

Scholars and Literati at the University of Barcelona (1450–1714)

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This note is a summary description of the set of scholars and literati who taught at the University of Barcelona from its inception in 1450 to its suppression in 1714.

1 SOURCES

To gather information on the professors who taught at the University of Barcelona before 1800, we used several sources. “La Universidad de Barcelona en el siglo XVI” was edited by Antonio Fernández Luzón and published in 2005. This book is intended to provide a better understanding of the University of Barcelona during the 16th century, which was a key period for the city. It has four sections: the origins of the university; the structure and the resources; the faculties and the university staff. We found most of the information about the scholars in the appendix.

“La Universidad de Barcelona en el siglo XVII” was edited by Rafael Ramis Barceló and Pedro Ramis Serra. This book was published in 2023 by Editorial Dyckinson and is part of a broader programme called “History of Universities”. This project is driven by the Figuerola Institute of Social Science History, a division of the Carlos III University of Madrid, which aim to enhance the collective understanding of the history of higher education institutions. According to the authors, it was more challenging to gather information on the University of Barcelona in the 17th century than in the 16th century. From the period 1596 to 1714, almost no direct sources were preserved. The authors investigated indirect sources, such as “Registres de Deliberacions”, “Registres d’Ordenacions” and “Dietari de l’Antic Consell Barceloní” and supplemented this with information on university life. Previous research was conducted in 2019 on the “Ordenaciones del Estudio barcelonés de 1638” to delve deeper into the legal framework under which the University operated during the 17th century. By focusing on the academic aspects, “La Universidad de Barcelona en el siglo XVII” complements the first study.

We also used the Catalan website www.enciclopedia.cat, powered by Enciclopèdia Group, to find more information on the scholars from the University of Barcelona. This is supported by a large community willing to disseminate knowledge from Catalonia.

2 THE UNIVERSITY

The University of Barcelona was founded in 1450 under the royal approval of King Alfonso V of Aragon. However, its origins date back to 1401, when Martin of Aragon, granted the city the “Estudio General de Medicina y Artes”. In 1450, it was enlarged to “Estudio General de Barcelona”. The civil war during King John II’s reign delayed the development of the university until King Ferdinand II of Aragon took the throne. Construction of the university building at one end of La Rambla commenced in 1536.

In 1714, after his victory in the War of the Spanish Succession, King Philip V of Spain closed all the Catalan universities (Barcelona, Tarragona, Lleida, Girona, Vic and Tortosa). The only university centre he permitted in the region was in Cervera.

There were two Jesuit colleges in the city of Barcelona of Barcelona, but they were never part of the University. They survived the suppression of the university until Jesuits were expelled from Spain in 1767. The Jesuits, were essential in the new university of Cervera, holding 9 of the twenty four chairs.

Period	nb. obs	birth date	known place	mean age at appoint.	mean age at death	med. dist. birth-univ.	with Wiki.	with Worldcat
1348–1449	2	0	100	NaN	NaN	144	50	50
1450–1526	30	6.7	10	32.5	55.5	0	10	20
1527–1617	311	5.8	11.9	36.7	64.2	78	12.5	16.1
1618–1685	243	8.6	17.3	31.9	68.9	38	6.2	12.8
1686–1733	118	8.5	13.6	26.8	65.3	0	6.8	10.2
1523–1800	704	7.2	14.2	33.3	65.9	48	9.4	14.2

Table 1: Summary statistics by period

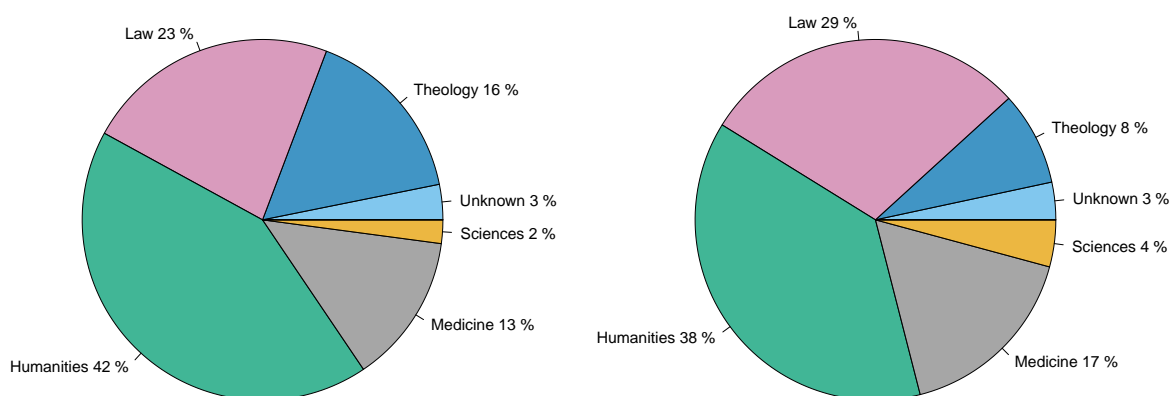


Figure 1: Broad fields at the University of Barcelona (left: all scholars, right: published scholars only)

3 SOME STATISTICS

Table 1 displays some descriptive statistics. We have information on 704 scholars. For the first period (before the official foundation of the university), we have virtually no exploitable data. We have some reliable information from 1450 onwards, although the share of people for whom the year of birth is known remains rather low. On the whole, the birthplace is known for 14.2% of the scholars, which is probably the lowest we found so far (in the whole database, the birthplace is known for about 70% of the cases). The median distance between Barcelona and the location of birth is 48 km, confirming the regional nature of this university. Most of the scholars do not have a Wikipedia page and do not appear in the VIAF catalog. Only in the fourth (1527-1617) period is a temporary change observed, with more renowned scholars.

4 FIELDS

Figure 1 shows the fields of specialization of Barcelona's scholars. The main fields are humanities, law, theology and medicine. Among published scholars, humanities and law dominate, followed by medicine, with theology having the lowest proportion of published scholars among the main fields.

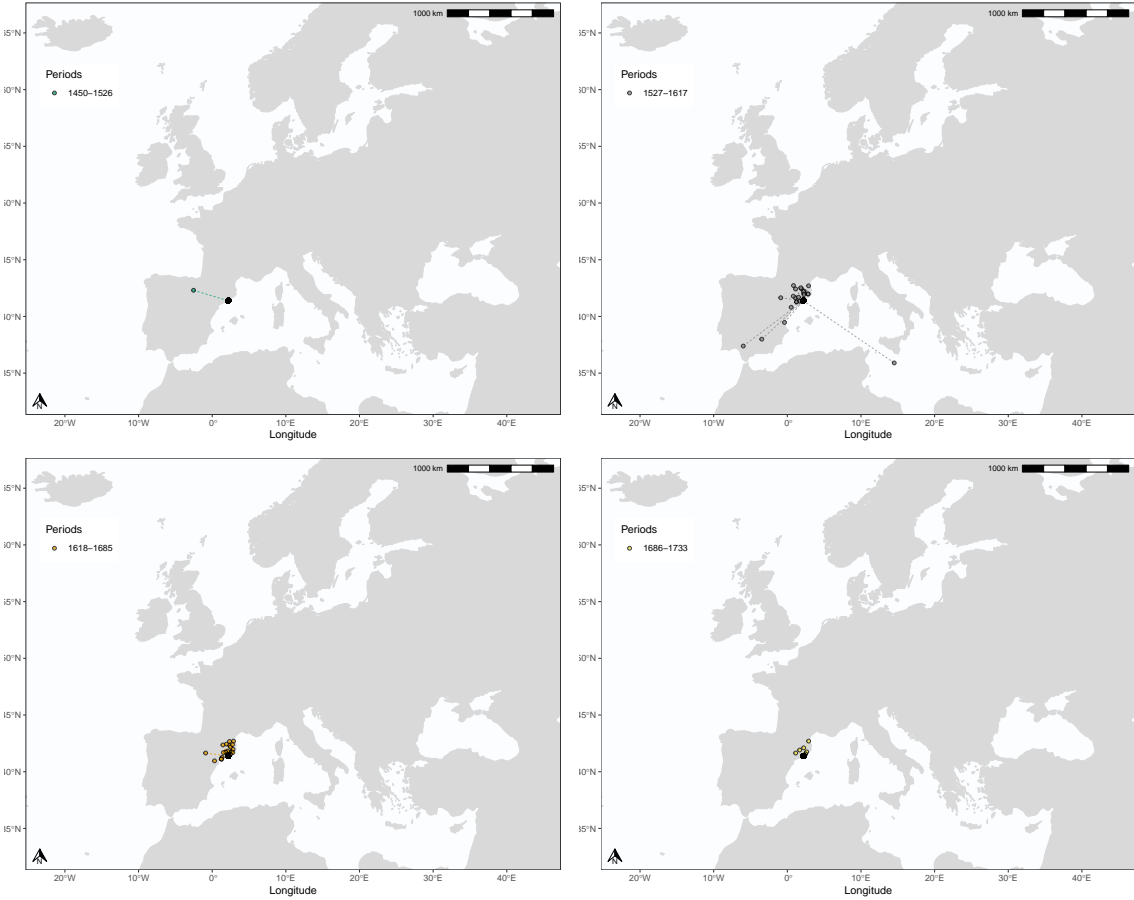


Figure 2: Places of birth of the scholars and literati at the University of Barcelona

5 PLACE OF BIRTH

Figure 2 shows the different birthplaces of the scholars affiliated with the University of Barcelona, by period. Across our sample period, we observe that the professors at the University of Barcelona came mainly from Catalan territories. Only in the third period (1527-1617) do we observe more professors coming from other regions of Spain.

6 HUMAN CAPITAL OF SCHOLARS AND LITERATI

For each person in the database, we compute a heuristic human capital index, identified by combining information from Worldcat and Wikipedia using principal component analysis. Based on the individual notability of scholars and literati, we compute the notability of the university at each date t by averaging the human capital of the scholars active at the University of Barcelona within a 25-year time frame leading up to t , and who concluded their careers before t . The details are given in Curtis and De la Croix (2023) and in De la Croix et al. (2023).

Figure 3 shows the names of all the scholars with a positive human capital index. The orange line displays the notability of the university, based on how well-published its top scholars were. The period 1560-1620 is one of high notability, but the peak of notability is reached late, in 1700, shortly before the dissolution of the university.

7 TOP 5 PROFESSORS

We now provide a brief overview of the five professors with the highest human capital index.

Pere Joan Nunyes (Valencia 1525 – Valencia 1602) was a writer and theologian. He studied Grammar and Latin at the University of Valencia before obtaining a chair in Greek at the same institution. After a brief stay in Paris, he came back to the University of Valencia and occupied different chairs over the period 1552-1557. In addition to teaching, he also published didactic work. Later, he taught at the University of Zaragoza and then at the University when he wished to avoid the Inquisition that was active in Valencia. At the University of Barcelona, he resumed publishing works related to Greek and Rhetoric. He continued publishing and remained in his chair at the University of Barcelona until 1596.

Diego Pérez de Valdivia (Baeza 1524 – Barcelona 1589) was a priest. His mentor, St. John of Avila, made him pursue studies at the University of Salamanca, where he obtained degrees in art and theology. He then taught at the universities of Granada and Baeza and attained the chair of Sacred Scriptures. From 1569 to 1574, he was archdeacon of Jaén and was later imprisoned on a charge of heresy. After proving his innocence, he decided to go to Italy. However, storms prevented him from making the sea journey and he started preaching in Valencia before moving to Barcelona, where he would stay until he died. He taught Sacred Scripture at the University of Barcelona and was called the Apostle of Catalonia. In 1581, he founded the House of Mercy of Barcelona and contributed to the Barcelona prison by rebuilding the chapel and providing support for the prisoners through the Pious Congregation of Gentlemen.

Juan Costa y Beltrán (Zaragoza 1550 – Zaragoza 1597) was a Professor of Rhetoric and Law and was the chief chronicler of the Kingdom of Aragon over the period 1592-1597. His best-known publication was “Gobierno del ciudadano” (Government of the Citizen), a dialogue reflecting civic governance and politics.

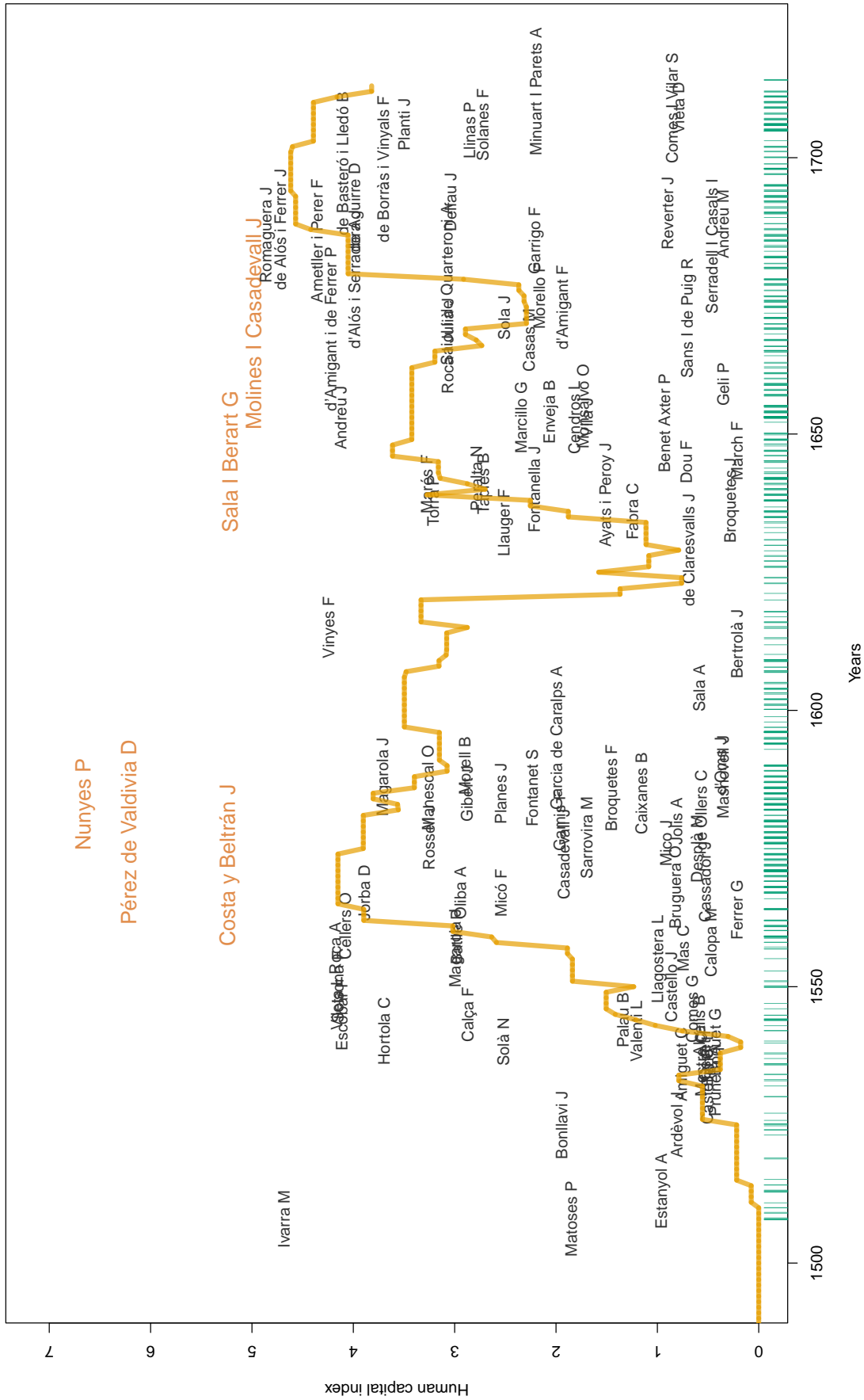


Figure 3: Famous scholars and university notability (orange)

Gaspar Sala I Berart (Zaragoza 1605 -Perpignan 1670) was a Catalan priest, politician, historian and writer. He entered the Augustinian Order in Zaragoza (1622) and Barcelona (1635). During the Catalan Revolt of 1640, he emerged as a significant Catalan figure. Gaspar Sala I Berart contributed greatly to the manifesto “Proclamación Católica a la magestad piadosa de Felipe el Grande” (Catholic Proclamation to the pious majesty of Philip the Great), in which the authors asked for a reconciliation with the Spanish crown to avoid the invasion of Catalonia. He then earned respect from the Catalan authorities, who granted him the theology chair at the University of Barcelona, and from France, as he became the preacher to the King of France. In addition, he served as an abbot of Sant Cugat. Unfortunately, he was threatened by the Inquisition and took refuge in France (Perpignan became French in 1659).

Josep Molines I Casadevall (Hospitalet de Llobregat 1645 – Milan 1719) was an ecclesiastic, who taught law at the University of Barcelona. He was also the rector of the Barcelona parish of El Pino and regent of the Sacred Penitentiary. Later, he became auditor of the Rota of Roma (the highest appellate tribunal of the Catholic Church) and a diplomatic representative of King Philip V of Spain. From 1717, he was appointed Inquisitor General of Spain but died before exercising his functions.

8 RELATED SCHOLARS

Beyond those who taught at the University of Barcelona, several important individuals are related to the institution. They probably did not occupy a tenured teaching position, but they were involved in preaching, teaching and/or research.

Juan de Malara (Sevilla 1524 – Sevilla 1571) was a poet. After studying Latin and Ancient Greek at the universities of Salamanca, Valencia and Barcelona, he returned to Sevilla where he opened l’Escuela de Humanidades y Gramàtica (Sevillian Poetic School). From 1561 until 1566, Juan de Malara had some trouble with the Spanish Inquisition. He is considered by some to be the inventor of the structure of the *décima abbaaccddc*, which is an octosyllabic ten-line stanza specific to the Spanish-speaking world. Juan de Malara wrote several poems and plays, such as “Philosophía vulgar, Primera Parte” and “Recebimiento que hizo la muy noble y muy leal Ciudad de Sevilla”.

Bernat de Granollacs (Barcelona 1421 -- 1478) was a Catalan astrologer and master in medicine. In 1455, he joined the Council of One Hundred to participate in municipal politics. Four years later, he stopped his political activity due to a nepotism scandal. In 1484, he published the lunar calendar “Sumari dels girants e plens de la luna e dels eclipsis del sol e de la luna e de les festes movibles”, which was widely disseminated in Europe. This piece of work was the first study on astronomy to be printed in Catalan. A wide range of applications from these lunar tables can be found in agriculture and medicine. In addition, he worked as a physician for Queen Maria of Castile. Bernat de Granollacs became an honourable citizen of Barcelona.

9 UNIVERSITY NETWORK

We assume that when a professor held positions at multiple universities during their career, it established a connection between those institutions. Figure 4 displays the universities that were linked to Barcelona during the period from 1527 to 1617, which stands out for the high level of international mobility among professors. For the other periods, there is no discernable mobility pattern.

10 FINAL THOUGHTS

The University of Barcelona is an esteemed institutions of higher learning, with a rich history that dates back centuries. However, prior to 1530, it was a relatively small and unknown local university.

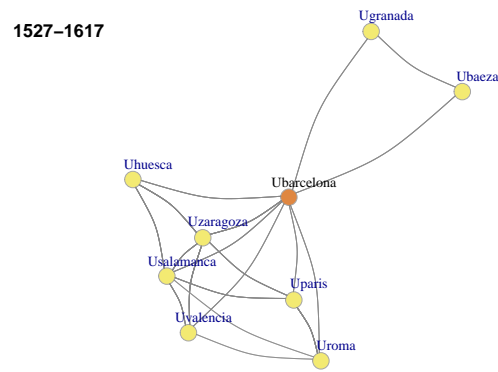


Figure 4: Links between Barcelona and other universities through scholars' mobility

Despite its early obscurity, the university quickly rose to prominence, enjoying a brief but brilliant heyday. Unfortunately, after 1600, the university experienced a sharp decline in both the quality and quantity of its publications, as well as its international nature.

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Homepage: <https://perso.uclouvain.be/david.delacroix/uthc.html>

Twitter: <https://twitter.com/UTHCerc>

Database: <https://shiny-lidam.sipr.ucl.ac.be/scholars/>

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