

# The House of Master Bonanat: Popular Education and Social Revolt in 13th-Century Barcelona

Section: Art and culture

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The first documented popular revolt in Barcelona took place at the end of the 13th century. It was directed against the powerful—nobility, the church, and wealthy merchants—who monopolized major businesses and owned most agricultural and real estate properties, imposing high taxes on the rest of the population for any use, exchange, or transfer.

The seeds of protest were sown in a school, the house of Master Bonanat. A highly respected figure, he taught children to read, copied and sold reading materials, and wrote letters for illiterate individuals. This was a time of commercial and productive growth in the city, which increased the complexity of economic relations, making a certain degree of literacy necessary. As a result, Bonanat's house became a space for socialization for people of all kinds, particularly the working class, where daily concerns were discussed.

Some of those who frequented Bonanat's house formed an association under oath with the goal of reducing the oppressive taxes. In early 1285, at a time of great social tension stemming from the Crown's war with France, the revolt

erupted. The working classes, led by the associates of Master Bonanat's house, attacked the businesses of the powerful, managing to control parts of the city.

The king intervened directly and violently suppressed the popular uprising.

The fate of Master Bonanat is unknown. Nevertheless, this event stands as a clear precedent for the role that popular education spaces have played throughout history in the struggle for justice and social improvement.

[Image: The Schoolmaster of Eßlingen. Universitätsbibliothek Heidelberg, Cod. Pal. germ. 848 Große Heidelberger Liederhandschrift (Codex Manesse) – Zürich, ca. 1300 bis ca. 1340.]