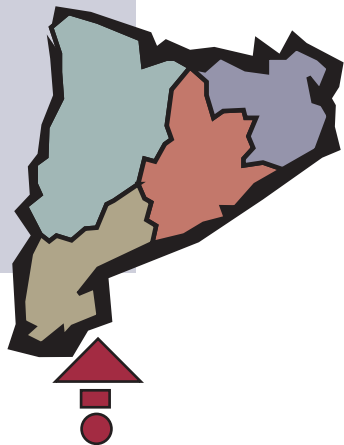


Català



The Catalan has its roots in a rich written language that dates back eight centuries.

In the European Community, Catalan is ranked ninth among spoken languages and seventh among written languages. It is also the most significant language that is not associated with a State.

For the rest of the world, Catalan is a prime example of a people to their language.

**Social history
of Catalan**

**Sociolinguistic
situation**

Language policy

**Legal situation
of Catalan**



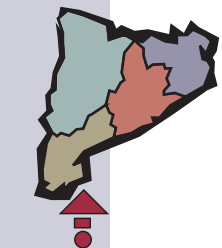
Galego

Euskara

Cymraeg

Elsässisch





Romanic church

Social history
of Catalan

Sociolinguistic
situation

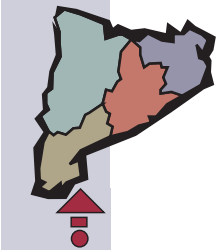
Language policy

Legal situation
of Catalan

Catalan belongs to a western family of languages derived from Latin. This family includes, among others, French, Portuguese, Spanish and Italian. Catalan is spoken in most of the eastern coast of the Iberian Peninsula (Catalonia, Community of Valencia, Eastern Aragon), Balearic Islands, Andorra, southeastern France (Department of the Eastern Pyrenees) and the Sardinian city of Alghero. It is the official language of Andorra; in the territories within the Spanish State, both Spanish and Catalan are official. Catalonia (31,895 km², population of 6,059,494) is the area with the highest rate of comprehension and use of Catalan in all spheres of life.

Catalonia forms, along with Lombardy, Baden-Württemberg and Rhone-Alpes, one of the four economic engines in Europe. Culturally, Catalonia is famous for its Romanesque paintings, Modernism and *Art Nouveau*. In the 20th century, the most famous cultural representatives have been the architect Gaudí, the painters Miró, Dalí and Tàpies, and the musicians Pau Casals and Montserrat Caballé.





Ebre Delta
(Catalonia)



Church of Sant Climent
de Taüll (Catalonia)

Social history
of Catalan

Sociolinguistic
situation

Language policy

Legal situation
of Catalan

The history of Catalan is closely linked to the history of Catalonia. This region was founded by Carolinian expansion in the area of the southern Pyrenees (785-802). In the 11th and 14th centuries, the use of Catalan extends southwards in what can be considered its most glorious age. In the 16th and 17th centuries, the area suffers a severe economic decline. The War of Spanish Succession (1702-14) leads to the abolition of its self-governing institutions and consequent cultural repression. A *Renaixença* or cultural renaissance takes place during the 19th century, followed by a recuperation of political powers that facilitates the normalization of the Catalan language during the first third of the 20th century. The Spanish Civil War (1936-39) and the dictatorship of General Franco (1939-75/78) mark the return of political and cultural repression. With the advent of democracy, the language is normalized once again ■



Map of the
Catalan language



Català

Social history of Catalan



Romanic picture



[See landscape](#)

Origins: formation and expansion of territories

The Medieval Epoch: the splendor of Catalan

From the 15th to 19th century: literary decadence

The 19th century: industrial development and *Renaixença*

The 20th century: codification of Catalan and the 2nd Republic

The Franco regime and the return to democracy

Galego

Euskara

Cymraeg

Elsässisch

Social history of Catalan

Origins: formation and expansion of territories



Romanic pantocrator



The earliest history of Catalonia is the conquest by Charlemagne in the early ninth century of the lands south of the Pyrenees that were previously occupied by the Saracens. The Catalan language was first forged in the free counties of the *Marca Hispànica*, to which was incorporated the future region of Catalonia as a result of the Muslim invasion of the Iberian Peninsula. The language appears in written form for the first time in a document dated in the second half of the 17th century, an autochthonous version of *Forum Iudicum*, a Visigothic law code; there are also sermonical verses written in Catalan, the *Homilies d'Organyà* (the Homilies of Organyà) which is a compilation of the provisions of the Council of Tours (813), in which the priests are advised to preach the gospel *in rusticam romanam linguam*.

From its original area on both sides of the Pyrenees, the Catalan language extended southwards with the conquests of territories of the Catalan-Aragon crown: towards what was known as *Catalunya Nova* (New Catalonia) (1148-53), the Kingdom of Valencia (1232-45) and the Islands of Majorca and Ibiza (1229-35). Sicily, Naples, Corsica and even Athens were at one time Catalanian possessions. The first port in the western shores of the Mediterranean was in Barcelona, a city which had established Consulates in most of the cities of the northern coast of Africa and the Middle East. The first Maritime Code *Llibre del Consolat del Mar* (Book of the Sea Consulate) was created in Barcelona and set the guidelines for commercial relations throughout the Mediterranean.



The see expansion



Social history of Catalan

Origins: formation and expansion of territories



Romanic sculptur



Treaty of Ramon Llu

Although early Catalonian poets expressed themselves in the Occitane language during the 13th, 14th and early 15th centuries (Catalan replaced until Aysiàs March), as early as the 13th century, Ramon Llul was the first great and universally acclaimed literary talent, marking a first phase in the maturity of the Catalan language. Llul not only cultivated literary prose (*Llibre d'Evast e Blanquerna*), but also used Catalan, along with Arab and Latin, in most of his philosophical and theological treatises and thus, was one of the first European intellectuals to use a vernacular language instead of Latin ■

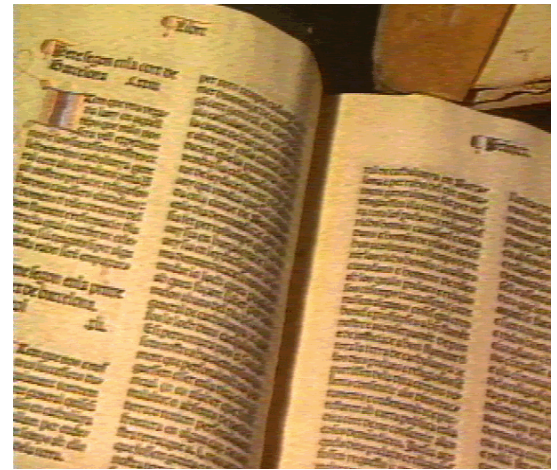


Social history of Catalan

The Medieval Epoch: the splendor of Catalan



This period of greatest intensity for the Catalan language lasts for almost a century that is marked by two works: *Libre dels feyts o Crònica de Jaume I* (Book of facts or the Chronicle of James I) in 1274 and *Crònica de Pere el Cerimonios* (Chronicle of Peter the Ceremonious) (1386), a work that marks the end of a great historical cycle of the four great chronicles, and which is completed by the chronicles of Bernat Desclot and Ramon Muntaner.



Homilies d'Organyà

As a bridge between this period and the mid 15th century, we have the figures of Francesc Eiximenis, a great exponent of religious prose; Bernat Metge, outstanding humanist writer in Catalonia; Joan Roís de Corella, an emblematic figure of Valencian prose; and Ausiàs March, the poet from Gandía, undisputed founder of Catalan poetry and advocate of introspection and, as mentioned above, pioneer in the sense that he was the first outstanding poet to truly free himself from the philoprovençal attitude that until then had been characteristic in Catalan poetry.

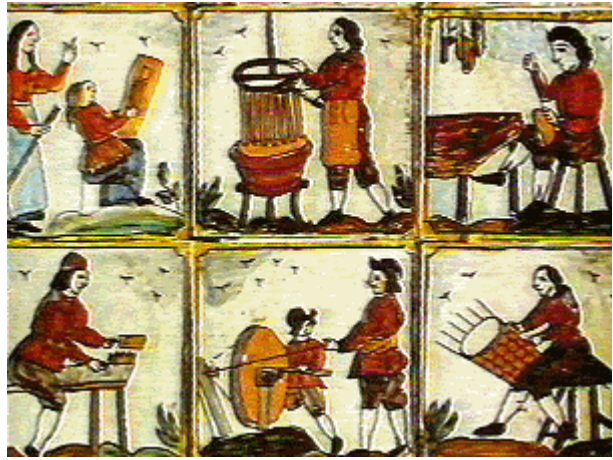
Finally, and at the apogee of this golden period of Catalan literature, which reaches full maturity and opens the door to the Medieval and Renaissance literary scene in Europe, mention must be made of the novel *Tirant lo blanc* (Tirant the White) by Joanot Martorell from Valencia, the first modern novel in European literature ■

Social history of Catalan

From the 15th to 19th century: literary decadence



In 1469, Fernando of Aragón and Isabel of Castille were joined in matrimony and their kingdoms were unified. From that moment on, the Catalan language was directly related to Spanish history. As a result of this unification (1516), Catalan began to lose importance as an instrument of literary creation, although it continued to retain its status of official language until the early 18th century.



Traditional works

As a result of the war of Succession (1705 - 1715), Philip V occupied Barcelona, abolishing the existing Catalonian governing institutions and imposing Castillian law. Castillian became the single official language in the public administration, even though much of the population was not familiar with the language. Over a period of time, with the introduction of Castillian in notarial, commercial and public education spheres, Catalan was reduced to the condition of an oral idiom and appeared only in popular literature ■



Naval gravue

Statue Rafael de Casanoves (Barcelona. Catalonia)

Social history of Catalan

The 19th century: industrial development and *Renaixença*



Landscape of
Joaquim
Vayreda.



The 19th century brought a period of economic, cultural and national re-establishment, known as the *Renaixença* (Renaissance). Economically speaking, Catalonia quickly absorbed the process of industrialization that was taking place in Europe. At the same time, Catalan was restored as a cultural, literary and scientific vehicle. The most important authors of this period are Jacint Verdaguer, Àngel Guimerà and Nacís Oller.

The conflict of interests between the Catalan bourgeoisie and the ruling classes of the rest of Spain spurred the development of political Catalanism, which included the language issue as one of its statutory demands. Gradually, the Catalan bourgeoisie gained control of regional governing bodies and thanks to the *Mancomunitat de Catalunya* (Community of Catalonia: a unitary administrative entity for all of the Catalan territory), a campaign was launched for the technical and administrative modernization of the region, as well as for the active promotion of Catalan ■

Industrial shanty town



La Teixidora:
painting of G. Planella.

Social history of Catalan

The 20th century: codification of Catalan and the 2nd Republic



Palau de la Música Catalana
(Barcelona, Catalonia)



In 1907, the *Institut d'Estudis Catalans* (Institute of Catalan Studies, IEC) was founded and was instrumental for the initial task of codifying the language. In 1913, thanks to the efforts of the linguist Pompeu Fabra, the IEC published the first *Normes ortogràfiques* (Orthographic rules) and in 1918, the *Diccionari ortogràfic* (Orthographic dictionary) and *Gramàtica normativa* (Grammar rules) were introduced. The main objective of the codification of Catalan was to promote a sense of geographic unity by taking into account the different dialects and variations of the common language and to achieve the historic unity of Catalan by adapting it to the needs of modern society. It is important to note that these common goals were adopted by the region of Valencia in passing the *Normes de Castelló* (Norms of Castellon) (1932).



Republican
Generalitat

The dictatorship of General Primo de Rivera (1923-1930) abolished the *Mancomunitat de Catalunya*. Nevertheless, with the proclamation of the 2nd Spanish Republic, Catalan recuperated its status as official language that had remained unacknowledged since the 18th century. The *Generalitat de Catalunya* (Regional Government of Catalonia) was restored with the passing of the Statute of Autonomy of 1932. During the 2nd Republic, the Catalanian government promoted a series of initiatives for the widespread use of Catalan in all spheres of public life ■



Spanish civil war



Fundació Miró.
(Barcelona. Catalonia)

The Spanish Civil War (1936-39) and the consequent victory of General Franco marked the end of autonomy and the beginning of a long period of repression for the Catalanian nation.



The Franco regime (1939-1975) annihilated the incipient process of linguistic normalization that the Regional Government had begun in relation to the official and public use of Catalan and its implementation in schools. In spite of this, there was a popular sense of loyalty among the population to their language, a fact that is reflected in the vast amount of literature. The most important authors of this period are Salvador Espriu, Mercè Rodoreda, Llorenç Vilallonga and Josep Pla, whose works were later translated into many different languages.

With the restoration of democracy in 1977, the Regional Government was reestablished by Royal Decree and later Catalonia was recognized as a nation by the Spanish Constitution; this combination of events greatly fostered the public use of Catalan. The Statute of Autonomy of Catalonia (1977) and the Linguistic Normalization Law for Catalonia (1983) made self-government possible and stimulated the implementation of a policy for the recuperation of its usage in all scopes and functions that had previously been taken away.





Students group



Demonstration

In response to the petition made by the parliaments of the Balearic Islands (1987) and Catalonia (1988) to recognize Catalan as one of the official languages of the European Union, on December 11th, 1990, the European Parliament passed *The Resolution on languages in the Community and the situation of Catalan*.

The consolidated presence of Catalan in the public administration, the official education policy and the media system of the Regional Government together have assured an effective production and reproduction of the Catalan language ■

