

Foreword

In this seventh issue of our journal, we are still offering overviews of the overarching themes in the history of the Catalan-speaking lands in all spheres. The influence of the Greek colonies in the ancient world on the evolution of the culture of the local peoples is one of the subjects that has intrigued researchers and the public the most. The ruins of Empúries (Empúries) attract the curiosity of foreign visitors in the beautiful landscape of the Gulf of Roses. It is no coincidence that Empúries was the point where the Roman conquest of Hispania began within the context of the Second Punic War. The first article in this issue of the *Catalan Historical Review* examines this topic. The most important classical Greek statue found in the westernmost part of the Mediterranean portrays Asclepius of Empúries, the god of medicine. It was discovered in the 1909 excavations conducted under the supervision of the Institut d'Estudis Catalans, which had been founded just two years earlier. The statue is over two metres in height. It was probably sculpted in Delphos with marble from Penteliko and the island of Paros in the second half of the 2nd century BC. Today, many researchers believe that the work actually portrays Zeus-Sarapis instead of Asclepius, but it is still called the Asclepius of Empúries. In 2008, the statue was moved to Empúries and an extraordinarily faithful replica was left in the Archaeology Museum of Catalonia in Barcelona. At the same time, its arms have been restored. This is the illustration shown on the cover of this issue.

Philhellenic classicism was one of the popular trends in Europe at the turn of the 19th to 20th centuries, and it was considered a factor in the modernisation of Catalan culture. During that same period, Aristides Maillol, in Catalonia north of the Pyrenees, began his Mediterranean work that is so highly valued in Catalonia south of the Pyrenees. If a Greek expert like Antoni Rubió i Lluch, the first president of the Institut d'Estudis Catalans in 1907, devoted his life to studying Catalonia's presence in 14th century Greece, the excavations in Empúries uncovered the supposed classical underpinnings of Catalonia. The history of Catalan Greece was now joined by the myth of Greek Catalonia.

Another article offers an overview of the knowledge of the fine arts in Catalonia from the 17th to the first half of the 18th centuries, spotlighting the most creative works of the ones found on either side of the Pyrenees both before and after the frontier that divided the Principality was raised back in 1659. In Catalonia, Baroque art had been dismissed due to adverse prejudices that lasted until quite recently, but efforts have gotten underway to rescue it from oblivion. Late Mannerism dominated most of the

17th century, and the Baroque per se lasted until the first half of the 18th century, before being displaced by academicism, the end of artists as guild members and the bourgeois taste for mythology and allegories. It was a kind of art devoted primarily to encouraging Catholic worship. The number of known artists is constantly on the rise, and now Antoni Viladomat (1678-1755) is no longer the only renowned painter of what was already a fact in the 19th century. The personality of sculptors like Agustí Pujol and Lluís Bonifàs, along with other artists, have considerably expanded the roster, despite the destruction wrought by the French Revolution north of the Pyrenees and the disentanglement of the monasteries in 1836 south of the mountains, both of them minor compared to the ruination brought about in the summer of 1936 in a Catalonia roiling in the mayhem of the Civil War.

Another topic examined in this issue is Catalonia's forced fit into Spain until its own governing institutions were destroyed in 1714. This process must be studied without the deterministic prejudices with which historians from varied ideological and geographical backgrounds have had. In many cases, there has been a desire to ignore the coeval feasibility in Europe of compound, limited monarchies, as if Bourbon absolutism were the only progressive solution in the formation of the modern state. The 1688 English revolution had consolidated the model of pre-parliamentary limited monarchy with the collaboration of the *statuder* of the United Provinces of the Netherlands, another similar model. Catalonia's pre-parliamentary constitutionalism had survived the Catalan Revolt against the Spanish monarchy in 1640, albeit in a weakened state. The goal of recovering full self-governance had a powerful influence on the decision of the majority of Catalans, Valencians and Aragonese to shift to the allies' side during the War of the Spanish Succession, a truly Europe-wide war. In fact, this war was examined in issue 3 of the *Catalan Historical Review* in 2010. The Catalan institutions were not democratic in the sense that we mean democracy today, just like the other limited European monarchies of the day, but they were indeed more representative than the ones imposed after 1714 by the force of French-Spanish weapons. The economic upswing of modern Catalonia was not the product of Bourbon absolutism, which, to the contrary, interrupted growth that dated from the last third of the 17th century. Attributing Catalonia's economic growth to Spain's centralist despotism is a thesis similar to attributing the growth in the 1960s to the Franco dictatorship, which merely postponed it for twenty years compared to European expansion.

In contemporary Catalan literature, the oeuvre of Joan Maragall has probably been the most widely read by successive generations of Catalans, along with the works of Jacint Verdaguer. The 2011 commemoration of the centennial of the death of Joan Maragall served to take note of the constant reassessment and expansion of knowledge of a figure who was not only a poet but also a thinker. Though he was neither a philosopher nor a theologian, he endowed his poetry and essays with a metaphysics, an aesthetics and an ethics that meant that he took on a prophetic and independent critical meaning, especially in his later years, as an intellectual committed to the conflictive society in which he was destined to live. Maragall wanted to affect public opinion without the fear of scandal and by staking his prestige as a man of letters on it. His cross-cutting Catalan patriotism, independent of political parties, is still provocative today. The article devoted to Maragall in this issue spotlights the even mystical dimension of an oeuvre and a personality that still arouse interest today and have given rise to an extensive body of literature.

The last article in this issue examines the role of sports in 20th century Catalonia. The mass society of the 20th century makes sports one of the defining signs of moder-

nity as a practice, and especially as a spectacle. It generates collective identity, channels and glorifies conflicts, and its popularity has stimulated its use as a political instrument by the State. At the same time, it is regarded as a factor in regenerating an active population that is increasingly sedentary. The history and sociology of sports are today a true discipline which is attracting an increasing number of scholars with the rigour of a scholarly specialisation. In the late 19th century, sports in Catalonia, which were still a practice of the wealthy elites, was synonymous with the more developed European societies, while it also developed at the same time as political Catalanism. The aspiration to host Olympics surged until 1936, but it did not materialise until the 1992 Olympics, an event that projected the Catalan identity internationally. After the Franco dictatorship, which denied all signs of Catalan culture, F.C. Barcelona became “more than a club”, and today it symbolises the Catalan nationality to the world. After the political democratisation, the so-called “sports for everyone” has become natural, beyond the facets of sports as competition and spectacle.

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