Throughout human history, the combination of continuity and renovation has led to ambiguities. One may think that the human essence has always been the same: in the Middle Ages the soul was seen from the perspective of the seven deadly sins,¹ as it still was literally in times much closer to us.² However, the social and human structures with which people adapt to the territory can change, as can the concepts used to denominate these. Thus, both the place and the terms with which we approach the past must be defined.

¹ From the *mer i mixt imperi* to the *imperi e senyoria*

“Aquesta és aquella ja benaventurada, glòriosa e fidelissima nació de Catalunya, qui per lo passat era temuda per les terres e les mars; aquella qui ab sa feel e valent espasa ha dilatat l’imperi e senyoria de la casa d’Aragó”.³

These were the words with which Bishop Joan Margarit addressed the Parliament or Courts in Barcelona in 1454. One and a half centuries earlier, around the start of the fourteenth century, the word *imperi* was used by civil servants in the royal chancellery of the Crown of Aragon in an attempt to seat the bases for the power of the sovereign on the Romanist formula of the *mer e mixt imperi* to serve royal pre-eminence while accepting access to part of the jurisdiction in certain places by all those (nobles, barons, churchmen and bourgeoisie) who were able to claim they had already enjoyed said jurisdiction.

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³ “This is that blessed, glorious and most faithful nation of Catalonia, which in the past was feared on land and on the seas; that which with its loyal and brave sword has spread the empire and lordship of the house of Aragon”. Ricard Albert, Joan Gassiot, *Parlaments a les corts catalanes* (Barcelona, 1928), p. 209.
for a long time.\(^4\) Throughout the thirteenth century, jurists had stated that the monarch should hold the *merum imperium* over the whole country as a kind of higher jurisdiction "*del Príncep per rahon de general jurisdicción que ha en son regne, cor en tots homes del regne seu a mer imperi, cor totes coses que són e-l regne són del rey quant a jurisdicció*".\(^5\)

These are practically the same words Guido de Bayisio used to defend the *imperium generalis jurisdictionis et potestatis* of the king of France.\(^6\) Placing the empire over the kingdom was one of the demands spread by Romanist jurists around Europe to consolidate a royal *plenitudo potestatis*.\(^7\) The simultaneous spread of Aristotelian philosophy also contributed to this aim, and reinforced "*il 'regime di uno solo' anche come la forma di governo più consona all'ordito ontologico dell'universo*".\(^8\) With these arguments, the sovereign sought a higher position from which to negotiate with the estates. Negotiation was inevitable, which is why all sides aimed to start from as strong a position as possible. Power in the Middle Ages was based by definition on agreement, because the sovereign had to reach agreement with the different holders of power,\(^9\) while the latter claimed to be representative.\(^10\) That is why there was a move towards a political system based on groups with social power, like the estates, and this generated institutional mechanisms where the “right of

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5 “of the Prince because of general jurisdiction that there is in his kingdom, because he has the merum imperium over all the men in his kingdom and because everything in the kingdom belongs to the king because he has the jurisdiction”. Pere Albert, "Commemoracions," in *Usatges de Barcelona i Comemoracions de Pere Albert* (Barcelona, 1933), p. 185.
8 “the ‘regime of one alone’ is the form of government most coherent with the ontological order of the universe”. Roberto Lambertini, "Governo ideale e riflessione politica dei fratri mendicanti nella prima metà del Trecento," in *Etica e politica: le teorie dei frati mendicanti nel due e trecento, Atti del XXVI Convegno internazionale (Assisi, 15–17 ottobre 1998)* (Spoleto, 1999), pp. 231–77.
10 Susan Reynolds, "Medieval urban history and the history of political thought," in *Urban History Yearbook* (Leicester, 1982), pp. 15–16.