

BARCELONA MEDITERRANEAN CAPITAL

The Medieval Metamorphosis, 13th-15th Centuries



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In the 13th century, Barcelona was no longer merely the episcopal city and county capital of earlier centuries. Sustained economic dynamism had fed many decades of physical expansion and population growth, and the city was now home to an increasingly complex society. Barcelona had also achieved political centrality, because the feudal lineage that lorded over the city had become a royal house that was forcefully increasing its domains, even seawards. The ruling elite was, moreover, about to gain increased influence and autonomy in managing the city's interests, negotiating the creation of the first municipal regime with the king. Barcelona's boundaries would extend from Montgat hill to Mount Montjuïc, and twelve leagues into the sea.

← Portolan chart. Detail of Barcelona showing the city's sea wall with its open section, the minor city gates in the wall along La Ribera quarter, the east and west extensions of the defensive walls reaching into the sea, the port breakwater, and the signal tower on Montjuïc. Jaume BERTRAN. 1489. BNCF

A Port City

Since the second half of the 12th century, sea trade had become the main driver of development in the city of Barcelona. Benjamin of Tudela noted the arrival of “traders from all over: from Greece, from Pisa, from Genoa, from Alexandria in Egypt, from the land of Israel, from Africa and from all its bordering countries”. They brought with them not only products, but also ideas and knowledge. In the mid-15th century, other travellers, such as Sebastian IIsung (1446) and Gabriel Tetzal (1465-1467), continued to compare Barcelona with Venice for its “great trade with the whole world” and “great sea traffic”.

All this “traffic” was managed without a natural harbour; only a large sandbar lying parallel to the maritime façade –known as the *tascha* or *tasques*– provided some protection for anchorage. In 1439, the city obtained royal permission to build its first dock. Despite the failure of the operation, these works transformed the Barcelona coastline. In 1477, a decade of further works finally equipped the city with a breakwater over a hundred metres long and fifteen metres wide.

Barcelona finally had a port, which since then has been a backbone of the history of the city, until the 21st century.

↓ Barceloneta I. Basque hulk built in c. 1410 and sunk in the port of Barcelona in mid-15th century. 2008 Archaeological excavations. Servei d'Arqueologia de Barcelona



↗ Ruins of the 1477-1487 breakwater found at the base of the Migdia bastion during the 2006-2008 excavations. Photo: Mikel Soberón.

Maritime transport: boats, lembi, hulks, galleys...

Transport was preferably done with boats, because it was much faster and cheaper. The naval typology included propulsion by oars, candle and mixed. Boats predominated for fishing, unloading and trading with nearby sites, and the middle-lined lembi to cross the Western Mediterranean. There were also hulks, between 150 and 800 tons, arriving from Alexandria to Flanders, just sailing and with little crew. Ships built in Atlantic ports, like this one, followed the technique of “clinker lining” (each edge of hull plank overlaps the previous one and it is finally fixed to the structure). The ones manufactured in Barcelona, like in the rest of the Mediterranean, followed the technique of “carvel lining” (each edge is fixed to the structure already built, in parallel to the previous one). There were also the galleys, long ships of low capacity and mixed propulsion, as well as those ships of rounded form. Fitted with between 150 and 180 paddlers - free men armed with crossbows and short swords - were easily manoeuvrable and defensible, optimal for war and trade in high value products, which attracted pirates.



Build and repair ships: slipways and shipyards.

The shipwrights built the ships; the caulkers waterproofed them with oakum and tar. They were concentrated on the quarter of La Ribera. The great shipwrights had a barrack to store tools and wood. In front of it there was the slipway, the beach area where boats, *lembi* and hulks were constructed. In the royal shipyards galleys were stored and repaired, to be reused,

and also new galleys were built. From 1378, the city co-financed the works of the new shipyard at the foot of Montjuïc, and in exchange the old shipyard, located in the current Pla del Palau, was transformed into a new civic square presided over by La Llotja (Exchange).

↓ Pliers. 14th century. MUHBA



A DYNAMIC SOCIETY

Like all other major cities in the Mediterranean region, Barcelona had a diverse society. The boundaries between groups were clear, but economic dynamism had opened the door to upward mobility based on enrichment.

The class of higher citizens was formed by *prohoms* (*probi homines*), who were distinguished from the mass of artisans, shopkeepers, innkeepers and vegetable-growers by their fortune and prestige. Superior to all others were public servants and the privileged ecclesiastical estate. As Barcelona was a port city, many people were constantly passing through, and there were large numbers of slaves. A large, active minority also lived in the Jewish quarters, known as *calls*, until the Jews were forced to convert or migrate.



Detail of the mural paintings in the former Royal Palace, depicting the conquest of Majorca. Fourth quarter of the 13th century. MUHBA

A city with very few noble people

Possession of the city of Barcelona was shared between the king, the Cathedral and the citizens, in different ways. The nobles of lineage (Empúries, Montcada, Pinós and so on) and other territorial barons continued to occupy the upper layers of Catalan society, but they lived in castles in their domains and did not intervene in the government of the city. The palaces of the nobility did not begin to proliferate in Barcelona until the 16th century.

↓ Corbels with representations of noble man and woman from a house in Carrer dels Templers. 15th century. MUHBA



↑ "Two-eared" knightly dagger, possibly of North African origin or from Granada. 15th century. MUHBA

Knights. Although depictions of their feats adorned the rooms of many urban mansions, knights (members of the military establishment or lower nobility) were not at first attracted to the city. In the mid-14th century, when the warlike function of the knights had diminished, members of the citizen elite obtained knighthoods by purchasing them or providing services to the monarch. By the 15th century, it had become normal to find knightly lineages with residence in Barcelona.



Knightly rituals. When the status of knight became the pinnacle culminating social rise in the city, knightly public rituals began to acquire a greater presence. The funeral ceremony known as *córrer les armes*, literally, "running the arms", became a frequent sight. In this ritual, riders on horseback carried in the ceremonial pavise of the deceased with the upper side downwards, riding round and round the funerary catafalque uttering cries of grief.

← Funerary pavises of the Tarré family and the Torres family, lords of Almenara. 15th century. PSMP

The social ostentation of ennoblement.

In the early-16th century, the number of nobles with permanent residence in Barcelona rose sharply. These noble people used a host of ways to show off their status, from self-representation in paintings and sculptures and heraldic decoration at their mansions to their clothing and the public exhibition of luxury goods.

→ Floor tiles from Casa Padellàs showing the heraldic arms and motto of the Sabastida family. C. 1515. MUHBA



The urban elite of the *probi homines*

In the early-13th century, a group of distinguished families with no ties to the rural aristocracy became established. They had become rich through trade, marriage and service to the monarch, and enjoyed great prestige and the acknowledgement of their neighbours. The heads of these families were known as *probi homines* and were the main beneficiaries of the constitution of the municipal governments in times of King James I. Over time, they evolved into rentiers and formed the group of *honourable citizens*, that were recognised as practically members of the lower nobility from the beginning of the 16th century onwards.

Outstanding tombs. Another way of making a show of one's social status was in the construction of solemn tombs in chapels and cloisters. Due to such a great demand, Gothic art developed architectural ensembles surrounded by chapels, something not seen in Romanesque sites.

↓ Burial urn of Bernat Burguet, Councillor of Barcelona. Inscripció: "Here lies Bernat Burguet with his wife and three daughters. The first one was wife of Marimó de Plagamans, and other of Bernat Duforc". 14th century. MNAC

The adoption of heraldry. The use of one's own heraldic arms in imitation of the system of self-representation already used by noble families was the symbolic expression of the consolidation of the citizen lineages that took control of municipal institutions.

→ Catalan book of heraldry. Bernat DE LLUPIÀ. 1480-1530. BC

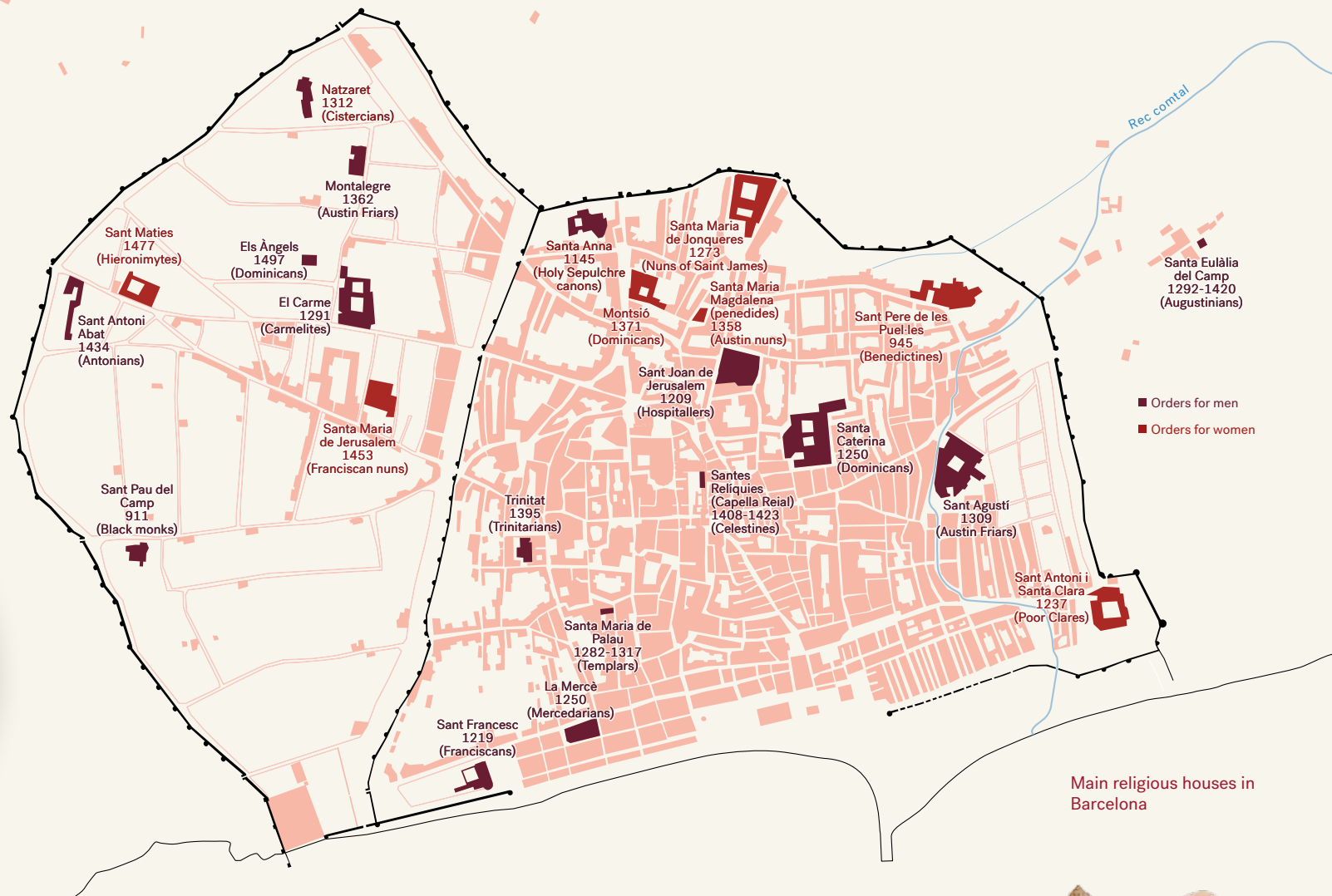


Many clergymen, monks and nuns

In those days, everyone had a close relative who was clergyman, monk or nun. Entering religious life ensured a livelihood and opened the door to studies and ecclesiastical benefits. The new urban monastic mendicant orders, which first appeared in the early-13th century with the founding of the Franciscans and the Dominicans, strengthened this trend. There were no obstacles to entrance. In a single day in 1368, 28 nuns professed at the Convent of Santa Caterina. By the end of the 15th century, the clergy represented nearly 10% of the total population.



↗ Tableware from the Dominican Convent of Santa Caterina. 15th century. MUHBA



Main religious houses in Barcelona

Religious houses in Barcelona. Both branches of the mendicant orders, masculine and feminine, soon arrived in Barcelona. Urban preaching, the ideal of the return to evangelical poverty and the canonisation of some members made them very popular, and this forced pre-existing monastic orders to adapt to the new context. After the plague epidemic of 1348, convents continued to spread to saturation point. In 1370, King Peter III dictated a statute banning the foundation of new religious houses within the city walls, but construction of such sites continued nevertheless.

An ecclesiastical nobility. In contrast to the mendicant ideal, the high clergy constituted a privileged elite comparable to the nobility. To the prelates and abbots were added a large number of secular canons and the rectors at the richest parishes. The accumulation of appointments with good incomes at various places, made possible by the right to delegate their functions to another salaried clergyman, enabled them to amass huge fortunes and establish their residence in the city.

→ Prelate and acolyte clergy on a funerary relief. Attributed to Gil DE MORLANES, *el Vell*. 15th century. MFM



More citizens, new trades

The need for labour in an expansive economy attracted immigrants, and the growth of both the population and wealth increased and diversified demand. Fruit and vegetable growers, fishermen and a few shepherds continued to operate food resources in the urban environment, but trade in food and the demand for processed products gradually reduced their relative weight compared to the population engaged in manufacturing. More and more specific trades emerged, and formerly secondary activities increased. Urban society also needed many services that required highly specialised workers.



↑ Wrought-iron wafer maker. 15th century. MUHBA

↓ Altarpiece of Saint Mark, by Arnau BASSA, commissioned by Barcelona Shoe-makers Guild to be installed in Barcelona Cathedral. Nowadays, at Santa Maria Church in Manresa. 1346

The production of musical instruments. As each industry began to boom, it stimulated others. For example, carpenters, tinsmiths and tanners supplied organ-makers with the necessary materials to build the large, medium and portable organs used to play sacred music in churches and profane music at palace and private parties. Masters of playing instruments and viola lambs worked for minstrels and troubadours who provided entertainment at the banquets and celebrations of the powerful.

↑ Bone flute or single-reed instrument fragment. Early-16th century. MUHBA

↖ Jew's harp. 15th century. MUHBA

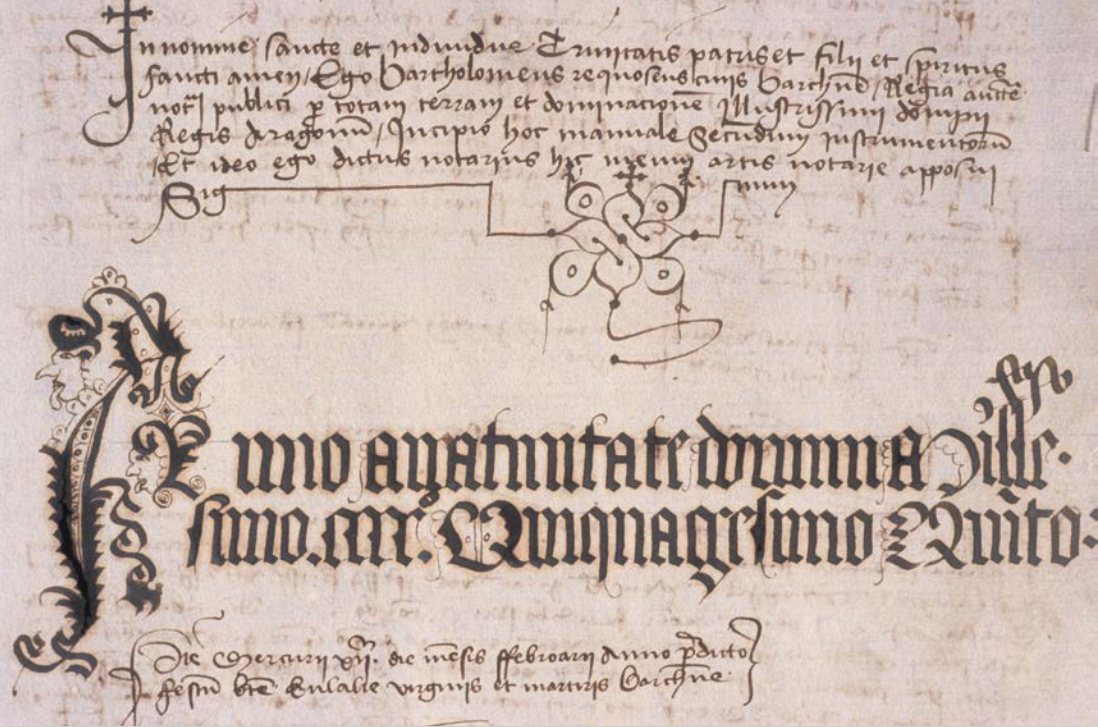


Written culture: from copyists to printers.

From the 13th century, the spread of literacy and the use of paper created a lay audience thirsty for knowledge in the city. The Catalan language penetrated into spheres previously reserved for Latin and Occitan, stimulating a Catalan literary tradition in which the history and image of Barcelona found a place. While the institutions and the elites continued to represent their power on luxurious parchment codices, the use of the humble paper manuscript spread rapidly. This dynamic continued with the arrival of the printing press in Barcelona in the 1470s. The first local printer, Pere Posa, established this new business in 1481, engaged at first in printing erudite works and posters (appeals, edicts, devotional plates and so on).

→ Miniature in the Catalan translation of the *Dictorum factorumque memorabilium*, by Valerius Maximus, made by Friar Antoni Canals in 1395. Copy commissioned to Arnau DE TOLLÍS by the councillors of Barcelona. 1408. AHCB





↑ Protocol of the Barcelonan notary public Bartomeu de Requesens. 1455-1456. AHPB

Law. The restoration of Roman law was consolidated over the course of the 13th century. Besides several jurists with university training, Barcelona was home to many public notaries familiar with legal Latin. Nearly all events of a certain importance generated notarial documents and, as a guarantee, the notary kept the registry version in his records. This practice, which continues even today, has generated a rich legacy of exceptional historic archives.

Health. In terms of services, there was great demand for health care. At the top of this sector were certain doctors with the theoretical university training of the times. Below them, a large number of barber-surgeons, apothecaries and healers, who had learned from those that preceded them and by reading basic texts translated into Catalan, attended those who could not afford the services of a doctor.

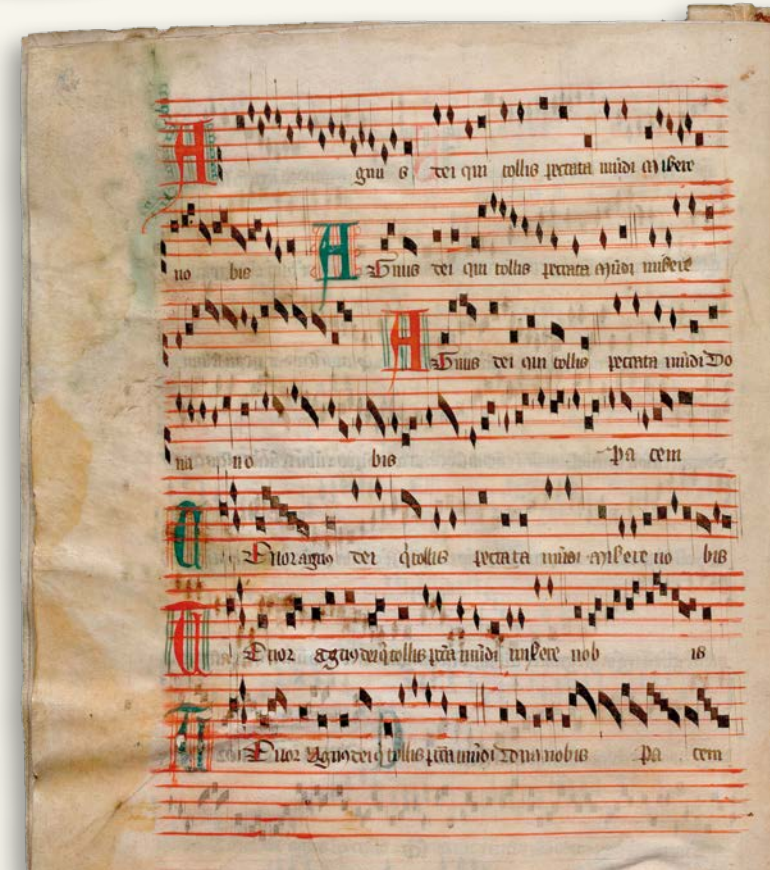
← Apothecary's pots. 14th-15th centuries. MUHBA



Musical performances. Music was omnipresent in Barcelona. In the cathedral, in churches and in convents, as well as outside, at processions and funerals, organ music, polyphony and plainchant could be heard. There were the official musicians playing heraldic instruments and high minstrels, popular flutes and drums, prayers sung by the blind and the songs of prostitutes, vendors and children, music that also rang out in the domestic sphere.

← Plate representing a musician probably playing a shawm. Early-16th century. MUHBA

↓ *Missa de Barcelona*, from the Royal Chapel of Martin the Humane. Late 14th Century. BC



The floating population

Thanks to its port, medieval Barcelona was a cosmopolitan city: there were merchants and factors (traders) from all over the realm and the western Mediterranean region. Barcelona was a pole of attraction for people inland, who came here to find work, and there was a large floating population of sailors passing through and men seeking to join the crews of ships. Many of the huge number of prostitutes were also foreigners. Some people stayed for just a few days, while others might live in the city for several years.

↳ Bronze jettons. Internal currency coins used by foreign trading companies, 14th-16th centuries. MUHBA



A society with many slaves

There were many slaves, both male and female, in medieval Barcelona. From the 10th century, Muslims arrived from the border with Islam; from the 14th century, these were joined by pagans and Eastern Christians from Greece, Eurasia and the Balkans, as well as Sardinians; from the mid-15th century onwards, migrant waves were made up, above all, by black people from West Africa. In 1425, at least one in ten inhabitants in Barcelona was a slave. Slaves had the legal status of chattels and they were kept by all kinds of owners, who often used them in craft activities and for the harder jobs. Most were finally Christened. In 1455, the Black Brotherhood of Saint James was founded.

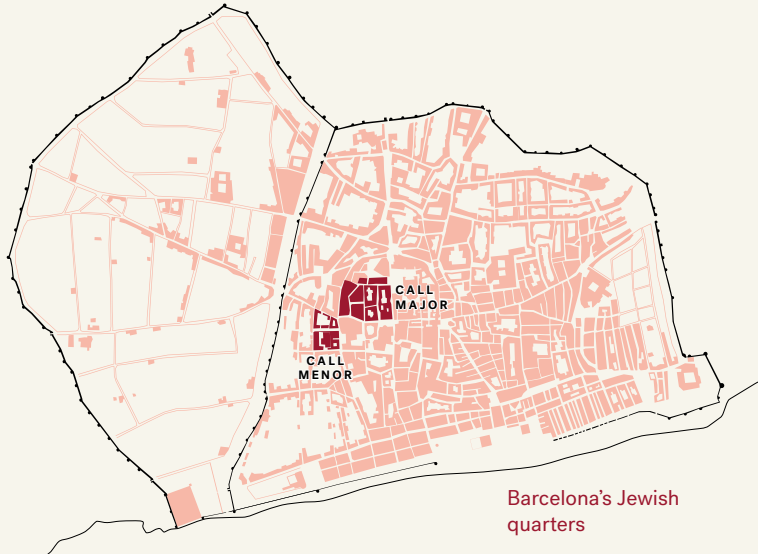
↓ Tile representing a black person and a Saracen, the two communities that brought the most slaves to Barcelona. From the palace of the Boil family, lords of Manises. 15th century. MDB



Barcelona's Jewish community

Besides the Christian population, there was a large Jewish minority in Barcelona, a community that played a leading role in the launch of Mediterranean city trade. Barcelona's Jewish quarter, the largest in the realm, prospered until well into the 14th century, its population increased by Jews fleeing from the domains of the king of France. Such activities as money-lending

(the prohibition on Christians against usury did not affect them), trade and specialised arts and crafts (coral, silver, bookbinding and so on) enabled their elites to prosper, thanks in part to their close relations with the monarchy, of which the Jews were both property and a source of revenue and finance. Barcelona's Jewish quarter, or call, was famed for its many outstanding intellectuals.



Barcelona's Jewish quarters

From rejection to the massacre of 1391. However, according to predominant lines of thought, Jews had no place in a Christian country. Social rejection grew in the 14th century, encouraged by preachers and with the connivance of the Council of One Hundred. In 1391, a wave of violence that had begun in Seville continued with attacks on Barcelona's Jewish quarters to the cry of "Baptism or death!". Around three hundred Jews were killed, the rest were baptised, many continuing to live in the city as conversos.

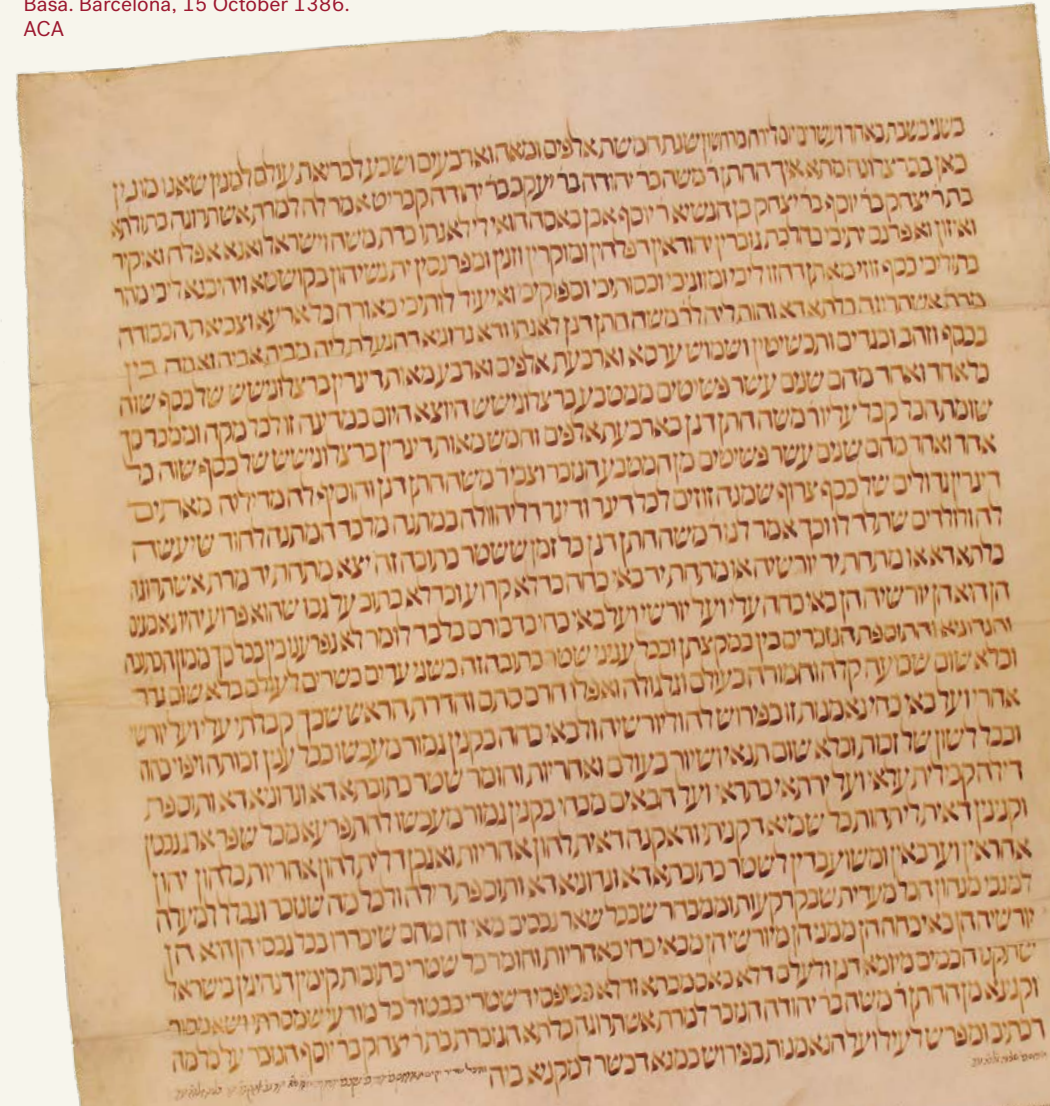
← Funeral stone of a young rabbi. 13th-14th centuries. MUHBA

↘ Salt bowl decorated with the star of David, 14th century. MUHBA



Discrimination against conversos. After 1391, the municipal government would no longer permit the regeneration of Jewish quarters by Jews coming from elsewhere. Conversos who did not leave sought to live together, moving into the Call menor, or minor Jewish quarter. Although they were legally Christian, they continued to suffer discrimination similar to previous years, a state of affairs that became even worse following the establishment of the new Inquisition by the Catholic Monarchs in 1487. This signalled the start of direct persecution.

↓ *Ketubah* — "marriage contract" in Hebrew — between Mossé Cabrit, a Barcelonan Jew, and his fiancée, Astruga, daughter of Isaac Aben-Basa. Barcelona, 15 October 1386. ACA



THE INSTITUTIONAL SYSTEM

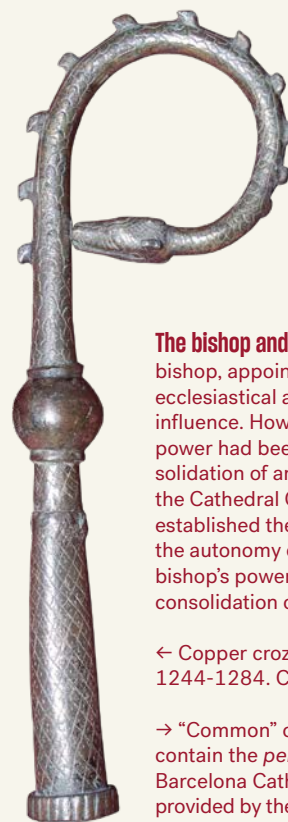
Diverse Barcelona society was articulated politically through its institutions. Some of these had remote origins and had evolved, while others were quite new or had been reformed while maintaining their traditional titles. The oldest were those of a religious nature. First and foremost were the bishop and the Cathedral, who had disputed rule over the city with the counts until the latter's authority was finally imposed in around 1140. Three years before this, the pact between Ramon Berenguer IV and Ramiro the Monk had transformed the county house of Barcelona into the royal dynasty of Aragon, and this had transformed the policy for territorial expansion. Barcelona's *probi homines* took advantage of the financial problems that wars caused the monarchy to establish the city's first municipal regime.

The Church

The Church fostered the devotion of the populace and gave assistance to the needy. The parishes were the basic organisational cell in the city. The power of the institution was based on its wealth and property, jurisdictional control and the political role played by its dignitaries. Since its creation, the municipal government established strong ties with the main ecclesiastical institutions, especially with the new mendicant orders. In the 14th century, the transfer of the papal court to Avignon enabled direct negotiations with the head of the Church, but also interference by the monarch in a Church divided by the Western Schism. When the Aragonese Benedict XIII (Pope Luna) resided briefly in the city, Barcelona became pontifical capital from August 1409 to June 1410.



→ Saint Eulalia, from the south door of the cloister in Barcelona Cathedral. Attributed to Giuliano DI NOFRI. 1431-1435. CB



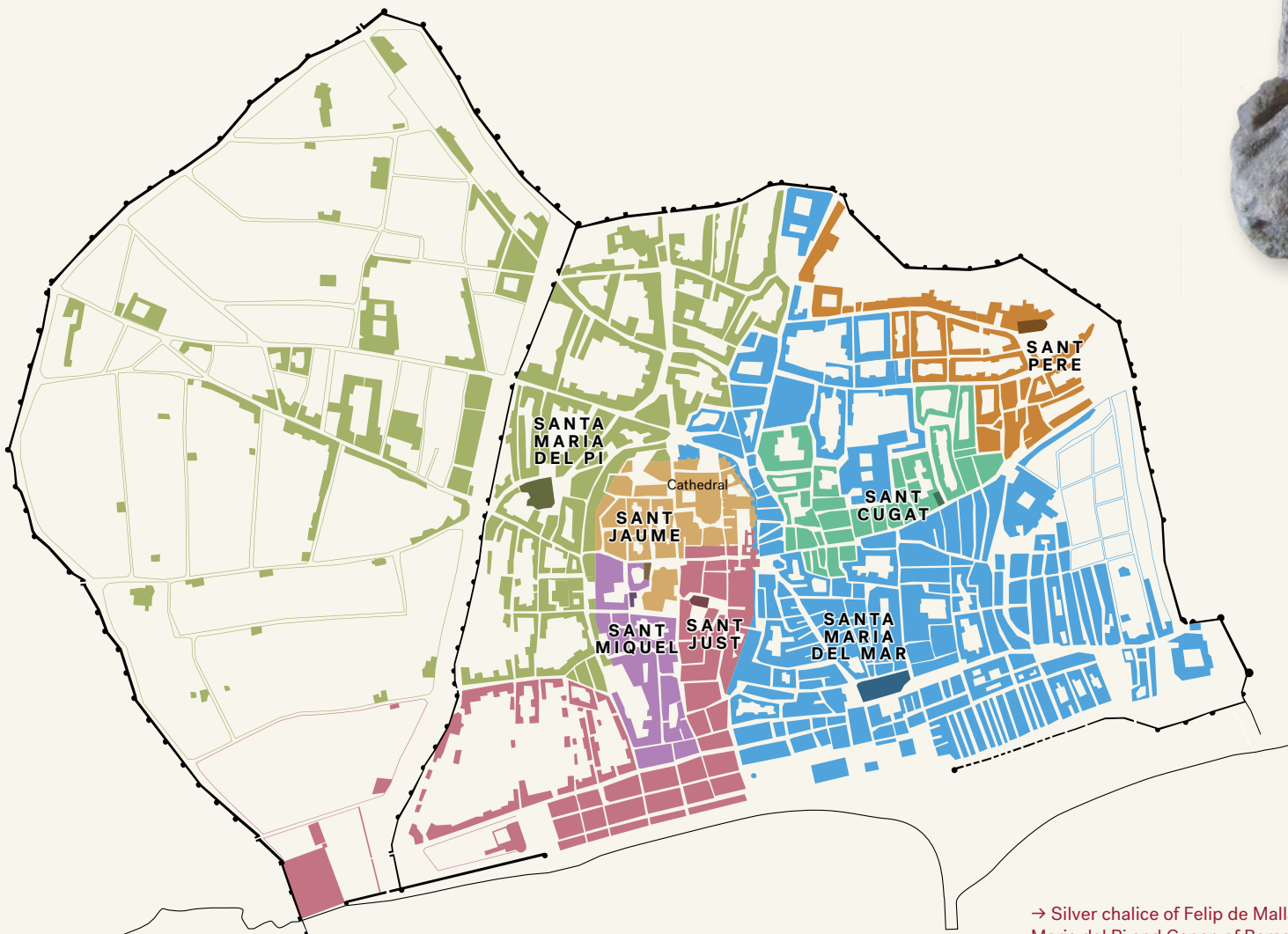
The bishop and the Cathedral Chapter. The bishop, appointed by the pope, was the highest ecclesiastical authority and exercised great influence. However, his political and economic power had been weakened by the gradual consolidation of an active internal counterpower: the Cathedral Chapter. The Carolingians had established the Chapter in order to increase the autonomy of the canons and counteract bishop's power, which diminished with the consolidation of county-royal power in the city.

← Copper crozier of Bishop Arnau de Gurb. 1244-1284. CB

→ "Common" or "Anniversary" bag used to contain the *pellotes*, coins used internally at Barcelona Cathedral to remunerate the services provided by the canons. 15th-16th centuries. CB



The parishes. Santa Maria del Pi. Urban growth led to the restructuring of the city's parishes. Since the 13th century, Barcelona had had seven parishes. In addition to administering the sacraments, they implemented different forms of organisation with the participation of their parishioners: workshops, alms-houses, brotherhoods... Among the parishes that most extended its boundaries was Santa Maria del Pi, which was favored by the gradual occupation of the north-western half of the Raval neighbourhood.



The parishes of Barcelona

→ Arms of the Parish of Santa Maria del Pi. 15th century. PSMP



→ Silver chalice of Felip de Malla, Rector of Santa Maria del Pi and Canon of Barcelona's Cathedral. 15th century. PSMP





→ Saint Augustine washes the feet of Jesus Pilgrim, a panel of the altarpiece from the church of Sant Agustí Vell, commissioned by the Tanners' Guild. Pau VERGÓS. C. 1470/1475-1486. MNAC

From brotherhoods to trade corporations

In the 13th century, when certain trades (shoemaking, blacksmithing, wool-making, and so on) began to achieve social importance, they used the protection of the Church to form associations, citing the ancient form of the devotional brotherhood. From their original religious and charitable functions, the brotherhoods evolved into trade corporations, governed by municipal regulations and royal privileges. By the end of the 14th century there were thirty-five such brotherhoods in Barcelona. In 1453, they entered the municipal government. Although they retained the name and forms of a brotherhood, many were already operating as guilds by that time.



↑ Wooden box containing the relics of saints Abdon and Sennen, patrons of the Brotherhood of Vegetable Growers of the Portal de Sant Antoni. 15th century. MUHBA

→ Silver reliquary of saints Abdon and Sennen, patrons of the Brotherhood of Vegetable Growers of the Portal de Sant Antoni. 1410. MUHBA





The Crown, lord of the city

By 1140, the count-kings had consolidated their control over Barcelona, the county capital and the monarchy's most important possession. They had their main palace in the city, with rooms to store documents, arms and books, as well as the best shipyard and the most active mint. They also chose Barcelona when they convened the Catalan parliament. Although they travelled frequently, thirteen kings and queens died in Barcelona. The good understanding between the monarchy and the city's *probi homines* had a strong economic component: the privileges that the monarchs granted were strictly in proportion to the monies with which the municipal leaders met their demands.

↖ King Martin I seated on the throne with the royal sceptre and crown. Charter of Valdecrist charterhouse. 1404. BC

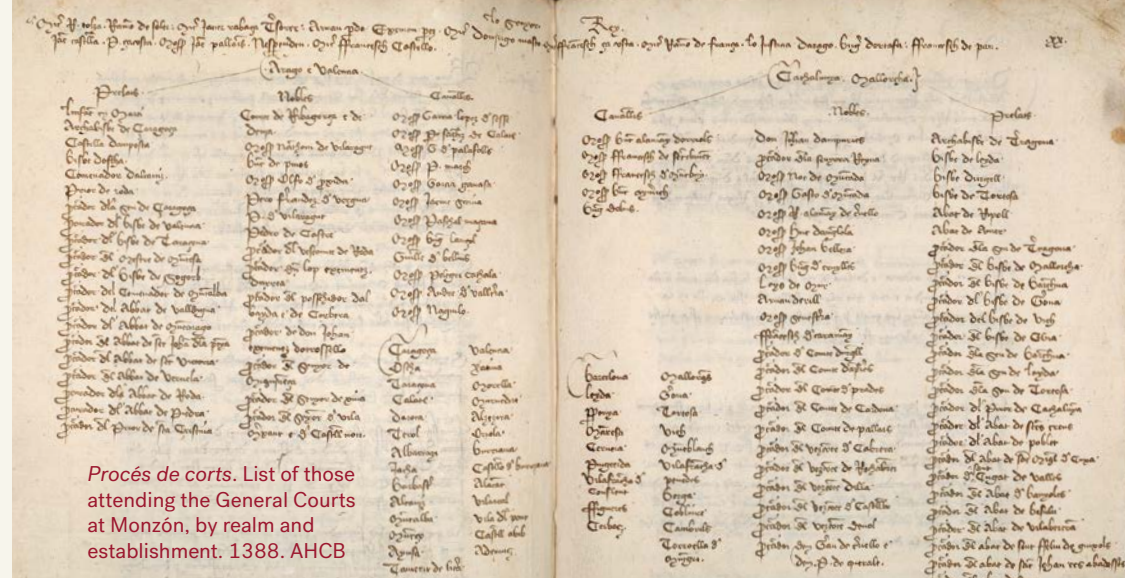


↑ Royal sword Saint Martin. This is a sword of virtue mentioned in various inventories of royal weapons, decorated with the small relief of the saint that gives name to it. C. 1290. MAP

↘ Crest of King Martin I. It was placed on his helmet in battle. 1396-1410. CR



Barcelona, seat of the royal administration. The organisational changes promoted by James II (1291-1327) marked a milestone in the slow evolution of the royal administration. Seven hundred years ago, king James II chose this Royal Palace as the seat of the two institutions of the monarchy that did not follow the monarch in their travels: the office of the "rational master", which controlled management of the Crown's financial officers, and the Royal Archive. These institutions remained in the palace for more than four centuries. Over the course of the 14th century, the number of Barcelona residents linked to the royal administration increased. In 1389, there were so many that John I could form an autonomous branch of the aristocratic Brotherhood of the House of the Lord King. When the House of Trastámara came to power, the kingdoms of Valencia and Aragon acquired their own offices of the "rational master" and royal archives, and Barcelona's position as the administrative capital of the monarchy gradually weakened.



Procés de corts. List of those attending the General Courts at Monzón, by realm and establishment. 1388. AHCB

The royal city during the Courts. The king summoned the Courts when he needed *advice* and *help* before difficult enterprises. The Courts were formed by three establishments or arms: the ecclesiastical, the noble and the royal arms. In exchange for financial and military aid, these agreed general legislation in the Principality of Catalonia. Barcelona led the cities and towns of the *royal arm*, which was sometimes convened alone, in *parliament*. The city always exercised decisive influence, whether the meeting took place in Barcelona or elsewhere, or if the event was a general summoning of all the kingdoms at Monzón.

Towards the capital of Catalonia: the "Deputation of the General". In the 1360s, the *Diputació del General* ("Deputation of the General") or *Generalitat* was created to manage subsidies to the Crown agreed by the Courts and its tax gathering mechanisms. The Generalitat was formed by deputies—one per arm—and the entire administrative structure of auditors, scribes and other officials. The new institution, invoking Saint George's protection, began the construction of its own palace in 1400, and went on to play a major political role, that consolidated Barcelona's status as capital of Catalonia.

↓ Frontal of altar of Saint George, commissioned by the *Diputació del General* for the chapel of the same name in the Palau de la Generalitat de Catalunya. Antoni SADURNÍ. 1450-1451. GC



The municipality of Barcelona

In 1226, the *probi homines* of Barcelona achieved autonomy to raise subsidies for the monarch, and in 1249 King James I agreed to the establishment of the first municipal government, which gradually took shape until it was constituted as the Council of One Hundred (1265) and an executive formed by five councillors (1274). In 1284, Peter the Great granted the Barcelona municipal regime in perpetuity, and the system continued to develop, as was normal at the

time, under the control of the oligarchy who took up the positions of councillors. Little by little, the city gained autonomy in all spheres of urban life, while never become a city state: the monarch always retained the power to modify the municipal regime. Despite the control of the rentier oligarchy at its head, the municipal institution also gave voice to merchants, artists and craftsmen grouped in corporations, although the rest of the population was excluded from its deliberations.

↓ The councillors of Barcelona in their characteristic red clothing. *Usages of Barcelona*. Jaume MARQUILLES. 1448. AHCB

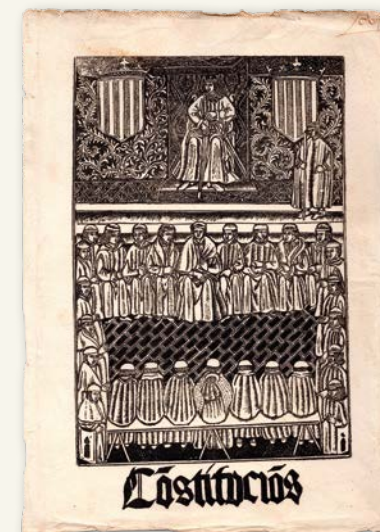


The municipal government and the two royal dynasties: from understanding to divergence.

The municipal government was most willing to cooperate with the count-kings as long as they respected the city's franchises and privileges. Its role in arbitration was key to maintaining complex balances. As the municipality accumulated royal concessions, it gained more strength to contest arbitrary decisions by the sovereigns, empowered by the restoration of Roman law, which exalted the figure of the monarch. Despite the friction, it was possible to maintain a certain balance with the House of Barcelona. When Martin I died without legitimate male offspring, the Compromise of Caspe (1412) led to the choice of the Castilian Ferdinand of Trastámara as king. The increased power of the municipality, enabled by the initial weakness of the new dynasty, led to confrontation with Alfonso the Magnanimous, who left for Italy in 1432. Thirty years later, Barcelona rose up in arms against Alfonso's brother, John II.

↗ Alfonso II, the Liberal, of the House of Barcelona. Jaume MATEU and Gonçal PERIS SARRIÀ. 1427. MNAC

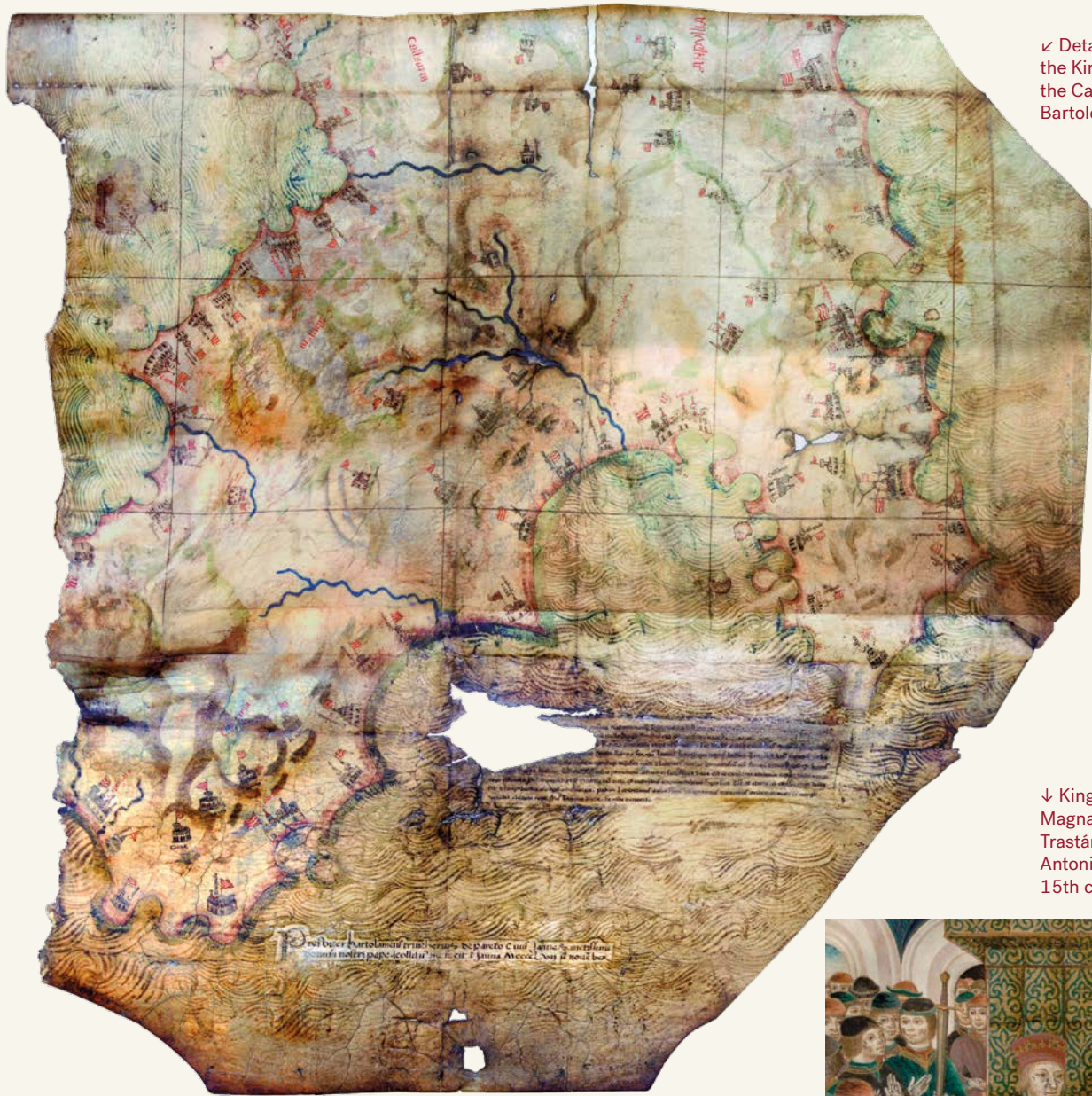
→ *Usatges i Constitucions de Catalunya*. King Ferdinand II, the Catholic, of the Trastámara dynasty, presiding over deliberations by the Royal Council. 1495. BLMR



The queens lieutenant: Queen Maria. Under the Crown of Aragon, women could not inherit the throne; they were queens consorts. However, those with strong personalities were highly influential. Some of them negotiated directly with the councillors, as their husbands' general lieutenants, while the king was far from Barcelona. What was at first an occasional mechanism of replacement became structural in the case of Queen Maria of Castile, wife of Alfonso the Magnanimous, due to the long absence of her husband.

← Queen Maria of Castile, wife of Alfonso the Magnanimous, portrayed in the *Llibre de privilegis i ordinacions de la confraria dels Hortolans del portal de sant Antoni*. 15th-17th centuries. AHCB



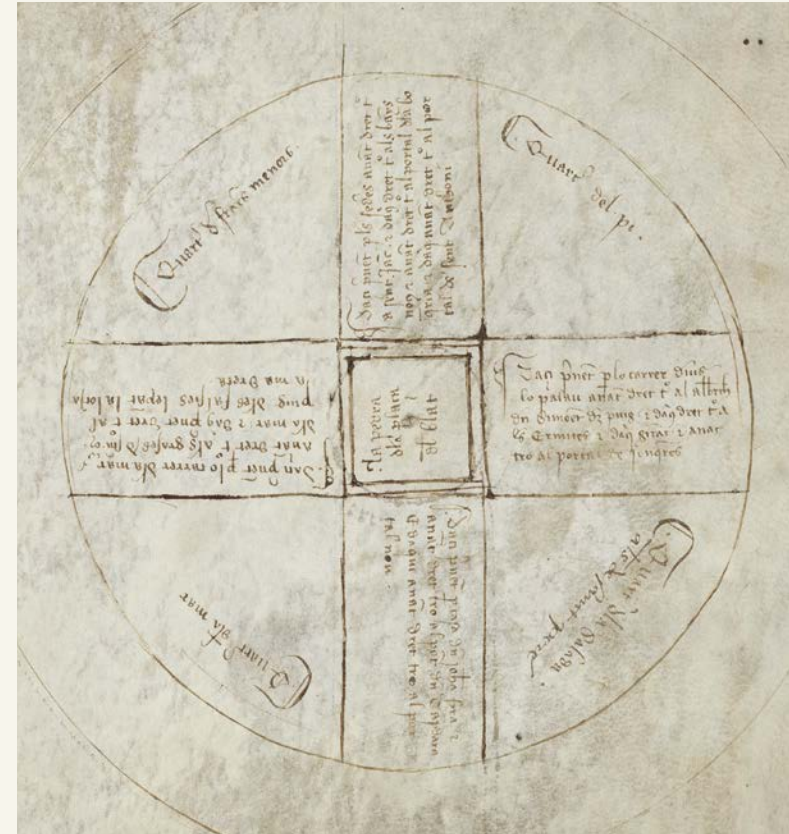


↙ Detail of a map of Italy showing the Kingdom of Naples, under the Catalan-Aragon dominance. Bartolomeo PARETO. 1457. BAHF

Municipal management and its financing. Before the constitution of the municipality, the count-kings had governed the city with their officers: the bailiff managed the defence of royal heritage and the *veguer* (sheriff) public order and the administration of justice. These posts did not disappear, but their importance was greatly decreased by the gradual expansion of municipal autonomy. Through their bodies and officials, the council and the councillors were in charge of defence, urban planning, supply, control of the market, public order and labour organisation. In this way, the municipality took over the provision of essential services for the population, managing the common good of the citizen *res publica*. To finance this, a local fiscal system was introduced, based on taxes on trade and consumption, with the revenue used, also, to finance the necessary public debt issues (*death and pensions census*).

↓ Drawing of the engraved stone in Plaça del Blat showing the administrative distribution of Barcelona and the indications of the four quarters. Military census. 1389. AHCB

↓ King Alfonso the Magnanimous, of the Trastámara dynasty. Antonio BECCADELLI. 15th century. BC



The king stays in Naples. In 1420, King Alfonso the Magnanimous had been adopted as son and heir by Queen Joanna of Naples. Three years later the queen changed her mind and Alfonso was forced to return. In 1432, the king decided to resume his Italian adventure, which culminated ten years later with the absorption of the Kingdom of Naples. Alfonso then stayed in Naples until he

died in 1458, never once visiting Barcelona in that twenty-six-year period. His endorsement of the distribution of Italy established by the Treaty of Lodi in 1454 is reflected in the fragments of this unpublished map.



The city coat of arms. In the first third of the 14th century, with the municipal regime granted in perpetuity, the Council began to feel the need for heraldic self-representation. That was when the city adopted the distinctive arms with the quartered shield that identifies the city even today. In it, the signs of the two institutions that had ruled over the city until then are combined: the Cathedral (the cross) and the Royal House of the count (stripes).

← New quartered arms of Barcelona represented in an ashlar of the convent of Santa Caterina. 14th century. MUHBA

↙ Badge carried on horses of the city services, with the quartered arms of Barcelona. 15th century. MUHBA



Territorial strategies of the Council of One Hundred.

Municipal autonomy was projected outwards in the direct control of strategic territories, above all to ensure wheat supply and obtain revenues. At around the end of the 14th century, the city acquired some fifteen baronies, becoming their feudal lord. At the same time, and with the collusion of a monarchy with large debts, the city began to incorporate communities forming part of royal patrimony as *carrers* (streets) of Barcelona. These communities sought to avoid the control of the creditors of the king, or of the nobility and the Church. The *Carreratge* gave them the protection of the privileges and exemptions that the city enjoyed. By 1485, at least 73 communities had been incorporated in this way.

Barcelona and other cities and towns.

Barcelona competed with other cities and lordly estates in the rest of Catalonia and in Aragon, Valencia and Majorca. Tensions were constant, and the municipal government conducted intense diplomatic activity to defend the city's interests. There were also, however, periods of cooperation, especially when it was necessary to oppose the actions of the monarchs or defend sea trade and the integrity of shared borders. In 1434, the city sent no fewer than 272 letters to authorities from all over the Crown.

→ *Libre de l'offici de la almudacafía de la ciutat de València.* Book sent by the city of Valencia in 1371 at the request of the councillors of Barcelona. AHCB



A PERIOD OF PROSPERITY

Despite the famines, wars and successive episodes of Black Death (since 1348) that had such drastic effects on both population and the economy, Barcelona maintained a general trend of economic strength throughout the Lower Middle Ages, a period of prosperity that lasted until the mid-15th century. Immigration quickly compensated for mortalities, and the population remained steady at around 30,000, added to which were those passing through and the marginal population. Sea trade was a constant driver of economic dynamism, stimulating manufacturing production, a vital element in the city's economy. Money and loans were readily available to finance ambitious projects, both private and public. The spectacular Gothic buildings built by the city over this period, many of which we can still see today, reflect this flourishing period in its history.



Catalan world map.
Attributed to Pere
ROSSELL. C. 1463. BEU

Production strategies

Barcelona was an important craft and manufacturing centre. The goods produced at the city's workshops went, above all, to the local market to cover every day needs (ceramics, metal objects, building materials and so on), without neglecting lucrative regional and international trade. The main manufactured goods exported included cutlery, leather, coral and, above all, drapery.



↗ Syrup pitcher with green and manganese decoration. 13th century. MUHBA

← Serving plate with green and manganese decoration. 13th-16th centuries. MUHBA

↘ Silver ex-voto and silversmith's mould to cast ex-votos of the eyes of Saint Lucy. 14th-16th centuries. MUHBA

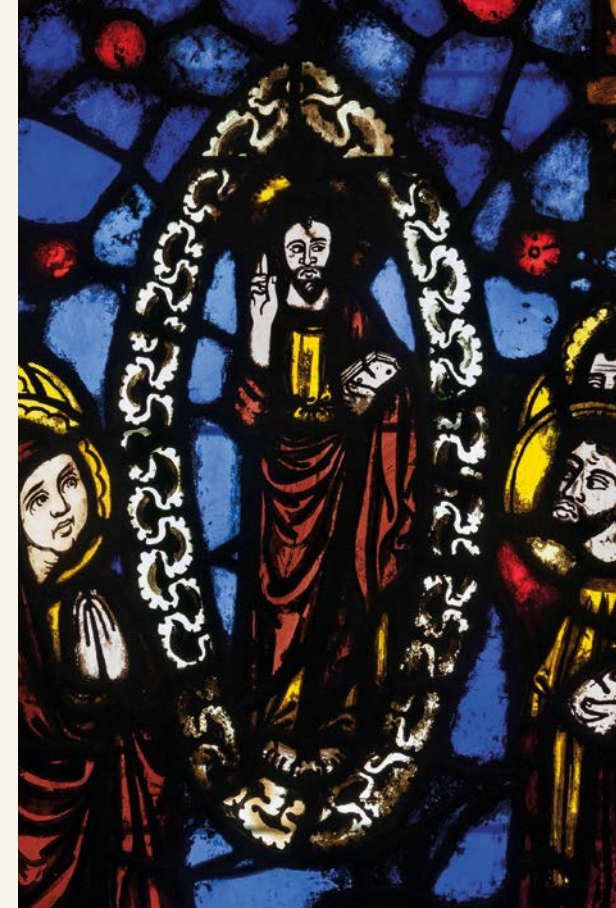


Diversification and reuse. Production was diversifying, especially in the textile sector. Certain manufactured goods, such as fustian, went into decline; others, like silk-making, flourished in the 15th century. Meanwhile, skinnners, second-hand merchants and rag and bone men did a steady trade in used goods: patched, stitched or restored, objects remained in use.

→ Locally produced cotton and linen fabric. 16th century. CDMT



→ Stained glass showing the Ascension of Christ, from the Church of Santa Maria del Mar. First half of the 14th century. PSMM



Artistic production. Sculptural decoration in Barcelonan architectural sites considered to belong to the Gothic period was concentrated at such important points as portals and capitals. Chapels also had altarpieces, carvings and tombs with recumbent images. Blacksmiths displayed their skills in grilles, lamps and candelabras, silversmiths in reliquaries and liturgical objects. The variety of materials and forms is surprising, and was enriched by the arrival of imported works and foreign masters, and by the travels of local artists. Practically all the profane art from that period of delicate production has been lost.

← Virgin, woodcarving. Second quarter of the 14th century. Jaume CASCALLS' Workshop. MFM

Trade, driving force of activity

Besides exporting local products, the city specialised in the redistribution of luxury goods (coral, fine ceramic, etc.), drugs and spices from the East. The city traded, above all, with the Mediterranean islands and Tunisia, but also maintained strong long-distance links with the Eastern Mediterranean, especially Syria and Egypt. Barcelona also imported many basic goods, such as cereals from Sicily and Languedoc. The city's activities stimulated other ports in the Crown, and became an important centre for trade and finance, home to many trading firms and credit and insurance companies.

The merchants' marks. To control movements when loading and unloading, and to lodge claims in case of damage, it was necessary to identify items used to transport and protect goods (sacks, bundles and so on). In the case of liquids, their pottery containers were marked. Other products, such as sugar, were given specific forms to make packaging and transport easier.



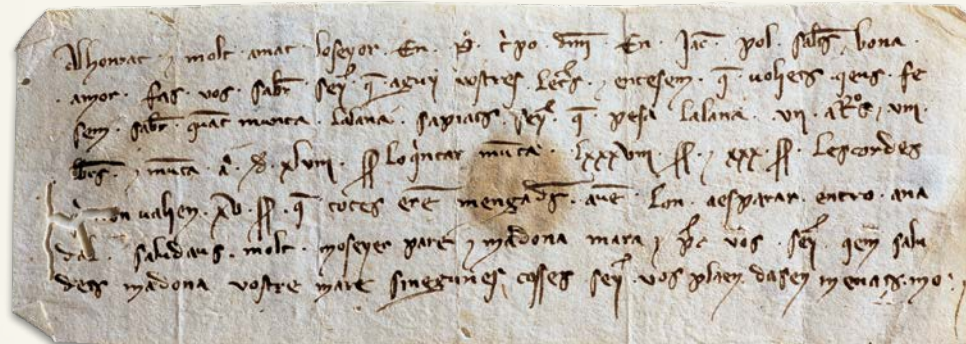
↗ Serving dish, imported from Syria or Egypt. 14th century. MUHBA

↘ Imported jug from Al-Andalus. 13th-16th centuries. MUHBA



↙ Valencia pitcher with merchant's marks, found in Barcelona. 15th century. MUHBA

↘ Tile produced on commission, with the owner's mark. 15th-16th centuries. MUHBA



↗ Letter with information on wool and cord prices sent by Jaume Pol to Pere Tripó, a Barcelona merchant. 1316-1322. CB

Business management. Trade activity was lucrative, but also complex and risky. Good management was essential. Merchants devoted many hours to drawing up the accounts for their businesses and writing letters to ascertain prices and the products most in demand in different places, the presence of pirates and bandits, the risk of seizure of goods by the local authorities, etc.

→ Imported luxury fabric made of gold and silk. 1450-1500. MDB

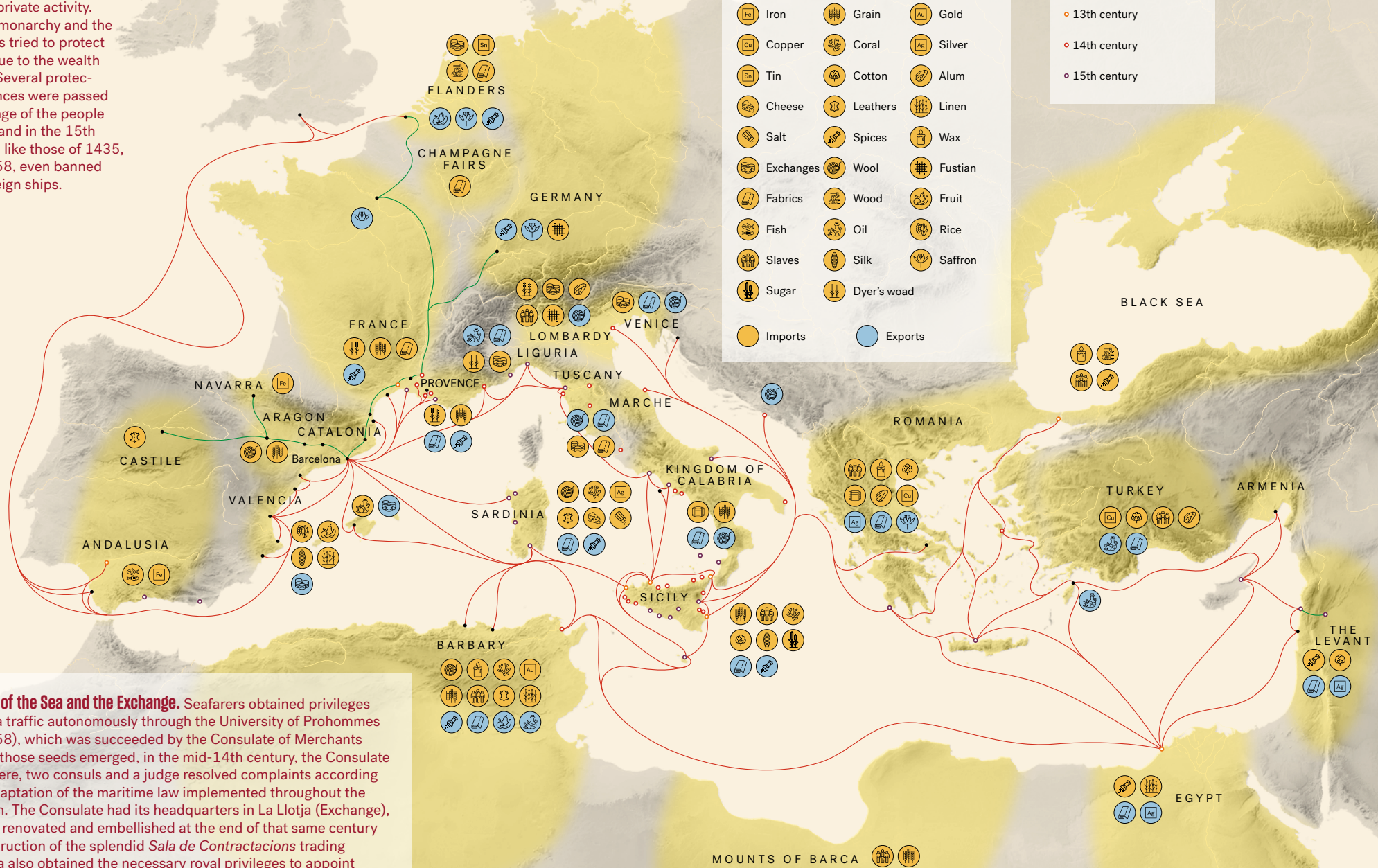


Trade traffic. Goods transport was mainly by water. Unlike Italian cities, Barcelona did not establish public navigation lines; commercial traffic was considered a private activity. However, the monarchy and the Council always tried to protect this activity, due to the wealth it generated. Several protectionist ordinances were passed to the advantage of the people of Barcelona, and in the 15th century some, like those of 1435, 1452 and 1458, even banned the use of foreign ships.

Large trade areas and sea and overland routes in Barcelona's international trade. 13th-15th century

- | | | |
|-----------|-------------|---------|
| Iron | Grain | Gold |
| Copper | Coral | Silver |
| Tin | Cotton | Alum |
| Cheese | Leathers | Linen |
| Salt | Spices | Wax |
| Exchanges | Wool | Fustian |
| Fabrics | Wood | Fruit |
| Fish | Oil | Rice |
| Slaves | Silk | Saffron |
| Sugar | Dyer's woad | |
- Imports Exports

- Overseas consuls appointed by the city of Barcelona**
- 13th century
 - 14th century
 - 15th century



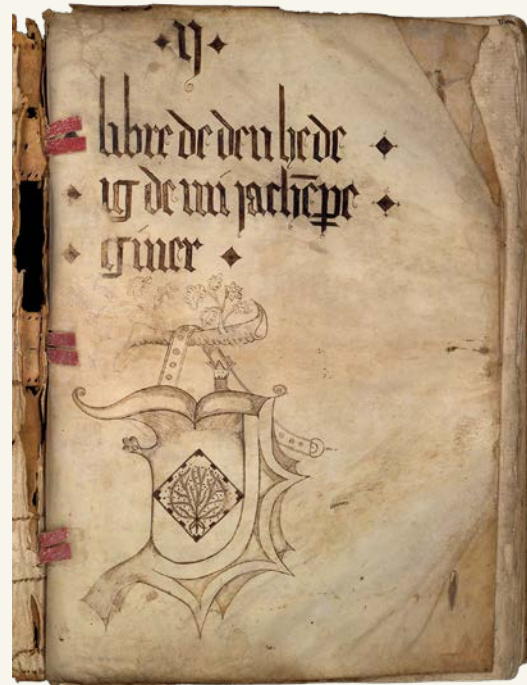
The Consulate of the Sea and the Exchange. Seafarers obtained privileges to manage sea traffic autonomously through the University of Prohommes of Ribera (1258), which was succeeded by the Consulate of Merchants (1279). From those seeds emerged, in the mid-14th century, the Consulate of the Sea. There, two consuls and a judge resolved complaints according to the local adaptation of the maritime law implemented throughout the Mediterranean. The Consulate had its headquarters in La Llotja (Exchange), which the city renovated and embellished at the end of that same century with the construction of the splendid *Sala de Contractacions* trading hall. Barcelona also obtained the necessary royal privileges to appoint overseas consuls abroad and in this way directly supervise its commercial expansion. By the 15th century, there were already around sixty consuls.

Currency and loans

The Catalan economy enjoyed extensive monetary circulation. Local minting of silver coins was increased by the groat (12 silver pence) in 1285 and the gold florin (132 silver pence) in 1346. Foreign currency was also used. Money changers established equivalences, but the volume and the agility of currency transfer were insufficient and many turned to loans. Loans were provided especially by the bank, which also engaged in money changing and handling bills of exchange, as well as receiving deposits and participating in investments. The city authorities regularly resorted to loans to respond to royal petitions and the expenses arising from the exercise of their powers. In 1401, high debt levels led the councillors to create a municipal bank in order to improve financing conditions and reduce the city's debt, aided by the current economic boom.

→ Aragonese florin from King Martin the Humane, minted in Sicily. 1346-15th century. MUHBA

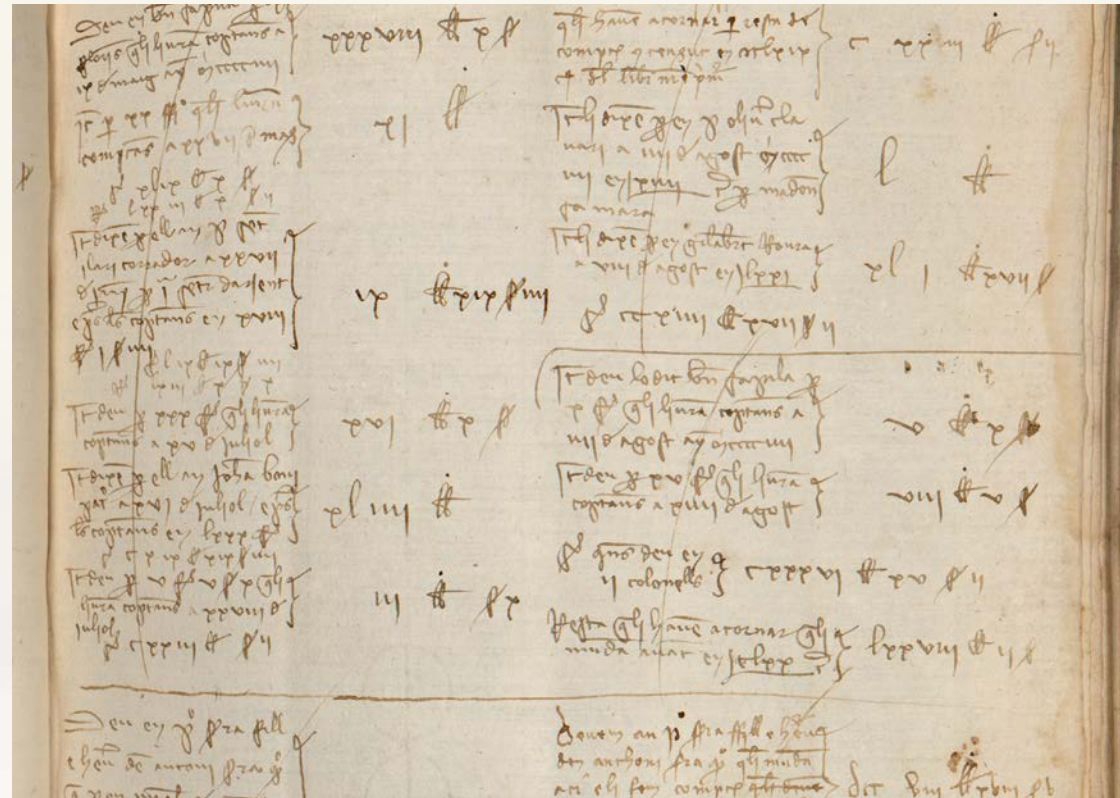
↳ Iron-lined coffer with reinforced lock, used to hold money and objects of value. 14th century. MUHBA



The Taula de Canvi, Europe's first public bank. The Taula de Canvi was the bank of the city of Barcelona. Benefitting from the mistrust generated by the bankruptcies of 1381, it soon became Catalonia's leading financial institution. Money embargoed due to disputes, delayed payments, tutorship, etc., had to be deposited with the bank, which also accepted voluntary deposits. The bank did not pay interest, but it did guarantee deposits, and only gave loans to the municipal authorities.

← *II libre de deu he deig de mi, Jachme Pere Giner.* Second major book by Jaume Pere Giner, banker of Barcelona. 1442-1461. AHCB

↓ Third major book of the Taula de Canvi. Early 15th century. AHCB



Containing unrest

According to the predominant moral doctrine, social inequalities were the will of God, enabling souls to be saved through the Christian exercise of charity. Dozens of charitable institutions and many individuals helped contain unrest among the poorest people in this way. Social peace was a necessary condition for the good progress of the economy, and social discontent posed a latent threat that could generate such violent episodes as the murder of Bernat Marquet (1258), the conspiracy of Berenguer Oller (1285) or the riots that followed the attacks on the Jewish quarters in 1391. The Council used several mechanisms to prevent unrest. Among them, regulating and subsidising food supply and welfare policy were the most effective and with higher propaganda value.

Control of the market. The city authorities subsidised wheat, because bread covered up to 70% of food requirement among the lower classes, and shortages generally resulted in rioting. Other consumer products, such as meat, oil, fish, wine and wood, were regulated by the city, but did not receive public subsidies. Similarly, the Council arbitrated in the sphere of labour relations.

↓ Book of the administrator of markets. 1378-1517. AHCB

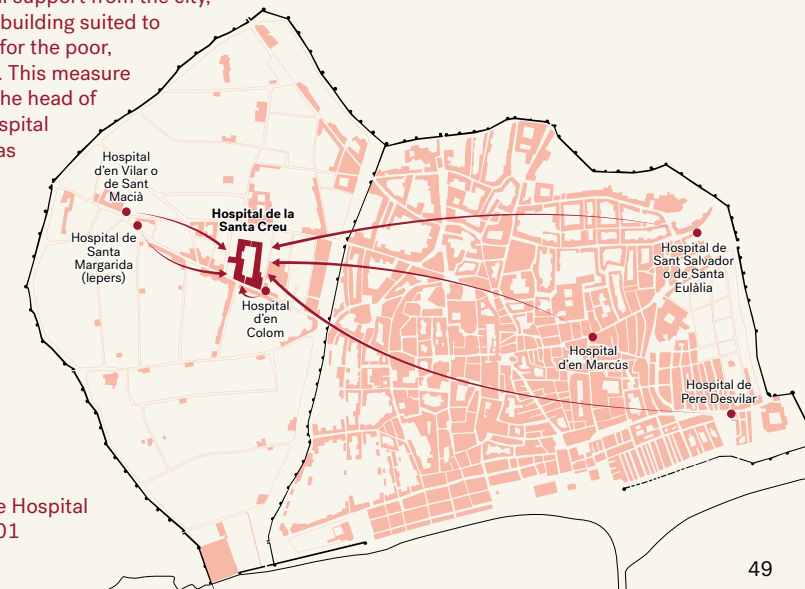


← *Libre Antic* (Old Book) of the Hospital of Pere Desvilar. 1308-1427. HSCSP

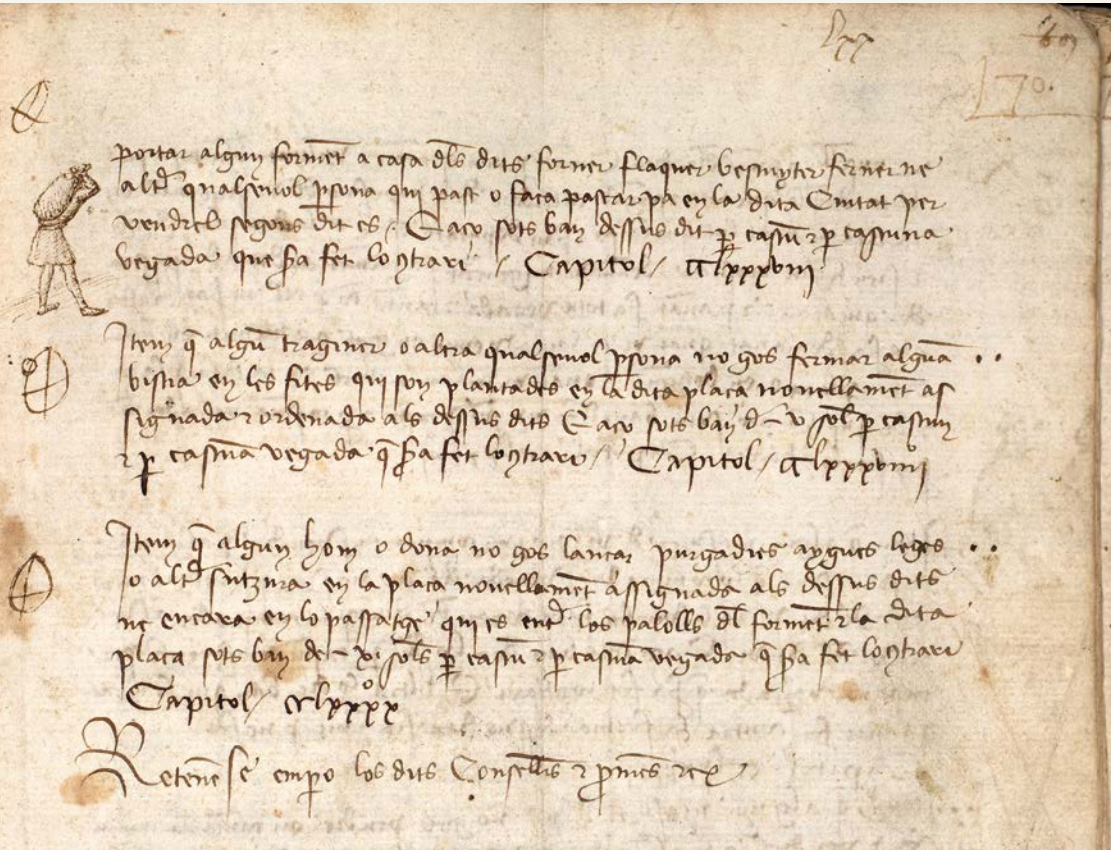
↓ Book of patient admissions with the shield of the Hospital of La Santa Creu. 1484-1492. BC



Welfare policy. At the end of the 14th century, Barcelona had six hospitals. These institutions provided minimal services and were underfunded. In 1401, the municipal and ecclesiastic authorities decided to merge the six into one, the Hospital of La Santa Creu. This major corporation, better managed and receiving considerable financial support from the city, was equipped with a building suited to providing assistance for the poor, orphans and the sick. This measure placed Barcelona at the head of the move towards hospital concentration that was spreading around Europe.



Hospitals fused at the Hospital of La Santa Creu, 1401



THE COLLAPSE OF A MODEL

In 1457, the Castilian humanist Alfonso de Palencia wondered at the appearance of a Barcelona which *resplandecía con increíble aparato* ["shone with incredible brilliance"]. At La Llotja, however, a merchant observed to him that the city he saw was nothing but a shadow of what it had been. The economic crisis, which had begun in the middle of the century, aggravated the conflicts of interest, and a long civil war broke out in 1462. This decade-long conflict left the city exhausted. The German traveller Hieronymus Münzer confirmed this in 1494: Barcelona had reached its apogee forty years earlier, thanks to trade, but the goods had then moved to Valencia. Despite its accumulated wealth, the city seemed dead, he said, compared to what it had been. However, not all economic areas suffered with the same intensity.



The rupture of the equilibria

As the 15th century advanced, the rivalry between the rentier elite and the mass of artisans had increased. Growing tensions were reflected in the constitution of two antagonistic parties: La Biga ("The Beam"), the party of the elites, and La Busca ("The Sliver"), the party of craftsmen. In the 1450s, with the economic crisis worsening and the king distant, the confrontation accelerated. To minimise the opposition of the oligarchy that controlled the city, the House of Trastámara supported La Busca. In 1453, the intervention of the municipal government led by the lieutenant general, Galceran de Requesens, sparked a series of violent episodes that foreshadowed the collapse that Barcelona's urban model was dangerously approaching.

Implosion: ten years of civil war

The imprisonment of the heir to the crown by his father, John II, caused a breakdown in the legal situation in Catalonia, and rising tensions in the country in general and Barcelona finally led to the outbreak of the Civil War (1462-1472). The Deputation of the General and the Council of One Hundred formed an alliance, the Council of the Principality, to lead the confrontation with a king who, in their opinion, no longer represented them. These leaders successively chose three kings to govern and command the army: Henry IV of Castile, Peter of Portugal and René of Anjou. Barcelona, through the *Taula de Canvi* bank, played a key role in financing the war. In 1472, after a year of siege, the city surrendered. The Capitulation of Pedralbes led, however, to the agreement of an acceptable peace with John II.

Paine pour joie. When Henry IV of Castile declined the crown, the councillors and deputies of the General turned their eyes on Peter of Portugal, grandson of Jaume d'Urgell. However, Peter's behaviour as a Renaissance prince educated in Portugal and Castile, and the defeat at the battle of Calaf, soon distanced him from the country. The traces left after his brief reign (1464-1466) include remains of the restoration of the Royal Palace. He left his motto, *Paine pour joie*, everywhere, even on the blade of his ceremonial sword and on the floors painted by Jaume Huguet in the new altarpiece of the Royal Chapel.

→ Window lintel with the motto of the Constable, *Paine pour joie*. 1465-1466. MUHBA

← Bronze bombard and stone from Pijoert Castle. 15th century. MDVA



BARCELONA AFTER THE CIVIL WAR

The postwar period was difficult, generating the changes that took place from the time of the Corts of 1480-1481: gradual conversion of the lieutenant general into a territorial governor or viceroy, and arrival of Castilian nobles to occupy key positions in the royal administration; installation of the Spanish Inquisition as an instrument of control; reform of the city council and other municipal bodies to enable nobles and representatives from guilds to become members.

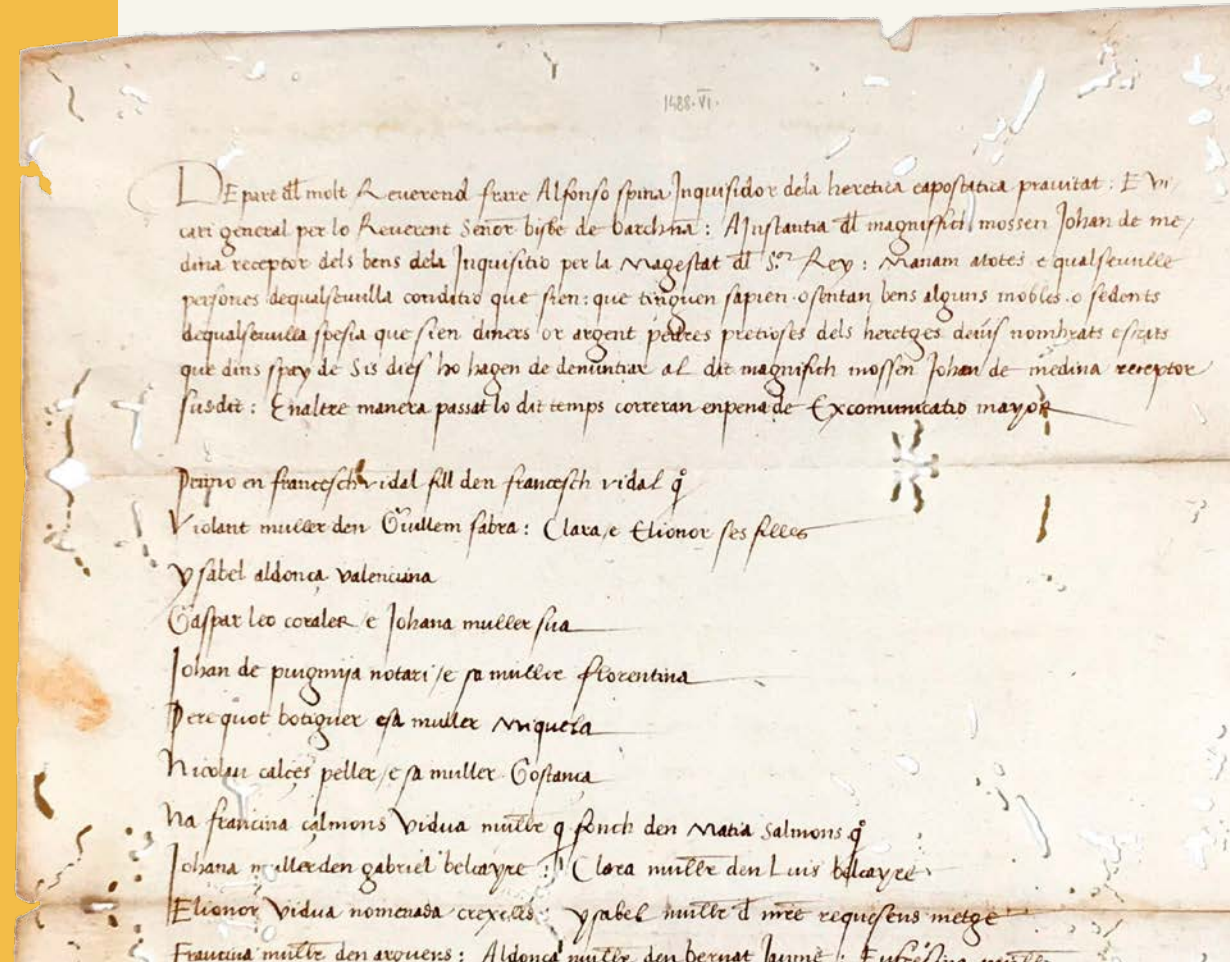
As regards the economy, manufacturing production and trade began to show signs of recovery while never reaching the heights of the previous period of prosperity.

Absentee royals: viceroy lieutenants

Under Ferdinand II, the physical and political absence of the monarch returned once more. Under the traditional name of the lieutenant general, a new figure appeared in Barcelona: the viceroy. Appointed for three to five years, subject to the monarch and badly paid, the viceroy exercised royal powers not assigned to ordinary official, including the general captaincy of the armies (1512). Often, Castilian nobles ignorant of the complex legal system and the local labyrinth of factions had to attempt to resolve such sensitive issues as public order and shortages, leading to the rapid degradation of their image.

Political control reinforced: the new Inquisition

To eradicate the heresy of the Jewish converts, the Catholic Monarchs, Ferdinand II and Isabella I, obtained the power to appoint inquisitors from the Holy See. They also sought an instrument to break the opposition to their political goals. The civil and religious authorities of Barcelona and Catalonia resisted unanimously, claiming that Barcelona had its own inquisitor. After three years of struggle, the councillors and deputies of the General were forced to give in by papal imposition. On 20 July 1487, they swore to assist the activity of the inquisitor Alonso Spina.



→ First official list of those condemned by the Inquisition of Barcelona. April 1488. ACA

Nomina o matricula dels Ciutedans honrats
 de Barcelona desfruits e continuats en lo
 privilegi mltuar per lo Rey nostre Senyor als
 dits Ciutedans atorgat

mclb

- | | |
|--|------------------------------|
| o Bernat Joan capita | o Guerau catorra e |
| o Pere gregos | o Miquel catorra son serma |
| o Pere lull | o Dionys pau e |
| o Galceran cestrada | o Janma pau ion serma |
| o franc de vall seba | o Janma de nauel |
| o franci querau | o Galceran fualler |
| o Pere Joan dicens | o Pere squerit |
| o Pere d'atorrent | o Matheu pinades |
| o Joan baltida | o francest santjust |
| o francest franc doctor | o Miquel de sos |
| o francest marquet | o Guillem ramon soler e |
| o Joan berenguer agular | o Miquel soler son serma |
| o francest de marimon | o Perot miquel |
| o Joan benet zos e miquel zos son serma e lur nebor fill de n Galceran zos | o Joan pinades |
| o Arnau roger dusay e | o Lluys gibert els sermans |
| o Bernat dusay son serma | o Thomas miquel d'az puc |
| | o Perot miquel onofa d'malla |
| | o francest ballester |

Reform of the municipal system

In the late-15th century, measures ratified by Ferdinand II helped to adapt the municipal government and other bodies to a society that had changed. The previous access of many citizens to the status of knight enabled a legal comparison between honest citizens and the lower nobility (1510), and paved the way for the integration of nobles into the municipal system (1516). Craftsmen and artists also began to be represented on the council, alternating occupation of the place of fifth councillor.

← Roll of honoured citizens of Barcelona. 1510. AHCB

Efforts to revive trade

From 1480, royal and municipal policy protected the production and sale of strategic products (cloth, leather, coral and so on) by new tariffs, as well as adjusting the currency and promoting exports. The liberalisation of maritime insurance enabled some merchants to start trading in products like sugar and black slaves. Barcelona became the centre for the financing and insurance of Catalan expeditions to the Iberian and African Atlantic.

↙ Ferdinand II the Catholic's coin. 1493-1516. MUHBA

↓ Portolan chart showing the Mediterranean with the Black Sea and the Northeast Atlantic. Pietro Russo. 1508. MMB



A NEW WORLD, DIFFERENT TIMES

The death of Ferdinand the Catholic marked the end of an era. Catalonia, like the rest of the territories in the realm, became part of the immense Habsburg empire under Charles I of Habsburg, already proclaimed emperor when the Corts swore loyalty to him. Converted into a province governed by a viceroy watched over by one of the councils of the House of Habsburg (Council of Aragon), the Catalan capital lost the political centrality it had held in previous centuries. Catalonia had not been excluded from American expansion by chance. Ferdinand II had chosen to apply the order of Castile in the new domains, as this was more favourable to the interests of the monarchy than

the Catalan system of pacts consolidated by the “Poc valria” Constitution or Constitution of the Observance, in 1481.

Barcelona was forced to reinvent itself, then, as a regional Mediterranean capital in the context of shift of economic prosperity towards the Atlantic. It did not while fighting to conserve municipal autonomy, key to maintaining production, trade, credit and socio-cultural bases active in the less favourable times brought in with the new era.

↓ View of Barcelona in the late-Gothic period. Engraving based on a drawing by J. C. Vermeyen in 1535. Georg BRAUN and Joris HOEFNAGEL, 1567. AHCB



Barcelona Mediterranean Capital. The Medieval Metamorphosis, 13th-15th Centuries

EXHIBITION

From march to october of 2019

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Coordination: Mònica Blasco i Arasanz
Curatorship: Ramon J. Pujades i Bataller
Advisers: Ivan Armenteros Martínez, Vicent Baydal i Sala, Julia Beltrán de Heredia Berceo, Stefan Cingolani, Albert Cubeles i Bonet, Joan Domenge i Mesquida, Daniel Duran i Duelt, Gaspar Feliu i Montfort, Ramon Grau i Fernández, Eduard Juncosa i Bonet, Tess Knighton, Jordi Morelló i Baget, Immaculada Muxella i Prat, Miquel Pérez Latre, Marcel Pujol i Hamelink, Albert Reixach i Sala, Jaume Riera i Sans (†), Lluís Sales i Favà, Roser Salicrú i Lluch, Manuel Sánchez Martínez, Pol Serrahima i Balias, Mikel Soberón Rodríguez, Maria Toldrà i Sabaté, Carles Vela i Aulesa, Pere Verdés i Pijuan

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The Grand Royal Palace of Barcelona, 11th-15th Centuries

Research and script: Ramon J. Pujades i Bataller

Development: Marc Viader Oliva,

with the support of Eduardo

Calcerrada and Oriol Palou

Advisement: Philip Banks, Julia Beltrán de Heredia, Reinald González and Emili Revilla

Laser survey and planimetry:

VIMAC Laboratori Virtual d'Innovació

Modelant l'Arquitectura i la Ciutat

(UPC)

Reading of walls: Veclus

Production: New Division

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• **The Growth: Barcelona, 13th-15th Centuries**

• **Great Works and Gothic Painting Workshops in Barcelona**

• **Gothic Architecture in Barcelona**

• **A clamor for freedom**

• **Missa de Barcelona: Kyrie and Agnus Dei**
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Texts: Ramon J. Pujades i Bataller. Based on the adviser team's contributions: Ivan Armenteros Martínez, Vicent Baydal i Sala, Stefan Cingolani, Joan Domenge i Mesquida, Daniel Duran i Duelt, Gaspar Feliu i Montfort, Ramon Grau i Fernández, Eduard Juncosa i Bonet, Tess Knighton, Jordi Morelló i Baget, Immaculada Muxella i Prat, Miquel Pérez Latre, Marcel Pujol i Hamelink, Albert Reixach i Sala, Jaume Riera i Sans (†), Lluís Sales i Favà, Roser Salicrú i Lluch, Manuel Sánchez Martínez, Pol

Serrahima i Balias, Mikel Soberón Rodríguez, Maria Toldrà i Sabaté, Carles Vela i Aulesa, Pere Verdés i Pijuan
Revision: Joan Roca i Albert
Design and layout: Andrea Manenti
Editorial coordination: Cayetana Gomis
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Cover: The councillors of Barcelona in their characteristic red clothing. Usages of Barcelona. Jaume MARQUILLES. 1448. AHCB

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MUSEUM PROJECT BARCELONA MEDITERRANEAN CAPITAL

Barcelona Mediterranean Capital deals with the trajectory of the city and the link with the sea as a driving force of its history, with the exhibition *The Medieval Metamorphosis, 13th-15th Centuries* in the Tinell Hall and with *The Quest for the Waterfront, 20th-21st Centuries*, in Santa Àgata Chapel, as a contemporary counterpoint. The cycle that the MUHBA began with the exhibition *The Free Port and the Barcelona's Factory* in 2018 continues and we expect to close it with an exhibition on the history of the relationship between port and city on the occasion of the 150th anniversary of its Junta d'Obres (Works Board).

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1 Shanties. The informal city

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3 Barcelona and the Jocs Florals, 1859

4 Cerdà i Barcelona. La primera metròpoli, 1853-1897

5 Salomon ben Adret. Barcelona, 1235-1310

6 We've got our Seat 600! The path to recovery without democracy

7 The water revolution in Barcelona

8 Murals in the spotlight. The paintings in the Capella de Sant Miquel

9 Calicoes, 1736-1847. The origins of industrial Barcelona

10 Barcelona, vint històries musicals

11 L'enginy de postguerra. Microcotxes de Barcelona

12 Feeding the city. The supply of Barcelona, from the 13th to the 20th centuries

13 Música, Noucentisme, Barcelona

14 La bandera de Santa Eulàlia i la seva restauració

15 The World of 1714

16 Fabra & Coats fa museu

17 Urban Monasteries in Times of War

18 Música, guerra i pau a la Barcelona moderna i contemporània

19 La cartografia medieval i Barcelona

20 Barcelona in Late Antiquity. Christianity, the Visigoths and the City

21 The Jews in Medieval Barcelona. MUHBA El Call

22 Barcelona Haggadot. The Jewish Splendour of Catalan Gothic

23 La casa Gralla. El periple d'un monument

24 First farmers BCN. The major innovation 7,500 years ago

25 Images to believe. Catholics and Protestants in Europe and Barcelona. 16th-18th centuries

26 La ferida d'Hipercor. Barcelona 1987

27 El port franc i la fàbrica de Barcelona

28 Pere IV. Passatge major del Poblenou

29 Crítica i restitució patrimonial en gastronomia

