

CONFLICT AND CONSTRUCTING NATIONAL IDENTITY: CATALONIA, 1516–1714

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ABSTRACT

There is an extensive discussion in Europe about when it is possible to refer to nations in Europe. Even though nationalism doesn't exist in the early modern period, it is indisputable that political conflicts between some countries and their monarchs were based in discourses which confronted the political and religious and cultural community against those monarchs accused of absolutist tendencies. We intend to explain this process in the case of Catalonia as well as how experiences in the 16th and 17th centuries provided memory and arguments that would be used in the 19th century in the construction of the Catalan nationalist discourse.

Keywords: Catalonia, nation, identity, Hispanic Monarchy

CONFLITTO E COSTRUZIONE DELL'IDENTITÀ NAZIONALE: LA CATALOGNA, 1516–1714

SINTESI

C'è un'ampia discussione in Europa su quando è possibile fare riferimento alle nazioni in Europa. Sebbene il nazionalismo non esisteva agli inizi del periodo moderno, è indiscutibile che i conflitti politici tra alcuni paesi e i loro monarchi erano basati su discorsi che confrontavano la comunità politica religiosa e culturale contro quei monarchi accusati di tendenze assolutiste. Intendiamo spiegare questo processo nel caso della Catalogna e come le esperienze del XVI e XVII secolo fornissero memoria e argomenti che sarebbero stati usati nel XIX secolo nella costruzione del discorso nazionalista catalano.

Parole chiave: Catalogna, nazione, identità, Monarchia Spagnola

THE DEBATE ON THE EXISTENCE OF NATIONS IN THE EARLY MODERN PERIOD¹

The full meaning of Benedetto Croce's famous phrase: "Il bisogno pratico, che è nel fondo di ogni giudizio storico, conferisce a ogni storia il carattere di 'storia contemporanea'," (Croce, 1965, 5) can be applied to studies of nations and nationalism, which are often presented as two parts of the same reality. In 1983, both Ernst Gellner (Gellner, 1983) and Benedict Anderson (Anderson, 1983) published their own studies of nations and nationalism and, in 1992, Eric Hobsbawm (Hobsbawm, 1992) also presented his thesis on the topic. All three works were very widely read in the last decade of the 20th century, made popular by the need to understand and explain the far-reaching changes in the borders of former Socialist Europe during those years. More recently, cases like Scotland, Catalonia, the Basque Country and Corsica have kept the debate alive in the academic world, either in parallel with or even mixed with the debate in the political world.

The positions maintained by Hobsbawm and Gellner are quite well known and there is no need to summarise them. It is enough to recall that they consider nations to have been born in the modern period as a result of the growth of the State and an ideology – nationalism – which was the cause and not the consequence of the existence of nations because it provides a justification of the nation state as the most "natural" form of political organisation for society.

For a modernist historian, the use of the word "modernist" to refer to this position involves an added difficulty when it comes to entering the debate on the existence of nations. The now well-known difference between early modern history and modern history in the British and American tradition and what are known as "modern" and "contemporary" history in continental Europe lead to confusion when it comes to speaking of modern or pre-modern nations, which are the usual expressions in this area.

A good number of the scholars who have studied nations are quick to make clear that they are not nationalists and have no sympathy for such ideology. By doing so, they associate nationalism with suspicious bedfellows, such as fascist and right-wing totalitarian movements. This attitude tends to preclude any study of nations, particularly when referring to their early stages or to cases of nations without states. We can take as an example the book by John Elliott, the illustrious historian of Spain and someone with a good knowledge of the history of Catalonia. It is a great work when it compares the development of Catalonia and Scotland to the 19th century but it ends with a no-punches-pulled attack on the Catalan independence movement

1 This study forms part of research project PRD 2018-17, financed by the Government of the Balearic Islands via the Directorate General of University Policy and Research with funds from the proceeds of the Tourism Tax Act (ITS 2017-06) and the Study Group on the History of the Western Mediterranean (GEHMO) of the University of Barcelona. This is recognised as an established group and financed by the Government of Catalonia (reference 2014SGR173).

and a rather more measured position concerning Scottish independence (Elliott, 2018). Any reader not involved in either of these disputes might be surprised to find that, for the author, the British and Spanish state positions are perfectly democratic and not described with the negative connotations with which he characterises the nationalisms attempting to change the status quo.

Above all, these preclusions and fixed positions make it difficult to suggest a theoretical debate about nations and nationalism throughout history, which must not be confused with a study of nationalism as the first of perhaps too many contemporary political ideologies. Because, in its time, nationalism represented the alternative to absolute monarchies in claiming the ownership of power for national sovereignty. The existence of the cultural and ethnic substrate for nationalism, however, goes back long before it appeared and it was constructed in a historical process involving various factors.

To see the complexity of the debate about the existence of nations before the 18th century, all we need to do is to look at how theories of the construction of the state have been developed. Many legal historians, applying the definition of state based on a strictly legal meaning, deny the existence of any state before it appeared in liberal, constitutional form. Their judgements range from the “*ficción del concepto*” (Clavero, 1981) to “*preconception*” based on a model of state projecting modern political institutions into the past and creating the fiction that medieval or early modern institutions are the origin of contemporary ones (Hespanha, 1986). The idea of an “*early modern state*” arising from a medieval period without a state has also been criticised, which would make it absurd to consider that the society and politics of the 16th century were more similar to those of the 19th century, because of the existence of a state, than to the 14th century, when there was none (Garriga, 2004).

However, I consider that societies have always been organised at different levels, from family to social class, and that these levels include ethnic groups or nations. What we have here is a structure for analysis that can vary over time: the existence of the nation as a form of organisation does not mean that nations are always the same or that they maintain the same characteristics. If Marxism uses the relationship between the population and the means of production to confirm the existence of social classes, which have not always been the same and which have developed their own cultural features (Thompson, 1968), why can the same consideration not be made for nations?

Anthony D. Smith (Smith, 1987) set out the dimensions of ethnic groups: a collective name, a common myth about their origin and rise, a shared history, a shared and distinct culture, an association with a specific territory and a feeling of solidarity. Catalonia has shown these features since the Middle Ages. But we are interested in highlighting the aspect that is possibly the most unattractive element of identity creation and which is related to what Benjamin Akzin called the similarity-dissimilarity pattern: the members of an ethnic group are similar and equal in those cultural traits in which they are dissimilar to those who are not members (Akzin, 1964).

This study focuses on the counter-identity or counter-image, understood as one of many elements used in constructing the affirmation of a community: in this case using as an inverted mirror the characteristics attributed to neighbouring communities with which relations during the Early Modern Period were usually difficult. Although this aspect could have negative connotations associated with xenophobia, we must not forget that, as well as stereotypes, it is built on shared history, from wars to cultural exchanges and that, in the imagination of a national group, it can be studied as a separate element within the set that forms identity.

ON THE FORMATION OF THE CATALAN IDENTITY

It ought not to be surprising that in Catalan society the debate on national origin should have given rise to such a large number of publications that it is impossible to present them all in detail. We will, however, highlight two works because they give an excellent explanation of the thesis that explains the basis of the Catalan identity. One is by the medievalist Josep M. Salrach (Salrach i Marés, 1978) and the other by Josep Fontana. The most important element in creating the Catalan identity is the institutional and legal framework. Beginning with the Catalan counties created by the Carolingian Empire in the lands occupied from the Muslims in the 9th century, the county of Barcelona began a process of absorption of all the others and then, in the 11th century, launched an expansion process, establishing the Catalan territory as it is known today. Throughout this process, power relationships were created between the Count of Barcelona, who was sovereign of Catalonia, and the estates of the feudal world in the form of representative institutions – *corts* (parliaments), municipal governments, the *Diputació del General* – and laws created in a system of pacts between the count and the estates. This led to: “a singular political evolution that came into a social contract that gave them the awareness of being participants of rights and freedoms that characterized their society: a set of elements, in sum, that integrate what the Catalans of the past called simply ‘land’” (Fontana, 2014a).² “The specific combination of perception, assumption, institutions, and representativeness over Catalonia has established that the discourse of social cohesion and political claim that leaves the Middle Ages carries a specific collective identity” (Sabaté, 2016).³ To these more political aspects we must also add cultural ones within an idea of everyday life with aspects such as table manners or civic standards. Even if the idea of language as an essential sign of the identity has been debated since its appearance in the 18th century, it is extremely clear in the Catalan case. The

2 Original text: “una evolució política singular que va cuallar en un contracte social que els donava la consciència de ser participants d’uns drets i llibertats que caracteritzava la seva societat: un conjunt d’elements, en suma, que integren allò que els catalans del passat anomenaven senzillament la ‘terra’.”

3 “La combinació específica de percepció, assumptió, institucions i representativitat sobre Catalunya ha consolidat que el discurs de la cohesió social i de reivindicació política amb que se surt de l’edat mitjana comporti una identitat col·lectiva determinada.”

common people were monolingual in Catalan, although the language most used by the royal chancery and in official documents was Latin and, in the Crown of Aragon, unlike Castile or France, the monarchy never showed any determination to establish a single official language. However, until the arrival of the Trastámara dynasty, the language used by the king in his private communication was Catalan, which was also used in the speeches made before the *Corts Generals*, which also brought together the Valencians, who also spoke Catalan, and the Aragonese, who did not (Cingolani, 2015).

Catalonia at the end of the Middle Ages showed the same characteristics as other European societies, although there were obviously some unique features. One of these was belonging to a superstructure – the Crown of Aragon – that also included the Kingdoms of Aragon, Valencia, Majorca, Sardinia, Sicily and, from 1443 to 1454 and after 1504, also the Kingdom of Naples.⁴ The Crown of Aragon was not, therefore, an entirely Hispanic construction, as the Italian element was a very important part of the whole, although it is true that a decision as far-reaching as the appointment of the successor to King Martin I in 1412 was taken by Aragonese, Catalans and Valencians, excluding all other territories (Casals, 2013).

But this Mediterranean dimension was not incompatible with a sense of belonging to a geographical and historical reality like the former Roman Hispania. It was this idea of Spain and its history, though, which marked the first point of divergence with the Castilian bloc. The end of the Roman Empire left its Hispanic provinces under the dominion of a Visigothic monarchy which was a military elite ruling a Christianised, Latinised population and integrating with it very slowly. So slowly, in fact, that we cannot say that the process was complete in 711, when the Muslims came into the peninsula. The end of the Visigothic kingdom left some unoccupied centres in the Cantabrian north of the peninsula and in the Pyrenees, where the first Christian political organisations appeared. From these, the four great Christian states emerged: Castile, Aragon, Navarre and the County of Barcelona.

The kings of Castile created a legitimacy that made them descendants of the Asturian kings who, in turn, had proclaimed themselves descendants of the Visigothic royal house. That gave them the right to claim not only the territories occupied by the Muslims but also the other Christian kingdoms. These principles appeared as early as the reign of King Alfonso III (866–910) and became consolidated in the 13th century, with the appearance of the book *De Rebus Hispanie* commissioned by King Fernando III of Castile (1215–1252). The work essentially exalted the Visigothic past of all Hispania, ignoring almost all history before the arrival of the Visigoths, who were presented as the predecessors of the Castilian monarchy and nobility. Based on this book and other later ones, such as *Estoria de España*

4 The way the Crown of Aragon worked can be followed through the minutes of the congresses of the Crown of Aragon, which are especially useful for our purposes (Simon i Tarrés, 2005).

published in about 1270 during the reign of Alfonso X, all the inhabitants of the peninsula were grouped together in the same undertaking, centralised in Castile (Martín Rodríguez, 1996). The work divided the historical periods into “lordships”: Greeks, Phoenicians, Romans and Goths, continuing with the kings of Asturias, Leon and Castile (Fernández-Ordóñez, 2002). The other peninsular monarchies, meanwhile, were never recognised or treated in the same way, while the Moors were merely enemies.

In Catalonia, Gothicism came later, introduced, not without difficulties, at the end of the Middle Ages. The early Catalan counts acknowledged themselves to be vassals of the French kings until 988 when they, *de facto* and in the same way as other European feudal lords, cut their ties to become sovereigns of their own territory. The Catalan counts therefore considered that “Spain” was the territory occupied by the Muslims: the Caliph of Cordoba was known as “rex Hispanie”. And this remained the case until the 12th and 13th centuries, when the term “Spain” (Espanya) came into normal use as a geographical reference, although the word “Spanish” (espanyol) was never used (Sabaté, 2015).

THE GROWING SEPARATION OF DISCOURSES OF IDENTITY WITHIN THE HISPANIC MONARCHY

The fact that after 1412 the same dynasty that ruled Castile also held the Crown of Aragon facilitated growing relations between the two crowns, both in exchanges between elites and in cultural influences. This led to a resurgence of Gothicism in Catalonia too, although it had difficulties in assuming Visigothic legitimacy considering the Frankish origins of the counts of Barcelona. Meanwhile, in Castile the historiographic discourse had culminated in works like *Anacephaleosis* in 1455, written by Alfonso de Cartagena, who did not hold back in his claims: “The kings of Spain among whom the main and first and major is the king of Castile and León” (Tate, 1970).⁵

The marriage of the claimant to the Castilian throne, Isabella, and the heir to the Aragonese crown, Ferdinand, in 1469 began the reign of the Catholic Monarchs, a touchstone in the construction of the Spanish identity. Spanish historiography has traditionally swung between those considering Spain as a single nation since Roman times (Benito Ruano et al., 1997); those who consider the reign of the Catholic Monarchs to be precisely the “foundational” moment of Spain (Ladero Quesada, 2014); and those who believe we cannot speak of the Spanish nation until the first Spanish Constitution of 1812 (Pérez Garzón, 2012).⁶

5 Original text: “Los reyes de España entre los quales el principal e primero e mayor es el rey de Castilla e de León”.

6 A very broad bibliography could be drawn up showing many nuances within these three positions, but unfortunately this would take us too far away from our topic and we have to keep things as simple as we can.

The marriage was the culmination of the policy of a dynasty – the Trastámara, of Castilian origin – who concentrated all the territories where they reigned or had ruled in a single branch of the family. This was the case of Naples, conquered in 1504, and Navarre, occupied by Ferdinand II in 1512, as well as Granada, which was taken in 1492. Only Portugal remained outside the collection of inheritances, and that was by mere biological chance.⁷ However, this accumulation did not include political unification, and still less a union of cultures or languages. Although Ferdinand did agree to place the Castilian titles before his own patrimony from the Crown of Aragon – despite the protests of his subjects – both he and his wife rejected the idea of creating the titles “King and Queen of Spain”, which really would have meant unification (Belenguier Cebrià, 1994).

The new political situation began to set the two historical traditions against one another: the Castilian political project behind the name “Spain” and the more geographical and cultural meaning given to it in Catalonia, where it was common to use the term “Espanya Citerior” or the plural “Les Espanyes” (the Spains), recalling the Roman provinces *Hispania Citerior* and *Hispania Ulterior*. This might be seen as highly appropriate for Renaissance classicists who favoured the recovery of Latin names: *Germania*, *Gallia*, *Britannia* and others (Duran, 2004).

The prestige of the name Spain and its international use to refer to the monarchy of the two crowns led some Catalan historians to try to also create the identification *Catalunya-Espanya* (Catalonia-Spain), but this was unsuccessful. The humanist Pere Miquel Carbonell wrote *Cròniques de Catalunya* between 1495 and 1513, but it was not published until 1547 under the title *Cròniques d’Espanya* (Carbonell, 1997). There was only one edition. The Barcelona canon Francesc Tarafa published his *De Origine, Ac Rebus Gestis Regum Hispaniae Liber, Multarum Rerum Cognitione Refertus*, dedicated to the future King Philip II of Castile, in 1553. In 1562, it was published in Castilian Spanish under the title *Crónica de España*. In fact, this was a rewritten version full of mistakes and mutilations, although editions of the original were published in Germany (1557, 1579, 1603).

At the end of the 16th century, some Catalan and Aragonese authors also tried to claim Gothic origin for their sovereigns, as the Castilians had been doing since the 12th century. Although the Frankish presence was a great complication for this version of events, the problem was solved by attributing a Gothic origin to the early counts of Barcelona. As Francesc Calça said in 1588: “Vuifredus gotus comes Barcionis” (Calça, 1588; Duran, 2004).

These were vain efforts to fight a battle that was already lost. In 1557, Cristòfor Despuig, a knight from Tortosa, denounced in his *Col·loqui de la insigne ciutat de Tortosa* the assimilation of Spain with Castile:

7 It must be remembered that after the death of the Catholic Monarchs’ heir, Prince John, in 1497, the new heir was their first-born daughter Isabella, who died in 1498, leaving a successor, Prince Michael, who would also have been king of Portugal had he not died in 1500. But, despite all this, the process culminated in 1581, when Philip II of Castile was proclaimed King of Portugal in a new dynastic unit that lasted until 1640.

Almost all of them are the same way that, in order not to publish the glory of the Spaniards who are not Castilian, they zeal the truth and to glorify their nation, they do not hesitate to write lies [...] and also almost all of the Castilian Historiographers are in the same position of wanting to name Castile for all Spain (Despuig, 1877).⁸

The response to the failure was the as-yet embryonic construction of an alternative historical story that began to take on shades of anti-Castilianism. A trend began that has continued down to the present day: the exaltation of defeat and the defeated. Despuig himself had referred to the murder of Charles, Prince of Viana and heir of King John II of Aragon. In 1461, the Prince had become the symbol of his father's Catalan opponents. His sudden death in Barcelona on 23 September 1461 sparked the rumour that he had been poisoned by John II's second wife, the Castilian Juana Enríquez. His demise led to an escalation of events that ended in a ten-year civil war (1462–1472). Charles became a religious symbol as well as a political one and he was venerated by the Catalans as a saint. The murder version of events was always present in Castilian and Catalan chronicles, but Despuig and other later authors stressed the Castilian origins of the woman behind it and of John II himself (Mahiques Climent, 2014).

The other example of this same trend is a manuscript of uncertain origin⁹ published in 1624: *La fi del comte d'Urgell* (The End of the Count of Urgell). This book told of the death of Jaume d'Urgell, one of the candidates for the Crown of Aragon in 1412 who was presented as the Catalan candidate. After losing the election and rebelling against the new king, the Castilian Fernando I of Trastámara, he ended his days shut up in Xàtiva Castle. The book accuses the son of the new king of murdering Jaume – which according to historiography is absolutely false – and takes a clearly anti-Castilian tone. The election was portrayed as the beginning of Catalonia's misfortunes and the Castilians – including the kings – were characterised as violent, tyrannical violent abusers (Batlle, 1999).

This development in thought during the 16th century was fed by growing political dissatisfaction on both sides – both among Catalans and at the royal court. There were various reasons for this. There was undoubtedly a clash of political cultures: Catalonia's parliamentary system of pacts came into increasingly open conflict with a tradition more favourable to the concentration of power in the king's hands. The first symptoms of this emerged very clearly in the reign of Charles I/V (1516/19–1556), when the Spanish Monarchy urgent military requirements ran up against the slow-moving, legalistic Catalan institutions. In 1543, the vice-

8 Original text: “Que tots son casi de esta manera que per no publicar la gloria dels espanyols que no son castellans, zelen de la veritat y per fer gloriosa la sua nació, no dubten de escriurer mentides [...] y també casi tots los Historiografos castellans estant en lo mateix de voler nomenar Castella per tota España”.

9 Ever since the beginning of the 20th century there has been a debate on the origin and dating of the text, which some claim is from the 15th century, a few years after the events. Others maintain that it is a text written in the 16th century based on an earlier original (Simon Tarrés, 2005).

chancellor of the Council of Aragon, Miquel Mai, was arguing with the provisioner of the royal galleys in Barcelona, Alonso de Rábago:

I was telling the vice chancellor in substance in front of five or six of the council, that new causes needed new Remedies and not old Constitutions. That when they were made, the Turk and the King of france were not allied against the King of Aragon like they are now. He answered, among other nonsense, that one day while Berbera was talking to the great chancellor who told him about this, Berbera said to the chancellor: ‘sir in this land we will understand both the French language and the Castilian one’, intending to apply the same to what I was saying. Implying that it doesn’t matter if we are from the King of France or of Castile.¹⁰

The castilianisation of royal posts in Catalonia aggravated this situation. Royal absenteeism meant the highest authority in the country was the Viceroy (or *Lloctinent General* as he was called in Catalan), who were mostly Castilian during the 16th and 17th centuries: of 51 viceroys, 38 were Castilian (Pérez Bustamante, 1993). The military presence also increased, with mostly Castilian commanders and troops who broke Catalan law whenever they felt like it, with the aggravating factor that their Captain General was the Viceroy himself (Carrió Arumí, 2008).

Like the Inquisition, the Church was a mechanism for transmitting royal power beyond strictly political spheres. In this case, too, castilianisation was a constant feature of the dynasty’s government. Between 1500 and 1715 there were 77 non-Catalan bishops of Catalan dioceses (including Italians, Aragonese, Valencians and others) and 55 from Catalonia (Bada Elías, 2011).

The Catalan response was to increasingly champion their institutions. The highest instance, the *Corts* or Parliament, depended on being called by the king and he summoned it less and less, until in the reign of Charles II (1665–1700) it was no longer called at all. However, it did enjoy an ephemeral renaissance between 1700 and 1705, just before and during the War of the Spanish Succession. The *Generalitat*, a permanent delegation of the *Corts*, became the true “nerve of Catalonia”; in other words, the representative of the country before the king. It began a growing dynamic of opposition to royal governments, taking advantage of its right to denounce illegal actions by the king and his ministers and their presence in the country as a whole. This escalating conflict came to a head for the first time in the events of 1591. This was the manifestation of a period of confrontations focused

10 General Archive of Simancas: Estado 268, Rábago to Cobos. Undated 1543. Doc. 121. Original text: “Yo decia al vicecanciller en sustancia delante de cinco o seis del consejo, que a causas nuevas eran menester Remedios nuevos y no Constituciones viejas. Que quando se hizieron no estavan aliados el turco y el Rey de francia contra el Rey de Aragon como agora. Respodíome entre otras pachochadas (sic) que, un día, hablando mosen Berbera con el gran cançiller que le dezía de estas cosas, dixo Berbera al canceller: ‘señor en esta tierra tan bien entenderemos la lengua francesa como la castellana’, queriendo el vicecanciller aplicar lo misrno a lo que yo dezía. Queriendo dezir tanto nos da ser del Rey de Francia como del de Castilla”.

on the application of the laws approved by the *Corts* of 1585 and the reforms in the operation of the *Generalitat*. In the end, the threat of royal military intervention in Catalonia made the *Generalitat* back down after it was accused of wanting to “llevar la corona del cap de Sa Magestat” (Pérez Latre, 2004).

We also cannot forget the language issue, although on that topic there are various historiographic positions. In general terms, there are various interpretations of the importance of languages in creating national identities in the early modern period, ranging between those who consider language a fundamental element of communities and others who believe that in early modern times it was not yet as important as it would become in the 19th century (Simon i Tarrés, 2016a). In the case of Catalan, apart from its importance as an element forming identity, another important debate continues on the mechanisms by which Castilian Spanish was introduced into Catalonia and whether this was politically significant. Today, it is fairly indisputable that the Castilian language penetrated Catalonia in the 15th century via the kings of the new dynasty, although there was no deliberate intention to castilianise the country.¹¹ In the 16th century the nobles, royal officials, soldiers and some intellectuals began using Castilian Spanish, which encouraged lower-status social groups to imitate them. This is not surprising or unusual if we apply to language use the patterns for the construction of cultural models in the process of civilisation (Elias, 1982) or the influence of elite culture on popular culture (Burke, 1978).

The context of the Renaissance must have encouraged the introduction of Castilian Spanish: the need for printed books with big markets (which put Catalan behind Latin and Castilian) and the growing cultural and political prestige of Castilian Spanish around Europe. But, as Simon Tarrés pointed out, the big question is whether the new monarchies had any desire to impose language as another tool for expanding a modern state (Simon i Tarrés, 2016a). In his response, he comes to the conclusion that the advance of Castilian Spanish was one of the mechanisms used to construct a specific space for power within the Spanish Monarchy which was intended to pull peninsular Spain together. There was a strong intellectual movement from Castile driven by jurists, intellectuals, theologians and historians (Simon Tarrés, 2005). The identification of Castile with Spain was strengthened with the presence of the king and the power structure in the centre of the peninsula. This was why at the end of the 16th century, what had begun with the marriage of Fernando and Isabella as a dynastic union between two legally equal partners began to be interpreted as a poorly accomplished absorption of the Crown of Aragon. It is the underlying attitude behind statements like those of López Madera in 1597: “the kingdom

11 During the entire 15th century, Catalan maintained its vitality as an elite literary language. A good example of this is the novel *Curia e Güelfa*, a work written in the surroundings of the Neapolitan court of Alfonso the Magnanimous and which has been attributed to a catalanised Castilian knight: Enyego d'Àvalos (Soler Molina, 2018).

of Spain is truly one”, because “the right and dominion of all of it, Spain was always there, and it continued with the kings of León and Castile, legitimate successors of King don Pelayo”.¹²

THE RUPTURE OF 1640

This whole ideological trend ended up being transferred into politics. We do not mean that there was a direct, deterministic link between the mass of authors and works advocating the political unification of the peninsula and the political plans Philip IV of Castile’s favourite Gaspar de Guzmán y Pimentel, Count-Duke Olivares, wanted to apply. Fully integrated into the intellectual context of his times, his reform programme considered that political division was the main cause of the misfortunes of a monarchy that was beginning to show worrying symptoms of weakness (Elliott, 1990).

The project Olivares presented to Philip IV in the *Gran Memorial* or “Great Report” of 1624 said it openly:

*Your Majesty, please consider the becomingness of King of Spain, the most important business of your monarchy: I mean, sir, do not content with being King of Portugal, of Aragon, of Valencia, Count of Barcelona, but work and think, with silent and secret advice, for reducing these kingdoms of which Spain is composed to the style and laws of Castile, without any difference, if Your Majesty reaches it, he will be the most powerful Prince in the world*¹³ (Elliott, 1990).

The failures of Olivares’ unification policy led him to back a campaign of anti-Catalan propaganda featuring the creative talents of the great Castilian writer Francisco de Quevedo, among others: “As long as there is only one Catalan left in Catalonia, and stones in the deserted fields, we must have enemies and war”.¹⁴ As a consequence of the current political system in Catalonia: “The Catalans are a monstrous abortion of politics. Free people with lord; For this reason, the Count of Barcelona is not dignity, but a vocal and a naked voice. They have a prince like the body has a soul to live and as this one alleges appetites and vices against

12 Quoted in Ayats, 2011. Original text: “el reyno de España es verdaderamente uno”, “Pelayo el derecho y señorío de toda ella, España siempre estuvo, y se continuó en los reyes de León y Castilla, sucesores legítimos del rey don Pelayo”.

13 Original text: “Tenga Vuestra Majestad por el negocio más importante de su Monarquía, el hacerse Rey de España: quiero decir, Señor, que no se contente Vuestra Majestad con ser Rey de Portugal, de Aragón, de Valencia, Conde de Barcelona, sino que trabaje y piense, con consejo mudado y secreto, por reducir estos reinos de que se compone España al estilo y leyes de Castilla, sin ninguna diferencia, que si Vuestra Majestad lo alcanza será el Príncipe más poderoso del mundo”.

14 Original text: “En tanto en Cataluña quedase un solo catalán, y piedras en los campos desiertos, hemos de tener enemigos y guerra”.

reason, those against the reason of their lord allege benefits and privileges”¹⁵ (Ettinghausen, 1989).

Undoubtedly the immediate trigger for the revolt was the mistreatment of peasants by the royal troops sent to Catalonia in 1639, who provoked grievances at various points in the country in 1640. But what made the violent reaction of the population more than a simple *jacquerie* was the existence of political thought, and a ruling class prepared to apply it. As has already been mentioned, the response to the failure of an intellectual construction of Spain acceptable to the Catalans was the championing of their Frankish origin (Villanueva, 1994) and, very importantly, the protection of the political community, which would cede sovereignty to the king under pacts and conditions (Simon, 1999). That is why, beyond physical war, historians have spoken of the “paper war” (Torres i Sans, 2006). The publicists (Ettinghausen, 1993) who worked to justify the war created a story and mental framework in which a whole series of negative characteristics were attributed to Count-Duke Olivares: tyranny, authoritarianism, a desire to do away with Catalan liberties and so on. He was backed up by other figures from his government and with an executive arm in the shape of the troops who had been sent to live off the backs of the Catalans and whose real aim was to ruin the country and its inhabitants.¹⁶ The destruction of churches by the troops strengthened the religious argument used by the Catalans in relation to the legal aspect. The laws approved by the Catalan *Corts* were sacred and sealed with the royal oath. Therefore, any breach of them as an attack on God himself. In addition, the Catalans were the true Catholics, as they had been the first Christians in the peninsula and they had introduced the Inquisition in the 13th century. This was compared to the Christianity of the Castilians, which was more questionable, as their lands had been occupied by the Muslims for longer. The use of the Old Testament also allowed a parallelism to be drawn between the Catalans and the Chosen People (Torres i Sans, 2008; Simon Tarrés, 2016b).

CATALONIA AND FRANCE: THE OTHER COUNTER-MODEL

“[The Catalans] have such a notorious antipathy and such a natural hate for the French, their neighbours, that can hardly be described. Their feelings are so strong that a son, born in the counts abhor, with an absolute natural hate, his father born in

15 Original text: “son los catalanes aborto monstruoso de la política. Libres con señor; por esto el conde de Barcelona no es dignidad, sino vocábulo y voz desnuda. Tienen príncipe como el cuerpo alma para vivir y como éste alega contra la razón apetitos y vicios, aquéllos contra la razón de su señor alegan privilegios y fueros”.

16 The best example of this clearly anti-Olivares and anti-Castilian propaganda was the popularisation in 1640 of the song that was the origin of the current Catalan national anthem: *Els Segadors* (Ayats, 2011) and Massot i Muntaner (2014).

France”¹⁷ (Baldó, 1627). Considering this statement, it seems impossible to believe that one of the most important demographic events in Catalonia from the 15th to the 17th centuries was immigration of French origin. Over 200 years, immigration from the Occitan regions swelled the ranks of a small population that was still below 250,000 at the end of the 15th century. Arriving first as seasonal workers and then settling gradually, the French helped the country’s population to double by 1626 (Nadal & Giralt, 2000). Despite this, Francophobia became a constant sentiment of Catalan identity.

But the rejection described by Lluís Baldó, who was from Perpinyà (Perpignan), was not the rough, brutal xenophobia against immigration still unfortunately found today all over Europe. The fact that the immigrants were Occitans made matters considerably easier because their language was much closer to Catalan than French and they were arriving in a country where workers were welcome. It is true that many of them came from regions where Calvinism had become quite well established, and the presence of so many subjects of the king of France in the border lands also frightened the military authorities, but this did not stop their integration in the country. The causes of hatred of the French, then, do not lie here.

In fact, tensions between the Catalan Count-Kings and the French monarchs go back a long way. We might speak of the times of the Albigensian Crusade against the Cathars at the beginning of the 13th century, which led a Catalan king, Peter I, to die in 1213 fighting against the men of the king of France, as the dream of Catalan dominion over Occitania evaporated forever. Decades later, in 1283, the dead king’s grandson, Peter II, took on the French House of Anjou for dominion over the island of Sicily and, in the 15th century, they squared up to one another again, this time in Naples, in the time of Alfonso the Magnanimous. But little of these events remained in the historical memory of medieval Catalonia beyond the legend of Saint Narcissus and the flies. In 1284, when the French besieged the city of Girona and desecrated the tomb of Saint Narcissus, such ferocious flies flew out of his body that they drove the troops back. The final form of the story took centuries to become established and spread, and it was in the second half of the 16th century – the time of the Counter-Reformation and the threat of the French Huguenots, which we have already mentioned – that it finally crystallised (Valsalobre, 2003).

The most serious trauma suffered by the Catalan territories at the hands of the French came in 1462. At the beginning of the civil war against John II, the king had to cede the counties of Rosselló (Roussillon) and Cerdanya (Cerdagne) to Louis XI of France as a guarantee. When the war ended in 1472, a revolt in Perpinyà, the capital of the two counties, managed to expel the French in January 1473, but they attacked the city and, after a siege between April and September that year, they

17 Original text: “Tienen (els catalans) una antipatia tan notoria y un odio tan natural a los franceses, sus vecinos, que dificilmente puede describirse. Sus sentimientos son tan fuertes que un hijo, nacido en los condados abomina, con un odio absolutamente natural, de su padre nacido en Francia”.

took it once again, holding it for 20 years. From that episode, the memory of the harshness of the siege and the cruelty of the French remained. These aspects were invoked again in the sieges of 1542 and 1596.

It was the climate of war between the two monarchies – Spanish and French – that constantly fed antipathy towards the French. There were raids on North Catalonia (the part now forming part of France) in 1502–1509, 1512–1526, 1535–1538, 1542–1544 and 1557–1559 (Pojada, 2018), 1570, 1581 and 1583 (the last three in what was theoretically peacetime) and in the 17th century warfare became more or less chronic from 1635 onwards: 1635–1659; 1667–1668; 1672–1678; 1683–1684 and 1688–1697 and again in 1705–1714 (Simon i Tarrés, 1998; Espino, 2014). This situation created a frontier mentality in Catalan society, particularly in the north, where the idea of being Spain’s defensive wall took root: “Catalonia is a border both by land and by sea, that it alone is the bastion of all Spain”,¹⁸ it was said in 1547, and this was repeated throughout the Habsburg period.

That anti-French feeling should be more intense and radical in the north of the country than the in rest of it was, therefore, absolutely normal. The result was that in 1640, when the Catalan authorities sought French alliance and protection, there was a division between the two parts of the country and Perpinyà remained loyal to Philip IV of Spain, having to be occupied militarily by the French in 1642. Ironically, this was the area – the counties of Rosselló and Cerdanya – which was handed over to France in the Treaty of the Pyrenees in 1659.

In French-dominated Catalonia there was considerable resistance to incorporation. The most important movement was the revolt of the “Angelets de la Terra” (Little Angels of the Earth) (1663–1673) and a pro-Spanish conspiracy in 1674 in Perpinyà, Vilafranca de Conflent and Cotlliure, which was crushed by the French army (Gual i Vilà, 2009). From then on, there was a dual and progressively divergent dynamic between the two, now divided, territories. In the south an irredentist feeling was maintained until the end of the War of the Spanish Succession in 1714, when the disappearance of the Catalan institutions strangled any claim. Meanwhile, in the north the process of absorption into France was slow and costly (Sala, 1996) because the common links with Catalonia – especially the linguistic ones – have never been lost, even though the language has been forced into the position of a minority one (Baylac-Ferrer, 2009).

NATIONAL DISCOURSE AND MEMORY

As in so many other parts of Europe, Romanticism and Liberalism constructed a national discourse, but in the Catalan case this was done without the tools of a state, which is very important to remember: “the nationalizing state of the masses

18 Original text: “Cataluña es tan frontera por tierra y por mar, que sola ella es el baluarte de toda España”. The book that offers a broader view of the relations between Catalonia and France in this period is that of Òscar Jané (Jané Checa, 2006).

of the late 19th century has found in historical narrative the space where the definition of the country and its identity are more fully defined”¹⁹(Casassas, 2009). Throughout the 20th century, one of the most common questions for historians was how that was possible. It is not the purpose of this text to answer that question, so I will simply note that the two most common explanations have been to speak of the “feeble nationalisation” of the Spanish State, due to its own structural weakness rather than the lack of a unifying discourse (Álvarez Junco, 2000), and the fact that Catalonia had a very different kind of society to Spain as a whole, with ideological and political divergences (Fontana, 2014b).

Together with the recovery of the language, and economic and political modernisation in the form of industrialisation, the construction of the Catalan historical discourse was part of a new political project – Catalanism. This did not attempt to separate Catalonia from the state but rather to adapt the state so that several identities could coexist within it (Colomines i Companys, 2014). An example is the “Memorial de Greuges” of 1885, which referred to models from the German Empire, Austria-Hungary and the union of Sweden and Norway (González Casanova, 1990).

The structure of the narrative of the history of Catalonia can be summarised as a glorious medieval period followed by decline in the 16th and 17th centuries leading to the disastrous defeat of 1714 and the loss of the Catalan structures of state. And what was the consequence of this unstoppable downward trajectory? Castilian intervention. This began with the intervention in the Compromise of Caspe and the introduction of a dynasty of Castilian kings and ended with the imposition of the Nova Planta decree by Philip V in 1716. Catalonia’s history therefore had very few episodes to be trumpeted in modern times: only the War of 1640 and the President of the Generalitat of the time, Pau Claris. The rest of the historical account confirmed the bad impressions expressed by Cristòfor Despuig: an increase in Castilian assimilationism. A dialectic was established between Castilian absolutism and the option of freedom represented by Catalonia (Grau i Fernández, 2004). And (Soler Molina, 2018) the 19th-century Catalan nationalists rewrote the history of the country again with the clear intention of presenting themselves as the people with a mission to put right Catalonia’s unfortunate history in a new relationship with Spain. This project began a debate with the state which is still ongoing today.

19 Original text: “l’Estat nacionalitzador de les masses de la fi del segle XIX ençà trobà en la narració històrica l’espai on es presentava d’una manera més acabada la definició del país i la seva identitat”.

KONFLIKT IN IZGRADNJA NACIONALNE IDENTITETE:
KATALONIJA 1516–1714

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POVZETEK

V članku je predstavljena hipoteza, da se nacionalna identiteta med drugim oblikuje skozi konflikt z drugimi narodnimi skupnostmi. Ker se prispevek osredotoča na moderno dobo, avtor najprej izpostavi teoretično razpravo o obstoju narodov pred 19. stoletjem. Študija primera, uporabljena za prikaz izhodiščne hipoteze, obravnava izgradnjo katalonske identitete in njeno postopno konfrontacijo s kastiljsko, ki je nazadnje obveljala za špansko. Poglavitne vire za preučevanje predstavljajo kastiljska in katalonska zgodovinska dela, dodatne pa tudi druga književna in politična besedila. Z identitetnim soočanjem s Francijo avtor prikaže, da soočanje identitet ne poteka ločeno zgolj z eno sosedo, temveč istočasno z vsemi. V sklepnem delu prispevka avtor ugotavlja, da so izkušnje in predhodni argumenti glede prepoznavanja nasprotnih si identitet v 19. stoletju že del nacionalističnih diskurzov.

Ključne besede: Katalonija, narod, identiteta, španska monarhija

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