

Foreword

In the first issue of Catalan Historical Review we set out our intention to offer a stocktaking of the present knowledge of the great historical themes of Catalonia, the Valencian Country and the Balearic Islands, their exterior relations, as well as every aspect of their collective activities.

In this second issue we proceed on the same lines. We begin with an article on the present knowledge on the peoples inhabiting the Eastern part of the Iberian Peninsula prior to the Roman conquest. These peoples, who eventually abandoned their language, laws and religion, were the foundation of the present Catalan Countries.

Our second study focuses on the situation that arose immediately after the 13th century conquests of Majorca and Valencia, when the Catalan Countries settled their present borders. The article analyzes the transformations originated in the wake of those events.

Three and a half centuries later, the defeated Muslims –called Moriscos– still had not been assimilated by the Christians, but kept their own religion and customs. In 1609, the Spanish monarchy of the Habsburgs decreed their expulsion; the effects of this expulsion, that were felt particularly in the kingdom of Valencia, are the theme of another article in this issue.

However the Moriscos were not the first minority to be expelled. Another article tells about the expulsion of Jews in 1492. This urban minority, with many outstanding personalities had, for centuries, been very influential in the Catalan-Aragonese confederation.

The last exodus, this in the 20th century, has lately attracted the attention of our historians, and even of the media. The Republican exile of 1939 was preceded by a much smaller exile of an opposite sign, in 1936, both provoked by the Spanish Civil War. They constitute the theme of another article. Forced exiles are unfortunately one aspect of twentieth century European violence, and those that occurred in the Catalan Countries are particularly remarkable.

So we find in this issue accounts, based on the latest historiography, of huge, and often traumatic, changes and transformations.

Our review is also open to the Arts. Here we take stock of the studies on the poet Jacint Verdaguer, just as the figure of Ramon Llull was dealt with in our first issue. The personality and the work of Verdaguer have given rise to a circle of specialists, so that today it is possible to talk of “Verdaguerism” in the same way as we could previously talk of “Lullism”. Verdaguer has been one of our poets most frequently translated into other languages.

In the 19th century, due to the lack of self-government, choral singing played a significant role in the recovery and development of Catalan identity. A similar association between choral singing, socialising and national identity has also occurred in other European countries, but in our case it deserves special attention, and this is why we offer here a historical account on the subject.

The cover of this issue is from the mosaic by Lluís Bru i Salelles, a jewel of Catalan Modernist style which decorates the pediment on the façade of the Palace of Catalan Music. Completed in 1909, it shows the singers of the *Orfeó Català* (Choral society) flying their banner while they are being presided over by the figure of *La Balanguera*, with the outline of Montserrat as a backdrop. *La Balanguera* was a popular female figure from an old children’s round dance; the poet Joan Alcover transformed her into a kind of Muse who spins the thread of life. Amadeu Vives, one of the founders of the Catalan *Orfeó*, set Alcover’s poem to music, and through its interpretation by the *Orfeó* became a popular song throughout the Catalan Countries. In this mosaic *La Balanguera* is identified with the homeland, and the song is today the anthem of the Autonomous Balearic Islands. The dome over the pediment shows the two Catalan coats of arms: the four-striped one, and the shield of Saint George, patron saint of Catalonia as well as of other European countries.

A new feature in this issue is the reference to the history books published by the *Institut d'Estudis Catalans* in 2008; we also offer the abstracts of the reviews in the field published during the same period.

ALBERT BALCELLS
Editor-in-chief