Historical background on Catalonia's independence

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What does seem beyond doubt is that there was already a pre-state sense of nation. It is for this reason that Thomas E. Bisson, an American historian, argues that in Catalonia the concept of a nation predess that of the state, and that there is no doubt that this feeling of nation dates back to before the 12th century. In fact, a Pisan chronicler calls catalan participants in the expansionist expeditions of Ramón Berenguer III el Grande (1086-1131) which shows that they were already recognized as a people[1].

One thing not to forget is that we are talking about the heyday of feudalism. A feudalism that in Catalonia takes on a form very similar to that in the rest of Europe, something that cannot be said of the rest of the kingdoms of the Iberian Peninsula. The relationship established between the Count of Barcelona and the rest of the counts was totally feudal, with a vassalage of the latter from the first.

Given what some defenders of Spanish nationalism argue to deny the rights to independence of Catalonia that it was never a kingdom, it should be noted that the Count of Barcelona did not wish to be a king who was above the system, but to be the head of the system, that is, the primus inter pares. The non-existence of a king does not presuppose that one cannot speak of a socially and politically formed entity. A contemporary example is Monaco, there is no king there, but prince, and no one doubts that it is a sovereign state. In 1198 the name of Catalonia appeared for the first time in a document related to Peace and Truce.

According to Professor Eduardo Manzano, the structure in the Middle Ages did not make counties less important than kingdoms or empires: they simply expressed their spaces, pretensions or capacities of dominance.

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Petronila de Aragón and Ramón Berenguer IV

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It should be noted that, despite the dynastic union, Aragon and Catalonia were governed by different laws, each having its own institutions. In fact, the king had to swear allegiance to both Courts; what did not happen in Castile, where it was the courts that swore allegiance to the king. With Peter II the Great (1196-1213)[2] it is obligatory to celebrate Cortes once a year. This point is marked by many historians as the beginning of the configuration of a parliamentary regime. It is important to note that this obligation on the part of the king to convene Cortes did not exist in any country in Europe, which explains, in some way, that the parliamentary regime in Catalonia was much more advanced than, for example, in Castile.

In the 14th century there was a clear idea of the unity of Catalonia, as reflected in the courts of 1368-1369. The king merely granted "force of law" to the provisions emanating from the courts. To get an idea of how clear Catalans had their independence from the rest of the Iberian kingdoms is in the opinion issued by the courts in 1283, where they forbidden the King of Aragon, James I,to present himself in Catalonia with a title other than that of Count of Barcelona.

We must come to pass those who still argue that Catalonia was an Aragonese possession, true historical stupidity that is not held anywhere. It is also argued here that Catalonia was not a kingdom, starting from the basis that a king is more than a count. They forget that in the Middle Ages this was far from reality: the Counts of Flanders were more powerful than the kings of England; the dux of Venice was more important than the king of Austria; the Dukes of Bavaria were more powerful than the kings of Poland; and, of course, the Counts of Barcelona were much more powerful than the kings of Aragon.

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It should be noted that since the mid-15th century Catalonia had a political and fiscal structure very similar to a modern state. To give two examples, holland and England would not have this consolidated structure until the 18th century.

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What is created from Castile is the idea that the kings of Castile were the heirs of the Goths and, therefore, kings of Spain, creating a confusion between the crown of Castile and Spain. But, I insist, the name of Spain as a political body is only used by The Castilian chroniclers. The truth is that they had nothing to do with it administratively, or institutionally, or economically. Each kingdom continued with its own laws and institutions. The only institution common to both kingdoms was the Inquisition.

The Austrians
It did not substantially change the situation in Catalonia during the austtracist period, although it is true that several monarchs of the dynasty tried to increase their power over Catalan institutions. But the independence of the kingdom of Aragon remained. An example is the well-known case of Philip II's secretary, Antonio Pérez, accused of the assassination of the secretary of John of Austria, who fled to Aragon to be under the protection of his es hoops. The refusal of the Justice of Aragon to surrender it led to the military entry into Aragon of the troops of Philip II. The revolt ended with the death of the Justice of Aragon, Juan de Lanuza. Despite everything, Antonio Pérez managed to escape to England.

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This situation led to a serious armed confrontation that arose when Pau Claris, president of the Generalitat, proclaimed the Catalan Republic. An important moment of this confrontation occurred on June 7, 1640 in the so-called Corpus of Blood. Although it could be said that the victory went to the Spanish side, the institutional situation in Catalonia varied very little.

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Language is one of the most important vehicles for a people to acquire the concept of nation. According to scholars, the Catalan language began to form in the 7th and 8th centuries, as a primitive romance, noting the influence exerted on it by the Provencal and the language of Oc.(Occitan)

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I believe that have been made enough arguments to show that if there is an autonomous community today that has enough historical arguments to claim its independence, this is Catalonia.

Another thing is whether or not it is agreed, no longer in the legitimacy of the independence process, but whether it is currently viable, and whether this independence would bring benefits for Catalonia. The answer to both questions is no.

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