

Foreword

Catalan Historical Review remains dedicated to publishing overviews of the historiography on the main topics in the Catalan lands' distant and recent past in different facets and periods. In the first article in this issue, readers will find a summary of the latest knowledge on megaliths in Catalonia, a topic which has undergone major transformations in the last four centuries thanks to numerous excavations which have shifted the dates of the phenomenon of megaliths in Catalonia. This new timeline ranges from the early middle Neolithic (4500 BC) to the early Bronze Age in around 1800 BC, a period two millennia and a half long. The discovery of new stone burials and new menhirs and cromlechs is now joined by the remains of settlements and statuary that resemble those found in southeast France.

Catalunya carolíngia is an exhaustive repertoire of documents from Catalonia prior to the year AD 1000, a monumental undertaking which was recently completed. The article in this issue discusses the conflicts in that remote society through legal documents, and it examines the way public assets were administered north of the Llobregat River in the days of the first counts, whose titles would become hereditary after the late 9th century, and who would become virtually independent of the kings of France after the last third of the 10th century.

The third article examines a historical source which is being used increasingly by researchers in studies from the 16th to 19th centuries: personal memoirs, both urban and rural. They are essential not only to understand everyday life but also to grasp the impact of epidemics, plagues in the countryside and wars. Collective mindsets are reflected in these personal memoirs, which were often written for a small group of readers. The efforts to develop a repertoire of available documents of this kind have revealed their extraordinary abundance in Catalonia compared to other European countries.

Another article in this issue discusses a cultural topic of keen interest: everything related to a musical instrument, the piano. In the 19th century, music could only be enjoyed if one played an instrument, and the most complete instrument for an individual performer was the piano. The piano industry employed an increasing number of sellers and builders in Catalonia, as well as printers of scores and teachers, while also promoting the appearance of internationally renowned composers. The cover illustration is a reproduction of the 1898 oil painting by Ramon Casas, *Young Woman at a Piano*, which takes us back to a late 19th-century bourgeois interior with a pianist whom we can imagine entertaining an audience that could well be a soirée with family or friends or perhaps a larger audience.

The penultimate article in this issue examines the phenomenon of political traditionalism which challenged liberalism and was manifested in both Catalonia and other countries to such an extent that some historians have started to speak about an "international white". The fact that Catalonia was a modern society thanks to industrialisation and the growth of a metropolis like Barcelona have historically been compatible with the persistence of a strong movement clinging to religious integralism, which ran counter to the major changes in the 19th and 20th centuries and came with its own guerrilla tradition. After having sparked three civil wars in Catalonia between 1833 and 1875 against the backdrops of 1822 and 1827, Carlism survived its military defeats and subsisted even beyond the first third of the 20th century. The Catalan Carlism who fled the enemy zone of the Republic in the 1936-1939 Civil War formed a military unit called the *Tercio de Nuestra Señora de Montserrat*, which also welcomed many non-Carlist volunteers. This force suffered many fatalities during the Battle of the Ebro River in 1938. The Carlism were among the victors in 1939, but their political role was severely curtailed under the Franco regime. They ended up suffering from internal divisions and were utterly marginalised after the end of the Franco dictatorship.

The last article summarises state-of-the-art knowledge on the 20th-century Catalan storyteller whose works have been translated into the most languages, Mercè Rodoreda. Her most famous novel, *La Plaça del Diamant*, is a great contemporary classic. Studying the figure and work of this author is tantamount to examining the female condition in Catalonia in the first third of the 20th century and during the 1936-1939 Civil War. Mercè Rodoreda bequeathed her intellectual property to the Institut d'Estudis Catalans, and the institution created a foundation bearing her name which confers awards and scholarships on 20th-century and especially Mercè Rodoreda's storytelling in any language. It also holds activities to commemorate this author at the Institut d'Estudis Catalans headquarters, which has a garden dedicated to her memory with her favourite flowers and plants.

This issue also includes obituaries for Jordi Nadal, member of the Section, and Jocelyn Hillgarth, a corresponding member of our Section, and features biographical sketch of Joan Ramon, new full member of the History and Archaeology Section.

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