

CONVERSI, Daniele. *The Basques, the Catalans, and Spain: Alternative Routes to Nationalist Mobilization*. Reno: U of Nevada P, 1997. XX+312 pp.

This important study offers a comparative analysis of two of Europe's most important contemporary national movements, both of which happen to exist within the same state. The comparison is worthwhile, for the Basque and Catalan cases represent two rather different types of nationalist movement operating within the same geographical, historical, and institutional context. As Conversi demonstrates in early chapters on the history of Basque and Catalan nationalism, both sought to distance culturally distinct regions from the centralizing and homogenizing policies of Castile; both were severely repressed during the Franco period; and both emerged as important components of Spanish domestic politics during the transition period of the 1980s.

But there, Conversi notes, the similarities end. Catalan nationalism has normally had as its central unifying element, or "core value" in Conversi's terms, the maintenance and spread of Catalan-language use among both native Catalonians and more recent non-Catalan immigrants. The Basques, by contrast, developed a nationalist discourse based primarily on the distinct ethnic, or even "racial," nature of the autochthonous people of Euskadi. Where the Catalans, although represented by a variety of political parties and movements, were at most times relatively united in their political demands, the Basques have long been plagued by a virulent factionalism and a confrontational rhetoric that has been directed as much against rivals within the Basque camp as against the Spanish state. Most importantly, while violence has rarely been associated with the political side of Catalan nationalism, violence has become a disturbingly persistent feature of the Basque variety.

Why have these paths been so different? Conversi's argument is intriguing and reveals (along with his exhaustive reading of secondary sources) the author's debt to his mentor at the London School of Economics, Anthony Smith. Conversi presents an argument grounded in what might be called "bounded contingency" (these are my words), that is, an analysis that seeks to elucidate the interplay between sociological and ideational factors in the development of nationalist movements. Smith's key contribution to debates about the origins of nations has been that, contra those who think that they are merely the imaginings of nationalist poets and writers, nations in the modern sense of the term arose from pre-existing cultural communities, or "ethnies" in Smith's language. While modern nationalists of course did much to formalize as "national" cultures the existing folk traditions and other forms of solidarity in these communities, they were constrained by the raw material with which they worked. In other words, nationalists might make their own history, but they do not make it just as they please.

This reflexive relationship between culture and ideas is crucial to Conversi's argument, for he is primarily interested in accounting for why Basque and Catalan nationalism have taken such different forms, especially this century. The argument, in brief, is this: At the dawn of the age of nationalism, the nature of Basque and Catalan societies were remarkably distinct. Basque elites were few and divided, and the Basque language existed in a diglossic relationship with Castilian; Catalans, by contrast, had managed

to preserve their use of Catalan as a developed primary language. These patterns of language use and elite politics prompted nationalist leaders to adopt two rather different discourses about the nation: the Basque one based on a primordial notion of the Basques as a separate ethnic or racial category, and the Catalan variant that situated the essence of membership in the community in the ability to speak Catalan. These discourses in turn led to rather different attitudes toward non-Basque and non-Catalan immigrants. In the former case, since being Basque depended on possessing a set of inscrutable "racial" characteristics, Basque nationalists necessarily created an unbridgeable gap between themselves and non-Basques, both immigrants and the Spanish state. In the latter case, since non-native Catalan immigrants could easily learn Catalan (an effort for which there were considerable economic incentives), the Catalonian nationalist movement managed to appeal to a far wider public, arguing for greater control over local culture and the local administration rather than pressing a timeless right to self-determination. It is principally the exclusivist orientation of Basque nationalism and the rather more inclusive vision promoted by the Catalans that, given the element of state repression of both movements before the 1980s, led to such violent outcomes in the former but not in the latter.

This book had its origins as a doctoral thesis, and some of the remnants of the dissertation are perhaps still noticeable. The text is sometimes repetitive, and the countless direct quotes from other authors diminishes Conversi's own voice. But these are quibbles with what is a genuinely insightful and well-researched comparative study. Conversi knows Spain, and he also knows the sociological, historical, and political science literature on nationalism. Students of west European politics, ethnicity and nationalism, and most importantly the politics of language will find this a remarkable and supremely useful book.

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DURAN, Eulàlia, and Joan REQUESENS. *Profecia i poder al Renaixement. Texts profètics catalans favorables a Ferran el Catòlic. Estudi i edició*. València: Edicions 314 (Eliseu Climent), 1997. 449 pp.

When Duran wrote her doctoral dissertation on *Les Germanies als Països Catalans*, she concentrated on socio-economic reasons behind the popular uprising in the region of Valencia in 1520. For years Duran continued researching the ideological currents which had led to that tragic rebellion. In this book—admirably well printed and presented by the publishing firm and bookstore 314—Duran and her colleague Joan Requesens look at how the prophetic movements of the fourteenth century described by Father Pou (see preceding review) where redirected in fifteenth century Valencia to support the new monarchy.

In their introduction, the authors show how changing historical circumstances required frequent reinterpretations of the old prophecy of the *vespertilio*, the hoped-for victorious opponent of the Antichrist who would