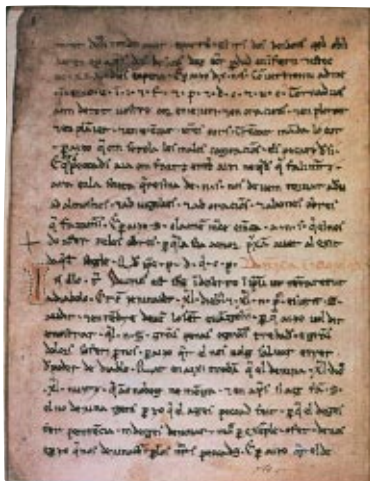


A thousand-year-old language

Les Homilies d'Organyà (12th century), the first known literary text written in Catalan; it is preserved in the National Library of Catalonia



Ramon Llull (Palma de Mallorca, 1232-1316), the first great writer to use Catalan, is the author of *Llibre d'Evast e Blanquerna* and *Llibre d'Amic e Amat*

A language of the people, culture and government

The first known texts written in Catalan are fragments from the Catalan version of the *Forum Iudicum* and the sermon *Les Homilies d'Organyà*, both from the 12th century. Catalan expanded considerably as a language of creation and government (the Royal Chancellery) between the 13th and 16th centuries, at the time when the Catalan-Aragonese crown had spread its rule through the Mediterranean, to Sicily, Sardinia, Naples and even to Athens. Literary works of international importance during this period include those by Ramon Llull, contemporary of Dante, the four *Cròniques*, the work by Francesc Eiximenis, Anselm Turmeda, Bernat Metge, Ausiàs Marc and *Tirant lo Blanc*, considered the first modern novel in western literature.

The great legal texts of this period were also in Catalan, such as the *Furs de València*, the *Costums de Tortosa*, the *Usatges* and the *Llibre del Consolat de Mar*, a collection of sea trading laws which were in use throughout the Mediterranean until the 17th century. The close ties with Italy led to one of the first known translations of the *Divine Comedy* being made into Catalan by Andreu Febrer; and other great works of literature of the time were also translated into Catalan, such as the *Decameron*.



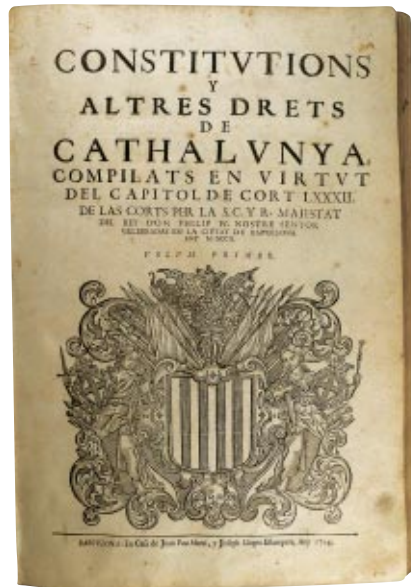
Tirant lo Blanc, by Joanot Martorell (Gandia, 1413/1415-1468), is considered the masterpiece of the golden age of Catalan literature



Title page of *Llibre del Consolat de Mar*, a collection of sea trading laws written on the 14th century and translated into several languages

Title page of the *Constitucions i altres drets de Catalunya (1704)*, a collection written in Catalan of current laws in Catalonia little before the loss of freedom

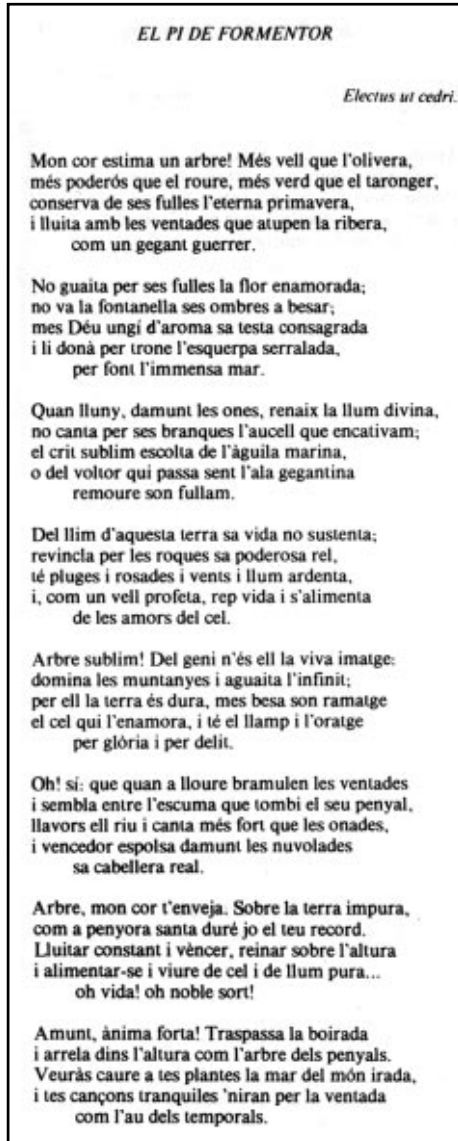
The verses, such as this one written in honour of the Virgin of Montserrat (17th century), are examples of devotion and popular literature



The period of literary decadence

Even though the Catalan language had early access to the printing press with the first book being printed in Catalan in 1474 (*Les trobes en llaors de la Verge Maria*), during the centuries of the Renaissance and Baroque, the language went through a period of decadence in serious literature. Despite this, it maintained its position as the language for law and government, and as the only popular tongue. Works of special note from this period include those by: Josep Vicenç Garcia and Francesc Fontanella in Catalonia; Joan Ramis in Minorca; and Lluís Galiana in Valencia Region.

After the Reaper's War (*Guerra dels Segadors*, 1640-1659), the territories of Northern Catalonia were ceded to the French crown and Catalan was immediately banned in education and for official purposes. During the Spanish War of Succession (1704-1714), the territories of the old crown of Aragon took the side of Archduke Carlos and fought alongside the allied powers. As a result, after the defeat of Almansa (1707) and the seizing of Barcelona (1714) and Majorca (1715), the Catalan speaking territories lost their own institutions and Catalan was excluded from law, the courts, municipal government, teaching, and from notary and trade documents.



El pi de Formentor, a poem by the Majorcan Miquel Costa i Llobera, which has become a symbol of the love for one's land

The Renaixença and the revival of the language

Coinciding with the movements of nationalism and romanticism throughout Europe, Catalan experienced a rich literary revival, the beginning of which is often symbolically marked with the publication of the ode *La Pàtria* (1833, *Fatherland*) by Bonaventura Carles Aribau. This continued with poetic, theatre and narrative productions by many authors from Catalonia, the Balearic Islands and the Valencia Region.

During the second half of the 19th century, the movement created universally important and very popular works, such as those by Jacint Verdaguer, author of the epic poems *L'Atlàntida* and *Canigó*; Àngel Guimerà, who brought high literary standards to national theatre with plays such as *Terra Baixa*; Narcís Oller, author of very modern novels, such as *La febre d'or*. Some of the most popular authors from the first third of the 20th century include: Santiago Rusiñol, Joan Maragall, Ignasi Iglésias, Víctor Català, Miquel Costa i Llobera, Joan Alcover and Joan Salvat-Papasseit (who incorporated the use of calligrammes), Josep Sebastià Pons and Bartomeu Rosselló Pòrcel.

At the same time, studies were begun on the language with the writing of dictionaries (such as those by Pere Labèrnia, Pere Antoni Figuera, Josep Escrig and Marià Aguiló), and treatises on barbarisms and orthographies (such as those by the Majorcans Antoni Cervera and Joan Josep Amengual, and Josep Balari, from Barcelona), which are the immediate predecessors of the modern-day linguistic regulation begun at the start of the 20th century.

Meanwhile, the use of Catalan spread to the daily press and magazines throughout the territory, covering national, local and county spheres with newspapers such as *La Renaixença*, *El Poble Català*, *La Veu de Catalunya* and later, *La Publicitat* and *El Matí*, along with magazines such as *La Ignorància*, *El Mole*, *L'Avenç*, and others.

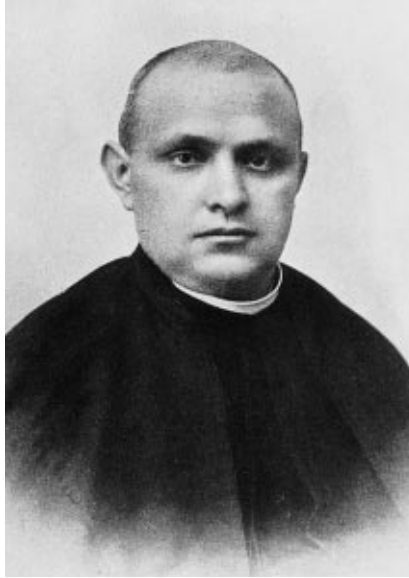


Edition of the poem *Canigó* by Jacint Verdaguer, an author who brought the Catalan language back to its literary universal character

In 1881 appeared the first newspaper written in Catalan, *La Renaixença* (1881-1905)

Mgr. Antoni M. Alcover (Santa Cirga, 1862 - Palma de Mallorca, 1932), one of the foremost figures in the language recovery at the beginning of the 20th century

Pompeu Fabra i Poch (Gràcia, 1868 - Prada de Conflent, 1948), inspirer and driving force of the spelling and grammatical codification of Catalan



The institutionalisation of Catalan

At the start of the 20th century, *Catalanism* in Catalonia began to campaign for the teaching of Catalan and for the language's use in government. Enric Prat de la Riba gave enormous institutional support to Catalan from the local institutions which he controlled and particularly from the *Mancomunitat de Catalunya* (Union of Catalan Municipalities), through the creation of the *Institut d'Estudis Catalans* (1907) and its language department. The first president of this department was the Majorcan Mgr. Antoni M. Alcover, promoter of the First International Congress of the Catalan Language (1906) and the *Diccionari català-valencià-balear* (1926-1962), a vital work of Catalan lexicography.

The support of Prat de la Riba and the *Institut* permitted the institutionalisation of the work carried out by Pompeu Fabra between 1913 and 1930 (orthographic rules, grammar, dictionary) with which Catalan was given a unified and modern set of rules.

The republican constitution of 1931 and the statute of autonomy of 1932 enabled Catalonia to recover the Generalitat (Catalan Government), and led to Catalan being declared the official language and to the implementation of an active policy of support for its teaching. In contrast, the Balearic Islands and the Valencia Region were unsuccessful in their attempts to pass their statutes of autonomy.

The dictatorship and the persecution of the language

Between 1939 and 1975, during the dictatorship following the Civil War, Catalan was subject to intense and systematic persecution, especially until 1962. The publishing of books, newspapers and magazines, the sending of telegrams, and telephone conversations in Catalan were all banned. Films could only be shown in Castilian and stage productions were only put on in this language. Radio and television could only be broadcasted in Castilian. Government, notarial, legal and commercial documents were drawn up exclusively in Castilian and any written in Catalan were deemed null and void. Road and shop signs, advertising and in general all exterior images of the country were solely in Castilian. A strong movement of immigration from the rest of Spain, at a time when none of the Catalan-speaking territories were able to offer adequate urbanistic and educational



Under General Franco's dictatorship the Catalan language underwent political and cultural persecution in order to impose Castilian

structures, further hindered the situation of Catalan.

Despite all this, Catalan continued to be the language spoken in families in Catalonia, the Balearic Islands and the rest of the Catalan-speaking territories. During this time, many writers educated during the previous period, some of whom were in exile, produced works of great importance, including Josep Carner, Carles Riba, Josep Maria de Sagarra, Josep Vicenç Foix, Josep Pla, Salvador Espriu, Mercè Rodoreda, Pere Calders, Joan Fuster, Vicent Andrés Estellés and Llorenç Villalonga.



*During the second half of the 20th century Catalan literature has had authors of universal prominence: Llorenç Villalonga, author of *Mort de dama*; Josep Pla, whose complete works consist of a portrait of his world and his time, and Mercè Rodoreda, author of *La plaça del Diamant**



In 2000 10 newspapers were published in Catalan, with a daily circulation of 175,000 copies altogether

Towards normalisation

Once the democratic freedoms had been won back, the 1978 Constitution recognised linguistic plurality and established that Spanish languages different from Castilian may be given official status in accordance with the Statutes of Autonomy. The Statutes of Catalonia (1979) and the Balearic Islands (1983) recognise Catalan as a mother tongue of these territories and declare it an official language together with Castilian. This has also taken place in the Autonomous Community of Valencia (1982) under the legal term Valencian. Likewise, the Constitution of Andorra (1993) establishes that Catalan is the official language of the State.

Under these statutes, the autonomous parliaments of Catalonia, the Balearic Islands and the Community of Valencia passed, between 1983 and 1986, laws favouring the Catalan language, through its introduction into schools, government and institutional media. In 1998, the Catalan Parliament passed a new law aimed at promoting the use of Catalan in the economic world, cultural industries and private mass media.

Over these years, an array of mass media has been created, including, in particular due to their high level of popularity, TV3 and Catalunya Ràdio in Catalonia, and Canal 9 in the Valencian Country. Recently a large number of local radio and television stations have been set up in all three territories.

During this period, Catalan has steadily regained its presence in the press and there are now ten newspapers written in the language: *Avui*, *El Punt*, *Regió 7*, *Diari de Girona* and *El Nou 9* in Catalonia; the *Diari de Balears* in Majorca, and the *Diari d'Andorra* and the *Periòdic d'Andorra* in the Principality of Andorra, along with the Catalan versions of *El Periódico* and *Segre*. In addition, there are also some thirty weekly publications, around a hundred magazines and over two hundred local papers in Catalan.

A very large number of book titles are now published in Catalan, something which is steadily increasing each year. In 1999, for example, 7,492 titles were published in Catalan, with a total print-run of over twenty million copies. At the end of this same year, the number of titles available in Catalan, according to the records of the ISBN (National Publications Register), was in excess of 75,000. In 1994, according to a report by UNESCO, Catalan was the tenth most translated language in the world in terms of source language.

