

Foreword

When an annual scholarly journal reaches its fifteenth issue, it is time to celebrate the solidity it has gained from its constant perusal by readers, most of whom access it electronically and live outside the Catalan-speaking lands, although the content of our journal is equally useful for scholars from its geographic region. We continue to send the paper edition of the *Catalan Historical Review* to all the universities where Catalan is taught and others where it is not, as well as to the universities located in the Catalan-speaking lands and some in the Spanish state. We are carrying on our mission to offer overviews of the latest breakthroughs on historical topics related to the Catalan-speaking lands. The abundance of the historiography produced fully justifies this type of journal, where the bibliographies cited are as useful as the abstracts personally written by the authors of each article.

This issue begins with a general study of mosaics in our geographic region from the Roman period and demonstrates the wealth and interest of the samples found at both urban and rural sites. They speak about the sensibility, customs and beliefs of an ancient civilisation which nonetheless somehow seems familiar. The image chosen for the cover of issue 15 of the *Catalan Historical Review* is the most famous mosaic found in the rubble in the Roman part of Empúries: the Sacrifice of Iphigenia, which is now housed in the museum at that archaeological site. With a Hellenistic influence, and dated from the late first century AD, it was discovered in 1849. It occupies an almost square space of half a metre on each side and depicts the moment when King Agamemnon is about to sacrifice his daughter Iphigenia in order to placate the goddess Artemisia so the winds would blow again so he could reach Troy with his fleet. In the background is Artemisia with a doe to be sacrificed instead of the king's daughter, who was spared death.

The centennial of the publication of Ferran de Sagarra's volume *Sigil·lografia catalana* is the inspiration behind including an article on mediaeval Catalan seals in this issue in order to provide an initial overview of the latest information on the seals found within the domains of the monarchs of the Catalan-Aragonese Crown since that publication. The interest in the sovereigns' seals extends beyond mere scholarship. This article is a contribution to the conference being planned on this topic, which spans much of the western Mediterranean.

The Catalan peasantry's different forms of association and sociability from the last third of the nineteenth century until the end of the Civil War (1936-1939) is the topic of another article, which reports on the conflicts and

changes experienced in this sphere, as well as the construction of a collective identity as part of the politicisation of peasants. It is a complex theme in social history analysed over a long and clearly important period, which justifies the publication of this article in this issue.

Popular poetry associated with songs has been the subject of research and study since the nineteenth century with the goal of salvaging an endangered form of intangible heritage which is the expression of collective identity. The predominantly literary motivation to recover popular poetry in the nineteenth century was joined by a musical interest in the twentieth century. The *Obra del Cançoner Popular de Catalunya* (Folk Songbook of Catalonia), promoted by the patron Rafael Patxot, is now entrusted to the Monastery of Montserrat, which has published the corresponding volumes. Because of its long and complex history, as well as its folkloric, social and linguistic interest, the topic deserves to be examined in an article in the *Catalan Historical Review*.

Two archives which are constantly consulted by researchers are the focal point of this issue, taking advantage of the commemoration of their creation seven centuries ago in one case and six centuries ago in the other. Both are still inexhaustible sources for researchers: the Royal Archive of Barcelona, currently the Archive of the Crown of Aragon, founded in 1318, and the Archive of the Kingdom of Valencia, created in 1419. Analysing their evolution and the logic behind the organisation of their catalogues is clearly of interest both to domestic and international historians working in them and to the public at large who are seeking to learn about the evolution of the document repositories on which scholars' studies are based.

As always, the *Catalan Historical Review* reports on the historical publications issued the previous year by all the different sections and societies of the Institut d'Estudis Catalans, not only by the History-Archaeology Section, which sponsors this journal. Finally, I would like to call to mind the figure and work of our recently deceased friend Santiago Riera Tuèbols and welcome our new member, Meritxell Simó Torres, an expert in mediaeval literature, with a brief biographical sketch.

Just as the editing of this issue of *Catalan Historical Review* was closing, we learned of the passing of our colleague Josep Massot i Muntaner, the associate editor of the journal since its inception. Rest in peace.

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Editor