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# Historical background on Catalonia's independence

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Carolingian Era - Catalan Counties

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The so-called Hispanic Mark was divided into counties led by counts appointed directly by the Frankish kings. These counts were the representatives of the Frankish monarchs had administrative, military functions while they were the ones administering justice.

Hispanic Marche

Over time, the independence of counties will become increasing – remember that the last count appointed by the Franks was Wilfredo the Velloso (870-897). From there a political unity will be formed, which had as a nexus of union the same language and acceptance by all the counts of the pre-eminence of the Count of Barcelona. With Ramón Berenguer I the Elder (1035-1076) the Usatges are drafted, where the laws establishing the laws by which the counties would be watered, with a marked feudal character. It is also with this monarch that in Catalonia a coin of his own was minted, the Mancuses.

From Peter IV the Ceremonious, the former counties would become principality. Some historians point to this moment, 1350, as a preconstitutional period.

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.

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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.

### The Union with Aragon

As is well known, the union of Catalonia and Aragon begins to forge with the marriage of Ramón Berenguer IV with Petronila, daughter of Ramiro III of Aragon. And it is very important to highlight the contract of sponsors between the two spouses:

I Ramiro, by the grace of God king of Aragon, give you Ramon, Count of Barcelona and Marquis, my daughter by woman together with the whole kingdom of Aragon, completely [...] And I entrust to you all the men of the aforementioned kingdom with homage and oath that they may be faithful to you [...] I also do all these above things to you, Ramiro, Count of Barcelona and Marquis, that if my daughter died prematurely, and you were still alive, have the donation of the aforementioned kingdom freely or immutably without any impediment after my death [...] This was done on the THIRD of the August idus in the year 1137 of the Incarnation of the Lord. reigning the aforementioned King Ramiro.

### Petronila de Aragón and Ramón Berenguer IV

Ramón Berenguer, to which Ramiro III had bestowed the title of prince of Aragon, was never appointed king. The first king of the house of Barcelona who will jointly hold the title of king of Aragon and Count of Barcelona will be Alfonso II the Casto, eldest son of Ramón Berenguer and Petronila. From that moment on, and until the coronation of Ferdinand the Catholic, all Aragonese kings will be from the house of Barcelona, or what is the same, Catalans.

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.

### Los Trastámara

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.

After the death without offspring of Martin I the Human (1396-1410), in February 1412 the Concorde of Alcañiz was signed, in which it was established that nine commitments, three by Aragon, Catalonia and Valencia respectively, would choose the new monarch from among the five suitors. Fernando de Antequera was elected, recognized by the Courts of Barcelona in 1413. Thus there was a fact that until then did not know: that the two main kingdoms of the Iberian Peninsula were governed by the same family, the Trastámara, John II in Castile and Ferdinand I in Aragon (John was the son-in-law of Ferdinand)

This does not mean, much less, that there was a unity project, let alone national. The kingdoms continued to be governed by different institutions, different laws, and with a different social fabric.

When Ferdinand I was sworn in in the Courts he had to agree that he could not dictate any law contrary to Catalan jurisprudence; the Generalitat was constituted as a permanent governing body; the king's ability to administer justice

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without the Hearing's agreement was also limited. It could be said that the king in Catalonia was clothed with a certain authority but that in reality he had no effective power. This authority granted to the Generalitat was, according to Vicens Vives, the step "between a medieval system of jurisdictions and a modern constitutional system"

John II of Aragon suffered an armed uprising while trying to undermine the authority of the Catalan institutions. Although John II achieved triumph (he entered Barcelona in 1472) in the Treaty of Pedralbes – in which neither victors nor vanquished were mentioned – the king recognized the justice of Catalan petitions, while stipulating that attempts would be made to return to the pre-war situation.

#### Catholic Monarchs

Ferdinand II of Aragon (1479–1516) married Elizabeth I of Castile on October 18, 1469. This marriage has been taken by many, within the context of the traditional history of Spain that has been transmitted and continues to be transmitted, the birth of Spain as a political and territorial unit. Nothing further from reality.

#### Isabel and Fernando

While it is true that Ferdinand II tried to increase his real power, he never did so by force – as Elizabeth sometimes asked him to advocate for military conquest. Ferdinand II preferred the policy of pacts with which he avoided internal confrontations.

In the kingdom of Aragon the monarch had to ask permission to carry out certain actions to the councils of Aragon and Valencia, and to the Catalan Generalitat.

It is not true, therefore, that there should be union of the two political institutions. To give two examples: Ferdinand II was recognized as king consort of Castile, while Elizabeth I was not of Aragon. Another detail: the coins minted during this period in Castile had no legal value in Aragon.

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 austracist 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.

With Philip IV the clashes were more serious, and with the insistence of his valid, count Duke of Olivares, who at the Grand Memorial of 1624 maintained that "the most important business of his monarchies" was "to become king of Spain, I would like to say, sir, that your Majesty is not content with being king of Portugal, of Aragon, of Valencia, Count of Barcelona, but that he works and thinks with mature and secret advice for reducing these kingdoms of Spain to the style and laws of Castile, without any difference". It included in this uniformity that Catalan language should be banned.

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.

#### The Civil War - Philip V

It is well known why this war led to this war. The heirless death of Charles II provoked armed confrontation between supporters of the crown passing into the hands of Philip of Anjou, the house of the Bourbons, or the new king being Archduke Charles, a member of the Austrian house.

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## War of Succession

In Catalonia they mostly supported the candidate of the Austrian house, while Castile did so for Philip of Anjou. The fall of Barcelona on 11 September marked the end of the fall of Catalan independence, with the abolition of all its trees, institutions, privileges, even with the prohibition of the use of Catalan.

## The Catalan language

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 Provençal and the language of Oc.(Occitan)

Already in the eleventh century some fragments written in Catalan – earlier than in Spanish – appear, one of the oldest is a partial translation of the Liber Iudiciorum; although the first volume written entirely in Catalan is believed to be the Homilies of Orgaňá, from the early thirteenth century.

Also in Catalan are the first philosophical treatises written in the Iberian Peninsula in romance language.

Llibre de les dones, by Francesc Eiximenis, 15th century

## Conclusions

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.

I imagine that some readers will not agree with the above in the article; I would ask you to comment on it. The debate on an issue always brings the best knowledge of it.

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