

# **The Role of Bullfighting and FC Barcelona in the Emancipation of Catalonia from Spain**

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### **El papel de la corrida de toros y FC Barcelona en la emancipación de Catalunya de España**

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Recibido: 11 de marzo de 2014

Aceptado: 17 de julio de 2014

#### **Abstract**

This paper looks at the role that bullfighting and FC Barcelona have played in the growing independence movement in Catalonia. This article will discuss nations, the importance of bullfighting and soccer to Iberian cultures, Catalan political parties and their role in the nationalist movement, the vote to prohibit bullfighting and FC Barcelona's increasing political conscious. I conclude that bullfighting and soccer have been used by political parties and those associated with the nationalist movement to foster feelings of difference with Spain. These feelings have been passed from the top down to the Catalan people and risk alienating those who are not in agreement with the nationalist movement.

**Keywords:** Catalonia; Bullfighting; FC Barcelona; Emancipation; Nationalism.

#### **Resumen**

Este trabajo examina el papel que la corrida de toros y el equipo de fútbol FC Barcelona han hecho en el movimiento continuo hacia la independencia en Cataluña. Discute el concepto de la nación, la importancia de las corridas y el fútbol en culturas ibéricas, partidos políticos catalanes y su rol en el voto a favor de la prohibición de las corridas en Cataluña y la evolución de la conciencia política cada vez más evidente de FC Barcelona. Concluyo que los partidos políticos y otros asociados con el movimiento hacia la independencia se han aprovechado de las corridas y el fútbol para destacar diferencias culturales con España. Esta actitud de diferencia se ha trasladado de arriba-abajo al pueblo catalán y el movimiento nacionalista corre el riesgo de alienar a los que no comparten sus creencias.

**Palabras clave:** Cataluña; Corrida de toros; FC Barcelona; Emancipación; Nacionalismo.

**Para citar este artículo:** Tkac, John A. (2014). The Role of Bullfighting and FC Barcelona in the Emancipation of Catalonia from Spain. *Revista de Humanidades*, n. 23, p. 137-156. ISSN 1130-5029.

**Sumario:** 1. Spain: Plurinational or Nation/State? 2. Catalan Nationalism and Political Parties. 3. Bulls and Bullfighting: Only Spanish? 4. FC Barcelona: At the service of its country. 5. Conclusion.

The desire for liberty, central to Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation whose 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary is the inspiration for this volume, has manifested itself innumerable times during the course of human history. Emancipation tends to be associated with slavery but its interpretation can also include the desire of peoples or regions to emancipate from a State to which they are bound by legal ties, with Catalonia fitting into this latter category. Catalonia forms part of the legally recognized state of Spain and is located in the northeast corner of the Iberian Peninsula. This autonomous community is in discussions to hold a referendum in regards to the region's desire for independence in 2014. While opinions vary in regards to the legality or eventual results of a legal separation from Spain, there are at least two social institutions that have played a part in fomenting nationalist fervor: bullfighting and FC Barcelona. This paper will discuss the role that bullfighting and FC Barcelona have played in the advancement of the nationalist movement in Catalonia. In order to do so, it is necessary to discuss the concept of nation and state, the meaning of the bullfight and soccer in Spanish society, Catalan political parties, and the role of soccer and the bullfight in the advancement of the nationalist agenda.

## 1. SPAIN: PLURINATIONAL OR NATION/STATE?

Historically states have modified their borders based on outcomes of war, treaties, purchases or annexations. In defining the state, Max Weber writes that it is a "...human community that (successfully) claims the monopoly of the legitimate use of physical force within a given territory" (Weber, 1952: 78). The 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries saw many states solidify their boundaries and begin constructing a national narrative to create a more cohesive nation-state. These creations maintained the military power usually associated with a state but also began to implement social policies designed to create a common identity among their citizens. Michael Keating writes, "Where the state as an institutional form coincides with the national as a cultural or felt reality, then we can speak of the nation-state" (Keating, 2000: 29). This nation-state dynamic is challenged by several countries in Europe that have territories seeking to proclaim themselves as nations. Communities like Scotland, Catalonia and the Basque Country all present narratives that contrast with those emanating from their Central Governments.

Absent from Weber's definition are the cultural issues at the heart of nationalism. Benedict Anderson refers to nations as an "imagined community," for they are groups of people who share a similar language and culture but who may not ever meet (Anderson, 1991: 6). Monserrat Guibernau has a broader view of the nation and defines it as "...a group conscious of forming a community, sharing a

common culture, attached to a determined territory, possessing a collective past and a collective project for the future that includes the reclamation of the right to self-governance” (Guibernau, 2004: 8). Culture is a common theme in both scholars’ definitions of a nation, and I believe a shared language is implied as part of that culture. Anderson points to the printing press and the popularity of the written word as elements important to the flourishing of nations, whereas Guibernau implicitly refers to language when she discusses culture. Within both definitions it is clear that people are able to choose to belong to a nation if their beliefs are in line with others in a determined geographical area. This union of shared beliefs, shared language, a shared project for the future and the ability to legitimately use force are characteristics of a nation-state.

One of the issues facing modern day Spain is the question of how to deal with the question of the various “historical nationalities” located within its borders. After the fall of the Franco dictatorship and the approval of the Spanish Constitution in 1978, one of the most hotly debated topics was the question of the “historical nationalities” in Galicia, Catalonia and the Basque Country. The center-periphery power dynamic has been problematic for centuries in Spain, with each region enjoying some degree of autonomy only to see it diminished at various points in history. Catalonia once thrived as a trading state along the Mediterranean in the Middle Ages and early modern period as part of the Kingdom of Aragón (Keating, 2000: 31). Even after the marriage of Ferdinand and Isabel, the Kingdom of Aragón continued to implement its own laws and Catalan was the language used by a majority of the population. This self-government ended with the signing of the Treaty of Utrecht in 1714 (Keating, 2000: 31).

The 19<sup>th</sup> century saw the creation of nationalist feelings in the “historic nationalities.” Many intellectuals in these regions did not believe that the Castilian language and culture, advanced by the central government, were elements shared by all who lived within the Spanish borders. Many intellectuals in these regions with strong nationalist feelings wanted more recognition as regions, and later as nations, possessing a language and culture distinct from the Castilian recognized as the standard by the central government. This feeling in Catalonia was best exemplified during the *Renaixença*, which saw a resurgence of Catalan in spoken word poetry contests, songs, poems and plays. Joaquim Rubió d’Orso proclaimed that Spain was no longer the ‘fatherland’ of Catalans while Joan Maragall celebrated Catalan identity in his ‘*Cant de la senyera*’ (McRoberts, 2001: 21, 22).

This continued desire for recognition was finally realized when the Second Republic was declared in Spain in 1932. The liberal government drew up autonomy statutes that gave increased powers to Catalonia and the Basque Country. The Spanish Civil War (1936-1939), which resulted in the almost 40-year dictatorship of Francisco Franco, quickly ended this attempt at increased self-rule. It wasn’t until the death of Franco that these regions could once again aspire to have any autonomy in

a democratic Spain. The current system allows for increased self-rule in the “historic nationalities,” an approach welcomed by the people in Catalonia who have long held that they live in a region whose language and culture are different from that of “Spain.”

The desire for autonomy grew after the death of the dictator Francisco Franco. During the 20th century Spain had seen two dictators, Miguel Primo de Rivera and Francisco Franco, attempt a radical regeneration of the country with an ideology founded in the indissoluble unity of Spain. The repression of these regional languages and cultures only served to increase their desire for autonomy and recognition. Isaiah Berlin asserts that, “Frequently nationalism is born of a wound or human indignation, the desire for recognition” (Berlin, 1996: 248). This desire for recognition led to the “*fiebre de autonomía*” or “*fever of autonomy*” seen after the fall of Franco and the eventual development of a system designed to transfer certain powers away from the central government and over to autonomous regions. This “fever” led some regions to begin to search for what the Catalans call their *fet diferencial*, or distinguishing feature.

## 2. CATALAN NATIONALISM AND POLITICAL PARTIES

The most evident *fet diferencial* that serves as the soul and essence of nationalism is the language (Roller, 2002: 274). This communal feature was considered so important that it led Franco and Primo de Rivera to prohibit the use of languages other than Spanish during their successive dictatorships. Despite the prohibition, people continued speaking Catalan at home or in certain public spaces like the soccer stadium for FC Barcelona (the Camp Nou). Following the death of Francisco Franco and the ratification of the Constitution in 1978, Catalan became the co-official language of Catalonia (Strubell, 2011: 131). This was the beginning of a process of linguistic normalization whose aim was to restore the use of Catalan in all aspects of public and private life (Woolard and Frekko, 2013: 130). It has counted upon strong support from the Generalitat (government in Catalonia), a group that has implemented measures to protect and encourage the use of Catalan. These measures have included the establishment of Catalan as a language of instruction in schools, the ability to use Catalan in most governmental institutions, and to normalize the use of Catalan in social situations (McRoberts, 2001:144). As a result, more than nine million people speak Catalan today and more than eleven million understand it (<http://www.gencat.cat/catalunya/cas/ coneixer-llengua.htm>).

The prevailing sentiment is that Catalan nationalism is not ethnically determined and membership is available to all who desire to belong to the nation. In 1934 Carles Cardó wrote, “...nationality is a cultural phenomenon which can perfectly mold individuals of distinct races...” (McRoberts, 2001: 130). This open attitude welcomes all into what he believes to be a tolerant society dependent upon

mutual cooperation for success. Their nation was formed on the base of language and culture with membership being available to those who wished to conform to the Catalan cultural norms and speak the language (McRoberts, 2001: 2). This type of nationalism avoids using the words such as “ethnic” or “race” and, in the case of Catalonia, puts language use as the most fundamental elements of belonging to the nation (Miley, 2007: 23). In this same vein, Catalans value two concepts in politics and society: *pactisme* and *seny*. *Pactisme* is a term originally used to describe the importance of forming pacts to ensure that all would be represented in politics, thus ensuring that no certain political party or person could exercise their dominance over another (McRoberts, 2001: 10). This mentality later was applied to all areas of social relations (Guibernau, 2004: 26). In a like manner, *seny* refers to common sense, which Josep Ferrater Mora describes as “...‘pursuing what is fair, proper and correct, even if this pursuit is sometimes the most senseless action imagined’” (quoted in Guibernau, 2004: 26).

To advance the cause of Catalan nationalism, Catalonia has numerous political parties that dedicate themselves to the Catalan cause. The Catalan autonomous government, Generalitat, is composed of representatives mainly from political parties whose interests center on the advancement of Catalonia but also participate at the national level through participation in the creation of coalition governments. On the left, the nationalist parties are Esquerra Republicana de Catalunya (ERC) and Iniciativa per Catalunya-Verds (ICV), but these parties have been overshadowed by the dominant Convergència i Unió (CiU), a center-right party that has held power almost uninterrupted since Catalonia regained its autonomous government in 1978. There are also Spanish political parties that operate on a national level and have a strong presence in Catalonia. The Partit dels Socialistes de Catalunya (PSC-PSOE) is affiliated with the Partido Socialista Obrero Español (PSOE), the dominant party of the left, whereas the Partido Popular Catalan (PPC) is affiliated with the Partido Popular, the dominant party of the right.

Each of the above political parties has differing attitudes towards the question of the proper role for Catalonia in a Spanish and European context. Since the return of democracy to Spain, ERC has argued that Catalonia should be a state within the European Union. They believe that Catalonia possesses a language, territory and culture that serve as the base for the formation of a Catalan state. ICV, while representing interests on the left, does not advance the nationalist cause quite as strongly as CiU. Although CiU believes in greater autonomy for Catalonia, they do not advance the nationalist cause quite as fervently as ERC. They do believe, however, in the ability for Catalonia to choose its political destiny but do not believe that destiny must have independence as the end result. Presently CiU, whose leader Artur Mas is the President of the Generalitat, is leading the charge towards a referendum on independence to be held in 2014. In previous decades CiU has advocated for Catalonia to have greater autonomy from the Spanish state without necessarily having to secede. They have maintained that secession is an option but not one that

has been advanced until recently. PSC and PPC, due to their affiliations with Spanish national parties, do not advocate for independence from Spain. Nonetheless, perhaps in response to the increased nationalist fervor and movements towards independence, some politicians in the PSC have recently participated in pro-independence rallies even though the party has not changed its stance in regards to independence. A brief glance at the websites for each of these political parties also reflects this attitude. The websites for CiU, PSC, ICV and ERC all load initially in Catalan with the possibility to access the content in Castilian also. The website for CiU loads in Catalan but does not allow one to access the content in Castilian. On the other hand, the website for PPC loads initially in Castilian with the ability to switch to Catalan.

Although these political parties differ slightly in their vision for the future of Catalonia, the political elites all share a top-down governing mentality. T. J. Miley challenges the notion of this “civic nationalism” growing from grass-roots efforts. He posits that if Catalonia were truly experiencing civic nationalism, there would be equal amounts of support for the nationalist project regardless of ones birthplace or maternal language (Miley, 2007: 3). On the contrary, he finds that there is a disparity between those who think of Catalonia as a region and those who think of it as a nation. Miley states that those who consider themselves “bi-cultural,” or imagine that they belong to two different cultures, are greater among those belonging to the cultural and political elite. Miley states that, “Among the general public, only 37.5% of the general public imagine their identities in “bi-cultural terms. By contrast, 73.9% of teachers, 72.7% of local politicians, and 82.1% of parliamentarians imagine their identities as such” (Miley, 2007: 17-18). This disparity between the general public and “elites” is evident in several areas designed to increase the normalization of Catalan in everyday life even to the opposition of many citizens. The controversy over the increased dubbing of films is a clear example of this top-down governing mentality.

In 2010, the Govern approved a law stating that movies with more than 50 copies distributed in Catalonia must have at least 50% of those copies dubbed or subtitled in Catalan (“Mitad de las películas,” 2011). The spirit of the law is meant to protect and encourage the use of Catalan in cinemas however it has failed to capture the general interest of the public and has drawn the ire of cinema owners in Catalonia, and the major production studios in Hollywood. In addition, the European Union declared in 2012 that the law must be altered. The law exempts films in Castilian from being dubbed into Catalan and as such discriminates against other films from Europe or Hollywood (Cuadrado, 2012). Possibly because of these issues, the number of films dubbed into Catalan fell from 66 in 2011 to 22 in 2012 (Crecen un 51,5%, 2013). The spectators who attended these showings in Catalan numbered 634,698 in 2012, an increase from 2011, but this number still pales in comparison to the 15,427,565 who attended showings in Castilian (lavanguardia.es). Prior to the approval of this law the writer Albert Espulgas Boter, a native Catalan who speaks it with his partner and friends, states that he and many others prefer to see movies in their original



language and if that is not available then in Castilian. He states that “there are many similar to me who prefer Castilian, maybe because we are already used to it and it is strange listening to Bruce Willis in Catalan or because we think that dubbing in Catalan takes advantage of linguistic puritanism and it seems less natural than Castilian” (Espulgas Boter, 2009-my translation). His opinion is consistent with the results of a study in 2010, which showed that 46% of Catalans preferred to watch movies in Castilian in comparison to only 18% in Catalan (“46% de los catalanes,” 2011). This top-down style of governing can go against the opinion of the inhabitants of Catalonia. However, it pleases the political elites who are in the unique position of having the platform to shape the official discourse of Catalonia and condition the opinion of many of its inhabitants.

### 3. BULLS AND BULLFIGHTING: ONLY SPANISH?

Bullfighting is an activity that has awakened passions among those in favor of it and those opposed to it during the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries. The commercial activity related with bullfighting has increased in the past two centuries but its presence in the Iberian Peninsula can be traced back thousands of years to the caves in Altamira. The Spanish philosopher José Ortega y Gasset states that “The history of bullfighting is tied to the history of Spain in such a way that if one does not understand the former, one will never understand the latter” (Ortega y Gasset, [www.proverbia.net](http://www.proverbia.net)). Many writers in popular mediums such as the newspaper or the internet, television commentators and many scholars, such as Timothy Mitchel or Carrie Douglass, refer to it as the “fiesta nacional” due to its popularity throughout the entire country. The popularity of bullfighting has even brought into the language numerous expressions such as *salir por la puerta grande* (complete something very successfully), *la faena* (the last part of an activity) or *coger el toro por los cuernos* (grab the bull by the horns).

While the “fiesta nacional” is an activity that is practiced in almost all corners of Spain, there are many who associate it with a conservative ideology. Stanley Brandes states that, “the Spaniard who dons such clothing or uses bull-adorned objects openly and conspicuously is immediately identified with right-of-center national politics” (Brandes, 2009: 785). This identification makes the task of constructing a national narrative problematic for Spain due to the distrust of many towards the central government. The Franco dictatorship fundamentally altered the relationship between the central Spanish government and the “historic nationalities,” brutally repressing the regional languages and cultural norms that did not conform to his vision of Spain. As such, the mention of Spain as a nation calls to mind, as in Brandes’ statement, visions of Franco and his attempt to radically regenerate Spain in his image. His imposition of the Castilian language was accompanied by officially sanctioning cultural practices such as bullfighting. It was used almost a sort of *pan y toros* or “bread and bulls,” to give the people a spectacle to distract them from everyday

problems. Franco also incorporated bullfighting into tourism campaigns designed at selling Spain as an exotic location.

Tourists are not the only ones who associate the bull with Spain, as evidenced by the following anecdote featuring the logo for Osborne (a popular sherry). A black bull appears on each bottle of sherry. The logo was popular, which led Osborne to launch an ad campaign in the 1980's featuring hundreds of enormous black bulls along public highways. In spite of the illegality of this action, the bulls were immensely popular with those driving on Spanish highways. The popularity prompted many citizens and journalists to protest the dismantling of the bulls due to the nationalist feelings that the bull and the bullfight are Spanish treasures. In speaking for citizens in favor of the bull and tourists, Antonio Burgos, a journalist, writes, "The bull, like so many other advertising symbols, formed part of the Spanish landscape. The foreigners took away memories of the Escorial, the Giralda, the Aqueduct, the thigh of a flamenco dancer in a show...and the Osborne bull seen from the air conditioned bus" (Burgos, 1989). Burgos feared that Spain was losing its unique national character and becoming another non-descript European country. The buildings he mentions, flamenco and the Osborne bull all contribute to making Spain a country unlike any other. His defense of the bulls, along with the outpouring of citizens' passion in defense of these black bulls, prompted the government to allow the billboards to remain but without any explicit reference to Osborne the brand.

The so called "fiesta nacional" is not seen by many to be an element related with Catalan culture but rather another example of an imposition of Castilian culture on the Catalans. Yet whereas the bull is commonly associated with Spain, bull baiting games and bullfighting also enjoy a long and seldom discussed history in Catalonia. The first mention of bullfighting activities in Catalonia takes place in the 14<sup>th</sup> Century in a meeting between the Kings of France and Aragón in Barcelona to proclaim their support in favor of Pope Clement VII (Segura Palomares, 1990: 196). The King of France sent a letter requesting three bulls and the necessary bullfighters to carry out the show (Segura Palomares, 1990: 196). The popularity of bullfights and other bull baiting games continued throughout the next few centuries with a style that differed from the bullfight being practiced in Castile. In the 13<sup>th</sup> Century the Castilian King Alfonso X declared in the *Siete partidas* that all who fought beasts for money would be dishonored (Sabio, 1807). This proclamation discriminated against the lower class tradition of fighting on foot and favored the nobility and warrior classes, who fought on horseback. The Catalans continued with their tradition of bullfighting, running with the bulls and other bull baiting games on foot and did not incorporate the fight on horseback (Segura Palomares, 1990: 197).

As the centuries passed, Catalonia continued practicing *correbous* (running with the bulls) and hosting numerous bullfights. At one time Barcelona was home to three bullrings which were in constant use, with La Monumental being one of the

largest and most prolific in Spain, often hosting more bullfights with high quality bullfighters than Las Ventas in Madrid (Segura Palomares, 1990: 178). Catalonia also produced its share of bullfighters and produced businessmen like don Pedro Balañá who were very important in the world of bullfighting. Most recently, in 2007, the mythical José Tomás decided to come out of retirement. He chose la Monumental, the largest bullring in Barcelona, as the stage for his comeback from a brief retirement (Brandes, 2009: 788). That the bullring was at capacity that is a testament to the popularity among certain sectors that bullfighting enjoyed and José Tomás delighted those lucky enough to attend.

In addition to the bullfight, Catalonia has another particular form of bull baiting game referred to as *correbous*. The tradition of *correbous*, or running with the bulls, commonly referred to as *encierro* in other parts of Spain, is deeply rooted within Catalan society. This activity consists of allowing a bull loose in a town square and allow the bull to run along a carefully planned out route, or just around in the square, to allow the participants to run with it and there and even those who are brave enough to touch it. The bulls do not die in this activity, nor is there any bloodshed. In Cardona (Barcelona) there is evidence of *corre-bous* dating back to the 15<sup>th</sup> century (Segura Palomares, 1990: 190). This particular bull baiting game consists of a young man hiding in a wicker basket in the middle of the plaza while the rest of the plaza is surrounded by young men holding onto ropes used to climb away from the danger of an onrushing bull. The young man in the wicker basket must call the attention of the bull, thus causing it to run in his direction and absorb the punishment from the bull's attacks. When he is knocked down, other men in the plaza help him back to his feet. At the same time, the other young men in the plaza run towards the bull with the aim of catching its attention so that it will follow or touching the bull before running away to safety. The neighboring autonomous community of Valencia also has a long tradition of *correbous*, and both regions practice a few other types of bull baiting games as well. There is the *toro embolado* in which sparklers or torches are attached to the bull's horns prior to running through the streets. This activity is very common at night during fiestas celebrated in various cities or towns. Finally, there are some cities in Valencia, like Benicarló, in which the *bous* (bull) runs through the town in a determined route with its final destination being the sea. The young men and women in the town guide the bull to a ledge where it then jumps into the sea. It must be stated that the previous activities do not involve the death of the bull, merely the proximity of the human beings to the animal.

Despite this longstanding history of bull games, resistance to bullfighting in Catalonia has emerged in the last few years. In December 2003, Catalan separatists tore down the last of the immense Osborne bulls from the highway (Brandes, 2009: 787). Prior to 2010, Catalonia had 37 cities or towns that were "anti-aurina" (anti-bullfighting) (Brandes, 2009: 787). In addition to this resistance, attendance at bullfights has fallen significantly over the past 30 years. In the year 2009 there were 1,848 bullfights or other bull activities in which 10,247 bulls participated ("Toros en

España,” 2010). This represented a decline of 16.88% from the number of bullfights in 2008 and a 29.52% reduction from the numbers of 2007 (“Los toros en España,” 2010). Authorities felt additional pressure from animal rights groups, known as *animalistas*, to officially ban bullfighting in Spain or at least in some regions of Spain. One of these groups, *Prou!*, presented on November 11, 2008 a petition with over 180,000 signatures to the Generalitat. After almost two years of discussions and deliberations on the topic, it was scheduled for a vote on July 28, 2010.

The debates prior to the vote centered upon animal rights and identity. Josep Rull, a representative of CiU, stated that the prohibition was about animal rights, not identity. He stated that bullfighting is as Catalan as any other tradition and reminded others that intellectuals such as Antonio Machado, Lope de Vega, Santiago Ramón y Cajal or Jacinto Benavente were against bullfighting with the simple aim of achieving a better country (López, 2010). In defense of the bullfight, Rafael Luna of PPC stated that, “everything that is not exclusively Catalan bothers the nationalists” (López, 2010-my translation). It was known prior to the vote that the President of the Generalitat, José Montilla, a member of PSC, would vote against the prohibition. He later stated that he voted against the prohibition because he believed in liberty (“Montilla: He votado,” 2010).

The result of the vote prohibited bullfighting, with 68 votes in favor of the prohibition, 55 against, and 9 abstentions. The votes and to whom they belonged hints that this particular prohibition was more about identity than animal rights. Prior to the vote, it was announced that each politician would be able to vote their conscience and not be forced to vote along party lines. In the end, 65 of the 68 votes in favor of the prohibition belonged to representatives of political parties in favor of increased autonomy, recognition of the Catalan nation or independence (CiU, ERC, ICV) (López, 2010). There were only seven members of CiU who voted against the prohibition and none from the other parties (Belmonte, 2010). The other political parties that participated, PPC and PSC, voted against the prohibition, with only 3 lawmakers from PSC voting in favor (López, 2010).

The overwhelming number of votes in favor of the prohibition suggests that the Catalan nationalist parties were seeking to strengthen their *fet diferencial* as opposed to defending animal rights. By prohibiting bullfighting, nationalist politicians were able to clearly contrast Catalonia against Spain. Catalonia portrayed itself as a forward-thinking, more tolerant “nation” in line with other European countries, as opposed to Spain, which continues to defend bullfighting, seen by some as an affront to animal rights. Since these political parties’ desire is to raise awareness of Catalonia as a separate entity from Spain, this vote helped them gain further international exposure. The parties who voted against the prohibition are national parties and voting in favor of the prohibition would not be in their best interest. Despite a somewhat reduced consumer demand, bullfighting continues to be a fixture on Sunday afternoons in many parts of the country.

Former President Montilla's previous statement about liberty is also instructive, for he does not mention being for or against animal rights but rather in favor of liberty. He is saying that it should be up to the individuals, not the government, to decide whether or not to attend an event whose history goes back hundreds of years in Spain. By not mentioning animal rights, he is calling attention to the lack of respect that the animal is receiving in this vote. Montilla is pointing out that the issue is the liberty of the Catalans to decide what is and isn't Catalan.

#### 4. FC BARCELONA: AT THE SERVICE OF ITS COUNTRY

While the rejection of the bullfight represents another way to augment the *fet diferencial* in Catalonia, Futbol Club Barcelona (FC Barcelona) has arguably been the most visible Catalan organization in the world. Their slogan, which is "Mes que un club" or "More than a club," seeks to reinforce their image as an organization that is a force for change. Since the club's founding in 1899, FC Barcelona has been a living symbol of Catalan identity. The club has been described as a "...disarmed civic army... a civil religion and a national ambassador for Catalonia" (García, 2012: 2). The Francoist dictatorship could not stop FC Barcelona from attracting supporters and some investigators "...point to the role of sports in creating a collective identity in times of political repression" (García, 2012: 5). During the Franco dictatorship the Camp Nou served as a safe haven for the Catalan language and culture due to the inability of police forces to control the more than 80,000 spectators filling the stadium. Today the Camp Nou plays a part in the nationalist cause through the songs sung by the fans and the flags that they carry. It is common to see the *senyera* (Official Flag of Catalonia) waved by thousands of fans during any game, while it is rare to ever see a Spanish flag inside the stadium (García, 2012: 5).

There is no doubt that thousands of fans bring Catalan nationalist sentiments with them to the stadium each weekend, but the political activity of the club is a recent phenomenon. Previous presidents of FC Barcelona, such as Josep Lluís Nuñez and Joan Gaspart, respected the nationalist aspects of the club, such as the language, but hesitated to take a more political stance. During his nearly twenty years as President of FC Barcelona, Nuñez took great pains to remain politically ambivalent (Ball, 2011). The club prospered both on the field and in the number of members, but no effort was made by the President to involve the club in political movements (Ball, 2011). This political ambivalence continued under Joan Gaspart. He was a member of the Partido Popular but avoided making political declarations while president (Ball, 2011). It wasn't until the resignation of Gaspart and the subsequent election of Joan Laporta that FC Barcelona threw itself into the political arena.

With Laporta now at the forefront, many of those who were incorporated into executive positions at the club were Catalan nationalist supporters who did not hesitate to express their support of Catalonia either verbally or through their actions (García,

2012: 6). During Laporta's term the *senyera* was added to the Barcelona jerseys, and the club encouraged nationalist displays in the Camp Nou. In 2009, Laporta participated in a pro-independence march that took place on *la Diada* (Catalan National Holiday), later defending his right to do so ("Miles de personas," 2009). Also in 2009 Laporta spoke about the supposed identity politics in the games between Real Madrid and FC Barcelona. He informed everyone that in his office there are two flags, an FC Barcelona flag and a Catalonia flag. He finished by saying that this was one of the most Catalanist and most universal teams ever ("Laporta saca pecho," 2009). Laporta was stating that not only did the team strongly represent Catalonia, but its success had made the club more popular internationally than ever before. After leaving office Laporta went on to form a pro-independence political party.

Laporta's successor, Sandro Rosell, has continued involving the club in the movement towards independence. FC Barcelona's Camp Nou served as a venue for the human chain that crossed all of Catalonia on September 11, 2013 ("La via catalana," 2013). Similar to the human chain formed in the Baltic states of Lithuania, Estonia and Latvia in 1989, the purpose of this act was to call attention to their desire for independence. The "via catalane," as it was called, stretched over 400 kilometers from the northern border of Catalonia with France to the southernmost point in Tarragona. FC Barcelona was asked if the *via* could pass through the Camp Nou and vice president Carles Vilarrubi stated that "Barca always has its doors open to FC Barcelona fans who want to express themselves" (<http://www.catalannewsagency/>"FC Barcelona opens," 2013). In addition, club President Sandro Rosell offered the institution's support for the referendum on independence in a press conference in October 2013. He stated, "We are a Catalan Club and Catalanista. We are that way because of our history, because of our identity and because of our conviction. We have reinforced our ties with Catalan institutions and we have collaborated in the diffusion of the values of the club and the country" (Solé, 2013-my translation).

In spite of FC Barcelona's universal appeal, they continue to use Catalan in their press releases and press conferences. The website for the club is also outwardly nationalist in the language used. In a previous version of the club's website, differing terms were used in discussing the identity of FC Barcelona. When accessed in Catalan or Castilian, the website says, "... FC Barcelona is more than a club for many people in the *Spanish State* who saw in Barcelona a firm defender of democratic rights and freedoms" ("Mes que un club"-emphasis mine). However, this same passage in English says, "...for many people in *Spain*..." ("Mes que un club"-emphasis mine). The use of the word *Spanish State* indicates that while FC Barcelona is bound politically to Spain, the club is stating that they believe Spain to be a pluri-national state and not a nation-state. The use of the word *Spain* in the text in English serves the purpose of hiding the identity debate from those who are unaware of the different cultures in Spain.

Nonetheless, this contrast completely disappears in the updated version of the website. In writing about the identity of the club, it states, “FC Barcelona is “more than a club” in Catalonia because it is the sports club that most represents the *country* and is also one of its greatest ambassadors” (“FC Barcelona, The member’s Club”-emphasis mine). The word *country* refers to the club’s view that Catalonia should be a state independent from Spain. The identity is therefore tied to a country that is not a political entity but is fighting to become one. Unlike the previous version, the website does not change its message from one language to another. This lack of change reflects the stance by the club to a more open stance in regards to independence, stating openly that Catalonia should be a country. Regardless of the version of the website accessed, there is a link at the bottom of the page to a tourism site dedicated to Catalan tourism.

The club’s executives also aggressively promote the use of Catalan by players and fans. The club hopes that foreign players, those born outside of Catalonia, learn Catalan when they sign a contract in the hope that they will follow in the steps of the club’s founder, Hans Gamper. He was born in Switzerland but moved to Catalonia in his twenties where he immersed himself in everything Catalan. Gamper learned the language, immersed himself in the community and even legally changed his name from Hans to Joan. His embrace of Catalonia is seen as another example of how Catalans believe that their society is open and inviting. The foreign born players who follow Gamper’s example by learning Catalan and integrating themselves into the community become heroes such as former players Johan Cruyff or Hristo Stoichkov.

As the club considers itself an outward symbol of Catalan nationalism, fans are also encouraged to speak Catalan. In March 2013, Club President Sandro Rosell stated that speaking Catalan was the best way to demonstrate that one is a true fan of Barcelona. He continued by reiterating that the club’s, “...official language is Catalan and, as such, it is important that you share the language of the club with all of the children who live together in this country” (“Rosell: Hablar catalán,” 2013). Rosell thus reflects the importance of the language to the Catalan identity and includes the club as part of that identity. He also lends importance to the nationalists’ belief that Catalonia as a country as opposed to an autonomous community in Spain.

In addition to the language, in recent years the club has begun to use *la senyera* in organized events and as part of their uniform. On October 7<sup>th</sup> 2012 Real Madrid visited the Camp Nou for a match and FC Barcelona organized the formation of a massive mosaic by providing fans with colored pieces of paper. At the minute 17:14 of each half the fans would hold up these pieces of paper to form a giant *senyera* (“Camp Nou se vestirà,” 2012). This large mosaic was a show of support to the independence movement and its pro-independence rally in the city of Barcelona a month prior on September 11 in which between 600,000 and 1.5 million people participated (Pi, 2012). This use of the *senyera* extends to the official game kits also. As previously stated, Joan Laporta added the *senyera* to the back of the Barcelona

jerseys. This small emblem will be much larger in the 2013-14 campaign, as they have decided to make their second jersey a *senyera*. With this jersey FC Barcelona will be a kicking, running and living advertisement for Catalonia, even more so than before.

## 5. CONCLUSION

Xavier Rubert de Ventós defines the *fet diferencial* as a fundamental element for nationalism: "...to define something is, first and foremost, to delimit what it is not, distinguishing it from the bordering phenomena or concepts" (de Ventós, 1994: 27-my translation). As such, Catalonia's prohibition of bullfighting does seem to derive from a desire to differentiate Catalonia from Spain. The overwhelming support from the politicians representing nationalist parties suggests that their goal is to place Catalonia in a position closer to the rest of Europe. By defining themselves as a region in favor of animal rights, they are placing themselves at odds with Spain. However, this redefinition does have its flaws. How can the Generalitat prohibit bullfighting but continue to allow a spectacle like the *correbous* which, on the outside, appears to violate animal rights? In fact, many *animalistas* have expressed their disapproval of the *correbous* but their petitions have not yet reached the level of popular support to be discussed by the Generalitat. Even if they did, I doubt that their petitions would be considered. *Correbous* are considered to be an integral part of Catalan culture, especially in areas in the south of Catalonia. Had the prohibition of bullfighting been mainly about animal rights, it would have been logical to prohibit an activity in which flaming torches are attached to a live animal. Finally, attendance at bullfights has been in decline for years not only in Catalonia but all over Spain. As such, market forces would have eventually ended the bullfighting spectacle, as it would no longer be economically viable to have them. Similar to ex-President Montilla's statement about voting in favor of liberty, it would appear that the spirit of *pactisme* is also under attack. Instead of looking for common ground with those who are in favor of bullfighting, a direct attack was made and one side received what it wanted while the other was left with nothing.

Whereas independence for Catalonia certainly garners popular approval, as evidenced by the hundreds of thousands of people who have participated in the various marches and pro-independence activities over the last few years, one cannot ignore the strong presence of politicians and presidents who have encouraged nationalist activities, resulting in a top-down governing mentality. Their shaping of the nationalist discourse may prove alienating to those who do not share all of the views being presented by those in power. Juan Segura Palomares, a Catalan who writes about the history of bullfighting in Catalonia, affirms that in Catalan nationalism there is a purveying sentiment that, "...to be a good Catalan you have to reject bullfighting because it is not a Catalan tradition" (Segura Palomares, 1990: 209). Club President Sandro Rosell affirms this by repeating the importance of the language to being a true fan in Catalonia and employing nationalist symbols on the



club's jerseys or in the stadium. These statements and actions create divisions where they are not necessary. The criteria that determines who is and is not Catalan should not be decided by politicians and club presidents. If someone enjoys attending a bullfight, why should that person be any less Catalan than his neighbor who repudiates the practice? Is someone less of a fan of FC Barcelona if they do not speak Catalan or share the view that Catalonia should be independent from Spain?

The nationalist rhetoric and actions that have been officially sanctioned by the club and its presidents run the risk of tarnishing the reputation of openness or *pactisme* that Catalonia and the club tout as their distinguishing features. Whereas César García writes that, "BFC fans in the rest of Spain are not going to change their support even if the club's president uses the team to promote Catalan independence," Alejandro Quiroga disagrees (García 2012: 11). He writes that the top down promotion of Catalan separatism "runs the risk of alienating non-Catalanist sectors of the Barça fan base in and outside Catalonia" (Quiroga, 2013: 145). The nationalist discourse of ex-President Laporta was criticized in a letter to Marca by ex-President of Extremadura Guillermo Fernández Vara. He cautions Laporta that he should moderate his discourse or else the only remaining fans of the club will be in the Diagonal in Barcelona (Fernández Vara: 2009). Similarly, peñas, or social groups of fans of a particular club, that don't share the nationalist beliefs have stated that the nationalist politics of the club have made it more difficult for them to be fans outside of Catalonia (Peñas barcelonistas de fuera: 2009). This sentiment extends to fans of the club who live in other parts of the world. In a comments section on the website for the newspaper *El país*, user *desdeguate* from Guatemala writes, "Here we are many fans who love to watch Barcelona play. Please don't put politics in the middle!" (Eskup).

These are only a few of the examples found but they sum up quite well what I have heard from many individuals who have a difficult time separating politics and sport. It is dangerous to mix a universal brand like Barcelona with the politics of a regional phenomenon because the commercial and public relations damages could be far reaching. FC Barcelona has worked very hard to establish partnerships with organizations such as UNICEF, which provide it an image of an open and forward thinking club. This image outside of Catalonia may continue to cause negative reactions from those who disagree with their nationalist position. It is possible that in the coming years FC Barcelona could continue to lose supporters around the world because of political movements that it chooses to support today.

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