in their domains never minted any coins but instead used the earlier Frankish coins, or even more often Venetian coins (mainly *tornesels* and *soldinos*),²⁰ only the imposing castles and towers built all over Greek geography during that period, from Lamia in the north to Aegina in the south, Karystos in the east to Lidoriki in the west, stand as a mute testimony of the Company's time in the land of the gods.²¹ Yet even in this case we cannot identify

clearly Catalan remains, since the majority are Byzantine constructions (often themselves built upon classical remains) which the Frankish counts (in the duchy of Athens), the sebastokrators in Thessaly (for most of the castles in the duchy of Neopatria) and the triarchs in Negroponte (Euboea) reused and adapted to their needs, just as the Catalans did during their period of domination. Only the castles of Styria and Daulis (in Boeotia), and especially the castle in Sidirokastro, in the northern part of Phthiotis, seem to have a history exclusively during the Catalan domination. However, none of them has been restored, despite their importance in defending the northern frontier of the Catalan domains in Greece, especially the castle in Sidirokastro. This strategic importance made them worthy the name "*clavis Athenarum ducatus*" (key of the duchy of Athens), as found in a document from Messina dated 18 May 1367 and published by Rubió.²² As if this were not enough, the exact location of two of these three castles (the ones in Styria and Sidirokastro), which the historiographic sources before and after the Catalans do not mention, is problematic,²³ and amidst the thick vegetation which has overtaken them, the remains conserved (walls built with irregular stones, adobe bricks and plaster, a few cisterns and, in the latter, a tower) are meagre and hardly noteworthy.²⁴ If we compare the state of all of these castles with what Rubió was able to see and describe in 1909 on his third and last journey to Greece, we can see that some of them have been subjected to more or less successful restoration campaigns (namely the castles of Livadeia, Karystos, Lamia, Ypati and Athens [Athens' Acropolis, that is, the Castle of Cetines]), while oth-



FIGURE 2. Castle in Livadeia (German Archaeological Institute, Athens [Böotien, 78, 1909]. Photograph by R. Rohrer).

ers, like the ones in Daulia, Styria, Sidirokastro, Amphysa and Lidoriki, as well as many of the towers, have been the victims of human carelessness, such that their state of conservation today is much worse than it was 100 years ago. And surely the most impressive castle of them all, the one in Thebes, the administrative capital of the duchy of Athens – built by Nicholas II of Saint Omer from 1258 to 1274 and, according to the *Chronicle of the Morea*, suitable to host an emperor and his court – was torn down by the Catalans (always according to the *Chronicle of the Morea*) for fear that it might fall into the hands of Walter VI, Count of Brienne, the son of Walter V, who died at the hands of the Catalans at the battle of Halmyros. Indeed, with the assistance of the House of Anjou and the papacy, Walter VI did futilely strive to win back the duchy which the Almogavar troops had seized from his father in 1311. The only thing that remains standing is what must have been its keep, or *donjon*, which was recently restored. Of the other castles, the one in Livadeia deserves special mention; it has been the subject of several restoration campaigns, and a few old photographs of it survive from Rubió's visit there in 1909.

During the Catalan occupation, this castle conserved the head of Saint George, the Catalan monarchs' most prized relic, which they unsuccessfully tried to have sent to Barcelona. However, the relic ended up on Aegina, where it was moved after the castle of Livadeia fell into the hands of Nerio Acciajuoli at an undetermined date after 1385, and there it was stored by the Catalan Caupena family, who controlled that island until the mid-15th century, more than 50 years after the continental domains

had fallen first to the Florentines and then to the Turks. From there, the prized relic reached Venice when the last Caupena, Antonello II, died without descendants and ceded this island to Venice in 1451. And after falling into oblivion for centuries, the American historian Kenneth Setton discovered it quite bizarrely in San Giorgio Maggiore abbey in 1971.²⁵

The latest castle to be restored is the one in Ypati (capital of the duchy of Neopatria). Several aerial photos remind us of the aptness of the French traveller J. A. Buchon's definition of it as a "*château aérien*" or a "*création de fée*" in the mid-19th century.²⁶ However, the remains which have come to light are quite meagre, limited to a pair of cisterns (the keep no doubt used to be above one of them, as we can see some of its ashlar scattered on the ground), the wall that used to protect these grounds from the north and west (it was naturally protected to the south and east by a steep hill), crosswise walls just a few centimetres tall which start at this wall and reach the top of the hill, and the base of a round tower on the southern side, which is relatively well conserved and, judging from the evidence, seems to have been built by the Catalans after the castle was conquered by Alphonse Frederick in 1319.²⁷

Even though Athens' Acropolis (Castle of Cetines) is more important symbolically than strategically (we should recall that the administrative capital of the duchy was Thebes, not Athens), we cannot fail to briefly mention the transformations that this monument underwent in the era of the Frankish dukes from the De la Roche and Brienne families, who steered the fate of Theseus' city from 1204 to 1311, when it fell to the Catalans, who ruled



FIGURE 3. Aerial view of the castle of Neopatria (Ypati) after being restored, with the current village at its feet (Ephorate of Antiquities of Phthiotida and Evrytania. Ministry of Culture and Sports of the Greek Republic).

it until 1388. The Propylaea – the splendid, unfinished construction attributed to Mnesikles which serves as a gateway to the monumental complex on the Acropolis – became the duke's residence, and an upper storey was built on it, along with a private chapel with a single nave dedicated to Saint Bartholomew, which was built atop the so-called Cistern of Justinian. The Parthenon continued to be used as a basilica dedicated to the Virgin Mary during the Catalan era, with the square tower on its far southwest side above the pediment and roof used as a bell tower, while the Erechtheion was turned into the residence of the Latin archbishop. Today, virtually no traces remain of these changes in architecture and use (because of the drive to restore the structure it originally had during the times of Pericles), which gave it the appearance of a true fortress within the fortress that the Acropolis itself was.²⁸

The defence towers scattered around the Catalan duchies in Greece also date back to the Frankish period, according to the majority of researchers, although in certain cases information indicates some of these constructions must clearly be Catalan. Generally speaking, their state of conservation is fairly poor, and only a handful of them still have intact structures, from the base to the battlements. Some of them, like the ones in Agia Marina, Antikyra, Gla, Yliki and Schimatari, have even disappeared, the victims of the passage of time and human neglect. Nonetheless, others, like the ones in Vravronas, Oinoi, Haliartus and Hypsilanti, whose walls are over ten metres

tall, are in a relatively satisfactory state of conservation, and we can still make out the remains of their different storeys. With regard to this overall poor state of conservation, very few of these constructions have been the subject of public or private restoration campaigns, and some have been used for purposes quite different from the reason they were built, such as to provide refuge to bandits before the war of independence, or more often as livestock shelters. They are all freestanding towers which follow a standard building technique: old ashlar on the edges and the three or four lower rows, and the remainder filled in with smaller, irregular stones joined with mortar and combined with adobe bricks on the edges. This building technique is found in the castles as well and was typical in the Frankish-Catalan era; however, it actually dates back to the period of Byzantine rule over these lands (or even the late centuries of the Roman Empire) and lasted until the Venetian and Turkish period. Usually square in shape, their original sizes varied, but the vast majority of the towers were originally 7.5 to 9.5 metres tall.

One key question on which historians did not agree unanimously until quite recently is the purpose of these towers. Everything seems to point to the fact that not only did they serve a strategic or defensive purpose, but they were primarily a symbol of their owners' effective control of these inland regions (they belonged to the lowest echelon of the Frankish and Catalan nobility, since the families in the upper nobility lived in the castles, over which



FIGURE 4. Tower of Vravronas, in Attica, seen from the east (Photograph by Eusebi Ayensa).

they did exercise effective control in some cases). However, we cannot reject the possibility that some of them may have been built at strategic points to monitor the movements of men and goods, such as the towers in Livadostra and Antikyra, in the Gulf of Corinth, or that they may have also been used in times of instability to protect their owners and, more generally, the civilian population working in their fiefdoms.²⁹

Apart from these defensive constructions (towers and castles), several private artefacts have been found occasionally and quite coincidentally, such as the mould of the seal of a Mallorcan member of the Company, Bernat Saguàrdia, with which he was most likely buried during the Almogavars' time in Thrace (1305-1307), as well as villages that seem to have been built and inhabited throughout most of their history in the era when our ancestors lorded over central Greece.

One example is a hamlet which spreads at the feet of the tower in Panakton, in Boeotia, which was excavated in 1991-1992 and again in 1999 by the American Archaeology School of Athens. It must offer a picture quite similar to the majority of Greek villages in Attica, Boeotia, Phthiotis and Phocis under Catalan rule. The objects found there are simple and not very valuable (with the exception of several items found in the church), which leads us to



FIGURE 5. Mould of the seal of Bernat Saguàrdia (Regional Historical Museum. Shumen [Bulgaria]).

believe that the population worked in agriculture and livestock and belonged to a middle or lower social stratum (the items found in the church seem to indicate that the population was local and practised the Orthodox religion). The excavation, whose results are outlined in full detail in an extensive article,³⁰ brought to light several houses and a small church with an attached cemetery. The objects found in the four excavated houses included ceramic shards from items for daily use and house and field utensils (horseshoes, hoe blades and knives). Of the items found in the church and the tombs – which are higher quality and more valuable than those located in the houses – worth reporting here are fragments of stucco from the walls and lamps, plates and ceremonial vessels, most of them decorated, along with keys and the remains of the altar, the entrance door and the architrave. Eighteen coins from different eras (especially Venetian) appear in both the private and religious constructions, as well as numerous projectiles (especially spearheads and arrows), which the heads of the excavations in this site relate to the turbulent life of the duchy of Athens, especially from 1362 to 1365 and during the second decade of the 15th century under Florentine rule.

WOULD THAT I COULD SEE YOU UNDER THE SWORD OF A CATALAN! THE CATALANS IN GREEK FOLKLORE

As Rubió revealed almost one century ago, and as we have tried to further flesh out,³¹ the Catalan presence in Greece in the 14th century has left a deep (and often quite nega-

tive) imprint on the collective Greek imagination. Wherever the Catalan Company went, from Thrace to Attica, where it settled permanently from 1311 to 1388, we find toponyms, sayings, curses and even entire songs which evoke the violence of those mercenary warriors who stood up to the Byzantine Empire.

The folkloric testimonials collected in Thrace, Macedonia and Thessaly, where the Catalan Company remained just a few years, as mentioned above, are rather scarce. Still, we can mention the curse “May the vengeance of the Catalans fall upon you!” (*Η εκδίκησις των Καταλανών εύροι σε!*), which, according to the Valencian historian Francesc de Montcada, was frequent in the region of Thrace at least until the 17th century. In these regions, the monastic community on Athos deserves special attention, where the Catalans’ raids left a harrowing memory which lasts until today, and the expression “You’re a Catalan!” (*Κατελάνος είσαι!*) was proffered as an insult by people from Thessaly until the late 19th century.

However, the unpleasant memory of the Almogavars was the most deeply rooted in the former duchies of Athens and Neopatria, where the Catalan presence lasted for over 70 years. In Athens, for example, we can find disparaging phrases about the Catalans from Theseus’ own city, such as “What a Catalan!” (*Διντί Καταλάνο!*) or “What a devil of a Catalan!” (*Τί διάβολο Κατελάνο!*), especially in areas that are difficult to reach, where the population generally remains stable, unlike Athens and the capital of the duchy, Thebes, which were virtually depopulated in the Turkish era. At the foot of Mount Parnassos in 1938, for example, the Greek folklorist Irini Spandonidi collected the saying “I fled from the Turks to end up in the hands of the Catalans” (*Από τους Τούρκους έφευγα, στους Καταλάνους πάαινα*), which she herself described as a “curious reminder of the terrifying Catalans”. And it is worth noting that the Catalans’ association with the Turks as the proverbial enemies of the Greek people is also widely documented in the folklore from southern Euboea, as revealed in several popular songs from the region.

However, the countship of Salona (today Amphyssa) is much more interesting, and especially the duchy of Neopatria, in whose capital, Ypati, phrases and expressions disparaging the Catalans were still quite common at the end of the last century. In the first of these two cities, the capital of a powerful countship governed by the descendants of the vicar general Alphonse Frederick for more than 70 years, the memory of the fall into the hands of the Turkish sultan Bayezid I still survives today in the region’s popular tradition. And in Neopatria, in addition to the insults “Leave him alone, he’s a Catalan” (*Άφτονε αυτόν. Αυτός είναι Κατιλάνος*) and “Read, Catalan dog” (*Διάβασε, σκυλί Κατιλάν[ι]κο[ν]*) – the latter said to lazy children – and the threat “Would that I could see you under the sword of a Catalan!” (*Να σε δω στο σπαθί του Κατελάνου!*), as late as 1994 we had the chance to hear an entire series of disparaging expressions which revealed two new aspects of

the Catalans, namely uncleanness and religious impiety, which were virtually unknown in the rest of Greece. Good examples are the phrases “The Greek cleaned himself and the Catalan soiled himself” (*Ο Ρωμιός νιβόταν και ο Καταλανός σκαταλιβόταν*), and to refer to the act of eating meat on fasting days, “The Catalan even eats meat on Good Friday” (*Ο Καταλάνος τρώει κρέας και τη Μεγάλη Παρασκευή*) and “[This person] fasts like a Catalan” (*Νηστεύει σαν τον Κατελάνο*). These expressions seem to be justified by the clash between the Catholic invaders and their Orthodox subjects, which must have been particularly virulent in this city.³²

To conclude, we should note that the Catalans’ poor reputation also radiated out to lands that they never occupied, although some of them were the victims of their devastating raids. For example, their sinister reputation is strongly preserved in the central Peloponnesus. In the city of Tripoli, for example, the historian Epaminondas Stamatiadis collected the expression “She’s acting like a Catalan woman” (*ομοιάζει σαν Κατελάννα*) to describe an irascible, harsh, coarse woman, and in the Argolis region, “Catalan” was the worst insult that could be hurled at a woman, as revealed in the expression “Ah, Catalan woman, you’ve done me a thousand wrongs!” (*Μωρ’ Κατελάννα, χίλιες ζημιές μου ’καμες!*), recorded by a Greek folklorist in 1937. Yet the Peloponnesus, more specifically in the Mani region of Laconia, is also where the only positive testimonials of Catalans survived until modern times. In this region, the proper name Catalan, which we can also find all over the Peloponnesus and on some islands in the Aegean Sea, was a symbol of bravery and courage, as revealed in a report that the Greek folklorist Nikolaos Politis sent to Rubió in 1883 which recounts a father’s violent reaction when he finds out that the son born during his absence was named “Peter” instead of “Catalan”, which he believed to be an expression of strength and noble birth. However, the use of the word “Catalan” as a proper name, or more frequently as a surname, is also related to the blossoming of Catalan trade on the Aegean islands during the late Middle Ages – especially in Chios and Crete, which even had Catalan consuls for long periods of time – a new phenomenon which was largely independent from the Catalan presence in the duchies of Athens and Neopatria.³³

THE MEMORY OF THE CATALANS IN CONTEMPORARY GREEK AND CATALAN LITERATURE

Despite the deep imprint left by the Almogavars’ acts in the Greek and Catalan historiography of the period, the adventures of Roger de Flor and his brothers-in-arms and their subsequent settlement in the duchies of Athens and Neopatria, where they managed to survive all sorts of threats and invasions for more than 70 years, on neither side of the Mediterranean did they find a poet who would turn them into a national epic. After falling into oblivion

for centuries, what was known as the *Almogavar theme* only became an essential referent in the literatures of Greece and Catalonia in the 19th century, a time when these literatures needed national self-affirmation after centuries of silence, if not clear decline, aggravated in Greece by four centuries of Turkish domination. In that country, the restoration of the *Almogavar theme* was closely tied to the crisis in national consciousness in the years immediately after independence; after the Greek State was established in 1830 and the early years of enthusiasm over the restoration of freedom had passed, the first voices started to cast doubt on the ethnic and historical continuity of the Hellenic people, most notably the Austrian historian Jacob Philipp Fallmerayer. These voices, coupled with the burgeoning national consciousness among the other Balkan peoples (especially Bulgarians and Albanians), who also arose to claim the remains of the sinking Ottoman Empire, prompted the Greeks' need to claim themselves as the legitimate continuation of Hellenism and the sole heirs to the ancient glories. The Greek literary scene in the second half of the 19th century and the early 20th century was thus inundated by works on Byzantine themes with the simple goal of tapping into the glorious classical past which the modern Greeks drew from to legitimise their national aspirations (after a long period, mostly dovetailing with the Enlightenment, which viewed Byzantium as a dark page in history, featuring fanatical monks endlessly engaged in sterile theological disputes). In this context, the almost 80 years of Catalanocracy in continental Greece provided enough material for at least four plays of differing scopes and stripes: *The Last Count of Salona* (*Ο τελευταίος κόμης των Σαλώνων*) by Spyridon P. Lambros (1870),³⁴ *The Lord of Olympus or John the Catalan* (*Ο άρχων του Ολύμπου ή Ιωάννης ο Καταλάνας*) by Marinos Kutuvalis (1873),³⁵ *The Duchess of Athens* (*Η Δούκισσα των Αθηνών*) by Kleon Rangavis (1905)³⁶ and *The Magic of Beauty* (*Της ομορφιάς τα μάγια*) by Laertis Larmis, the pseudonym of Kostas Athanassiadis (1919).³⁷ The most literarily notable of these four works is the first, which was written by Spiridon P. Lambros, a professor of Byzantine history at Athens University and briefly Prime Minister of Greece. In it, the words of the Greeks plotting to liberate the niece of the Orthodox bishop, who had been kidnapped by the Catalan count of Salona (currently Amphysa), express all the aspirations of modern Hellenism in a solemn, epic tone, despite the fact that these aspirations are profoundly out of place coming from the mouth of a Greek Byzantine from the 14th century: "The Catalans are beasts, / odious doers of abominable deeds, / they are the tyrants of our fatherland. / We all weep over our dead kin, / our seized property, / we all see our enslavement, / we all detest tyranny / and before this holy altar / we feel sufficiently brave / to swear that we want a life / as free Greeks; otherwise / - and let this tomb bear witness - / may our enslaved bones turn to ash".³⁸ After the Catalan count's death at the hands of the fiancé of the Greek bishop's niece, the final

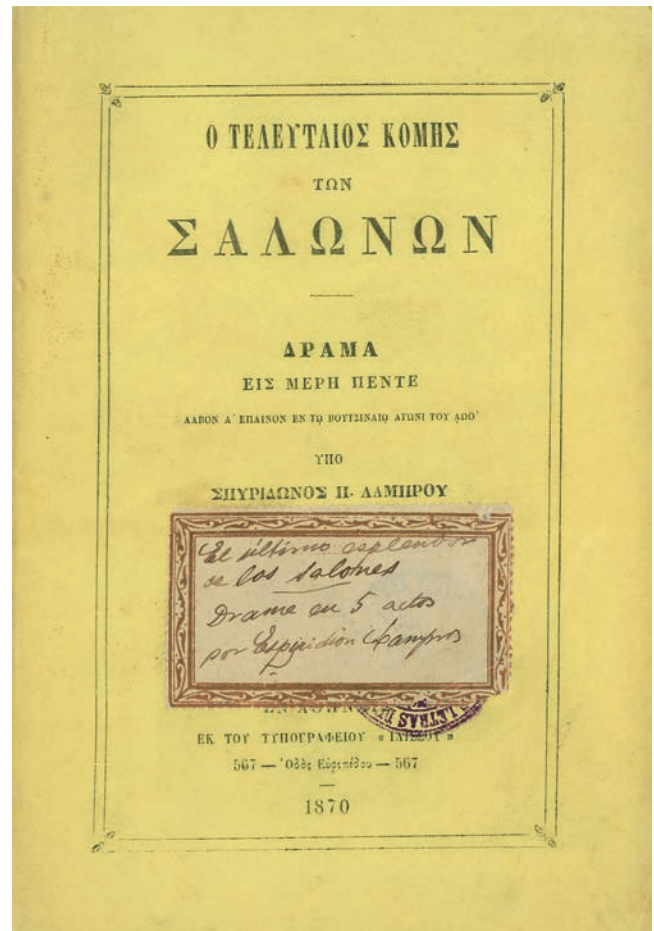


FIGURE 6. Cover of the play by Spiridon P. Lambros *The Last Count of Salona*, with the translation of the title into Catalan by Antoni Rubió i Lluch (Biblioteca de la Reial Acadèmia de Bones Lletres de Barcelona).

words as the Byzantine banner is being unfurled over the walls of the city embody all the Greek people's desires for national redemption: "As today we become free / of the Catalans, / thus one joyful day, / may you celebrate the festival of the complete / liberation of our people".³⁹ These words are driven home by another Greek who states that "since they all profess the same faith / if only one day may they also form a single people".⁴⁰

The words that close Marinos Kutuvalis' *The Lord of Olympus or John the Catalan* are a kind of anthem which also originated in this climate of patriotic fervour. After its main character, the abominable Catalan Lord of Olympus, a character with no historical basis, dies from a stroke of lightning descended from the sky as punishment for his harsh repression of the Greek people: "May your force, Creator, be with us, / sweetly, above Greece, may / the sun rise once again and may / the zephyrs blow freely above it. / Greece! Freedom shines once again!"⁴¹

In Catalonia, the situation was somewhat comparable. Despite the scepticism of Hegel and other Romantic treatise-writers on the feasibility of the epic genre in modern times, here – as in the bodies of literature from neighbouring countries – there were serious attempts, albeit

from the strictly cultivated realm, to make it possible to compose a sweeping story in a solemn tone referring to a national feat with which the people could identify. The first major thrust of the Almogavar theme – which perfectly fit the objectives just outlined – came from the Royal Academy of Letters of Barcelona, when on 20 February 1841 it announced a contest to award a prize to an epic poem on the Catalan expedition to the East. Later, in 1857, it did the same with the conquest of Mallorca. The authors were allowed to choose both the metre and the language – Catalan or Spanish – in which the poem was written. A second impetus came from the Spanish war in Morocco in the mid-19th century, in which the Catalan bourgeoisie participated so enthusiastically. Víctor Balaguer, who had already heavily contributed to forging the legend of the Almogavars with both his literary activity and his *Història de Catalunya* (1886), was one of the first to associate the Greek and African adventures.⁴² Thus, in his monumental work *Jornadas de gloria ó Los españoles en África*, a dense, illustrated volume almost 400 pages long, the Barcelona poet, carried away by the enthusiasm inspired by that Company in Catalonia, described the farewell that the city of Barcelona gave to the Catalan volunteers: “*Mar de los condes de Barcelona, lleva ese buque á seguro puerto, como llevaste un dia, meciéndolas en tus azuladas espaldas, las galeras de los almogavares que fueron al Oriente a conquistar un reino para su patria*” (Sea of the counts of Barcelona, carry this ship to safe harbour, just as one day you carried, rocking them on your bluish back, the galleys of the Almogavars who went eastward to conquer a kingdom for their fatherland).⁴³

This entire climate, which partly explains the success of Muntaner’s *Crònica* and its translation into the most important European languages, logically fostered the appearance of more poems on the Almogavar theme, which their authors often submitted to the Jocs Florals literary contests in Barcelona, albeit to varying degrees of success. Examples include *¡Són ells...! Desembarch dels almogàvers a Orient* (It’s them...! Disembarkation of the Almogavars in the East) by Damas Calvet, which won the gold prize at the 1859 Jocs Florals,⁴⁴ *La mort d’en Roger de Flor* (The Death of Roger de Flor) and *La fi dels almogàvers* (The End of the Almogavars) by Ramon Picó i Campanar and Eduard Girbal i Jaume, poems submitted to the contest in 1867 and 1909, respectively,⁴⁵ and *Los almogàvers al Parthenon* (The Almogavars in the Parthenon) by Jaume Collell, which won the second honourable mention at the Jocs Florals in 1897.⁴⁶ Most of these poems were not very literarily accomplished and contained countless exaggerations and flagrant anachronisms. Without a doubt, the two best Catalan works on the Almogavar theme were *Roudor de Llobregat ó sia Los catalans en Grecia* (Roudor of Llobregat, or the Catalans in Greece), an epic poem in three sections by Joaquim Rubió i Ors, the father of Rubió i Lluch, winner of the contest announced by the Reial Acadèmia de Bones Lletres of Barcelona mentioned above, and especially *L’Orientada* (The Eastern Cam-

paign) by Francesc-Pelagi Briz, published in Barcelona in 1865.⁴⁷ The former, which is comprised of 53 stanzas with eight verses, recounts the adventures in love and war of an obscure character, Bernat de Roudor, one of the only three Almogavars who managed to escape the bloodbath into which the reception that Michael IX held for Roger de Flor at the palace in Adrianople had turned. The latter, which has almost 8,000 verses divided into 13 sections, masterfully combines scenes of war with more lyrical scenes that sketch the amorous adventures of Corbrau, the poem’s real main character.

Having said that, it should come as no surprise that even Antoni Rubió i Lluch himself, who took such pains to help expand historical knowledge of the Catalan presence in Greece, ended up accepting the truly epic dimension of this episode in Catalan history. So did its chronicler, Ramon Muntaner, who was defined as the Camões of history by his Italian translator, Filippo Moise, while Rubió nicknamed him the “*Homer de la grandiosa epopeia escrita amb les ascones dels almogàvers*” (Homer of the grandiose epic written with the spears of the Almogavars).⁴⁸

NOTES AND REFERENCES

- [1] David JACOBY. “Catalans, turcs et vénitiens en Romanie (1305-1332): un nouveau témoignage de Marino Sanudo Torsello”. In: *Studi Medievali*, XV, 1974, pp. 223-230 (= *Recherches sur la Méditerranée orientale du XIIIe au XVe siècle. Peuples, sociétés, économies*. Variorum Reprints CS105, London 1979).
- [2] Professor David Jacoby recently devoted an article to studying the heterogeneity (both ethnic and social) of the Catalan Company, which also included women and children, yet without this affecting its “Catalan nature”, inasmuch as “Catalans appear to have been the largest group within its ranks and their language was in common use” (“The Catalan Company in the East: The Evolution of an Itinerant Army (1303-1311)”, in Gregory I. Halfond (ed.), *The Medieval Way of War: Studies in Medieval Military History in Honor of Bernard B. Bachrach*. London: Routledge, Ashgate, 2015, p. 153-182 [the quote is from p. 160]).
- [3] The French historians Agnès and Robert Vinas recently published an interesting historical monograph entitled *La Companyia Catalana a Orient* (Rafael Dalmau Editor, Barcelona, 2017 [originally published in French in 2012]), which for the first time compares the versions of the Company’s feats of arms contained in the Catalan historical sources (especially Muntaner) and the Greek sources (and occasionally with Sicilian, Castilian, Genoese, Florentine and Serbian sources), from which they reproduce long passages. The author of this article was in charge of translating the texts by the Byzantine historians into Catalan.
- [4] On this obscure undertaking, see Ernest MARCOS, “La Companyia Catalana i Bizanci”. In: *L’Avenç*, 213, April

1997, pp. 12-17, and by the same author, *Els almogàvers. La història*. Esfera dels Llibres, Barcelona, 2005, in which he surveys the adventures and misadventures of the Catalan Company from their arrival in Constantinople in 1303 until they settled in the duchy of Athens eight years later. Also useful on this topic are the stories recounted in Rafael TASSIS (*L'expedició dels Almogàvers*. Rafael Dalmau Editor [Episodis de la Història, 6], Barcelona, 1960); Jep PASCOT (*Els Almogàvers: L'epopeia medieval dels catalans*, 1302-1388. Proa, Barcelona 1971) and especially Afonso LOWE (*The Catalan Vengeance*. Routledge & Kegan Paul. London and Boston 1972 [with a translation into Spanish entitled *La venganza catalana* published by Libros de la Frontera in 1974]). With regard to the Almogavars' relations with the Byzantine empire and especially with emperor Andronicus II (once again over the obscure plans of Charles, Count of Valois, who made his trusted right-hand man, Thibaut de Chepoys, the captain of the Company after Bernat de Rocafort was imprisoned), the classic book by Angeliki E. LAOIU (*Constantinople and the Latins: The Foreign Policy of Andronicus II*. Harvard University Press, 1972, especially pp. 134-242) is still an essential reference.

- [5] Precisely the official declaration of war – presented as a public event (before witnesses) of the “disengagement” from and “challenge” of the emperor – led some scholars of the Almogavar venture in Greece to consider the popular term “*venjança catalana*” (Catalan vengeance) as inappropriate to define acts of war whose main goal was not to avenge a crime but to restore rights violated by the Byzantine sovereigns' betrayal. One example is the scholar Ernest MARCOS (*Els almogàvers. La història*, p. 209).
- [6] For Muntaner's *Crònica*, we are using the edition by Ferran Soldevila, which was revised philologically by Jordi Bruguera and historically by Maria Teresa Ferrer i Mallol and published in Barcelona in 2011 by the History-Archaeology Section of the Institut d'Estudis Catalans [No. LXXXVI].
- [7] Indeed, the Serbian archbishop Danilo II, at that time the hegumenos or superior of the Orthodox monastery of Khilandari and eyewitness to this destruction, held back no blows when presenting, in literal words, “those impious warriors, those men without religion”, who “were the terror of that place for three years and three months”. The Serbian archbishop continued: “They were terrifying peoples who took captive many men, women, boys and girls who were on Athos, bound by ropes as if they were four-footed animals. Anywhere a man could go, through mountains, valleys or roads, injured people and unburied bodies were found. For those who saw it, that was truly a terrible spectacle.” (*Life of the Archbishop Danilo II*, in the edition by D. Daničić, London 1972, reprint of the edition published in Zagreb in 1866, p. 348). As an act of atonement to that religious community that suffered the ire of the Almogavars more than any other, in the late 20th century the Catalan government of the Generalitat sponsored the restoration of the treasure tower at

the monastery of Vatopedi. The official opening ceremony of this project – which is commemorated with the plaque written in Greek and Catalan installed in a place of honour in this Athos monastery – was held on 9 October 1996 and was presided over by Joaquim Nadal i Farreras, at that time the Regional Minister of Territorial Policy and Public Works of the Generalitat de Catalunya. See the author's report on this event in the articles “Vatopedi: el nou consolat català a Grècia”. *Serra d'Or*, no. 556, April 1996, pp. 9-14, and “Retorn a Vatopedi, els catalans a l'Athos”. *Revista de Girona*, no. 238, September-October 2006, pp. 98-106.

- [8] *Letter to the Philosopher Joseph*, in an edition by J. Boissonade (*Anecdota graeca e codicibus regiis*. G. Olms, Hildesheim 1962, pp. 219-220).
- [9] The Florentine chronicler Giovanni Villani was no more benevolent with the Almogavars, and in his *Cronica Universale* he claimed about the battle of Halmyros, “così le delizie dei Latini, acquistate anticamente per gli Franceschi, per così dissoluta gente furono distrutte e guaste” (the splendid properties of the Latins, which the French had previously acquired, were damaged and destroyed by such a dissolute people as these [the Catalans]) (VIII, 51). Regarding this source, see Kenneth SETTON. *Catalan Domination of Athens, 1311-1388*. The Mediaeval Academy of America, Cambridge-Massachusetts, 1948, p. 13. Henceforth: SETTON. *Catalan Domination of Athens*.
- [10] *The Franks in the Aegean, 1204-1500*. Longman, London & New York, 1995, p. 119.
- [11] Indeed, as the insightful Israeli professor (most likely the leading historian of the Catalan presence in Greece at that time) observed, we have reports that some castles were never split among the conquerors of the duchies and remained the collective property of the Company, most likely for strategic reasons. Thus, in a document drawn up in Thebes on 26 March 1314, in which the Company gives the castle of that city to Guiu, Baron of Montauban, the aforementioned castle is presented as collective property of the Company and defined as “*nostrum castrum [...] situm juxta civitatem Thebanam*” (our castle [...] located near the city of Thebes) (*Diplomatari de l'Orient Català [1301-1409]*. *Collecció de documents per a la història de l'expedició catalana a Orient i dels ducats d'Atenes i Neopàtria*. Institut d'Estudis Catalans, Barcelona, 1947 [reissued in Barcelona in 2000 (Memòries de la Secció Històrico-Arqueològica, 45)], doc. LXXI, p. 89; henceforth: *Diplomatari de l'Orient Català*). On the other hand, the castles and lands in the duchy of Neopatria conquered by Alphonse Frederick in 1318 or 1319 automatically came to depend on King Frederick II of Sicily, on whose behalf the duchy of Athens had been conquered and annexed. In this regard, see David JACOBY. “L'estat català a Grècia: evolució interna”. In: *L'Avenç*, 213, April 1997, pp. 18-21, and by the same author, “L'état catalan en Grèce: société et institutions politiques”. In: *Els catalans a la Mediterrània oriental a l'edat mitjana*, Scholarly conference of the Institut d'Estudis

- Catalans. History-Archaeology Section, Barcelona, 16 and 17 November 2000. Institut d'Estudis Catalans [Sèrie Jornades Científiques, 11], Barcelona 2003, pp. 73-101.
- [12] *Diplomatari de l'Orient Català*, doc. CCCXCI, pp. 473-479.
- [13] SETTON, *Catalan Domination of Athens*, pp. 252-254.
- [14] Antoni RUBIÓ I LLUCH. "La població de la Grècia catalana en el XIVè segle". In: *Memòries de la Secció Històrico-Arqueològica*. Institut d'Estudis Catalans, Barcelona, 1933, vol. 4, p. 29. The habitual use of Catalan in the documents drawn up in these Greek duchies is itself sufficient reason to attribute the name Catalan to the domination of the subjects of the Crown of Aragon in Greece, as Antoni Rubió i Lluch upheld one century ago in a powerful article responding to those who rejected this name ("Per què donem el nom de catalana a la dominació de la Corona d'Aragó a Grècia". In: *Estudis Universitaris Catalans*, 12, 1927, pp. 1-12).
- [15] *Diplomatari de l'Orient Català*, doc. CCXCVIII, p. 386.
- [16] *Ibid.*, doc. CCCXXXV, p. 423.
- [17] Spiridon P. LAMBROS. "Athenian bibliographers and owners of codices during the Middle Ages and Turkish rule" [in Greek]. In: *Parnassos*, 6, 1902, pp. 159-218. On this matter, see too SETTON, *Catalan Domination of Athens*, pp. 223-224.
- [18] *Diplomatari de l'Orient Català*, doc. CDIV, p. 491.
- [19] "Significació de l'elogi de l'Acròpolis d'Atenes pel rei Pere'l Cerimoniós". In: *Homenaje a Menéndez Pidal*. Impr. de la Libr. y Casa Ed. Hernando, vol. III, 1925, pp. 37-56. In 2012, on the occasion of the installation and unveiling of a monolith at Beulé Gate at the foot of the Propylaea one year earlier, bearing this praise in Catalan, Spanish, English and Greek, a facsimile was published in Athens preceded by two texts on the meaning and significance of the text, written by the director of the Archive of the Crown of Aragon, Carlos López, and by the author of this article, respectively, "The eulogy and the Archive of the Crown of Aragon" and "The eulogy: Context and significance" (*Elogi de l'Acròpolis [Pere IV d'Aragó, 11 de setembre de 1380]*. Instituto Cervantes de Atenas, Institut Ramon Llull, Ministerio de Educación, Cultura y Deporte, and Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas, Athens 2012, pp. 4-11 and 12-15 [Catalan version], 18-26 and 27-31 [Spanish version], 34-42 and 43-47 [English version] and 50-58 and 59-62 [Greek version]).
- [20] In the field of numismatics, the only clearly Catalan coin is the tornesel struck by Prince Ferdinand of Mallorca in Glarentza in 1315-1316, in his fleeting and tragic campaign in those distant lands. However, Glarentza, located in the *nomos* or province of Eleia on the Peloponnesus, never belonged to the Greek domains and was only the site of one of the many campaigns by which the Western noblemen proved their valour in the Middle Ages in lands that were always swathed in an aura of myth.
- [21] The first to study the Catalan castles in Greece was Antoni RUBIÓ I LLUCH in his classic study "Els castells catalans de la Grècia continental", which can be read on pp. 364-425 of vol. II, from 1908, of the *Anuari de l'Institut d'Estudis Catalans* (a work translated into Greek and published in Athens by Hestia publishing house in 1912). As Rubió explains in the first few pages of his work, he describes – more from the standpoint of their historical context than from the strictly archaeological vantage point – the four castles he visited on his third and last journey to Greece, taken in 1909 in the company of his disciple and friend Ramon d'Alòs-Moner: Livadeia, Ypati, Lamia and Amphysa, to which he added Sidirokastro, which he never managed to visit and had located in the wrong place. We have recently furthered our knowledge and study of the castles occupied by the Catalans in Greece to six new castles about which Rubió said little or nothing (Athens and Aegina [in Attica], Davleia and Styria [in Boeotia], Karystos [in Euboea] and Lidoriki [in Phocis]), as well as twenty-one towers (Aspropyrgos, Varnavas, Oinoi, Vravronas and Dangla [in Attica]; Panakton, Tanagra, Paralimni, Pyrgos, Thurion, Parori, Haliartus, Hypsilanti, Koroneia, Askri, Melissochori, Thisvi and Livadostra [in Boeotia]; Lilea and Polydrosos [in Phthiotis]; and Amficleia [in Phocis]). See the book by the author of this article, *Els Catalans a Grècia. Castells i torres a la terra dels déus*. Base [Base Històrica, 109], Barcelona 2013. Henceforth: AYENSA, *Els Catalans a Grècia*. The following article is also very useful: Nikos KONDOIANIS "Tracing Catalan Boeotia. The defensive organisation of the Duchy of Athens during the 14th century" [in Greek]. *The Catalan-Aragonese Domination in Greek Territory*. Instituto Cervantes de Atenas and Institut Ramon Llull, Atenes 2012, pp. 67-109.
- [22] *Diplomatari de l'Orient Català*, doc. CCLXXXIX, p. 375.
- [23] With regard to location issues, see AYENSA, *Els Catalans a Grècia*, pp. 187-188 (Styria) and pp. 305-309 (Sidirokastro).
- [24] A description of these two castles, with several photographs on pp. 188-190 (Styria) and 309-310 (Sidirokastro) can be found in the author's book *Els Catalans a Grècia*.
- [25] Regarding the dicey fate of this relic, see the interesting article by Kenneth SETTON "Saint George's head". In: *Speculum*, XLVIII, January 1973, pp. 1-12, which can also be read in a Catalan version published in Barcelona by Impremta Juvenil in 1973 and reissued by Proa publishing house one year later. With regard to this relic, and to Livadeia castle in general, see AYENSA, *Els Catalans a Grècia*, pp. 145-176.
- [26] Jean Alexandre BUCHON. *La Grèce continentale et la Morée. Voyage, séjour et études historiques en 1840 et 1841*. Librairie de Charles Gosselin, Paris 1843, p. 330.
- [27] Regarding these scant remains, see AYENSA, *Els Catalans a Grècia*, pp. 264-273, as well as the publication on the results of the restoration of this castle recently issued by the Greek Ministry of Culture and Sports entitled *Ypati Castle. The Restoration and Museumisation* [in Greek]. Ephorate of Antiquities of Phthiotida and Evrytania, of

- the Ministry of Culture and Sports of the Greek Republic. Lamia 2015.
- [28] The Greek architect Tassos TANULAS, the head of restoration of the Propylaea for many years, has devoted a large number of articles to studying Athens' Acropolis in the Frankish-Catalan era, among them: "The richest gem in the world in the Crown of Aragon: The Athens Acropolis under Catalan domination [1311-1388]" [in Greek], published in the volume *The Catalan-Aragonese Domination in Greek Territory*, pp. 23-65. The author of this article also presented it, albeit more succinctly, in the book *Els Catalans a Grècia*, pp. 64-84.
- [29] This is the opinion of several authors, including the archaeologist and mediaevalist Peter LOCK (cf. "The Frankish Towers of central Greece". In: *The Annual of the British School at Athens*, 81, 1986, pp. 101-123). See too, AYENSA, *Els Catalans a Grècia*, pp. 29-35.
- [30] S. E. J. GERSTEL; M. MUNN; H. E. GROSSMAN; E. BARNES; A. H. ROHN & M. KIEL. "A late medieval settlement at Panakton". In: *Hesperia. The Journal of the American School of Classical Studies at Athens*, 72 (facsimile 2 [April-June]), 2003, pp. 147-234.
- [31] The first to report on the unpleasant memory left by the Catalans in Greek folklore was Antoni RUBIÓ I LLUCH in his speech *La expedición y dominación de los catalanes en Oriente juzgadas por los griegos*. Impr. de J. Jepús, Barcelona, 1883, pp. 11-18. Reissued in 1887 in Barcelona in *Memorias de la Real Academia de Buenas Letras de Barcelona*, pp. 11-18, and more recently in a Catalan version entitled *L'expedició catalana a l'Orient vista pels grecs*, in Barcelona, Llibres de l'Índex, 2004. Henceforth: RUBIÓ, *Expedición y dominación*. And the author of this article added new information, primarily on the cities of Amphysa and Ypati, in the book *El record dels catalans en la tradició popular, històrica i literària de Grècia*. Edited by Eusebi Ayensa. Publicacions de l'Abadia de Montserrat. Textos i Estudis de Cultura Catalana, 83, Barcelona, 2001 (written in 1926). Henceforth: RUBIÓ, *El record dels catalans*. The author of this article has expanded upon the information provided by Rubió in the publications "Nous testimoniatges folklòrics sobre la presència catalana a Grècia", which was published as an annexe to his monograph *El record dels catalans* (pp. 111-129), and especially in the article "Que et vegi sota espases turques i en mans de catalans. El (mal) record de la presència catalana a Grècia". *Anuari Verdager*, 22, 2014, pp. 161-212. All the testimonies referred to in this article come from this last article cited.
- [32] In relation to the clash between Orthodox inhabitants and Catholic occupiers in Ypati and its memory in the folklore of the region, readers are referred to the author's article "Ayuna como el catalán: Algunos aspectos de la controversia entre ortodoxos y latinos en la Neopatria catalana (1319-1390)". *Medievalia*, 19/2, 2016, pp. 49-57.
- [33] On the presence of Catalan merchants (and pirates) in the eastern Mediterranean, the following works are very useful: Stephen P. BENSCH. "El comerç català a la Romània en el segle XIV". *L'Avenç*, 213 (1997), pp. 26-29;
- Mario DEL TREPPO. *I mercanti catalani e l'espansione della Corona d'Aragone nel secolo XV*. Università di Napoli [Seminario di Storia Medioevale e Moderna, IV], Naples, 1972; Maria DURU-ILIOPULU. "The Catalans in the Cyclades in the 14th century" [in Greek]. *Yearbook of the Association of Cycladic Studies*, 14, 1993, pp. 227-232; "The Catalan presence on Crete during the 14th century" [in Greek]. In: *Proceedings of the 7th International Congress of Cretan Studies*. Rethymno: History and Folklore Association of Rethymno, 1995, vol. II, 2, pp. 587-592; and Chryssa MALTEZOU. "The Archive of Venice as a source of knowledge on the Catalan presence in Greece" [in Greek]. *The Catalan-Aragonese Domination in Greek Territory*, pp. 111-131. On the Catalans' lucrative slave trade before they settled in Athens, see Daniel DURAN. "La Companyia Catalana i el comerç d'esclaus abans de l'assentament a Atenes i Neopàtria". *De l'esclavitud a la llibertat: esclaus i lliberts a l'edat mitjana. Actes del col·loqui internacional celebrat a Barcelona, del 27 al 29 de maig de 1999*. Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas, Barcelona 2000, pp. 557-573.
- [34] Spiridon P. LAMBROS. *The Last Count of Salona* [in Greek]. Ilissós, Athens 1870. Antoni Rubió devoted one of his first articles to reviewing this book, cf. *La expedición y dominación*, pp. 24-29, and he revisited it in the monograph *El record dels catalans*, pp. 102-107. The following examination of this work is extremely useful and exhaustive: Kiriakí PETRAKU. "The Catalan presence in Neo-Greek Theatre" [in Greek]. *The Catalan-Aragonese Domination in Greek Territory*, pp. 134-139. It was recently adapted to modern Greek, with an extensive epilogue on its content and author, by professors Iannis KOLIÁVÀS and Dimitris PALUKIS. Friends of the People's Library of Amphysa, Amphysa 2013.
- [35] Marinos KUTUVALIS. *The Lord of Olympus or John the Catalan* [in Greek]. Perrís Brothers, Athens, 1873. Regarding this work, see too, RUBIÓ, *La expedición y dominación*, pp. 29-32, *El record dels catalans*, pp. 64-66, and PETRAKU, *The Catalan Presence in Neo-Greek Theatre*, pp. 139-142.
- [36] Kléon RANGAVÍS. *The Duchess of Athens* [in Greek]. Hestia, Athens, 1905. More information of interest on this book is available in RUBIÓ, *El record dels catalans*, pp. 89-91, and in PETRAKU, "The Catalan Presence in Neo-Greek Theatre", pp. 142-148.
- [37] PETRAKU, "The Catalan Presence in Neo-Greek Theatre", pp. 148-150.
- [38] LAMBROS, *The Last Count of Salona*, p. 111.
- [39] *Ibid.*, p. 189.
- [40] *Ibid.*, p. 194.
- [41] KUTUVALIS, *The Lord of Olympus or John the Catalan*, p. 194.
- [42] On this topic, see Josep Maria BERNAL. "Els catalans a Orient: la configuració d'un mite nacional". *L'Avenç*, 221, 1998, pp. 9-10.
- [43] Víctor BALAGUER. *Jornadas de gloria ó los españoles en África*. Librería Española, Madrid 1860, vol. I, p. 345.

- [44] Damas CALVET. “*¡Són ells...! Desembarch dels almogàvers en Orient*”. In: *Jochs Florals de Barcelona en 1859*, Llibreria d’A. Verdaguier, Barcelona 1859, pp. 97-100.
- [45] Ramon PICÓ I CAMPANAR. “La mort d’en Roger de Flor”. In: *Jochs Florals de Barcelona en 1867*. Llibreria d’A. Verdaguier, Barcelona 1867, pp. 167-181; and Eduard GIBBAL I JAUME. “La fi dels almogàvers”, In: *Jochs Florals de Barcelona, any LI de llur restauració*. Estampa La Renaixença, Barcelona 1909, pp. 61-63.
- [46] Jaume COLLELL. “Los almogàvers al Parthenon”. In: *Jochs Florals de Barcelona, any XXXIX de llur restauració*. La Renaixença, Barcelona 1897, pp. 89-91.
- [47] Francesch Pelay BRIZ. *La Orientada*. Barcelona, Impr. Joan Roca i Bros, Barcelona 1865.
- [48] Antoni RUBIÓ I LLUCH. *Muntaner excursionista*. Associació Catalanista d’Excursions Científiques, Barcelona 1891, p. 16.

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

Eusebi Ayensa i Prat holds a Bachelor’s in classical philology and a doctorate in Romance philology from the Universitat de Barcelona. He is a corresponding member of the Reial Acadèmia de Bones Lletres de Barcelona, the Academy of Athens and the Association of Greek Writers. He has published numerous studies on the Almogavar presence in Greece in the 14th century and its survival in Greek literature and folklore, and he has particularly focused on the figure of the Catalan historian Antoni Rubió i Lluch, whose Greek correspondence he edited in four volumes on assignment from the Institut d’Estudis Catalans. From 2007 to 2012, he was the head of the Instituto Cervantes in Athens, and he is currently the president of the Spanish-Hellenic Cultural Association.