

Presentation

In 2007 the Institut d'Estudis Catalans (IEC), the Catalan academy of the sciences and humanities, celebrated the centenary of its foundation. For the first four years of its existence it was a centre for historical studies until enlarged by the addition of a Philology Section and a Science Section. Both commenced operation in 1911, alongside the older History and Archeology Section. Nowadays the IEC has five sections: in 1968 a Philosophy and Social Science Section was set up alongside the Science Section, and in 1989 the Science Section itself was divided into a Section of Biological Sciences and another of Technological Sciences.

The very year of the Institute's foundation, 1907, saw the publication of the first issue of the *Anuari de l'Institut d'Estudis Catalans*, a large-format publication with over six hundred pages per volume. By 1936 eight volumes had appeared. Copies can be found in university and academic libraries all over the world which were in existence prior to 1939. The *Anuari de l'Institut d'Estudis Catalans* assured the dissemination of new advances in historical research about Catalonia, the Valencian Country, the Balearic Islands and other lands which at one period or another had links with them. The *Anuari* brought tangible evidence that Catalan was a scientific language, while illustrating the high standard already attained by historical studies in the Catalan cultural environment.

The repression of the Catalan language and culture by the Franco dictatorship from 1939 onwards caused publication of the *Anuari* to be interrupted. It did not however prevent the IEC from issuing numerous monographs and miscellanea devoted to political, social, literary and legal history, despite the precarious conditions in which it subsisted until it gained official recognition once more in 1977.

Now the IEC's Section of History and Archeology has decided to resume dissemination, beyond its own linguistic and cultural sphere, of the progress accomplished there in the field of historical research. Though English will be its *lingua franca*, it will continue nonetheless to bear witness to the fact that most of its native contributors normally write studies dealing with the history of their homeland in Catalan.

The quantity and quality of present-day historiography in the linguistic and cultural environment proper to the Institut d'Estudis Catalans fully warrants an annual publication such as the one we are launching today. The scale of the research conducted both inside and outside the universities by native and foreign historians alike renders the information offered by the *Catalan Historical Review* necessary.

Catalan is in normal use in the social sciences. Yet undeniably, despite the fact that it is a Romance language, historical studies published in Catalan often have difficulty reaching the attention of those who are interested in the history of the Iberian peninsula. Hence the fact that the *Catalan Historical Review* is being published in English.

This annual journal intends to offer appraisals and syntheses of various aspects of the history of the Catalan-speaking countries – at all periods – and of their relations with the rest of the world. It will be published in both electronic and hard copy format. Scholars in other countries, to whom this publication is primarily addressed, will undoubtedly find the summaries useful, and they will also be of interest to those who live and work in the very lands on which the *Catalan Historical Review* focusses its attention.

The birth of this new journal takes place in the year devoted to the commemoration of the eighth centenary of the birth of King James I (1208-1276). James I belonged to the dynasty of the counts of Barcelona, who were also kings of Aragon from 1137 onwards. By conquering first the kingdom of Majorca and then that of Valencia from the Moors – with help from the Aragonese in the case of Valencia –, he laid the foundations of the linguistic and cultural community that comprises Catalonia – including Rosselló and the territories annexed by France in 1659 –, the Balearic Islands and the Valencian Country.

Since James I represents a key period in Catalan history, a portrait of him, painted by Jaume Mateu and Gonçal Peris in 1427 on the basis of their own imagination, is reproduced on the cover of this issue. This work is currently in the Museu Nacional d'Art de Catalunya.

The IEC is contributing scientific input to the commemoration of James I. It has already published an annotated edition of the famous chronicle of his reign, which was dictated by the king himself. This document is of decisive importance because it was written in the vernacular – Catalan – instead of Latin. By the end of the reign of James I, Ramon Llull was writing his first books in Catalan, and a body of sea law to facilitate trade was beginning to be drawn up, also in Catalan. These laws were to evolve into the *Llibre del Consolat de Mar*, which became an international model of mercantile legislation from the 14th century onwards.

Autonomous municipal institutions such as Barcelona's Consell de Cent took shape and became established at the same period. King James I sought to enlist the support of the bourgeoisie to offset the power of the feudal nobility and this new political equilibrium was reflected

in the Catalan parliament, or Corts, which acquired legislative and tax-raising powers during the following reign. Thus a limited monarchy was born, the fruit of a sort of medieval constitutionalism that was characteristic of the Catalan tendency to favour compromise over conflict.

The international conference organized in Barcelona from 31 March to 4 April 2008 by the president of the IEC's Section of History and Archeology, Maria Teresa Ferrer i Mallol, was another upshot of the Institute's participation in the year devoted to James I. The IEC also took part in the commemorative event organized by the Catalan Generalitat on 30 March 2008. On that occasion the Institute's second vice-president, Antoni Riera i Melis, spoke about the reign of James I and the text of his address opens this issue of our journal.

As President of the Institut d'Estudis Catalans, I am delighted to greet the launching of this new periodical publication, the *Catalan Historical Review*, which will add its efforts to those of other prestigious IEC journals that are already striving to make our culture better known abroad, such as *Estudis Romànics* and *Contributions to Science*. The achievements of Catalan historiography, both past and present, have been attracting attention from the international community of historians for a long time and I am convinced this publication will be of great utility to them.

SALVADOR GINER
President of the Institut d'Estudis Catalans