



# Catalan currency as an opportunity and symbol of self-governance: From the War of the Reapers to the Civil War

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## ABSTRACT

This article provides a brief overview of the role of Catalonia's own currency from the War of the Reapers to the Spanish Civil War in an effort to point out how the exceptionalism of the conflicts spurred the development of Catalonia's own currency, with the need for such currency coupled with the opportunity of symbolic vindication offered by currencies, one of the most prized symbols of identity and self-governance.

**KEYWORDS:** Currency, Paper money, Obsidional coin, Identity, Self-governance

## INTRODUCTION

A survey of the monetary history of Catalonia in the 300-year period spanning from the Reapers' War to the Spanish Civil War sheds light on the development of Catalan currency issued in a variety of political situations. In this overview, we shall draw from the historiography<sup>1</sup> on the topic to trace the transition from Catalonia having its own currency to the imposition of an outside currency after the Nueva Planta decrees (1716), highlighting the brief windows in which more or less fragmentary Catalan currencies appeared and testimonies of the claims for and resilience of this prerogative, with differing intensities in different periods.

On this point, we must first distinguish the currency in circulation in Catalonia from the currency issued by the local authorities in its territory. The complex economic and political situation at every juncture meant that these two do not fully coincide because of both the cessation of privately issued currencies and private speculations and the complementarities that emerged in the currency market, which are not always under the public authorities' control.

In this article, we shall focus on the currency issued by the Principality of Catalonia to see how a community which has been deprived of the right to strike its own currency veers between the need and the desire to introduce

its own currency, no matter how modest it may be. In this sense, periods of war repeatedly offer the possibility and opportunity to issue currency, justified by need. This is neither an immediate nor an automatic cause-effect relationship, and in the nuances lie a variety of political positions. Therefore, the emphasis shall be on the nature of currency as an identity marker and its perception as a manifestation of political autonomy and a vehicle of political aspirations.

We start with the fact that issuing currency is one of the clearest political rights of self-governance of a people who comprise a political community and the symbolic role played by currency in identity, which has been the root of the claims for the right to issue it in varying ways over the course of several centuries.

## A POINT OF DEPARTURE: CATALAN CURRENCY UNDER THE LAST HABSBURGS

In the Modern Age, Catalonia was a political community that had successively been part of the community of kingdoms and lands of what was called the Crown of Aragon and a diverse range of peninsular and extra-peninsular political communities which shared the same sovereign, precisely called the King of the Spains and the Indies on Castilian coins and the Catholic King or the King of Spain in the simplified diplomatic jargon of the European courts, ignoring the real political and legal reality.

The monarchy was represented in the Principality by a king's lieutenant, the captain-general of Barcelona—pop-

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ularly known as the viceroy—and a Supreme Council of Aragon established in Madrid within the firmly entrenched Polysynodial Regime. Around these political institutions were others related to heritage matters, such as the Batllia General de Catalunya, and judicial matters, such as the Reial Audiència and the Tribunal of the Inquisition. Along with all of these central institutions or bodies, which represented the peak of the political community, there was a political body called the General de Catalunya, represented by its Diputació which, along with other holders of seigneurial jurisdictions and royal municipalities, with Barcelona at the head, were the leading political actors whose utmost arena of dialogue for the entire Principality was the Corts.<sup>2</sup>

Within this context, currency was a prerogative of the king, and as a sign of his ownership, its surface bore his name and often his bust. In practice, however, the monetary prerogative was one of a series of rights subjected to pacts that immobilised it in order to remove it from royal policy. The city of Barcelona controlled the royal mint and exercised broad stewardship that bucked change and guaranteed the general currency of legal tender. Within this legal framework, silver and billon coins were matters agreed upon by the Consell de Cent, and only rare gold coins somehow escaped its strict control and therefore bore new numismatic features.

The seventeenth century began with the reign of Philip II of Aragon and III of Castile (1598-1621) and dovetailed with a period of enormous economic and monetary turbulence throughout the entire Spanish monarchy, which was particularly virulent in Catalonia.<sup>3</sup> The royal mint remained in Barcelona and was charged with furnishing the entire Principality with the royal currency, striking gold, silver and billon (a copper alloy) coins. The Barcelona mint was one of the first to show a clear dependence on Castilian models, which had been striking gold pieces since the waning days of the Catholic Kings, such as the ones known as *excelentes*, which were used internationally. The gold coins issued demonstrated the dependence on and prestige of the Castilian Catholic Kings' *excelentes* in the form of *trentins*, half-*trentins* and *onzens*, and *escudos* when they were struck following Castilian patterns. It should be borne in mind that *excelentes* and *escudos* not only circulated around Europe but were also imitated, following an old pattern of copying international currencies.

Meantime, silver and billon coins continued the earlier series of *rals* and *diners*, a consensual matter that was difficult to change. The massive export of silver to France for speculative purposes had to be grappled with, while there was an onslaught of counterfeit coins at home. The modernisation of the coin manufacturing system in the Barcelona mint with the pioneering addition of livestock-drawn mills—after the *Real Ingenio de Segovia*—was positive for billon but not for gold and silver coins, given that it was impossible to adjust their weight, and the overweight pieces were quickly taken out of circulation and

melted down. Therefore, striking coins with a hammer coexisted with producing them in mills.

Finally, local coins—most of them municipal—were also widespread, with the extension or renewal of the old and new privileges. Crusafont<sup>4</sup> has inventoried them, and specific series have also been studied in relation to the documentation in Vic<sup>5</sup> and Reus.<sup>6</sup> These coins from the mediaeval tradition were always shouldered by the respective municipality, in theory with a royal concession or an ancient privilege, as in Lleida. The profits from minting coins were a source of taxes, their circulation alleviated the traditional lack of small royal coins from Barcelona—at least until the widespread issuances of *ardits*—and they were a source of pride and local autonomy. These pieces tended to bear the name or heraldry of the town, or both at the same time.

## THE WAR OF THE REAPERS

The reign of Philip III of Aragon and IV of Castile (1721-1665), under the protection of the Count-Duke of Olivares and his standardising policy, collided with Catalans' particular interests and dovetailed with a revolutionary context around Europe involving a head-on dispute with the authoritarian pretensions of the English, French and Spanish monarchies. The secret report in which Count-Duke of Olivares, the *valido*, presented the monarch with the general line of governance mentioned the goal of reducing the plurality of kingdoms on the Iberian Peninsula to the Castilian regime. That project failed during his reign, but it did reveal the overarching aims of absolutist policy.

The War of the Reapers (1640-1652), which dovetailed with the independence of Portugal, halted the arrival of Castilian silver circulating in the Principality of Catalonia and created the need to replace it with a locally struck equivalent in order to defray the costs of war. One possible example of these sets of Castilian silver going through the Principality on their way to Genoa or Naples is the discovery of the Castilian silver coins known as the treasure of Platja de l'Estanyol in Sitges, today in the Museu d'Arqueologia de Catalunya. Seen from this perspective, the need for larger coins was met with the production of silver coins with a higher value than the Catalan *rals*, which had never before been struck in the Principality.

The Barcelona mint, and many other local mints as well, issued these large pieces valued at 5 *rals* or 5 *sous*, in addition to pieces with a lower value, such as *sisens*, *ardits* and *diners*.<sup>7</sup> Coins were struck in many places, one example being Vic (Fig. 1), where a rare manufacturing die has been conserved.<sup>8</sup> This was also a stage when the manufacturing system of small coins by milling, which was useful in striking small coins, began to spread. The large silver and gold coins were still struck with a hammer due to the aforementioned difficulties in adjusting the weights with mill technology, despite the fact that it was so useful in other ways. However, the first ones must have been so distorted



FIGURE 1  
Principality of Catalonia. 5 rals from Vic, 1641  
Stamped silver, Ø 36 mm, 11.8 g  
MNAC/GNC 003767-N

that, for example, not a single example remains of the coins called *lluïses d'or*, which, according to written documents, were issued in Barcelona.

Symbolically, we can trace the evolution from the coins in which the name of the king was replaced by the Principality of Catalonia to the coins in the name of Louis XIII and later Louis XIV of France as the counts of Barcelona, Roussillon and the Cerdagne. In this period, we should note the 1646 request for protection and the renewal of the privileges from the college of labourers and coin-makers, which was headed by an allegorical engraving in which the labourers and coin-makers—symbolically represented by their working tools and coins—surround the royal coat-of-arms without concessions to other possible arms which represent the monarch, while scales and weights are balanced in symbolic correlation to express the justice they expected (Fig. 2).<sup>9</sup>

The end of the war restored monetary normality with the cessation of emergency coin issuances and the centralisation of the royal coins in the Barcelona mint, with dif-

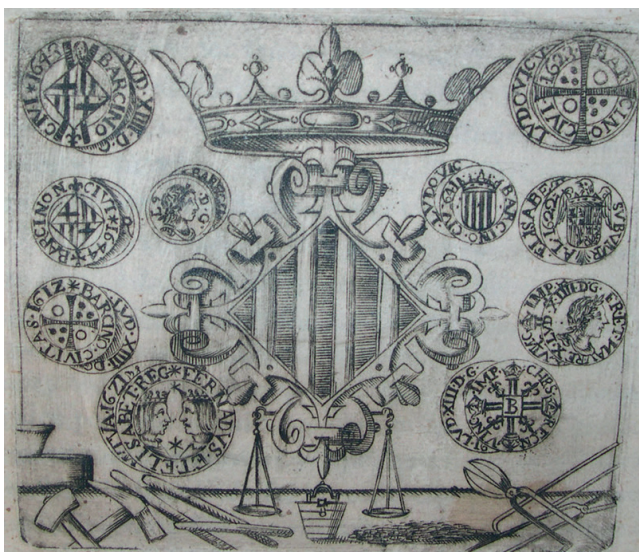


FIGURE 2  
Ramon Olivet. Allegory of the Royal Mint of Barcelona, Barcelona, 1646.  
Chalcographic print on paper  
Library of the Centre Excursionista de Catalunya.

ferent issuances of *croats* or *rals* during the reign of Charles II (1665-1700). The arrival of silver from the Americas, which was accumulating in the boxes in the Barcelona Board of Exchange, halted the striking of large pieces, and *rals* were once again manufactured in Barcelona with all the traditional features from prior to the war. The Treaty of the Pyrenees (1659), however, led to the permanent loss of the Countship of Roussillon and much of the Cerdagne, as these territories were integrated into France.

The occupation of Barcelona for a brief period during the Nine Years' War led the French authorities to issue an edict on the currency in circulation (1698). Barcelona was a maritime marketplace and as such was exposed to attacks and naval blockages, especially by the French, within the context of pressures on a monarch whose succession was compromised, namely Charles II of Spain, the last king in the Habsburg dynasty.

### THE WAR OF THE SPANISH SUCCESSION AND ITS CONSEQUENCES

Charles II's last wishes regarding his succession (1700) broke the existing peace, given that his choice of the Duke of Anjou, the grandson of Louis XIV, as the new monarch was not accepted by the Viennese branch of the family. This international conflict led the Barcelona mint to issue coins in the name of Philip V (Fig. 3) after his initial proclamation in that city, and then in the name of the Archduke Charles—proclaimed king as Charles III (Fig. 4)—



FIGURE 3  
Philip V. Ral from Barcelona, 1705  
Stamped silver, Ø 21 mm, 2.14 g  
MNAC/GNC 016191-N



FIGURE 4  
Charles III. Ral from Barcelona, 1706  
Stamped silver, Ø 21 mm, 2.14 g  
MNAC/GNC 015819-N

after he forcibly entered the city. The pretender also struck general coins—*pessetes* or *rals de dos*—which were not part of the Catalan monetary system and steadfastly promoted the material renovation of the mint by ordering the construction of a coining press and a milling machine, although they did not replace the livestock-drawn mills or the striking of gold coins with a hammer.

It is common knowledge that the end of the war (1705-1714) and the Nueva Planta Decree (1716) meant that the prerogative of currency was the king's and that much of the legal and political order that had existed until then was repealed. Catalonia became yet another province of Castile under the governance of the Captain General. While the king initially kept the mint to strike Castilian coins adapted to Catalonia, he ended up closing it that same year.

The next coins issued for Catalonia as a Spanish province came during the reign of Ferdinand VI (1746-1759) in the mint of Segovia in 1754-1755 (Fig. 5), namely *ardits*. This small coin was essential for everyday payments of everything from daily goods to alms to the poor and Church collections. The strange design of the coat-of-arms, with crosses which were neither correct nor traditional in the arms of Barcelona, reveals a lack of knowledge resulting from political distance. In the next coins, also from Segovia, issued shortly after that in 1756 Barcelona's criticised, maladroit heraldic coat-of-arms was replaced with the Catalan stripes and the legend 'Ferran VI, per la gràcia de Déu, príncep de Catalunya' (Ferdinand VI, by the grace of God, prince of Catalonia). This time, the monarchy itself was giving Catalonia peculiar recognition as a principality with the ancient arms of the monarchs of Aragon as its symbol.



FIGURE 5  
Ferdinand VI. *Ardit* from Segovia, 1755  
Stamped copper, Ø 20 mm, 2.95 g  
MNAC/GNC 016432-N

## THE PENINSULAR WAR

The monetary system in Spain was fully consolidated by the late eighteenth century, especially after the enlightened reforms of Charles III in the second half of the century. There were different gold, silver and copper coins on the Peninsula and gold and silver coins from the Indies. *Rals de vuit* were the prime coins in the system, and their circulation as a globally prestigious currency was recognised far and wide. The Principality of Catalonia

was part of this system as yet another province from the earlier kingdoms, although it did not have its own currency or mint. In any event, leftover small coinage from the past century must have continued to survive, in addition to the continuity of the imaginary or account currency system, expressed in pounds, *sous* and *diners*, which dated back centuries from the arrival of the Franks and continued in the notary documentation until the mid-nineteenth century.

The long Peninsular War (1808-1814) was a turbulent period which signalled the end of the Old Regime and laid the foundations of the liberal nation-state, albeit not without many difficulties after the enactment of the 1812 Constitution. Due to its proximity to France, Catalonia was annexed to the French empire and its territory was divided into departments until they were permanently returned to the Spanish Crown.

However, it is interesting to note the memory of the local coins issued and the Barcelona mint, a memory that was still burning like the embers of a fire that was only apparently extinguished. Three testimonies support this claim. In his apprenticeship as a master silversmith in 1761, Francesc Paradaltas recast the images from two earlier engravings that illustrated a work by the silversmiths of Josep Tramulles<sup>10</sup> depicting the inside of a mint.<sup>11</sup> In the centre occupied by a coining press, he replaced the monarchy's coat-of-arms that appeared in the model he copied with the Barcelona coat-of-arms, thus depicting the inside of an imaginary local mint. When local emergency coins started to be struck in Barcelona in 1808, the former site called *La Seca*, where coins had been minted for centuries, was chosen as the new site. The famous Baron of Maldà stated this fact in his ledger, attesting to the fresh memory of the site's former activity. Almost one century after the mint had been closed, its location and purpose was still recalled.

The onset of the Peninsular War and Barcelona's isolation from the rest of the territory were its excuse to begin issuing emergency currency in its own restored mint from scratch. The same thing happened in Girona and Lleida, albeit on a smaller scale. That memory of the past coupled with the present need were seen as an opportunity to be seized. Barcelona's mint operated between 1808 and 1814. It was given operating regulations and a site, and a locally-circulating monetary system in gold, silver and copper was approved. There are two factors that reveal its local nature, which can particularly be seen in two of the essential features. First, the denominations made popular names like the *pesseta* official. This name was used for the pieces that were officially called *rals de dos*. The copper coins were not called *maravedís* but *quartos*. Secondly, the type of coins repeatedly showed the coat-of-arms of Barcelona in the form of a tile amidst laurel branches and the inscription *En Barcelona* alongside the year the coin was issued (Fig. 6). The confluence of these three factors sheds light on the calculated prudence of a coin issued forcibly because of a purely local need. The



FIGURE 6  
Napoleonic occupation. *Pesseta* from Barcelona, 1808  
Stamped silver, Ø 27 mm, 5.75 g  
MNAC/GNC 034716-N

people living then justified the mint as a way of draining the silver and gold from private owners, who could liquidate them at a legal price in order to survive. However, the opportunity for the French was to convert the silver from the churches into coins.

This was obsidional or emergency currency that was not trying to replace the currency of the monarchy, at least formally. The same commentators living at the time highlighted this fact by writing that if a century later someone found those coins, they would be unable to explain under what pitiful circumstances they had been struck. Indeed, they were bereft of any element that would refer to Spanish legal tender, just as marking them with any other element that could associate them with the Napoleonic occupation had been avoided. They were an artifact of equidistance, neutrality and political prudence that drew from the local heraldry and popular names. However, their importance extended through much of the nineteenth century.

Before resuming the history of the Barcelona mint that was open from 1808 to 1814, we should note that in 1809 a new mint was established in the city of Reus under the legal aegis of the Junta Superior del Principat de Catalunya, which was the authority resisting the French occupiers.<sup>12</sup> This mint adopted the brand *C* for Catalonia, even though it was often called the '*seca volant*' (flying mint) because it moved to Tarragona and ultimately to Mallorca, fleeing the French army. Only when the war ended did it return to Barcelona. The Barcelona native Joan d'Amat was an executive at this mint; associated with the town of Barcelona, he fled the city with the organisational regulations of the local mint, which he adapted to the new flying version. The coins issued from this mint can be associated with the traditional Spanish coins which he sought to carry on in his loyalty to Ferdinand VII as the king kidnapped in France. The metals, amounts, types and inscriptions proclaimed this. After publishing two account balances showing the profitability of his mint, which he cannily distributed far and wide, a triumphant Joan d'Amat took possession of the Barcelona mint zealous to resume issuing coins and restoring both establishments which until then had been parallel and antagonistic. This project, however, was thwarted. The coins issued by the

coin press maintained the balance from the old *ardits* of Ferdinand VI. That is, on the front was the coat-of-arms of Catalonia and on the back the arms of the monarchy inscribed with the name of the monarch as the king of Spain and prince of Catalonia in the different copper denominations.

The period has been studied by the now-classic work by Goig,<sup>13</sup> while the flying mint was the subject of a study by Sanahuja, and the Gabinet Numismàtic de Catalunya devoted an exhibition to them in 2008.

### THE LIBERAL TRIENNIUM AND THE FIRST CARLIST WAR, THE COINS ISSUED BY THE BARCELONA PROVINCIAL COUNCIL AND THE PROBLEM OF CATALAN COINAGE

It was not until the Liberal Triennium (1821-1823) that the same mint was reopened and coin issuances resumed under Amat's direction, with the participation of the staff that worked in it during the Napoleonic domination. They included the assayer Salvador Paradaltas, the son of an idealistic silversmith, Francesc Paradaltas, from a mint in Barcelona described above. The main new features of the coins issued was the addition of the constitutional king and the replacement of Catalonia's coat-of-arms with Barcelona's.

The aforementioned entry of French currency in the period when the Principality was occupied and annexed was aggravated after the arrival of the army of One Hundred Thousand Sons of Saint Louis to put an end to the Liberal Triennium and restore Ferdinand VII to absolute power on behalf of the Holy Alliance. In Spain, the immediate signing of pacts in Oartzun entailed recognition of exchange values that were favourable to the French currency, which led to a widespread exchange of coins and the invasion of French currency, especially in Catalonia, as shown by the treasuries from the mid-nineteenth century, such as the ones in Alcoletge<sup>14</sup> and Puig-Reig.<sup>15</sup>

With the restoration of absolutism, the Barcelona mint closed and did not reopen again until it was needed to meet military needs in the middle of the First Carlist War, upon the request of the Junta de Defensa with the support of the Diputació de Barcelona. The mint reopened, taking advantage of the muddled situation and the fact that it already had experience and capital, coupled with the desire for it to continue. The mint start issuing provincial coins with denominations and types that maintained the *pessetes*, and the heraldic coats-of-arms of Catalonia were engraved on their surface. Once again, need and caution conspired to allow Catalonia to have its own coins unlike those in the rest of the monarchy. Even though they were struck under the aegis of the Diputació Provincial de Barcelona, they bore the coat-of-arms not of Barcelona but of Catalonia (Fig. 7).

The Diputació Provincial de Barcelona used the minting of coins, especially different denominations of the



FIGURE 7  
Isabel II. *Peseta* from Barcelona, 1836  
Stamped silver, Ø 25 mm, 5.75 g  
MNAC/GNC 016504-N

copper *xavalla* (Fig. 8), to finance the expenses of war and the other activities it oversaw. This abuse had negative effects on the local economy, to such an extent that it was defined by the economist Laureà Figuerola as an economic cancer. Just as in other times in history, the difference between the face value and the material or intrinsic value of the pieces proved to be a major stimulus for counterfeits, which became a major industry in itself. The scope of the problem led the government to intervene by first stripping the *Diputació* of the mint and later removing and reminting the *xavalla*. In order to carry out this costly process, bills equivalent to the replaced copper coins were created, which was supposed to facilitate exchanges initially while waiting for their amortisation in Spanish copper coins (Fig. 9). These notes circulating in Catalonia were engraved with the coats-of-arms of the four provinces of Catalonia.

The centralist policy began to work against Barcelona-issued coins. First, the government took over management of the mint and struck general coins there, no longer particular ones. For much of the reign of Isabel II, there was a debate between the functioning of the mint, which was profitable, a technical pioneer and supported by the local oligarchies, and its periodic closure by government order. Ultimately, after restricting the mint to only striking copper coins, it was permanently shuttered in 1881.

This centralising process could also be seen in the bank notes issued by the different financial institutions not only



FIGURE 8  
Isabel II. 3 *quartos* from Barcelona, 1837  
Stamped copper, Ø 26 mm, 7.52 g  
MNAC/GNC 032319-N



FIGURE 9  
Junta de Moneda. 500 *rals de billó*. Banknote equivalent to Catalan copper coin, 1853  
Paper with printed watermark, 172 x 127 mm  
Subhastes Àureo & Calicó

in Catalonia but also in the rest of Spain. Indeed, the Bank of Spain, the successor to the bank of San Fernando and the Bank of Isabel II, was given the government monopoly on issuing bank notes via a decree issued on 19 March 1874. Beyond appearances and privileges, it should be borne in mind that the Bank of Spain was a private company governed by a Shareholders' Board, not a state-owned institution. Furthermore, throughout this period, the convertibility between coins and bank notes was not automatic, so what was circulating was not paper money *per se* and was therefore sometimes penalised in transactions with discounted values. The centralist position became clear with the aforementioned monopoly or privilege to issue coins, which spelled doom for the other paper notes issued by a range of regional or local banks, including most notably in Catalonia the Bank of Barcelona.

The Bank of Barcelona had been founded by a decree dated 1 May 1844, and therefore it was the oldest bank in the state after the Bank of Isabel II.<sup>16</sup> It issued bank notes cut from matrixes in 1845, 1855, 1859 and 1868, although the institution continued operating until its famous suspension of payments in 1920. In all the coins issued on behalf of the institution, Barcelona's coat-of-arms was a clear sign of its local ties, although the backs depict the female allegory of Barcelona and the allegory of the monarchy equally for the first time, a somewhat futile gesture given subsequent political decisions (Fig. 10).

On a more local and less symbolically ambitious level, we should also mention issuances from the banks of Reus and Tarragona and consider the bonds issued by the *Sociedad Catalana General de Crédito* founded by the Royal Order dated 14 May 1856, which had a border or garland centred by a crowned coat-of-arms of Catalonia.<sup>17</sup> They could be used as paper money. We should also take into account the Bank of Valls, which issued bonds in 1891, and the *Banco de Reus de Descuentos y Préstamos*, which



FIGURE 10. AHBE, Bank Note Collection, note worth 100 *peses fuertes* from the Bank of Barcelona issued on 9 November 1867, cat. no. 423.

issued them in 1901. In both series, the different paper notes came with galleries of portraits of illustrious citizens, which highlighted their strictly local nature.

#### ASPIRATIONS, CLAIMS AND COUNTERFEIT MONEY DURING THE RESTORATION. FROM THE BASES DE MANRESA TO THE MEDALS OF THE UNIÓ CATALANISTA

The prevailing centralism of the Restoration quashed any local monetary initiative with the closure of the Barcelona mint in 1881. During this period, Catalanism's aspirations laid down in the *Bases per a la constitució regional catalana*, known as the *Bases de Manresa* (1892), also considered the important role of currency, as contained in its articles. For example Base 6 called for the right of the future Catalan regional government to charge taxes and strike currency.<sup>18</sup>

During this period, Barcelona became a major hub of counterfeit French and Spanish currency.<sup>19</sup> In this latter case, it also became a manufacturing hub dispatching machines and tools used for counterfeiting via the railway network. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of France asked the Consulate General of Barcelona to ascertain the magnitude of the problem and the counterfeit hubs, given its suspicion that the Spanish authorities were not paying sufficient attention to the problem.

On another front, we should note the Unió Catalanista's initiative to manufacture patriotic medals in the workshops in Vallmitjana, Barcelona, in 1900, which borrowed the metals, denominations and modules of the Spanish monetary system at the time. By doing so, it sought to give Catalonia a symbolic yet fully real monetary system, mocking the laws that prevented any kind of currency from being issued outside the sole mint in Madrid. It was an imitation of the monetary system in place at the time with a type of variation which all showed Saint George on horseback slaying the dragon on the front and the coat-of-arms of Catalonia with different accompani-

ments on the back (Fig. 11). Thus, the gold pieces were 100 and 20 *pesetes*; the silver ones were 5 and 1 *pesetes*; and the copper ones were 10 and 5 *cèntims*. As Crusafont has noted, more recently a fake piece equivalent to 2 *pesetes* was added to trick collectors.<sup>20</sup> We should note that the emulation is so subtle and discreet that the association with the coin must not have been more than a bourgeois frivolity that was hardly useful on the street.

The Spanish currency circulating, especially the *menu-da*, was sometimes used as a vehicle of protest,<sup>21</sup> such as in the successive campaigns against the president of the government, Antonio Maura, after Tragic Week (1909), against the Alphonine monarchy with slogans of '*mori el rei*' or in others during the Second Republic.

Finally, because of its strictly symbolic meaning, we should note the issuance of *peseta* and franc banknotes with the attempted insurrection led by Francesc Macià at Prats de Molló (Prats-de-Mollo-la-Preste in French) in 1926, which failed due to the intervention of the French police. Crusafont has published a copy of the former and reports on the latter.<sup>22</sup> The image shows a Catalan peasant sowing seeds under a tree. In the background are a coun-



FIGURE 11  
Unió Catalanista, medal struck by the Vallmitjana workshop with a value equivalent to 100 *pesetes*, Barcelona, 1900  
Stamped gold, Ø 33 mm, 32.18 g  
MNAC/GNC 013399-N

try estate and a blazing sun with the Catalan coat-of-arms and the solitary star of the pro-independence flag of Estat Català, the organisation that sought to wage the guerrilla penetration against Spain during the dictatorship of General Primo de Rivera.

### **A DESTINATION: FROM THE SECOND REPUBLIC TO THE CIVIL WAR, AND RESPONSES TO CURRENCY SHORTAGES**

The proclamation of the Second Republic in 1931 did not lead to any special changes in relation to currency and Catalonia. However, we should highlight the slowness in changing the types of coins and banknotes to adapt them to the new reality of the State, beyond printing the image of former king Alphonse XIII with the coat-of-arms of the Republic on the banknotes on which he was depicted. It was not until the outbreak of the Civil War in 1936 that the events overwhelmed the monetary system and a breach opened that allowed for the participation of local individuals and institutions. The Gabinet Numismàtic de Catalunya recently devoted one of its lecture series to currency from this period.<sup>23</sup>

The 1932 Constitution of the Republic reserved the prerogative of issuing currency exclusively for the Spanish central government, and therefore the Statute of Autonomy of Catalonia could not encroach onto this exclusive authority. However, just as it had in the past, the monetary emergency spurred a series of mechanisms to deal with the lack of currency. Worth noting first is the lack of coinage due to the withdrawal and concealment of silver coins first and the insufficient manufacture and distribution of the new coins, which led to a major dearth of small coins, especially the *menut* for small transactions and exchanges. This time, folk ingenuity managed to fill this gap by issuing a myriad of vouchers, bonds, chits and tokens of all kinds. This reaction was a self-serving solution to the problem given that their fiduciary value went no further because they were issued by small, private establishments. This led to situations that were advantageous to the issuer, who earned the loyalty of customers who wanted to spend all their tokens, while guaranteeing the issuer a certain profit because some customers either lost their tokens or never went back to the establishment to spend them on goods. All of this stimulated the roguishness and atmosphere of social protest which we can trace in both opinion columns and comics in the newspapers, an unsurprising reaction in a country where the dissemination of private tokens by retailers, industrial colonies and cooperatives had taken root in the last quarter of the nineteenth century.<sup>24</sup>

Secondly, the municipalities reacted. Somehow the market policy and commercial public order were in competition, and this is why the new municipal law approved by the Parliament of Catalonia supported the autonomy of local finances, which led to an avalanche of locally is-

sued small coins. The phenomenon was quite widespread but not universal and has been quantified by the leading scholar and author of the catalogue of these pieces.<sup>25</sup> Due to their proximity to Barcelona, some municipalities refused to issue their own coins with the express goal of allowing the Barcelona pieces circulate, while other smaller towns also refused as well.

It is interesting to analyse the actions of the Barcelona Town Hall, because it was far and away the leading city in Catalonia and therefore faced the significant challenge of taking over the coin supply, thus informally reviving its historical role as the Principality's currency issuer. In this sense, the largest cities in its conurbation openly hoped for this, while the Barcelona tokens inspired a greater sense of security in small towns than their own did. Regardless, when we analyse the pieces struck and even compare them to many contemporary municipalities, we can only be surprised by the scant presence and elaborateness of the pieces. In many of the municipalities, token manufacturing was a kind of escape valve for the expression of pride, as they sought to make notes that evoked local glories.

However, the notes of Barcelona were extraordinarily modest in appearance, and there were never enough of them. The cause behind this presentation of small coins in an almost philatelic format and with a very discreet appearance was internal political conflicts and political divisions, with factions that were displeased with these coins because they considered them counter to the Republic, which gave the central government the monopoly on issuing currency. Indeed, the government ended up suddenly banning them and ordered them withdrawn. One case is the notes in three denominations that the Les Franqueses del Vallès Town Hall recovered from an old safe and deposited in the National Museum in 2015.<sup>26</sup> Despite this withdrawal of municipal currency, many of the notes remained in private hands as a testimony of an era, or in the hands of early collectors. Indeed, we should bear in mind that during this period notes started to be invented for the collectors' market.

Given the problem of the dearth of currency, the government of the Generalitat intervened in a quite different fashion. Not only did it protect and encourage local currency, but it also got involved in issuing an authentic monetary system on paper notes. The person responsible for this plan was the Regional Minister of Economy and Finances at that time, none other than Josep Tarradellas. The small coins in the system were produced and entered into circulation. However, what is the most interesting is that from the test notes that never entered into circulation, today we know that the goal was to manufacture banknotes with much higher values until a full monetary system was established (Fig. 12). This ambition took shape in high-quality bills issued on paper with a safety watermark manufactured in Gelida by the company Guarro and designed and printed by Josep Obiols at the Oliva printing press in Vilanova i la Geltrú. That is, the





FIGURE 12  
Generalitat de Catalunya, test banknote worth 1,000 *pessetes*, 1936-1937.

Printed paper, 164 x 97 mm  
MNAC/GNC 310007-N

companies with the most experience and highest quality were chosen to manufacture the notes, which even today are an extraordinary testimony if we bear in mind the full range of obstacles at the time. These pieces have drawn the attention of not only historiographic numismatics but also historians of the graphic arts like Santi Barjau<sup>27</sup> and art historians like Pilar Vélez.<sup>28</sup> Symbolically, they are a good example of the graphic arts and the Noucentista movement, with local symbols like labour and industry, the sculpture of the blacksmith by Josep Llimona and an image of Barcelona's shipyards, which are like a catalogue of local symbols quite distinct from the prevailing format and aesthetic found on the notes from the Bank of Spain.

Therefore, the currency circulating in this period was quite varied, as shown, for example, by the content of a lost wallet which was found by the city of Barcelona, in which large banknotes from the Republic coexist alongside local municipal and Generalitat coins. Furthermore, we should not forget that the queen of the black market was the old silver coins that had officially been demonetised and taken out of circulation.

Ultimately, the government of the Republic ended up withdrawing to Valencia and then Barcelona, until the retreat and final defeat, when issuing this currency was banned. One of the measures implemented to restore public monetary order was to strike cardboard disks bearing the coat-of-arms of the Republic, on the back of which a seal of legal tender had to be affixed.

After the Civil War, people had to choose banknotes and coins to see what the new government would accept and what it would reject as seditious, whose value it refused to acknowledge. The key date was the military uprising—18 July 1936—which was designated as the moment when Republican money ceased being considered legitimate. Only the Republican money issued until that date was accepted. The entry of Franco's troops also entailed the onset of the new 'national' currency and the resurgence of underground currency, as well as the destruction or concealment of the demonetised currency, which was stored in many homes as a memento.

## NOTES AND REFERENCES

- [1] See especially SALAT, J. *Tratado de las monedas labradas en el principado de Cataluña*, Barcelona, 1808, Botet, J. *Les monedes catalanes*, 3 vol., Barcelona, 2007-2011 and the extensive publications of CRUSAFONT, M., which we shall cite throughout the article.
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- [15] Pere VEGUÉ (Dir.). *El Tresor de Puig-Reig*, Gabinet Numismàtic de Catalunya. Barcelona, 1982.
- [16] RUIZ, F., ALENTORN, J. *Catálogo del papel moneda español*, 1974, pp. 234-238.
- [17] RUIZ, F., ALENTORN, J. *Catálogo del papel moneda español*, 1974, p. 327.
- [18] *Base sisena. Catalunya serà l'única sobirana del seu govern interior. Per tant, dictarà lliurement les seves lleis orgàniques; tindrà cura de la legislació civil, penal, mercantil, administrativa i processal; de l'establiment i el cobrament d'impostos; de l'encunyació de moneda, i tindrà totes les altres atribucions inherents a la sobirania que no corresponguin al govern central segons la base primera.* (Sixth Base. Catalonia will be the sole sovereign of its internal governance. Therefore, it shall freely enact its own organic laws; it shall oversee civil, criminal, mercantile, administrative and trial laws; it shall establish and collect taxes; it shall strike its own currency; and it shall have all the other attributes inherent to sovereignty that do not correspond to the central government according to the first Base.)
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