CONSTRUCTING ROYAL POWER: HOST DESECRATION AND KINGSHIP IN THE FOURTEENTH-CENTURY CROWN OF ARAGON

By

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A DISSERTATION PRESENTED TO THE GRADUATE SCHOOL OF THE UNIVERSITY OF FLORIDA IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

UNIVERSITY OF FLORIDA

2017
Allen, we can write our book now.
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This study emerged from a paper that I wrote for a graduate seminar I took with my adviser, Dr. Nina Caputo, in 2011. I remember the delight I felt when Dr. Caputo confirmed that I could indeed write a dissertation about three fourteenth-century host desecration investigations. Looking back at the six years that have come and gone since that initial moment, I never imagined the adventures and struggles that I would experience in the process of completing a dissertation. During that time, I have benefited from the advice and support of many people who helped me turn a seminar paper into a dissertation and forever influenced the course of my life.

First, I would like to thank my adviser who patiently allowed me to explore different questions and topics before settling on a study about kingship in the medieval Crown of Aragon. I owe her a debt of gratitude for teaching me about medieval Jewish-Christian relations and for reading countless drafts of seminar papers, conference presentations, articles, and dissertation chapters. Writing a dissertation would not have been possible without her guidance on finding and analyzing sources, paleography, visiting archives, writing chapters, and many other academic aspects. Furthermore, I would like to express my appreciation for her understanding and sympathy regarding some of the personal difficulties I encountered over my years as a graduate student.

I would like to thank my mother for showing me that it is possible to love my work and for encouraging me to never give up on my dreams. In many ways, I grew up in the world of academia. As a child, I accompanied my mother, a researcher and college professor, to faculty meetings, dinner parties, and conferences. Between the age of five and fifteen, I explored college campuses with my bicycle, figured out how to take naps on strange chairs and couches in spare offices and conference rooms, and learned how to converse with adults whose entire lives revolved around their research. I recall her grading papers as she sat through ballet recitals and
soccer practices and set aside piles of data and drafts to read bedtime stories or play dolls or soccer with me. My mother always managed to balance my needs with her professional aspirations, but at some point around the age of 11 or 12, I proclaimed that I would never become an academic like her because she never stopped working. At the time, I could not understand why she delighted in spending so much time on her students and her own research. And yet, here I stand having written my dissertation and preparing for a job as an instructor of history. It seems trite to say, but clearly the apple did not fall far from the tree, and I could not be happier about that phenomenon.

I would also like to thank my father for keeping me grounded. His knowledge of everyday life helped me navigate the world outside academia. Over the years, as I sat among my books and papers, focused on writing the best possible dissertation chapter and making a name for myself in my field, my father changed the oil in my vehicle and made sure I had roadside assistance so that I would never be stranded. He reminded me to keep up with the necessary tasks of life, including but not limited to going to the doctor when I was sick and getting renter’s insurance – tasks easily overlooked when one is immersed in dissertation writing. In addition to this, I am grateful for the larger lessons that he imparted to me over the years. He taught me that life is what I make it so build the existence I want by being strong, resourceful, and making my voice heard. Because of my father, I know that I will always survive and succeed no matter what life throws at me.

In addition, I would like to express my gratitude to Anna Lankina, Diana Reigelsperger, Eleanor Deumens, and Francesc Morales for their friendships. They were always there to offer a hug or a kick in the pants, depending on which was more necessary at the moment. Without them I would not have survived the ups and downs of graduate school. Finally, I would like to thank
my best friend and fiancé, Michael Gennaro. You are my broken hallelujah, and you have made all the hard work worth it.
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By

Alana Lord
August 2017

Chair: Nina Caputo
Cochair: Bonnie Effros
Major: History

My study analyzes three host desecration investigations that took place in the fourteenth-century Crown of Aragon to illustrate how Kings Pere III (r. 1336-1387) and Joan I (r. 1387-1396) and their subjects conveyed their political visions through their treatment of the Jews. Part I of my dissertation chronologically explores how Pere and Joan defined and solidified ideals of royal power by either welcoming or rejecting association with the Jews and their revenue. Pere relied on his exclusive claim to the Jews and their revenue to support his life-long efforts to advance and maintain ultimate governing authority to the exclusion of alternate forms of power, including that of his son, the crown prince. Crown Prince Joan and his allies pursued accusations against the Jews in order to undermine the king’s political objectives and recoup power for themselves. In contrast to his father, Joan decentralized royal power when he ascended the throne in 1387 and shared control over the Jews with the nobility and urban governing elite.

Part II of my dissertation examines urban responses to different forms of royal authority. When Pere enacted policies to expand royal power over every level of society, nobles and urban elites living in Barcelona, Osca, and Lleida sought to protect their autonomy by supporting the prosecution of their Jewish neighbors. In contrast to Pere’s kingship, Joan’s inclusive approach to governance permitted nobles and urban oligarchs to dominate the cities. The shift from strong
central rule to the decentralization of power, however, did not satisfy the ambitions of these groups. Instead, noble and urban elites moved to extend their jurisdiction beyond what Joan had permitted to accumulate power at the Crown’s expense. The three host desecration investigations discussed here thus offer a means to understand both notions and practices of kingship in the fourteenth-century Crown of Aragon and how rulers and their subjects used royal Jewish policies and accusations against Jews to advance, challenge, and negotiate royal power.
NOTE ON NAMES

By the end of the fourteenth century, the Crown of Aragon consisted of seven kingdoms – Aragon, Catalonia, Valencia, Mallorca and Minorca, Sicily, Sardinia, and Corsica –, the duchies of Athens and Neopatras, and the two counties of Rousillon and Cerdagne. With each new territory that rulers acquired, they also acquired a new title. Titles for Aragonese rulers became increasingly complex due to the fact that the number of predecessors with the same names differed in each kingdom, and the lands that they governed spoke a range of languages. For example, Peter “the Ceremonious” (r.1336-1387) was known as Pere III in Catalonia, Pedro IV in Aragon, and Pere II in Valencia. Because rulers of the Crown of Aragon remained culturally and dynastically Catalan throughout the late Middle Ages, I use their Catalan names and numeration in my study rather than their Aragonese titles. Furthermore, although Aragonese rulers were technically considered “count-kings” due to their historical comital rights in the Kingdom of Catalonia, I refer to them simply as “kings” in order to increase the readability of my study. When I mention foreign rulers, I use the names by which they were recognized in their own kingdoms. Thus, Pedro “the Cruel” of Castile (r.1350-1366) is called Pedro I, and Philip VI (r.1328-1350) of France is called Philippe III. Similarly, I refer to Aragonese queens who originated from other kingdoms by the original forms of their names. For example, Joan I’s (r.1387-1396) second wife is referred to as Yolande of Bar (1364-1431), the French form of her name, rather than Violante, the Catalan form.
CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

In the mid-fourteenth century, King Pere III (r.1336-1387) commissioned a chronicle that narrated the events and experiences of his life as crown prince and then as ruler of the Crown of Aragon. That Pere commissioned a chronicle to document his life was not unusual; rulers throughout late-medieval Europe frequently did so in order to legitimize their authority and provide instruction for future kings and queens about how to rule justly and effectively.¹ Toward the beginning of his chronicle, Pere recalls a situation from his youth in 1328 when Valencian city officials resisted the efforts of his father, Alfons III (r.1327-1336) to place their towns and cities under the seigniorial authority of his younger son, Prince Ferran. Pere III’s stepmother, Queen Leonor, declared that Alfons should immediately execute the Valencian officials for their defiance, as her brother, the King of Castile, would have done. Alfons, however, replied “Queen, queen, Our people are free and are not kept in subjection as are the people of Castile, for they have Us as lord and We them as good vassals and companions.”² Looking back on this tense exchange, King Pere III seems to have used his father and stepmother to depict the contemporary debate revolving around the questions “who should rule and by what authority?” In Pere’s chronicle, Queen Leonor and King Alfons appear to represent two contemporary forms of kingship. On the one hand, Leonor (and by extension, the King of Castile) represents authoritarian rule in which the ruler wielded unlimited power; on the other hand, King Alfons III

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¹ In fact, in his own chronicle, King Pere explains that he was reading Jaume I’s, his great-great-great-grandfather, Books of Deeds when he received word that King Jaume III of Mallorca had seized the royal city of Puigcerdà in November of 1344. Pere III, Chronicle, ed. by Mary and J.N. Hillgarth, vol. I (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1980), 193-194.

² Pere III, Chronicle, 179.
of Aragon represent governance based on a balance of power between the king, the nobility, and the urban centers of the realms.

Kingship in the Crown of Aragon and throughout Europe in the Middle Ages was complex both in theory and in reality partially because the ideals and limits of royal authority were always in flux. A ruler’s approach to governance was not solely a domestic action but part of an image that rulers projected onto an international scene. Rulers had to adapt their leadership styles to address the current needs of their subjects and simultaneously portray themselves and their kingdoms as politically, economically, and culturally significant and strong to other rulers. Furthermore, a ruler’s subjects, as well as his international allies and enemies, could respond to the way in which he implemented his kingship through rebellion, financial and military support, alliances, war, and so on. Kingship was not simply the way a ruler approached the governance of his realms. Rather, it was part of a political dialogue that he carried out with other contenders for power: the nobility, the urban governing elite, his royal officials, and other rulers. In this dialogue, these different stake-holders constantly advanced, challenged, and negotiated the limits of royal authority to suit their own interests.³

At its core, the on-going dialogue about medieval kingship revolved around the seemingly small but important distinction between the authority to rule and the power to do so. Rulers may have had the authority to rule their kingdoms based on a tradition of hereditary hegemony, but the ability to control their subjects and carry out their objectives was not always

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³ The flexibility and reciprocal nature of kingship appears to have characterized the Middle Ages, as well as the Early Modern Era. For example, Paul Monod demonstrates that rulers Europe had to change their strategies and performances of power to acquire obedience from their subjects as a result of wider developments in Christian self-identity. Monod, *The Power of Kings: Monarchy and Religion in Europe, 1589-1715* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999).
realized. As Michel Foucault has demonstrated in his work on historical and modern concepts of power, power was never solely the property of the State. Due to the feudal foundation of European kingdoms, power in the late Middle Ages was often dispersed among different components of society, including the clergy, nobility, and urban centers. The dispersal of power within society was particularly apparent in the Crown of Aragon and the other kingdoms of the Iberian Peninsula. This was due to the fact that Christian rulers relied heavily on the military and administrative assistance of nobles and urban leaders to conquer and retain Muslim territory, an effort that primarily took place between the eleventh and thirteenth centuries. As a consequence of this reliance, rulers participated in an “economy of power” to gain their subjects’ obedience and support. They utilized different images, rituals, and approaches to persuade their subjects of their right to rule in the manner they desired. In turn, their subjects responded to the king’s assertion of power, whether in support or opposition, often by drawing on similar tools.

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4 This is evidenced in the many documented rebellions that subjects carried out against their rulers. These rebellions were carried out by nobles, commoners, and even the sons of rulers. Björn Weiler has demonstrated that uprisings led by royal sons were particularly prevalent across Europe in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. Weiler, “Kings and Sons: Princely Rebellions and the Structures of Revolt in Western Europe, c.1170-c.1280,” Historical Research 82:215 (2008): 17-40.


6 Works by Marc Bloch and Georges Duby remain the most influential on the topic of feudalism. Bloch attempted to sketch a model of feudal society, and in doing so, he argued that two feudal periods existed, one characterized by invasion and devastation, and the second characterized by economic expansion and intellectual revival. In both cases, however, a social and political hierarchy existed that guided the administration of a kingdom. Duby builds on Bloch’s work by demonstrating how changing ideologies influenced the shape of feudal society, which he argues emerged as a trifunctionary model comprised of clergy, nobles, and peasants. Bloch, Feudal Society, translated by L.A. Manyon (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1964) and Duby, The Three Orders: Feudal Society Imagined, translated by Arthur Goldhammer (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980).

7 For more information about the nature and progress of what would become known as the Reconquista, see Joseph F. O’Callaghan, Reconquest and Crusade in Medieval Spain (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2003).

Scholarship on royal governance in medieval Europe reflects the complexity of kingship as it was shaped and implemented by rulers. Ernst Kantorowicz has pointed to three forms of medieval kingship - a Christ-centered kingship, a law-centered kingship, and a polity-centered kingship- none of which were confined to specific periods of time in the Middle Ages. Moreover, Kantorowicz suggests that rulers often utilized aspects of two or more of these forms at the same time or over the course of their reign depending on their immediate goals or the political image which they sought to project.9 While Kantorowicz does not examine these models of kingship within the context of the Crown of Aragon, documents from King Pere III’s reign indicate that he adopted them on multiple occasions to support his political endeavors. For example, in his chronicle, Pere legitimizes his conquest of Mallorca in 1344 by explaining that God guided his military efforts against his cousin, Jaume III of Mallorca, and that it was his judicial duty as king to punish Jaume’s disrespect towards the King of Aragon and his subjects.10 As will be seen, Pere’s son, the Crown Prince Joan (r. 1387-1396), evoked all three forms to defend his judicial actions (1367 and 1377) against Jews accused of host desecration. In his letters to his father, he suggests that it is his god-given duty and his legal obligation as head of a Christian kingdom to pursue accusations.

In addition to Kantorowicz’s three forms of kingship, Marc Bloch, Sergio Bertelli, and Teofilo Ruiz have identified a range of spectacles that European rulers implemented to adopt these forms of kingship and adapt them to their reigns. While some were confined to particular kingdoms, such as the “royal touch” in France and England, others, like the ceremonial rituals of

9 Ernst H. Kantorowicz, The King’s Two Bodies: A Study in Mediaeval Political Theology (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1957). See his discussion on the persona mixta on pp. 42-45 for his argument about rulers’ assumption of more than one form of kingship in the Middle Ages.

anointing kings, royal entries, and processions, were found throughout Europe.\textsuperscript{11} Bloch, Bertelli, and Ruiz ground Kantorowicz’s panoramic study of the different forms of royal authority by demonstrating how rulers used particular political tools to acquire power and shape kingship. Their focus on patterns of performance of power across dynasties, centuries, and, in the case of Bertelli, an entire continent, however, suggests that all rulers shared a goal to acquire as much power as possible at the expense of everyone else.

The assumption that, as king, all rulers sought to centralize power in their office is connected to the perspective that royal power in the late Middle Ages was a universal phenomenon that evolved and was implemented similarly by rulers across the continent. In fact, this approach is misleading: many European rulers did initiate efforts to consolidate royal power during the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. Alfonso X (r. 1252-1284) and Alfonso XI (r. 1313-1350) of Castile replaced regional law codes that promoted the political autonomy of urban officials with kingdom-wide law codes that forced officials to follow the orders of the Crown and acknowledge its authority.\textsuperscript{12} Some contemporary Aragonese rulers took a similar approach. When King Jaume I (r. 1213-1276) conquered the Kingdom of Valencia in 1238, he encouraged traditionally pro-monarchy Catalans to settle in the new territory, which helped to shift the balance of power in the realms from the defiant, fractious Aragonese nobility to the Crown. Jaume thus used his conquest of Valencia to expand and stabilize monarchical power in the face


of the threat to it posed by the Aragonese nobility.\textsuperscript{13} In addition, Jaume’s son and heir, Pere II (r.1276-1285) increased the number of officials in his royal court, an act that allowed him to enhance his control over the operation of governance on every level of society.\textsuperscript{14} In response to the efforts of Jaume I and Pere II to centralize royal power, their noble and municipal subjects initiated rebellions to express their displeasure with the Crown’s authoritarian policies. Jaume I faced three rebellions during his time as king, and Pere II faced a near-continuous revolt throughout his short reign (r.1276-1285). During each rebellion, nobles and municipal leaders used military and legal means to force the king to acknowledge their authority and include them in the governance of the realms.\textsuperscript{15}

The trend to consolidate royal power in the Crown of Aragon during the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries shifted the focus of the on-going dialogue from the question of what qualities constituted an ideal ruler to where the appropriate limit of royal power lay. Marta VanLandingham and Donald Kagay have examined how rulers and their subjects used law and political institutions to advance or resist the centralization of royal power. VanLandingham uses palatine ordinances and financial and legal documents created by court officials to demonstrate that rulers consolidated power by increasing the bureaucracy of royal governing institutions, and particularly the royal court. With a larger number of royal officials, rulers could manage an increasing number of administrative tasks and thus inject and expand royal authority into every level of society. This worked to the disadvantage of the nobility and city officials who had up to


\textsuperscript{14} Marta VanLandingham, \textit{Transforming the State: King, Court, and Political Culture in the Realms of Aragon (1213-1387)} (Leiden: Brill, 2002), 159-162.

that time enjoyed expansive political autonomy as a result of the Crown’s focus on conquering Muslim territory. Similarly, Kagay uses records from *Corts* (Aragonese *Cortes*) meetings between the eleventh and fourteenth centuries to illustrate how rulers used parliamentary sessions in the Crown of Aragon to demonstrate their superiority in the realms. Jaume I, for instance, underlined his control over the urban centers and nobility by forcing representatives from these groups to gather before him at scheduled times. He insisted that they agree to common laws that superseded the local customs and traditions that his subjects often used to resist the expansion of royal power. VanLandingham and Kagay shed light on the legal tools and institutions that rulers used to establish control over their subjects and demonstrate the strength of their office. Their focus on how rulers acquired and maintained political power leads VanLandingham and Kagay to assume that all rulers in the late-medieval Crown of Aragon had the primary goal of consolidating royal power and to overlook distinctions between the leadership styles of individual rulers and the implementation of more inclusive forms of kingships.

Other scholarly approaches to medieval kingship reveal that while many rulers in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries in the Crown of Aragon and throughout Europe made efforts to centralize power in their royal office, there were, in fact, multiple answers to the question “who should rule and with what authority?” Joseph Canning and Francisco Elías de Tejada use the works of late-medieval philosophers to explore how thinkers conceptualized the ideal

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16 VanLandingham, *Transforming the State*.

17 The *Corts* (or *Cortes* in Aragon) assembly was made up of representatives from the clergy, nobility, and municipalities.

relationship between a king and his people and the appropriate limit of royal power. While Canning draws from philosophical works from across the continent and Tejada restricts his examinations to works from the Crown of Aragon, both scholars demonstrate that thinkers tended to advocate either an unrestricted or limited form of kingship.\(^1\) John of Paris (1255-1306), Dante Alighieri (1265-1321), and Jaume de Montjuïc (c.1250-1321) offered the clearest arguments in support of unrestricted royal power. In his *De regia potestate et papali*, John of Paris argued that nature and the common good of the people necessitated that a king should retain full, unconstrained authority over his subjects.\(^2\) He states, “It is clear that it is necessary and useful for man to live in a multitude and especially in one which can suffice for all the purposes of life, like a city or a region, and especially under the rule for the common good by one man who is called good.”\(^3\) Whereas John of Paris only considered monarchical power located within individual territorial states, Dante in *De monarchia* laid out an argument for the necessity of having an emperor with absolute power over the entire world. Believing that war, and subsequently suffering, were the result of cupidity on the part of leaders, he declared that the only way to achieve peace was to install an emperor whose dominion had no borders, whose power was unconstrained, and thus, who would have no reason or desire to start wars or abuse his power.\(^4\) Agreeing with John of Paris and Dante, the Aragonese political philosopher Jaume


\(^{22}\) Dante states that because “cupiditas ipsa sola sit corruptiva iudicii et iustitiae praepeditiva” (lust of power alone is corruptive of judgment and justice), “Et quod potest fieri per unum, melius est per unum fieri quam per plura” (what can be done by one ought to be done by one person rather than by several). As a participant in the communal strife created by conflict between White and Black Guelphs in Florence, one can perhaps understand why Dante would desire a sovereign who was powerful enough to put an end to such conflicts for good. Canning, *A History of
de Montjuïc explained in his popular commentary on the *Usatges of Barcelona* that the King of Aragon was in his principality what the emperor was in his empire. De Montjuïc insisted that, based on the hallowed tradition of his ancestors, the king was subject to no law nor any authority other than his own.\(^{23}\)

Promoting a limited form of kingship, Marsilius de Padua (1275-1342) argued in his *Defensor pacis* that supreme temporal power resided not in the king, but in the people as lawgivers and electors. As such, a contractual relationship should be established in which the people would voluntarily place themselves under the authority of a ruler of their choosing, and the ruler would be subject to censure and correction by them.\(^{24}\) Like Marsilius, Aragonese scholars Jaume de Callís (c.1370-1434) and Francesc Eiximenis (1330-1409) advocated a monarchical government in which the king shared legislative power with his people. According to de Callís in his *Extravagatorium curiarum*, the king’s will was law only in so far as his will was in accordance with the law. In order to ensure that the ruler adhered to this guideline, he should be required to consult annually with the *Cortes*.\(^{25}\) Likewise, in *Regiment de Princeps* Eiximenis suggested that a king’s subjects should establish the conditions according to which he exercised his power.\(^{26}\) Canning’s and Tejada’s focus on medieval philosophy means that they do not demonstrate how ideas and ideals were translated into actual royal policies, but their work


\(^{26}\) *Regiment de Princeps* is also known as *Lo dotzè*. Tejada, *Las Doctrinas Políticas*, 138-163;
presents the possibility that since thinkers accepted and advocated multiple styles of royal leadership, the consolidation of power was not necessarily a unanimous objective for all rulers.

In his chronicle, King Pere III appears to portray two categories of kingship through his description of the exchange between Queen Leonor and King Alfons III. On the other hand, Queen Leonor advocated an unrestricted or authoritarian approach to governance in which rulers governed their realms as they saw fit without input or constraint from their subjects. On the other hand, King Alfons enacted a limited or inclusive form of kingship through which rulers shared power by delegating responsibilities and allowing their subjects to participate in and influence the administration of the realms. My dissertation posits that a close analysis of individual rulers and their approaches to governance reveals that not all rulers sought to consolidate royal power. I examine the reigns of King Pere III and his son, Joan I (r. 1387-1396) and the way these two rulers expressed their political ideals in conversations with their subjects. In doing so, I argue that whereas Pere advanced an authoritarian kingship, centralizing power in his office and presenting himself as the ultimate governing authority, Joan implemented an inclusive form of kingship by delegating power and portraying himself as first among equals. Like many other rulers of his time, Pere dedicated his entire reign to expanding royal authority and excluding other contending forms of power from effecting governance. When Joan ascended the throne, however, he rolled back his father’s policies in order to decentralize power and include his subjects in the operation of administration. The two ideals of kingship that Kings Pere and Joan endeavored to implement and the shift from one to the other in the fourteenth century had implications for the legal system, including the relationship between royal and local laws, and shaped the role of Jews and Muslims in defining and reinforcing municipal, noble, or royal
authority. This is particularly apparent through the lens of three host desecration accusations that took place in the second half of the fourteenth century.

During the reign of Pere III, Prince Joan and his cousin, the count of Urgell,27 pursued three separate accusations of host desecration against Jews from Barcelona in 1367, Jews from Osca in 1377, and Jews from Lleida in 1383. The judicial processes that Prince Joan and the count of Urgell oversaw were documented through the letters – 35 in total – that they exchanged with King Pere.28 Yitzhak Baer’s perception of Jewish history as a sequence of persecutions leading up to the Holocaust has motivated him to use the letters to argue that the three host desecration cases were manifestations of increasing anti-Jewish sentiment that ultimately led to the expulsion of 1492.29 More recently, Miri Rubin has positioned the letters within the context of European Eucharistic devotion in the late Middle Ages. Images of the Passion of Christ in churches, processions and plays carried out during Holy Week, miracle stories, and sermons from mendicant preachers throughout the Middle Ages, encouraged Christians to see medieval Jews as theologically identical to ancient Jews. They were thus understood to be predisposed to recreating their negative role in the crucifixion of Christ. As the emphasis on and celebration of the Feast of the Eucharist spread through the continent in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, people began to consider Eucharistic dignity and potential dangers to it, including that posed by the Jews. This concern produced a new narrative about the allegedly evil intentions of medieval Jews who were accused of testing and abusing the consecrated host by stabbing, boiling, and

27 The name of the count who oversaw the investigation in 1383 was “Pere.” In order to avoid confusion between Pere III, the King of Aragon, and Pere, the Count of Urgell, I will simply refer to the latter as the Count of Urgell.

28 Many of these letters are transcribed in Joaquim Miret i Sans, “El procés de les hòsties contra eles jueus d’Osca de 1377,” Anuari d’institut d’Estudis Catalans 4 (December 1911): 63-79.

burning pieces of it. The established perception that Jews, at the very least, had contempt for the Eucharist and, at the very worst, intended to harm it, encouraged Christians to think about their duties to the divine and the wider Christian community.\textsuperscript{30} Rubin’s analysis of documented accusations of Jewish host desecration enables her to demonstrate how late-medieval Christians used the idea that Jews posed a threat to Christ and Christendom as a tool to assess their own place in society. This line of analysis offers insight into the development of Christian identities and the effect of this development on interfaith relations. However, when we consider the royal missives within the political environment of the fourteenth-century Crown of Aragon, they also present a unique angle on the evolving policies of the monarchy.

The letters reveal that Pere and Joan used contrasting approaches to Jews under their control to develop and implement opposing political philosophies. Reading these documents as a means to understand royal history, however, only makes sense within the context of the historical relationship between religious minorities and the Crown of Aragon. Scholars of medieval Jewish history have focused much attention on the relationship between rulers and the Jewish communities because this relationship directly influenced the experiences of Jews in the Crown of Aragon. By contrast, this study proposes that the Crown’s evolving approach to the religious minorities, and particularly Jews, under its control informs us about royal history and kingship.

Rulers in the twelfth-century Crown of Aragon were focused on acquiring Muslim territory for their realms. For each town or city a ruler conquered, he established a town charter or fuero (fur in Valencia) that laid out the operation of local administration and laws dictating the

relationship between residents and the Crown. In 1177, King Alfons I (r.1164-1196) first codified the legal status of Jews as *servi regia camerae* or “servants of the royal treasury” in the *fuero* for the town of Teruel. In the remaining years of the twelfth century and throughout the thirteenth and fourteenth, this legal status for Jews appeared in municipal charters throughout the Crown of Aragon.\(^{31}\)

The status of *servi regia camerae* identified Jews as the property of the Crown of Aragon, and this identification entitled Jewish communities to royal protection from unauthorized harm; economic advantages, including the right to lend money at a higher interest rate than Christians and exemption from certain trade restrictions; and access to important offices in municipal governance, such as bailiff, and in the royal court. In turn, rulers declared their right to all Jewish revenue through taxation or donation.\(^{32}\) Focusing on how the label *servi regia camerae* affected Jews’ ability to function in multi-faith societies in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, Norman Roth and Jonathan Ray have suggested that identification of Jews as royal servants and the corresponding lack of anti-Jewish regulation in municipal charters reflects a royal desire to establish a legal structure that enabled Jews to become an organic part of local society.\(^{33}\) Because Roth and Ray are concerned with how royal policies affected the experiences of Jews, they

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\(^{32}\) Nirenberg, *Communities of Violence*, 13.

\(^{33}\) Scholars have disagreed about what it meant for Jews and Muslims to be “*servi camere nostre*” or serfs of the royal chamber. Jewish historians from the previous generation argued that this status was analogous to serfdom. For example, Salo Wittmayer Baron, *A Social and Religious History of the Jews*, vol. I (New York, 1965), chapter XL. Norman Roth, on the other hand, argues that the term reflected a royal effort to protect the Jews and create harmony between Christians and Jews. Norman Roth, “The Civic Status of the Jew in Medieval Spain” in *Iberia and the Mediterranean World of the Middle Ages: Studies in Honor of Robert I. Burns, S.J.*, ed. by Larry J. Simon (Leiden: Brill, 1995) and Jonathan Ray, *The Sephardic Frontier: The “Reconquista” and the Jewish Community in Medieval Iberia* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2006).
assume that the identification of Jews as royal servants and the corresponding lack of anti-Jewish regulations in *fueros* reflected the monarchy’s desire to create a foundation for good interfaith relations.

While rulers may have genuinely wished to smooth interactions between Jews and their Christian and Muslim neighbors in order to facilitate a productive collection of Jewish revenue, David Abulafia, Hussein Fancy, and Anna Sapir Abulafia have posited that rulers also used their exclusive claim to the Jews to demonstrate the superiority of royal power over all other authorities in their realms. Since Jews were property of the Crown, rulers had unrestricted access to their revenue and could use it however they pleased; rulers could appoint Jews to offices in the place of nobles or other Christian elites who had their own political interests. The fact that the Crown had complete jurisdiction over the Jewish communities evidenced the king’s preeminence.  

David Abulafia analyzes twelfth-century municipal charters to show that rulers used the legal identification of Jews as *servi regia camerae* to consolidate royal power over and against rebellious nobles and independent-minded urban elites. Building on David Abulafia’s study, Hussein Fancy demonstrates that Pere II of Aragon (r.1276-1285) relied on *jenets* (Muslim soldiers) and Jewish courtiers to demonstrate the uniqueness of his office. Beginning in the thirteenth century, Aragonese rulers began to identify not only Jews but also Muslims as property of the Crown. Rulers’ exclusive claim to the Jews and Muslims of their realms helped to set them apart and above members of the nobility who sometimes had just as much wealth and

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political influence as the king. Anna Sapir Abulafia widens the scope of analysis beyond the Crown of Aragon to demonstrate that European rulers up to the thirteenth century emphasized that Jews deserved perpetual servitude due to their role in the crucifixion of Christ. She argues that this theological concept enabled rulers to legitimize their exploitation of the Jews in support of their political objectives. By examining municipal charters and royal orders to understand why rulers inside and outside of Aragon were interested in cultivating a close relationship with Jews, David Abulafia, Hussein Fancy, and Anna Sapir Abulafia have demonstrated that medieval rulers used their close connection with the Jewish communities as a performance of political power. The prescriptive nature of their sources, however, presents a flattened image of kingship. Municipal charters and royal orders point to a general objective of the Crown to acquire power and control, but they obscure differences in the approaches that individual rulers took towards minority religious communities and the governance of their realms.

Although Jewish communities represented an important source of political and economic power for rulers in the Crown of Aragon, that relationship sometimes posed challenges to the Crown. Yom Tov Assis uses royal financial records to argue that the Crown’s reliance on Jewish revenue created financial hardship for the Jewish communities, which by the beginning of the fourteenth century, made it increasingly difficult for them to meet monarchical demands. Furthermore, the pressure to satisfy royal demands caused conflict within Jewish communities that further impeded the collection of Jewish taxes. Together these financial issues called into


37 Anna Sapir Abulafia, *Christian-Jewish Relations*. 
question for rulers the value of the established relationship between the Crown and Jews. David Nirenberg examines violence against Jews in southern France and the Crown of Aragon up to the mid-fourteenth century to demonstrate that rulers’ exclusive claim to the Jews encouraged people to attack Jewish communities as a means of expressing their opposition to royal policies. The conspicuous nature of the relationship between the Jews and the Crown thus created a political tool for subjects to wield against the king. Although financial records and recorded cases of persecution enable Assis and Nirenberg to point out changes in the relationship between Jews and the Crown and their impact on the shape of royal power, their studies do not extend through the fourteenth century. Although the dynasty of the House of Barcelona continued until 1410, Assis concludes his study with the reign of Jaume II (r.1291-1327) and Nirenberg ends his with the plague of 1348. In fact, many studies concerning the relationship between rulers and Jews in the late-medieval Crown of Aragon focus on the period before the plague or begin in the fifteenth century with the House of Trastámara. Leaving a gap of over forty years, scholars assume that Kings Pere III (r. 1336-1387) and Joan I (r. 1387-1396) utilized the same approach towards the Jews as their predecessors to create political power. Maya Soifer Irish has recently attempted to fill this gap for Castilian royal history by demonstrating how the monarchy’s

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39 Nirenberg, Communities of Violence.

40 In addition to the studies mentioned above, see: Yom Tov Assis, The Golden Age of Aragonese Jewry: Community and Society in the Crown of Aragon (Oxford: The Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, 1997); David Abulafia, “The King and the Jews –The Jews in the Ruler’s Service” in The Jews of Europe in the Middle Ages (Tenth to Fifteenth Centuries): Proceedings of the International Symposium held at Speyer, 20-25 October 2002, ed. by Christopher Cluse (Turnhout, Belgium: Brepols Publishers, 2004), 43-54; Barton, Contested Treasure. The exception to this is Mark Meyerson, whose work on Jews in Morvedre spans the thirteenth through the fifteenth centuries. Meyerson, however, demonstrates how royal developments and the kingdom-wide changes in the relationship between Jews and the Crown influenced interaction between Jews and Christians in one urban location. See Meyerson, Jews in an Iberian Frontier Kingdom. My work examines how two rulers, Kings Pere III and Joan I, took different approaches to the Jews in royal territory to shape contrasting kingships.
evolving approach towards the Jews influenced their relationships with Christians between the eleventh and the fourteenth century.\textsuperscript{41} I seek to create a similar bridge for the fourteenth-century Crown of Aragon through an examination of the different policies that Pere III and Joan I implemented regarding the Jewish communities under their control.

The letters narrating the host desecration investigations of 1367, 1377, and 1383 offer insight into the various ways that Kings Pere III and Joan I used the established relationship between the Crown and the Jewish communities of the realm to shape disparate kingships. In each of the three judicial processes, the prince and the count continued their investigations of the host desecration accusations, despite King Pere’s expressed disapproval. I argue that King Pere relied on Jewish revenue and his exclusive claim to the Jews more than any ruler before him to advance an exclusive kingship and prevent other contenders for power from influencing governance. Prince Joan was the appointed governor general, which in theory provided him with extensive authority as the king’s second and primary coadjutant, but in reality Pere’s authoritarian approach to governance restricted the prince from exercising political power.\textsuperscript{42} Consequently, Prince Joan attacked an important source of the king’s power by pursuing accusations against the Jews, which simultaneously gave him a position from which to advocate that rulers should be first among equals rather than ultimate governing authorities. To protect his established power and demonstrate control over his subjects, King Pere attempted to dissuade and hinder Prince Joan and his noble and municipal supporters from continuing their


\textsuperscript{42} The office of governor general gave Prince Joan the jurisdiction to prosecute crimes in the kingdom and act as the king’s second in command politically and militarily. For a history of the duties of the governor general in the Crown of Aragon and the people who normally assumed the position, see Jesús Lalinde Abadía, “Virreyes y lugartenientes medievales en la Corona de Aragón,” \textit{Cuadernos de Historia de España} 31 (1960): 98-172.
investigations. I analyze the royal missives to demonstrate how Pere and Joan created two different models of kingship, how they used the Jews to implement each model in practice, and the consequences that their leadership styles had for Jews, Christians, and Muslims living in the Crown of Aragon during the fourteenth century. Furthermore, my analysis of the letters offers the opportunity to shed additional light on the relationship between rulers and the Jewish communities during the second half of the fourteenth century. Although their dynasty would come to an end at the beginning of the fifteenth century, Pere and Joan, through their interaction with Jews, utilized political tools to shape and legitimize different forms of kingship that had significance for the next regime.43

Since the three host desecration investigations under study here took place while Joan was crown prince, I suggest that the letters also provide a glimpse into Joan’s political development as heir apparent. Scholars who have examined the political philosophies of Pere and Joan tend to rely on royal decrees, speeches, and legal records.44 These sources encourage the perception that rulers did not develop a style of governance until they ascended the throne and, by extension, that princes only acted in support of the standing king’s policies. The assumption that crown princes did not possess their own political ideals has encouraged scholars like Donald Kagay and J.N. Hillgarth to characterize as irrational Prince Joan’s prosecution of

43 For example, Henry Kamen argues that Isabella of Castile and Ferdinand of Aragon attempted to bring the Inquisition and its investigations of Jews and Conversos under their control. See Kamen, The Spanish Inquisition: A Historical Revision, 4th ed. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2014), 54-55.

the Jews accused of host desecration.\textsuperscript{45} Prince Joan’s approach to his council members and the Jews as described in the royal letters, however, suggests that, far from irrational, the prince used his investigations of the accusations to grapple with concepts of appropriate royal power. The letters thus act as milestones for the development of the prince’s political philosophy. They suggest that Prince Joan came to believe governance based on a balance of power between the king, the nobility, and the urban centers of the realm would produce an ideal political environment. He also recognized his father’s reliance on Jewish revenue to consolidate power as detrimental to the health of the realms. It thus appears that Prince Joan shaped a political philosophy of inclusive kingship in direct opposition to his father’s authoritarian style of leadership. When Joan ascended the throne after his father, his efforts to decentralize royal power reflected the political philosophy he fostered as prince. Joan thus learned what it meant to be king while he was still the heir apparent and developed inclusive policies as prince that he subsequently implemented when he ascended the throne.

Furthermore, the letters describing the host desecration cases, although exceptional in nature, also provide a lens through which to measure and compare Joan’s approach to governance to that of his father, Pere III. Scholars who have examined Joan’s kingship within the context of state building have often concluded that, in contrast to his father, Joan was not as eager or successful in taking control of and centralizing government institutions and systems.\textsuperscript{46} This line of thinking is based on the assumption that all late medieval rulers aimed to extend royal power and exclude any competing source of power so as to achieve the status of ultimate


\textsuperscript{46} Kagay, “Poetry in the Dock,” 41; Hillgarth, The Spanish Kingdom, vol II, 222-225; Ruiz, Spain’s Centuries of Crisis, 74-76; Bisson, The Medieval Crown of Aragon, 121-125.
governing authority. Since Pere III and many of his predecessors and successors sought to consolidate royal power, it would seem inevitable that Joan I also adopted this political objective. From this perspective, Joan’s failure to assert royal power reflects a defect, rather than a different approach to governance.\textsuperscript{47} Evaluating Joan’s kingship within the context of an over-determined progression of royal power thus overshadows his actual political intentions and makes it impossible to assess his style of governance by the standards of the time.\textsuperscript{48} Using the royal letters about the three host desecration cases as a window into Joan’s political mindset as crown prince, I position the development of his ideas and ideals about kingship within the discourse on royal power taking place in the Crown of Aragon and throughout Europe during the fourteenth century. In doing so, I demonstrate that Prince Joan shaped a philosophy of kingship vis-à-vis the cases that promoted the incorporation of the urban governing elite and nobility in the structure of governance. Contrasted with Pere III’s self-image as the ultimate governing authority, Joan’s adoption of this form of kingship suggests that while the consolidation of royal power represented a growing trend across late-medieval Europe, the trajectory of sovereignty did not progress towards an absolutist monarchy without occasional deviation. This dissertation consequently stands as a revision of Joan both as heir apparent and as king. I demonstrate that rather than a “weak” ruler or even a “featherheaded escapist,” as one scholar has labeled him,

\textsuperscript{47} For example, Donald Kagay explains that “as the offspring of such powerful parents, the Infant Joan seemed both less intelligent and less interested in ruling than his forebears, spending much of his youth in the company of huntsmen and astrologers.” Kagay, “Poetry in the Dock,” 41.

\textsuperscript{48} In connection with this perception about the development of government, many scholars only examine Joan’s reign as it compares to his father’s. To date, there is only one monograph completely dedicated to Joan I. See Rafael Tasis i Marca, Joan I: El Rei Caçador i Músic (Barcelona: Editorial Aedos, 1959). This neglect is primarily due to the brevity of his reign and, thus the finite amount of sources, but I suspect that it also due to the fact Joan does fit easily within the established image of a fourteenth-century king.
Joan shaped and implemented a form of kingship that he believed would create political stability within his kingdoms and advance an image of strength and innovation internationally.\textsuperscript{49}

An analysis of the letters regarding the three host desecration cases also enables me to explore the active role that nobles and municipal officials played in the discourse on legitimate kingship in the fourteenth-century Crown of Aragon. Suzanne Cawsey has examined the rhetoric in speeches and sermons given by Aragonese kings, including Pere III and Joan I, to reveal the political ideals, motifs, and images they used to depict themselves as legitimate rulers. Considering how rulers shaped their rhetoric to gain the support of their subjects leads Cawsey to argue that political leadership in the Crown of Aragon was personal and involved a protracted dialogue between the competing forms of power, and particularly urban and noble representatives in the \textit{Corts} and \textit{Cortes}.\textsuperscript{50} Similarly, Michael Ryan uses royal correspondence and archival records to analyze how noble interests in astrology and magic influenced their perceptions of Kings Pere and Joan. By considering what elements guided elite support or rejection of rulers’ authority, Ryan demonstrates that rulers were not the only stake-holders in the discourse about royal power; instead, multiple groups had a vested interest in the type of kingship a ruler implemented.\textsuperscript{51} Building on this scholarship, I use the royal missives as another lens by which to examine how interactions between Pere and Joan and their subjects influenced the shape of kingship and the operation of government. I contend that members of the nobility and urban governing elite, in collaboration with Prince Joan, manipulated judicial processes to

\textsuperscript{49} For the claim that Joan was a “featherheaded escapist”, see Kagay, “Poetry in the Dock,” 2. Both Michael Ryan and J.N. Hillgarth describe Joan as “weak” in comparison to his father. Ryan, \textit{A Kingdom of Stargazers} and Hillgarth, \textit{The Spanish Kingdom}, vol II, 223.

\textsuperscript{50} Cawsey, \textit{Kingship and Propaganda}.

\textsuperscript{51} Ryan, \textit{A Kingdom of Stargazers}.
restrict King Pere’s royal power and enhance their own. Furthermore, the letters exchanged about the host desecration accusations enable me to trace political dialogue across multiple urban settings – Barcelona, Osca, and Lleida – where the investigations took place. The missives reveal the names of the nobles and municipal officials in these cities who took part in the three investigations. By investigating the extant municipal records from the three cities for the individuals Joan mentions in his letters, I suggest that the urban governing elite experienced a loss of local authority throughout the realms as a direct result of King Pere’s efforts to consolidate power. The unique political circumstances of each city and its distinct historical relationship with the Crown, however, influenced officials in Barcelona, Osca, and Lleida to respond differently to the kingships of Pere III and Joan I. By exploring the political philosophies of Pere and Joan alongside the politics of the three cities, my study demonstrates that royal power was as much a bottom-up development as a top-down one.

Through this investigation of how urban officials and rulers worked together or against one another to shape royal power, I contribute to the recent historiographical trend of local histories. The intensive examination of specific cities and towns has proven to be a particularly popular approach for scholars of the medieval Crown of Aragon because it acknowledges the disparate nature of its realms. By the end of the fourteenth century, the Crown of Aragon was comprised of seven kingdoms (Aragon, Catalonia, Valencia, Mallorca and Minorca, Sicily, and

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52 For an examination of Morvedre, see Meyerson, Jews in an Iberian Frontier Kingdom; for Tortosa, see Barton, Contested Treasure; for Manresa, see Jeff Fynn-Paul, The Rise and Decline of an Iberian Bourgeoisie: Manresa in the Later Middle Ages, 1250-1500 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016); for Barcelona, see Elka Klein, Jews, Christian Society, & Royal Power in Medieval Barcelona (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 2006), Stephen Bensch, Barcelona and its Rulers, 1096-1291 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), Jaume Aurell i Cardona, Els mercaders Catalans al quatre-cents: mutació de valors i procés d’artistocratització a Barcelona, 1370-1470 (Lleida: Pagès Editors, 1996), Carmen Batle, La crisis social y económica de Barcelona a mediados del siglo XV (Barcelona: Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas, 1973); for Osca, see María Teresa Iranzo Muñíno, Els alemanys Aquitànics a Huesca a la edat mitjana (Huesca: Ayuntamiento de Huesca, 2005) and Carlos García Manau, El ayuntamiento de Huesca: historia, arte y poder (Huesca: Instituto de Estudios Altoaragoneses, 2012).
Sardinia and Corsica), the duchies of Athens and Neopatras, and the two counties of Rousillon and Cerdagne. Although the various kingdoms, duchies, and counties comprised a single state, they often had their own traditions, currencies, languages, and relationships with the monarchy. With this in mind, an intensive examination of specific urban centers has enabled scholars to avoid inaccurate generalizations and explore the unique economic, political, and cultural particularities that shaped communal experiences and perceptions of legitimate authority. María Teresa Iranzo Muñío has examined royal decrees and municipal ordinances to demonstrate that privileges from the Crown influenced the shape of the local governing institutions in the city of Osca during the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. Similarly, Carmen Batlle argues that local political and economic circumstances in Barcelona during the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries prompted conflict between members of different classes in the city in the fifteenth century. My study draws attention to the idiosyncrasies of the three cities where the host desecration investigations took place – Barcelona, Osca, and Lleida – and demonstrates how kingdom-wide royal developments influenced local experiences and how local perspectives of appropriate royal power impacted what kingship a ruler assumed and the effectiveness of his approach.

To show how royal and local perceptions of legitimate royal power influenced the shape and success of the two forms of kingship implemented by Pere III and Joan I, I have divided my study into two sections. The first section takes a chronological approach to the reigns of Pere and Joan. Chapter Two explores the different mechanisms of power that King Pere used to demonstrate his status as the ultimate governing authority and exclude competing forms of


54 Iranzo, *Élites políticas y gobierno urbano en Huesca en la edad media*.

55 Batlle, *La crisis social y económica de Barcelona a mediados del siglo XV*.
power, particularly the nobility and urban center, from influencing his administration of the realms. Existing scholarship has shown that Pere employed military aggression, royal officials, and rhetoric to implement an unprecedented power grab. The royal letters exchanged about the host desecration investigations evidence Pere’s use of these mechanisms, but they reveal that he relied on his exclusive possession of the Jews and their revenue more so than any previous ruler to carry out his life-long effort to expand royal power and authority. King Pere’s concern about the treatment of the Jews in the host desecration investigations reflect the importance of the Jews to his political program. Chapter Three uses these letters to gain access to the Prince Joan’s mindset and measure milestones in his political development. I contextualize the prince’s persistence in the host desecration investigations within his evolving relationship with King Pere, who sought to silence his son’s political voice in order to demonstrate complete control over his realms. Within this context, Joan used his authority over the investigations to create space for himself to exercise political power and shape an inclusive kingship in opposition to his father’s exclusive kingship. I then demonstrate in Chapter Four how Joan implemented his inclusive kingship when he ascended the throne. In theory, King Joan’s willingness to share power by delegating authority over local governance to the urban elite should have created political stability within his realms. This delegation of authority included power over Jews and Muslims, who traditionally represented the uniqueness of the king in comparison to his subjects. In addition to satisfying the ambitions of the nobility and municipal officials, King Joan’s efforts to decentralize royal power enabled him to focus his energy on creating a royal court that projected an image of strength and culture onto the international stage. In reality, however, the urban governing elite took advantage of Joan’s inclusiveness, and they tried to acquire more power over governance of the realms and over the king himself.
The second section of this dissertation adopts a thematic approach to examining the political, economic, and social circumstances in the cities where Jews were accused of host desecration – Barcelona, Osca, and Lleida – and the historical relationships these urban centers had with the Crown. I explore why residents in these cities responded to the host desecration investigations in different ways and what their reactions suggest about perceptions of the brand of rule adopted by Kings Pere and Joan. In Chapter Five, I demonstrate that rulers in the thirteenth century relied heavily on the financial support of Barcelona’s wealthy merchants and rentiers (those who earned their living by renting property) to assert authority over a contumacious nobility. In exchange for loans and monetary donations, rulers provided merchants and rentiers with political offices, which enabled them to form an oligarchy and maintain control over governance of the city and its residents. When Pere III became king he sought to retake control over the municipal governance of Barcelona at the expense of the established autonomy of the urban governing elite. As a result, Pere and the municipal officials of Barcelona engaged in a power struggle through judicial processes. King Pere targeted the urban governing elite of the city by pursuing an accusation of murder against its members, and municipal officials pursued accusations of criminal activity against representatives of the king, including Jews. When Joan ascended the throne, city officials saw Joan’s efforts to decentralize power as an opportunity to gain more power. They recognized that denying the king their financial support enabled them to control royal policies and the monarchy. Chapter Six turns to look at Osca, a small, agricultural city located in the Kingdom of Aragon. In contrast to the merchants and rentiers of Barcelona, the urban elite of Osca had less wealth through which to

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56 Rentiers were bourgeois individuals and families who earned their living by purchasing real estate and renting their property to other residents in the city. For more information about rentiers in Barcelona between the thirteenth and fifteenth centuries, see Batlle, *La crisis social y económica de Barcelona.*
gain the favor of the Crown. Consequently, local nobles and merchants vacillated between alliances with rulers and the nobility in order to gain political privileges and eventually political autonomy. As with Barcelona, Pere instituted policies that eroded the hard-won autonomy of Oscan officials. Within this context, officials understood Prince Joan’s prosecution of local Jews as a means of creating a new alliance with an adversary of royal policies and thus a viable tool in the acquisition and defense of their established power over urban governance. While Joan’s inclusive policies as king provided Oscan officials with the freedom and power that they desired, it left them vulnerable to nobles who sought to take control of the city. Finally, in Chapter Seven, I demonstrate that Lleida’s early experiences under the seigniorial authority of the counts of Urgell at the end of the twelfth and beginning of the thirteenth centuries encouraged city officials to cultivate a familiar, mutually beneficial relationship with the Crown. Throughout the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, Lleidans identified as representatives of the king and actively supported rulers’ endeavors financially and militarily. As a result, when the count of Urgell sought to undermine Pere III’s increasing power, he used judicial processes to target Lleidans, both Christian and Jewish. Consequently, unlike officials in Barcelona and Osca, Lleidan officials did not support the count’s investigation of local Jews accused of host desecration because they recognized that it was an attack on the city and its relationship with the Crown. When Joan became king, Lleidans sought an intimate relationship with him similar to the ones they had enjoyed with previous rulers, but, much to the dismay of city officials, King Joan disregarded their overtures of amity.

The three host desecration investigations and the letters narrating them offer a unique angle on royal history in the fourteenth-century Crown of Aragon since they reveal how Pere and Joan used Jewish policies to shape and implement very different brands of kingships. By
positioning the investigations within the context of royal history, I demonstrate that Prince Joan exploited accusations against the Jews as a political tool. He used judicial processes that targeted the Jews to undermine his father’s objective to consolidate power at the expense of everyone else. They shaped an inclusive form of kingship that Joan would later implement as king. The letters reveal that the noble and municipal elite of the realms were not passive spectators in the construction and implementation of Pere and Joan’s distinct kingships and reigns. Instead, their subjects participated in the discourse to advance their own political interests, which had been shaped by local circumstances. Together, Pere, Joan, and their subjects contributed to the late-medieval debate that revolved around the question: “who should rule and by what authority?”
CHAPTER 2
PERE III: THE ULTIMATE GOVERNING AUTHORITY

Introduction

In late medieval Europe, rulers attempted to extend their power geographically, legally, and fiscally. This trend was particularly apparent in the Iberian Peninsula, where Christian kings led their armies southward to acquire lands held by Muslims. Between the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, Aragonese rulers quadrupled the size of their realms to include the kingdoms of Catalonia, Aragon, Valencia, the Balearic Islands, Rousillon, and Sicily.¹ Since conquered territory in the Iberian Peninsula was mostly inhabited by a Muslim population that spoke a different language than their new overlords, Aragonese rulers required loyal representatives with sufficient fiscal and linguistic skills to develop and minister the area in their stead. The kings of Aragon frequently looked to Jews to fill this role due to their experience trading across political and religious borders, their knowledge of multiple languages, and their political neutrality.² In exchange for their services to the monarchy, rulers offered the Jews royal protection. This agreement was instituted in local law codes called fueros. These declared that the Jews, along with the Muslims residing in royal territory, were the property of the Crown, and as such, any attacks carried out against them would be considered attacks on the Crown.³


³ David Abulafia argues that the arrangement of protection in exchange for service between the king and the Jews was first codified in 1176 in the Fuero de Teruel, although it had been practiced informally prior to this point. This document states that the Jews “are servants of the king and always pertain to the royal treasury.” See his article, “‘Nam Iudei servi regis sunt, et semper fisco region deputati’: The Jews in the Municipal Fuero of Teruel (1176-1177),” in Jews, Muslims, and Christians in and around the Crown of Aragon: Essays in Honour of Professor Elena Lourie, ed. Harvey Hames (Leiden: Brill, 2004), 97-123.
At the same time that Aragonese rulers expanded their territory, they sought to consolidate their royal power at the expense of fiercely independent nobles and urban centers throughout their realms. In this matter, the exclusive claim that rulers made to the Jews, Muslims, and their property reinforced the political superiority of the Crown of Aragon. The relationship between the Jews and the Crown was particularly conspicuous in the thirteenth century since rulers like Jaume I (r. 1213-1276) often appointed Jews to carry out administrative tasks, such as tax collection. Jaume and his successors used Jewish officials because they were fiscally adept and, as opposed to Christian officials with their own political interests, were unlikely to rebel or disobey royal orders. As a result, when members of the nobility united in a rebellion in 1221 and again in 1251 against the king and the expansion of his power, one of their demands was the dismissal of Jews from public posts. On both occasions, when Jaume succeeded in reasserting his authority, he also reinstated his Jewish officials.\(^4\) The connection between Jews and royal power continued to grow in the fourteenth century as rulers increasingly relied on Jewish revenue to carry out political endeavors that supported their consolidation of power. This reliance largely stemmed from the fact that many Jews in royal territory had grown wealthy by engaging in the lucrative urban work of trading and moneylending. Because the Crown legally owned the Jews, rulers could directly access Jewish revenue by taxing them or by simply demanding donations from their communities.\(^5\) It is within this historical context of the developing relationship between the monarchy and the Jewish communities that we must

\(^4\) Meyerson, *Jews in an Iberian Frontier Kingdom*, 18-23 and 63-78.

consider the host desecration investigations that took place in the second half of the fourteenth century.

In a letter dated to December 12, 1377, King Pere III of Aragon (r.1336-1387) expressed concern to his son, Prince Joan, the governor general of Aragon, about the prince’s investigation of six Jews from Osca who stood accused of buying stolen pieces of the consecrated host with the intention of desecrating them. The information and tone of the letter reveals mounting tension between the king and the prince, both of whom seemed to hold a stake in the outcome of the investigation. King Pere was particularly adamant in his letter that Joan should halt the trials and protect the Jews. In support of his appeal to stop the judicial process, Pere contended that the charge and the overzealous manner with which the prince and his men were handling the investigation in Osca looked awfully similar to the case that Joan oversaw in Barcelona ten years before in 1367. The 1367 case also concerned Jews accused of buying pieces of the consecrated host with the intention of desecrating them, and Pere reminded his son that his actions at that time were careless and impulsive, and his order of execution for two of the accused Jews were based solely on false testimony.6 It is clear that the king strongly disapproved of the prince’s prosecution of the Jews in 1377 in Osca, just as he had disapproved of it in 1367 in Barcelona. Pere conveyed comparable anxiety in his letters in 1383 when his nephew, the count of Urgell, initiated an investigation in the town of Castelló de Farfanya against three Jews from Lleida, who

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were also accused of host desecration. In all three cases, Pere asserted that the accusations and the persistence with which Joan and the count imprisoned, tortured, and executed suspected Jews was motivated more by a desire to destroy the Jewish communities than by the wish to carry out justice. Pere’s deep concern about the treatment of the Jews at the hands of Prince Joan and the count of Urgell raises the question: Why was the king so focused on the Jews and the outcome of the host desecration investigations?

By themselves, these cases and the letters that describe them (35 in total) appear to stand as moments of religious persecution, early harbingers of the riots of 1391 and the expulsion of the Jews from Spain in 1492. When we examine them together and within the context of Pere’s reign, however, they offer insight into the on-going discourse about the appropriate limit of royal power. Scholars have demonstrated that Pere III presented himself as the ultimate governing authority and have documented how he utilized mechanisms of power, including military aggression, appointments of royal officials, and rhetorical strategies, to advance his political agenda at the expense of the nobility and urban centers in the realms. Although the letters generated during the host desecration trials of 1367, 1377, and 1383, exhibit those mechanisms of power, they offer a unique angle on them. In contrast to the prescriptive documents, such as

7 ACA C, Reg. 1281, f. 122.
8 Concerning the trial of 1367 in Barcelona, see ACA C, Reg.1260, f. 186; for the trial of 1377 in Osca, see Reg. 1259, f. 134; for the trial of 1383 in Castelló de Farfanya, see Reg. 1281, f. 122.
9 For this perspective, see Baer, A History of the Jews, vol. II, 37-42.
10 Robert Chazan and John W. Baldwin make similar arguments about kings in France. They suggest that while rulers such as Philippe Augustus (r.1180-1223) justified their orders by citing moral religious reasons, they used despoliations and expulsions of the Jews to consolidate their power and as part of their program to create a strong and efficient French monarchy. Chazan and Baldwin demonstrate this by examining the motives for each king, rather than pointing to the cases of despoliation or expulsion as part of a larger development of Jewish persecution. Robert Chazan, Reassessing Jewish Life in Medieval Europe (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 92-95 and John W. Baldwin, The Government of Philip Augustus: Foundations of French Royal Power in the Middle Ages (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986), 51-52.
laws and speeches, upon which existing scholarship has relied, the missives shed light on these mechanisms in practice and their effect on the relationship between the king and his subjects. More than this, however, I argue that the anxiety that Pere expressed in his letters reflects the growing and deliberate association in Aragon between political power and the Jews. This association made Pere dependent to an unparalleled degree on the Jews in order to advance his ability to rule as the ultimate governing authority. Although his predecessors had made strides towards the consolidation of royal power, Pere’s exploitation of the Jews, along with the other mechanisms of dominance at his disposal, was instrumental in providing him the tools necessary to undertake the largest power seizure by the Crown yet experienced in the realms. From this perspective, Pere’s concern with the treatment of the Jews in the host desecration investigations of 1367, 1377, and 1383, reflects the importance of the Jews in his life-long effort to expand his royal power and authority.

**Becoming the Ultimate Governing Authority: Mechanisms of Power**

King Pere III intended to become and remain the unquestioned ultimate governing authority in the collective kingdoms of Aragon. To further this goal, Pere sought to obtain complete control over the administration of his realms on both the municipal and kingdom-wide levels. He wanted complete decision-making power over Aragonese expansion in the Mediterranean and the Iberian Peninsula. Furthermore, he wanted to implement this domination without restraint or challenge from any other sector of society, whether noble or municipal.11

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However, the challenge for Pere lay not in articulating his vision of the parameters of legitimate kingship but in attaining unlimited power, an effort that his predecessors had attempted but never fully achieved.

Pere relied on various mechanisms of power, including military aggression, appointments and deployments of royal officials, and rhetorical tools to expand his power as king; scholars have evaluated these through the examination of chronicles, royal orders and speeches, and proceedings from Corts/Cortes meetings. The prescriptive nature of these sources, however, tends to project a hypothetical image of Pere’s political objective of remaining the ultimate governing authority and contemporary discourse regarding royal power. The conversational nature of the royal missives concerning the three host desecration investigations of 1367, 1377, and 1383, while stylized to a certain degree, reveals how Pere implemented these mechanisms of power in practice and how his subjects responded to his efforts to expand royal power.

Using Pere’s chronicle, royal orders, and Corts proceedings, J. N. Hillgarth and Thomas Bisson have demonstrated that the king’s trans-Mediterranean military efforts facilitated significant expansion of both royal territory and power. Pere’s recent predecessors had made important, but minuscule additions to royal territory: Jaume II (r. 1291-1327) annexed the County of Urgell in 1314, and Alfons III (r. 1327-1336) incorporated the Duchies of Athens and Neopatria. In contrast, Pere III consolidated and expanded the Crown of Aragon’s geographical

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12 The Corts (or Cortes in Aragon) was a parliamentary assembly that was made up of representatives from the clergy, nobility, and municipalities. During the reign of Pere III, it also came to include an additional arm for the lesser nobility. Previously, representatives for the nobility were generally members of the upper nobility. For more information about the development of the Corts/Cortes in connection with royal power see Donald Kagay, “The Development of the Cortes in the Crown of Aragon 1064-1327” (Ph.D. diss., Fordham University, 1981).

reach further into both the Iberian Peninsula and the Mediterranean.\textsuperscript{14} Immediately after ascending the throne in 1336, King Pere initiated a war with Jaume III of Mallorca under the pretense that the latter had failed to perform homage. Jaume I (r. 1213-1276) had originally conquered the Balearic Islands, Roussillon, and Cerdagne in 1229, and he had bestowed them on his second son (also named Jaume), whose heirs had retained the title of king of the territory up to Pere III’s reign. While Pere’s predecessors had expressed a desire to reunite this territory with the Crown of Aragon, it was Pere who succeeded in reuniting it with the Crown of Aragon in 1344.

Pere also incorporated the island of Sicily into the Crown of Aragon. Similar to Mallorca, Sicily was initially conquered in 1282 by Pere II (r. 1276-1285), who left Sicily to his second son (also named Jaume). The island was ruled by a junior branch of the House of Barcelona until 1377, when Frederic of Sicily died with only a daughter, María, to take his place. The leading Sicilian barons attempted to marry her to the Lord of Milan, Gian Galeazzo Visconti, but Pere III had his own plans for María. Moving swiftly, the king sent an armada to destroy Visconti’s fleet, and he married the princess to his grandson, Martí the Younger.\textsuperscript{15} Pere’s victories over Jaume III of Mallorca and the Lord of Milan remedied the historical fragmentation of the Crown of Aragon carried out by previous rulers and simultaneously enlarged its territory. In addition, his military efforts served as a performance of power over other Mediterranean rulers.

Between 1356 and 1369, Pere engaged in a local territorial struggle with Pedro I of Castile. Relations between Castile and Aragon had been increasingly hostile over the previous couple decades, but evolved into open war when a Catalan captain attacked ships destined for


\textsuperscript{15} Bisson, \textit{The Medieval Crown of Aragon}, 110-111.
Castile. Over the next 13 years, Pedro I and Pere III devoted significant resources to the battles that shifted the borders of the two kingdoms in one direction and then another. Pere not only relied on mercenary troops from France, but also required municipalities and nobles in his realms to provide men and capital to fight Castilian armies.\textsuperscript{16} In the end, the frontier lines reverted to their original locations; however, while his efforts to expand the Crown of Aragon further proved unsuccessful, Pere’s lengthy war with Pedro of Castile had provided him with an opportunity to demonstrate his power over his own subjects.

The letters exchanged between Pere and Prince Joan during the host desecration investigations further illustrate the king’s intention to expand royal power territorially while also maintaining complete control of domestic operations. On April 9, 1378, Pere wrote to Joan to admonish him for continuing his investigation of the Jews in Osca who had been charged with host desecration. He accused Joan of looking forward a little too happily to his father leaving on an expedition to Sicily.\textsuperscript{17} Pere was devoted to increasing the borders of the Crown of Aragon, and it seems likely that Joan had hoped to take advantage of his father’s absence to direct the host desecration investigation on his own terms without interference from the king. The king, however, was unwilling to share power or allow others to make judgments or resolutions without his oversight within his expanding empire. This was the case even for Prince Joan, who was the acting governor general of the kingdoms and, as such, nominally had the necessary jurisdiction over criminal cases to investigate the host desecration accusations and judge and sentence the accused without interference from the king.


\textsuperscript{17} “E que lo senyor Rey vol passer en Sicilia, vaie a la Bonaventura que he len daran longa cossa lo senyor Duch e aquells que lin son entorn, que sen vaia.” ACA, C, Reg. 1744, f. 141.
Pere also used royal officials to expand royal power over all levels of society. Although previous rulers had steadily developed the bureaucratic systems of the kingdoms in the thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries, which had the consequence of increasing the number of royal officials, Pere reorganized the hierarchy of power in his court and in urban centers across the realms to consolidate power in the figure of the king. In 1344, Pere promulgated his *Ordinances*, regulations that provided detailed information about the duties of all royal household officials. Marta VanLandingham has shown that Pere copied the organization of Jaume III of Mallorca’s (r. 1224-1344) *Leges palatinae*, which arranged court officials and their duties around the person of the king, reflecting an idealized structuring of his kingdom in miniature. Like Jaume, Pere introduced his *Ordinances* by presenting his office as the equivalent of the head of a human body, emphasizing his unquestioned power over the rest of society.\(^{18}\)

Outside his royal court, Pere manipulated and exploited the appointment of royal officials to expand royal power and reversed the policies of his predecessors, who tended to concede privileges of autonomy to members of the nobility and municipal officials in order to gain their support. Throughout his reign, Pere replaced potent, independent-minded nobles in royal offices with figures who would submit to the king’s will. For example, in 1377, Pere named the brother of his mistress-turned-wife, Sibil·la, as royal chamberlain, a position that gave its occupant unlimited access to the king and thus potentially enabled him to influence the king’s actions. This appointment meant that members of the established nobility were forced to defer to a lesser knight who was their natural vassal and did not have their interests in mind. Perceived as a sign

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\(^{18}\) VanLandingham, *Transforming the State*, 108-109. In the introduction of his ordinances, Pere states “The ordering of government is fine and pleasing when the various offices are distributed among different people, as is found in the human body, in which the different duties are relegated to the various members, resulting in the elegance and perfection of the entire body.” *Ordenacions*, in P. de Bofarull y Mascaró, et al., eds. *CODOIN*, vol. V, VIII-IX (Barcelona: José Eusebio Montfort, 1847-1910).
of the king’s disrespect for their noble status, the appointment prompted calls for an uprising.\textsuperscript{19}

On the municipal level, Pere expanded the power of royal officials, such as the bailiff, over and against the power and autonomy of municipal officials like the \textit{veguer} and members of the city council. For example, in Barcelona, ordinances issued between 1312 and 1341 were all promulgated by city council members and the \textit{veguer}, but by the 1360s, nearly all were issued by the bailiff.\textsuperscript{20} Pere’s changes to the duties and appointments of officials in the royal court and on the municipal level thus served to exclude all but the king from holding or distributing authority.

While palatine ordinances and royal orders issued by Pere reflect the prescribed authority he endowed to royal officials as representatives of the Crown, the missives related to the host desecration investigations of 1367, 1377, and 1383, reveal how the king used royal officials to implement actual control over his kingdoms. Just as the proverbial royal head might direct an arm, Pere routinely sent trusted officials to receive and review documents concerning the trials in Barcelona, Osca, and Castelló de Farfanya. This approach allowed Pere to remain informed about the progress of the investigations.\textsuperscript{21} In addition, in February, 1378, following Joan’s impulsive and unauthorized execution of two of the Jews accused in Osca, Pere wrote to his chamberlain, Lope de Gurrea, ordering him to go to Osca to see that the crown prince followed his directions and provided a fair trial to the Jews who remained in prison.\textsuperscript{22} Although Joan, as

\textsuperscript{19} Bisson, \textit{The Medieval Crown of Aragon}, 116-117

\textsuperscript{20} AHCB, Ordinacions originals. IB.XXVI-1, f. 21. The \textit{veguer} was a municipal official who was responsible for keeping the peace in the city. See Stephen Bensch, “Poder, dinero, y control del comercio en la formación del regimen municipal de Barcelona,” \textit{Barcelona Quaterns d’Història} 4 (2001), 50-54, for more information about the \textit{veguer} and the responsibilities of this office.

\textsuperscript{21} For letters showing that royal officials received and reviewed documents, see ACA C, Reg. 1260, f. 186; 1723, f. 51; 1261, f. 8; Reg. 2262, f. 10; 2262, f. 14; 1261, f. 27; 1282, f. 135r

\textsuperscript{22} “Mossen Lop, segons que per letres trameses per nos a nostre car primogenit lo Duch sobre lo fet dels juheus Dosca porets veure nos enim a cor quen lo dit fet no sia feta rigor ans en aquell ab justicia ordonada et ab gran deliberacio sia procexit. Per que volem eus dehim et manam que vos daquest fet pregats carrech en vos, ço es quels juheus delats sien hoyts plenerament en lur dret e defensions e quen lo dit fet sia ab gran deliberacio e acort
the governor general, was in charge of the investigation, Pere used his officials to maintain a royal presence during the judicial process and shape its outcome in accordance to his purposes, further serving to exhibit the king’s omnipotence.

In the same way that Pere sought to diminsh the power of nobles and municipal officials by replacing them with royal officials who were easier to control, Pere also reduced the power of Prince Joan and reshaped his role as heir apparent. It was imperative for rulers to have a male heir in order to ensure political stability and a sense of continuity and legitimacy for their political program. Traditionally, rulers of Aragon bestowed on their heirs the office of governor general, which gave them the authority to prosecute crimes in the realms and act as the king’s second in command politically and militarily. These activities theoretically enabled princes to practice their royal abilities before ascending the throne, and consequently, rulers frequently allowed their heirs to carry out their responsibilities as governor general without too much royal interference.²³ The office of governor general enabled Prince Alfons, the future Alfons III (r. 1327-1336), to prosecute Jews who rioted in 1321 following attacks on their communities by the Pastorelli, a group of shepherds who traveled south from France with the intention of carrying out a crusade in Granada.²⁴ Similarly, Prince Pere, the future Pere II (r. 1276-1285), led a royal army against rebellious nobles in 1275.²⁵ Although Prince Joan’s birth in 1350 secured King

²³ For a history of the duties of the governor general in the Crown of Aragon and the people who normally assumed the position, see Jesús Lalinde Abadía, “Virreyes y lugartenientes medievales en la Corona de Aragón,” Cuadernos de Historia de España 31 (1960): 98-172.

²⁴ For evidence of Prince Alfons’ judicial actions, see ACA C, Reg. 170, f. 93, 101-102 and Reg. 219, f. 176. For more information about the Pastorelli, see Meyerson, Jews in an Iberian Frontier Kingdom, 95-96 and Nirenberg, Communities of Violence, 43.

Pere III’s political legacy, the king had no intention of sharing political power with the prince. While Pere appointed Joan to be his governor general in 1363, he prevented Joan from exercising his power. For example, in 1364, the king placed Joan in command of an army during the war against Castile but prevented him from actually participating by keeping his army inactive. It appears that Pere intended to keep Joan’s authority purely symbolic. In contrast to the independence enjoyed by princes in the past, Joan was meant to act purely as an extension and demonstration of Pere’s power.

Pere also relied on rhetorical and literary elements to support his life-long efforts to advance and maintain his status as the ultimate governing authority. Suzanne Cawsey suggests that in order to persuade his subjects to support his military maneuvers in Castile and Sicily, Pere gave speeches and sermons that depicted him as a just and pious leader and deserving of his people’s respect and resources. In addition, Cawsey demonstrates that the chronicles that Pere commissioned about his life and those of his predecessors legitimized endeavors that were intended to help expand his royal power. For example, in his own chronicle, he portrays his war against Pedro I of Castile as a battle against a “wicked and false traitor.” In doing so, Pere suggests that he engaged in war with Pedro of Castile in order to protect his kingdom and not for his personal political interests.

Just as Pere used speeches and chronicles to demonstrate the necessity and righteousness of his actions, the king’s rhetoric in his letters to Joan during the 1377 investigation and to his

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nephew, the count of Urgell, in 1383 depicted his interference in the judicial processes as imperative. His missives frequently contrasted images of himself as an impartial, upright ruler against those who persecuted the Jews unfairly. When writing to Joan on January 26, 1378, Pere emphasized his own morality and lawfulness, while describing Joan’s advisers as deceptive men who “do not act under the color of Justice.”\textsuperscript{30} In 1383, Pere accused the count of knowingly pursuing accusations against three Jews from Lleida based on false information, while describing his own actions as honoring God by protecting even those who are “lost.”\textsuperscript{31} In both letters, the king used these contrasts to portray his interference in the cases as a moral necessity rather than an exercise of power over those who preferred to act independently according to the authority of their offices.

Pere’s unparalleled use of military action, royal officials, and rhetoric to construct and legitimize his authoritarian kingship did not go unnoticed by members of the nobility and leaders of the municipalities. They recognized that the king’s comprehensive and intensive use of these mechanisms of power would slowly erode the privileges and rights that they had enjoyed for centuries. From the perspective of the nobility and municipal elites, a ruler was not supposed to be the ultimate governing authority, but rather first among equals, a leader who would act with the guidance of his subjects and with an eye to their objectives and aspirations.\textsuperscript{32}

\textsuperscript{30} “…les execucions et destrets et altres maneres per que no sien exequiats sots color de for justicia trossus quel dit vostra vicicanceller sia en vostra Cort.” ACA, C, Reg. 2262, f. 10

\textsuperscript{31} “…pregam vos, car Nebot que daquest fet abans que proceescats a neguna execucio entenats discretament e ab tota diligencia encercar e hauer la veritat e que segons aquella vos hi haiats madurament e savia e segons ques pertany, en tal manera quel dit jueu si culpa no ha no sia per falses acusacions condemnat ne punit ne sen puxa als altres seguir perill ne dempnatge….” ACA, C, Reg, 1281, f. 122

\textsuperscript{32} See for example, the political philosophies of the Catalan scholars Jaume de Callís (c.1370-1434) and Francesc Eiximenis (1330-1409). Callís believed that the king’s will was law to the point that his will was in accordance with the law. In order to ensure that the ruler adhered to this guideline, he should be required to consult annually with the Corts. Eiximenis suggested that a king’s subjects should establish the conditions according to which he exercised
The nobility and municipalities only needed a reason to challenge Pere’s authoritarian impulses. The tipping point came in 1347, three years before the birth of Prince Joan, when King Pere announced that his daughter, Constança, would inherit the throne instead of his brother Jaume, the count of Urgell. Thomas Bisson describes Pere’s decision as driven by a fear that he would fail to produce a male heir, which is the same reason that the king provides in his chronicle.\(^\text{33}\) Within the context of the king’s political objectives, I suggest that Pere’s decision was also connected to his efforts to consolidate power in the figure of the king, and to ensure his political agenda by designating a pliant heir. However, the appointment of a female heir went against tradition in the Crown of Aragon.\(^\text{34}\) Following Pere’s announcement, the nobility of Aragon and Valencia countered the king’s political overreach by banding together in a Unión. Many municipal officials in these kingdoms saw the nobles’ actions as an opportunity to protect their established autonomy in the face of Pere’s expansionist policies and declared their support for the rebels.\(^\text{35}\) Over the next year, rebels and royalists carried out sieges, took hostages, and generally sought to coerce their adversaries into backing down. The conflict ended in July of 1348 when Pere emerged victorious from a dramatic battle at Epila.\(^\text{36}\) Seeking to demonstrate his power. Francisco Elías de Tejada, *Las Doctrinas Políticas en la Cataluña Medieval* (Barcelona: Amya, 1950), 138-162 and 181-186.


\(^{34}\) During Jaume I’s reign, *Corts* representatives ruled that only the male offspring of a ruler could ascend the throne. See Pere III, *Chronicle*, vol. I, 54.


unbreakable and enduring power over the rebels and over all of his subjects in the Crown of Aragon, Pere publically burned Unión documents and smashed their seal with a mace.³⁷

The host desecration investigations of 1367, 1377, and 1383 took place after the battle between Pere III and the Uniónes. The royal missives, however, suggest that the aversion that municipal officials and nobles, including Prince Joan, felt towards Pere’s efforts to consolidate power in the office of the king motivated them to look for other ways to resist. For example, in one letter dated February 4, 1378, Joan named some of the advisers assisting him in his prosecution of the Jews accused in Osca. A few of the nobles named, including Mossen Johan Eximenez Durrea and Micer Pere Arnau de Ffrança, are also listed in Pere’s Chronicle as members of the Unión that opposed the king in 1347 to 1348.³⁸ As I will discuss later, it thus appears that some of those who backed Joan in the host desecration investigations had been involved in a power struggle that had begun decades before.

The Jews of Aragon: Another Mechanism of Power

The letters exchanged during the three host desecration investigations reflect King Pere’s determination to control the outcome of the prosecution and even the physical bodies of the Jews accused. Throughout the investigations, Pere maintained that the Jews accused were innocent and that prosecution against them was unnecessary and disrespectful to his royal objectives and power. Regarding the investigation in Osca, on January 18, 1378, Pere claimed that Prince Joan’s prosecution “goes against the correct form of justice and against Our [royal] council, and we marvel that for 3 and 30 solidos a Christian would commit such a great crime as to sell the body of Jesus Christ.” The king went on to demand that Joan provide the king’s officials with factual

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³⁷ Pere III, Chronicle, vol. II, 437

information about the case so that “God does not punish you in the same way that you use false accusations to punish the Jews.”  

And on January 26, he directed the prince to “stop those who touch the Jews because they do not act under the color of Justice.”  

That same day, the king sent notices out to royal and municipal officials in Aragon, asserting that “Our dear first-born has acted severely against some Jews from the city of Osca, and if this is also your plan, we urge you and those near you not to proceed in this manner, but instead to recognize Our royal policies towards the Jewish communities.”  

These statements suggest that Pere III regarded the Jews as valuable assets. They represented an important mechanism of power that Pere III utilized in his enduring efforts to advance his status as the ultimate governing authority.

Partly as the result of the traditional legal relationship between the Crown of Aragon and minority religious communities, control over Jewish persons and their assets represented political power for both King Pere and his subjects. As mentioned above, by the twelfth century, Aragonese rulers had designated Jews and Muslims property of the Crown, a legal status that guaranteed them royal protection. The special status of Jews and Muslims was not purely beneficial to minority populations. In his study on the construction of kingship during the reign

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39 “…la qual cosa si axi es, es contra tota forma de justicia et massa corrent encare que tots aquells de nostre coonsell et nos maravellam que per III sortilles darget e per V i per XXX solidos hagues comes un crestitan tan gran crim com es vendre los cors de Jhesu christ….Perque car Primogenit volem eus manam que ans de totes coses reebats informacio de les cases denant nos proposades e queus fema saber et aquella reebuda haiats lo vostre canceller lo Justicia Durago et los altres advocats et altres vons lechs cauallers et altres et sia feta relacio altre vegada de tot lo fet et de la informacio per vos faedora sobre les cases demunt dites et altres les quals vos serà vist faedoi et façats haut consell ple et solemn e oyts los juheus justicia en les cases demunt dites no contrastants qualseuol letres en contrari fetes com nos lo dít fet nol nos haiam reseruat mas sobre aquel voliem hauer consell faentho en tal manera que Deus no puxa inculpar nos ne vos ne per falses suggestions algu no puxa esser punit no degudament.” ACA, C, Reg. 1261, f. 8

40 “…et vostre que vos en los fets qui toquen a juheus dejats a ades sobreseure ço ese n fer les execucions et destrets et altres maneres per que no sien exequiats sots color de fer justicia…” ACA C, Reg. 2262, f. 10.

41 “Sabet que havemos entendido que nuestro caro promogénito el Duch…entantar muy rigorosamente contra algunos judios de la ciutat Duesca e segunt veemos si estas maneras tiene ne vos ne los otros qui so es cerca dell non lo tirades de aquello noy fincara aljama en nuestra senyoria…” ACA C, Reg. 1262, f. 10.
of Pere II in the thirteenth century, Hussein Fancy argues that the king used Muslim soldiers and Jewish officials to emphasize his uniqueness as king.\(^{42}\) The fact that Jews and Muslims were legally defined as property of the Crown served to set the ruler apart from other powerful members of the nobility residing in royal territory.

During the three host desecration investigations, Pere III stressed that the Jews who were being prosecuted by the prince and the count belonged to him. In November of 1367 during the prince’s investigation in Barcelona, he stated that “all the Jews of our dominion with their wives, children, and families, and with their property are guarded under Our royal protection.”\(^{43}\) With regard to the Jews of Osca, he proclaimed to Prince Joan on January 26, 1378 that “you know well that We have always had the practice of preserving the Jewish community, and….because We have striven to protect them in our kingdoms and lands during times of war and tribulation, [you] can and should protect them in times of peace.”\(^{44}\) Like his predecessors, Pere recognized the legal relationship between the king and the Jews and sought to protect them from prosecution by emphasizing their status as property of the Crown. In doing so, he simultaneously highlighted the singularity of his office and the superiority of his power over all others.

The Jewish communities of Aragon also contributed to their symbolic and political association with Pere III by articulating their preference for a strong royal government that was capable of protecting them. This preference appears to have increased during Pere’s reign in


\(^{43}\) “…nichilominus omnes judeos nostrre dominionis cum eorum uxoribus filiis familiis rebus et bonis suis sub nostra proteccione Regia guidatico…” ACA, C, Reg. 1219, f. 62.

\(^{44}\) “…sabes bien que siempre hauemos tenido practica de conseruar las aljamas e…que bien podedes considerar que nos qui en tiempos guerras et de tribulaciones que hauemos houidas e n nuestros Regnos et tierras los hauemos conseruados bien los puede et los deue conseruar el Duch en tiempo de paç et de benenança.” ACA, C, Reg. 1262, f. 10.
response to the king’s public claim to the Jews, as well as the concurrent rise in popular aggression against them. In the “Accord of 1354,” a resolution drawn up by representatives of the Jewish aljamas of Catalonia, the Jews agreed to “embrace the throne of the king...for he and his fathers have ever been merciful monarchs.” Furthermore, they asked King Pere to persuade the pope to speak out against accusations of Jewish host desecration and the regular attacks on Jews during the Passover season. Similarly, during the host desecration investigations in 1377 and 1383, Jewish leaders from Osca and Lleida sent letters to the king offering their perspective on the accusations and judicial processes and requesting his intervention. Although the letter from the Jews of Lleida is only relayed to us indirectly through the king’s missive, the letter from the Jews of Osca is still extant. These accounts make it clear that the Jewish communities in these two cities did not passively accept accusations against their members, but actively advocated for a strong ruler who would protect them and their interests, individually and collectively. The Jews from Osca explained that the crown prince and his councilors had unjustly deprived the accused of lawyers and had refused to share documents related to the investigation. Furthermore, they alleged that the accused had been subject to

45 Scholars such as Miri Rubin and Alexandra Eni Paivra Guerson de Oliveria have noted an increase in recorded Christian attacks against Jews in the fourteenth century in the Crown of Aragon and throughout Europe. They suggest that these attacks were a reflection of the development of Christian identity and Eucharistic devotion. See Rubin, Gentile Tales and Guerson de Oliveria, “Coping with Crises.”

46 The term “aljama” comes from the Arabic root al-jamī, meaning “community.” This term was adopted by Christian rulers by the late eleventh century to identify and discuss geographically distinct Jewish and Muslim communities within the cities and towns of the Crown of Aragon. By the twelfth century, the term aljama referred to Muslim and Jewish populations that resided in the same area of taxations. So, for example, in 1332 the aljama of Barcelona included Jews living in Barcelona and the towns of Vilafranca del Penedés, Cervera, Manresa, and Caldes de Montbui. Brian Catlos, The Victors and the Vanquished: Christians and Muslims of Catalonia and Aragon, 1050-1300 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 126-128 and Joseph Pérez, History of a Tragedy: The Expulsion of the Jews from Spain, trans. by Lysa Hochroth (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2007), 20.

unlawfully harsh torture even after the man who had originally denounced them had retracted his confession. In one of his letters to his nephew, the count of Urgell, the king noted that Jewish leaders from Lleida had explained to him that Jewish host desecration was not possible because “it is not believable in the heart of a Jew.” By this, the Jewish leaders meant that, because Jews did not believe in the divine nature of Christ, the Eucharist held no meaning to them and there would be no point in desecrating it. With this in mind, Jewish leaders petitioned that the king direct the count to release the accused. Jewish requests for Pere to interfere indicate that the relationship between the Crown and the Jews was not one-sided, making their affiliation even more conspicuous. Not only did the king associate the Jews with the monarchy through decrees, but the Jews also publically associated themselves with the king. As a result, the Jews symbolized King Pere’s objectives, and more generally, his power and political identity as the ultimate governing authority.

In addition to and as a result of the legal relationship between minority religious groups and the Crown, Jewish revenue was also perceived as a source of royal power. As property of the

48 ACA, C, Reg. 1261, f. 28v-31v.

49 “E com per als uns jueus sia estat novellament proposat davant Nos que, segons lur presumpció e creença lo dit Sentou no es culpable en lo fet, allegants diverses raons per les quals pretenen que semblant acte raonablement no pot de deu caure en cor de jueu…” ACA C, Reg. 1281, f. 122.

50 This builds on Miri Rubin’s argument that the Jewish stance towards the Eucharist and other Christian rituals remained largely unchanged, but the idea of what it meant to be a good Christian and part of a wider Christendom developed during this time, often in opposition to perceptions of non-Christians, like Jews. Rubin, Gentle Tales, 27-29.

51 My argument that the Jews in the fourteenth century Crown of Aragon played in a role in shaping their own relationship with the king builds on the arguments of scholars studying Jewish identity in other time periods or regions. Elka Klein demonstrates similar Jewish agency in Barcelona between the eleventh and thirteenth centuries. See Klein, Jews, Christian Society, and Royal Power in Medieval Barcelona (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2006). Robert Chazen also presents this idea in his analysis of five Jewish polemicists from medieval Northern Europe. See Chazan, Fashioning Jewish Identity in Medieval Western Christendom (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004). David Biale supports this argument in a study that extend from late antiquity up to the modern day. See Biale, Power and Powerlessness in Jewish History (New York: Schocken Books, 1986).
Crown, Jews and Muslims were obliged to pay rulers various property, meat, commercial, and inheritance taxes from which Christians were excused, as well as extra donations to the Crown when the king required it. Records indicate that Aragonese rulers throughout the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries utilized Jewish revenue to support their efforts to expand royal power. In 1282, Pere II demanded 100,000 sous barcelonesos from the Jewish communities in the Kingdom of Catalonia to pay for expenses incurred from his conquest of Sicily. In 1314, Jaume II (r.1291-1327) required the Jews of his realms to pay over 230,000 sueldos towards the purchase of the county of Urgell for the Crown. And in 1332, when Alfons III (r.1327-1336) needed funding for a crusade in Granada, he received 78,880 sous barcelonesos from the Jews of Barcelona, a far larger sum than that which was collected from all of the Christian inhabitants in Catalonia combined.

Although Pere continued the exploitation of Jewish revenue, he increased the Crown’s financial reliance on the Jews significantly in comparisons to his predecessors, to fund his political objectives. Historians have estimated that during Pere’s reign, Jews and Muslims contributed 22 percent of total royal tax income, up from the 17 percent they yielded during Jaume II’s reign. Furthermore, through their examination of chancellery records, David Nirenberg and Lester Little have demonstrated through examinations of chancellery records that

52 For the recorded division of this amount among the Catalanian Jewish communities, see ACA C, Reg. 59, f. 147, 151-152, and 156.
55 For Pere’s III reign, see John Boswell, The Royal Treasure: Muslim Communities under the Crown of Aragon in the Fourteenth Century (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1977), 226, f. 120. For Jaume II’s reign, see Sánchez, El Naixement de la Fiscalitat d’Estat a Catalunya, 90.
the taxation of profits gained by Jewish moneylending was one of the primary sources of revenue for the royal fisc in the second half of the fourteenth century.\(^{56}\) In 1357, during the war with Castile, Pere required Jews and Muslims to pay full tithes for their crops before they had even harvested them. This demand was made in addition to a recent order that Jews and Muslims pay further subsidies in support of the war and contribute to the cost of repairing the walls of cities that they inhabited that protected them from invading Castilian troops.\(^{57}\) A few years later, as the war against Castile raged on, Jewish communities throughout the realms complained that they were being taxed at a higher rate than was viable since their populations had declined drastically due to plague and war. While Pere agreed to lower the amount they were obligated to pay in some locations, he accused a few communities of lying about their actual numbers and required them to pay the full amount.\(^{58}\)

Although Pere occasionally required the Muslims to contribute to the royal treasury, as demonstrated by the examples above, records indicate that Jews paid far more in taxes and subsidies than Muslim communities despite the fact that the Jewish population was much smaller than the Muslim one. For example, in 1354, Pere ordered the Jews of Osca to pay 1,000 *sueldos* toward the upkeep of the Estudio General d’Osca, a university in Aragon, while the Muslims only paid 500.\(^{59}\) In 1359, the same Jews of Osca paid 350 *sueldos jaqueses* for the annual *cena*,


\(^{57}\) For the tithes see: ACH, arm. II, leg 19 (1357.VII.19). In 1356, the Jews of Osca were required to pay the wages of a number of cavalry troops. In 1361, Pere ordered his royal porter to force the Muslims of Osca to pay 5,000 *sueldos* to help with the war. See ACA C, Reg. 1175, f. 72r. In 1357, municipal leaders in Osca received permission to imprison Muslims and Jews in a compound with their property until they agreed to pay for and perform needed repairs on the city walls. See ACA C, Reg. 1381, f. 34.

\(^{58}\) For Teruel’s complaints: ACA, C, Reg. 982, f. 188. For the king’s accusation: ACA, C, Reg. 1383, f. 239.

\(^{59}\) AMHu, leg. 55, n 3998.
compared to the 100 paid by Muslims. In 1374, Queen Elionor ordered officials to ignore the complaints of some Muslim *aljamas* about the amount of interest they owed to the Valencian Jew, Jafuda Alatzar. She defended her disregard of the objections presented by the Muslim communities by explaining that Alatzar alone paid more taxes to the Crown than virtually all the Muslim *aljamas* of the Kingdom of Valencia combined. This difference was largely due to the widespread impoverishment of the Muslim communities. Whereas Jews tended to engage in urban occupations as merchants, artisans, and moneylenders, all of which could be quite lucrative in the increasingly mobile and moneyed atmosphere of the Mediterranean, most Muslims remained engaged agricultural production. Their prosperity or poverty was often determined by bad weather or pests, which were regular occurrences in the fourteenth century. The financial disparity between Muslims and Jews is also evidenced in the royal orders King Pere sent. Between 1350 and 1380, the king pardoned debts or provided the Muslims of Osca with extra time to pay sums on six different occasions during the course of his reign. In contrast, the Jews of Osca only received one such accommodation. Consequently, although Jews and Muslims held the same legal status as property of the Crown, they had a different relationship with the king. The general solvency of Jews and the insolvency of Muslims encouraged a stronger connection between the king and the Jewish communities.

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61 Nirenberg, *Communities of Violence*, 179.


63 Records indicate that the “mal anys” were 1337, 1347, 1356, 1358, 1370-1371, 1374, 1375. See Pere’s *Chronicle*, vols.I and II.

64 Muslims in Osca received pardons or moratoria for their debts from the king in 1357, 1358, 1363, 1376, 1382, 1384. The Jews received a pardon for a portion of their debt in 1358. See ACA, C, Reg. 692, f. 7v-8r; Reg. 1381, f 29v-30r; Reg. 714, f. 138 r-v; Reg. 793, f. 52v; Reg., 946, f. 138r.
As the Crown’s reliance on Jewish revenue increased, Pere implemented policies on the municipal level that were intended to funnel Jewish revenue more effectively and efficiently to the Crown’s treasury. For example, in 1337, Pere ordered that every Jew residing in royal territory should be assessed for taxation, and they should not be permitted to relocate to another town or city in order to avoid paying the proper amount. And in 1358, Pere granted Jews in Osca the authority to implement local taxes in their communities to raise the money demanded by the king. In addition to reaffirming and strengthening his claim to Jewish revenue, Pere stressed his royal right to direct jurisdiction over the kingdom’s Jews and Muslims; he rejected the claims by other figures of authority over them. For instance, in 1344 in Lleida, Pere insisted that all litigation concerning Jews or Muslims fell exclusively under the authority of their own judges or the bailiff, a royal official. This stood in contrast to his predecessors’ concessions, which permitted members of the city council to judge and sentence all criminal activity deserving corporal punishment, including activity that concerned Jews and Muslims. In addition, in 1365, Pere reprimanded a bishop for attempting to charge local Jews with usury. He reminded the bishop that it was not his place to decide if such a crime had been committed since

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65 Klein argues that between the eleventh and thirteenth century, rulers in the Crown of Aragon shifted their approach to managing Jewish communities from “autonomy by default” to “autonomy by design.” Rulers at that time realized that allowing Jewish leaders to manage fiscal operations within their communities facilitated the extraction of money for the Crown more efficiently. See chapter seven, “Forging a New Relationship: the Jews and the King” in Klein, Jews, Christian Society, and Royal Power in Medieval Barcelona. As I will demonstrate in the Chapters 4, 5, and 6, however, rulers in the late thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries provided municipal government organization with some power over the Jews and Muslims living in their cities and towns. In contrast to the concessions of his predecessors, Pere reasserted his power over the Jews and Muslims in order to lay claim to their revenue and to implement a more effective tax assignment and collection system.

66 ACA, CR, Pere III, C26, f. 3617; ACA C, Reg. 1054, f. 116r. These orders are partially transcribed in Meyerson, Jews in an Iberian Frontier Kingdom, 157.


68 ACA C, Reg. 695, f. 149. For examples of concessions that Pere’s predecessors provided to municipal officials, see ACA C, Reg. 141, f. 52v; ACA C, Reg. 175, f. 227.
it was the king who set the legal interest rate.\textsuperscript{69} Pere’s policies regarding minority religious communities, and particularly the Jews and their revenue, served to emphasize their connection to the Crown and their role in king’s political identity.

In his letters to Prince Joan during the 1377 host desecration investigation, Pere hinted at the political advantages that Jews offered the Crown. On January 26, 1378, the king urged his son to stop his prosecution of the Jews accused in Osca before “they move themselves to the lands of prelates and nobles, and weaken Us and you.”\textsuperscript{70} It is uncertain whether Pere feared that the Jews’ departure would weaken the Crown due to the absence of their revenue or because it would undermine the uniqueness of his status as king; quite possibly it was both. Regardless, it is clear that Pere believed that the Jews were a necessary component of royal power. Offering further support for this interpretation, in the same letter Pere said “And because we know that you enjoy their service, your advisors should cease their investigation and you should continue the practice of protecting the Jewish community.”\textsuperscript{71} It appears that Pere sought to persuade Joan to stop his prosecution of the Jews and accept the expansion of royal power. He reminded Joan that as the crown prince and the future ruler of the realms, he too benefited from the revenue and symbolic power the Jews provided to the Crown. To continue his investigation would only serve to diminish the privileges that Joan enjoyed then and would enjoy in the future. A week later, Pere sent the prince another letter in which he emphatically stated that “We have long reigned

\textsuperscript{69} ACA C, Reg. 1210, f. 133r-v. That same year, Pere also scolded the justicia of Aragon for meddling in Jewish financial matters. See ACA C, Reg. 1210, f. 83.

\textsuperscript{70} “…segunt veemos si estas maneras tiene ne vos ne los otros qui so es cerca dell non lo tirades de aquello noy fincara aljama en nuestra senyoria antes se mudaran en las tierras de los prelados, ricoshombres et cavalleros et faran mas mengua a nos et a ell que a neguno de vosotros.” ACA C, Reg. 1262, f. 10.

\textsuperscript{71} “E porque sabemos que vos amades el nuestro servicio et el suyo et que querriades su bien avenir vos escrivimos daquesto quell conselledes que tales cosas no faga que vos qui ja havedes continuado muyto con nos sabes bien que siempre havemos tenido pratica de conservar…” ACA C, Reg. 1262, f. 10.
and will reign as long as God pleases, and for this reason we have defended the Jews."\textsuperscript{72} It thus appears that Pere recognized that Jewish resources and their legal affiliation with the Crown supported his objectives, and more generally, his power over all others in his realms. With this in mind, it naturally followed that if Pere gained power through his claim to the Jews, then he would lose power if he lost control of them.

**Retaining Power: King Pere, Prince Joan, and the Count of Urgell**

Pere demonstrated the importance of the Jews to his vision of unrestricted royal power through his untiring effort to retain control over them during the host desecration investigations of 1367, 1377, and 1383. However, because of the association between Jews and royal authority, it was not unusual for Jews in the Crown of Aragon and elsewhere in medieval Europe to become the focus of a resistance movement against the monarchy. Mark Meyerson and Marta VanLandingham have shown that nobles sought leverage against the growing monarchical power of Jaume I and Pere II by forcing them to control the interest rate of Jewish moneylending and replace royal Jewish officials with Christian ones.\textsuperscript{73} In addition, David Nirenberg demonstrates more generally that Christian subjects in medieval France and Spain carried out systematic and cataclysmic violence against the Jews express their displeasure with the king.\textsuperscript{74} With the recognition that Jewish communities represented an important source of power within Pere’s authoritarian formulation of kingship, Prince Joan and his cousin, the count of Urgell, attempted to undermine the king’s expansion of royal power by gaining control of judicial processes that

\textsuperscript{72} “…nos qui havem moly regnat et regnarem aytant con a Deu plaura, havem rabonat ab ell de les pratiques que nos havem servades en los fets dels juheus…” ACA C, Reg. 2262, f. 10.

\textsuperscript{73} See Chapters 2, “Putting the Jews in Their Place” and 4, “The Yoke of Usury” in Meyerson, *Jews in an Iberian Frontier Kingdom* and VanLandingham, *Transforming the State*, 135-137.

\textsuperscript{74} Nirenberg, *Communities of Violence.*
impacted the Jews. Royal missives exchanged during the judicial processes, however, reveal that King Pere was unwilling to relinquish control without a fight. His struggle to maintain exclusive power over the Jewish population provides evidence of their importance to his objective of reigning as the most powerful governing authority.

In his letters, King Pere conveyed with clear conviction that Joan, as well as the count of Urgell and their advisers, were pursuing accusations of host desecration in order to undermine his power. On multiple occasions during the 1367 and 1377 investigations, the king declared that Joan and his advisers were motivated more by a desire for “the destruction of the Jewish communities than for justice or out of concern for the Catholic faith.”

In a letter dated to December 31, 1377, Pere contended that Joan was punishing the Jews of Osca “without reason and due to [his] bad advisers,” who were “well pleased with the accusations.” It appears that Pere recognized that the accusations of host desecration provided Joan and his advisers with the perfect opportunity to target the Jews and, by proxy, the king. In 1383, Pere claimed that the count of Urgell’s continuation of his investigation was influenced by “false accusations” and “persons who strive for evil.” Similar to his stance toward Joan, it seems that Pere was convinced that his nephew, the count of Urgell, was pursuing the accusations to gain control over the Jews and, through them, royal power, rather than with the objective of carrying out justice.

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75 For this statement in royal letters concerning the trial of 1367 in Barcelona, see ACA, C, R. 1260, fol. 186; For the trial of 1377 in Osca, see R. 1259, fol. 134; For the trial of 1383 in Castelló de Farfanya, see R. 1281, f. 122.

76 “…et nos vista quell porem vos mils consellar que hi deurets fer cor si colpa hi ha bens plau que la compren axi com se pertany a tan leig crim, mas en lendemig no entenem que his deiats fer altra enantament.” ACA C, Reg. 1259, f. 134.

77 “…mas que daço son estats acusats ell e Mosse Xicacella iniqament e ab falses tractaments e maneres, per persones quils volen mal…” See ACA C, Reg. 1281, f. 122.
Although Joan assumed an air of piety and righteousness in his justification of his host desecration investigations, a rhetorical tool that will be discussed further in the next chapter, some of Joan’s remarks suggest that Pere was not wrong to think that the prince had political motivations for continuing his judicial processes in the face of the king’s objections. For example, in a letter dated February 4, Joan claimed that the Jews were whispering to one another that they would be able to escape the prince’s grasp by paying him off. Joan exclaimed that he would not concede to their bribes and that the king should not challenge or punish him, but should instead allow him to complete his investigation without further interference.\textsuperscript{78} Joan thereby disclosed his irritation with the established connection between the Jews and the king, and he used his judicial authority over the Jews to control his father’s actions and access to the investigation. Although we lack the count’s responses, it is possible to speculate from the king’s missives that the count, like Joan, used the 1383 host desecration investigation to acquire power over and against the king. Over a period of four months, Pere attempted via royal officials and strongly-worded letters to persuade the count to halt his investigation. Although Pere eventually succeeded in taking charge of the case, it does not appear that he did so by legally forcing the count to relinquish control.\textsuperscript{79} Instead, it seems that the count continued to exercise his control over the case, and by extension, the Jews of Lleida, until deciding on his own terms to accede to the king’s demands. In this manner, he demonstrated to the king and the Jews that he could and would exercise his authority and power as the count of Urgell, and there was nothing they could do about it. Considered together, the letters exchanged regarding the three host desecration

\textsuperscript{78} “…et alguns murmurassen que jo e mon dispenser delatavem et prorogavem aquest fet per haverne diners...Senyor, pusquam del dit get bon compte retre al Creador, lo qual prech devotement que de necligencia o triga no vulla vos, Senyor, ne mi reptar e punir.” ACA C, Reg. 1723, f. 62.

\textsuperscript{79} ACA C, Reg. 1105, f. 47.
investigations reflect a struggle revolving around control over the Jews and, by extension around the limits of royal power.

Within the context of Pere’s political program, it appears that Joan and the count were motivated to target the Jews in order to resist the expansion of royal power that left them with little room to exercise their own power. As his Ordinances demonstrated, Pere believed that everything his officials did should reinforce his own power as king, not the power of the king and his relatives. Yet Joan and the count held titles that gave them authority to govern. In 1363, Pere bestowed the title of Governor General of Aragon on Joan, making him the king’s second in command, and the count had governed the county of Urgell as its seigniorial lord since 1348. In practice, however, the king was unwilling to relinquish control, creating a situation in which Joan and the count held nominal positions that had been essentially stripped of their power. In 1364, Pere allowed Joan, his governor general, to command an army in the war with Castile, but only under the close watch of the viscount of Cardona and with the understanding that the prince would not actively participate in battles. That same year, Pere refused to grant the count of Urgell his inheritance when, Ferran, the count’s uncle and the king’s half brother, died without an heir and left the count of Urgell, the towns of Fraga, Vallobar, Peñalba, and Privia in the Kingdom of Aragon. Pere reasoned that the law required him to confiscate the towns for the royal patrimony, but it seems more likely that it was self-interest that motivated him to refuse to release them to the count.

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80 See Chapter 2 for more information about Joan’s assumption of the title, governor general. See Chapter 6 for more information about the Count of Urgell as seigniorial lord in the County of Urgell.

81 Rafael Tasis i Marca, Joan I: El Rei Caçador i Músic (Barcelona: Editorial Aedos, 1959), 34-35.

82 In 1368, the king agreed to give the towns to the count if the count agreed that they would return to the Crown in the event that the count died without an heir. The count granted this, but soon after, the king explained that it was illegal to alienate any parts of the patrimony and thus could not deliver the towns to him. Diego Monfar y Sors,
While Pere claimed that the Jews and the services that they offered belonged exclusively to the king, the offices that Joan and the count held gave them the authority to prosecute all crimes committed in their territory regardless of whether the accused were Christian or not. As governor general, Joan had jurisdiction over any criminal activity that took place in royal territory, including in Barcelona and Osca. Similarly, as the seigniorial lord of the county of Urgell, the count had the authority to preside over any investigations and trials that concerned criminal activity conducted in the county, including host desecration carried out by Jews visiting from Lleida. It seems likely that when the prince and the count learned of the accusations against the Jews, they took the opportunity to exercise an aspect of their authority that would put the Jews beyond the reach of the king. Whereas armed rebellion against the king was illegal and had proved unsuccessful in the past, and targeting the interest rate of Jewish moneylending or forcing rulers to replace Jewish royal officials with Christian ones was only effective for short periods of time, the prosecution of Jewish crimes by the governor general and the count of Urgell was lawful and placed at least a certain group of the Jews beyond the king’s control.

Maintaining his authoritarian approach to governance and seeking to retain control of the Jews, Pere repeatedly tried to intervene in each of the three host desecration investigations. He sent numerous letters demanding information from Joan and the count about the judicial processes. When he was dissatisfied with this information or felt that Joan and the count were not conducting their investigations in an appropriate manner, the king sent his own officials to gather information and influence the outcome of the cases. Both of these methods of interference

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Historia de los Condes de Urgel, vol. IX, in CODOIN, ed. by D. Próspero de Bofarull y Mascaró (Barcelona: J.E. Monfort, 1853).

83 For more information on the offices of governor general and count of Urgell, see Bisson, The Medieval Crown of Aragon, 117 and Monfar y Sors, Historia de los Condes de Urgel, vol. IX.
indicate that Pere believed that he, as king, should have the last word in the trials. In 1367, after receiving a letter from the Jewish *aljama* of Barcelona, Pere told Joan that through his own inquiry “we found no fault with the Jews accused” and, consequently, the trials should cease.\(^{84}\) In December of 1377, when Joan made it clear that he would persist in the investigation against the accused Jews of Osca despite his father’s objections, Pere replied that “We demand again that you act in accordance with the plan that We have already written you concerning the process.”\(^{85}\) Perhaps frustrated with his inability to prevent the prince from proceeding in his investigation, Pere targeted Joan’s advisers. In June of 1378, Bernat Dezpont, the prince’s chancellor, insulted the king in the presence of some of Pere’s officials, who subsequently reported the insults to him. Just as the prince used the Jews to target the king’s power, Pere took advantage of the situation to force Joan to submit to the king’s power by threatening to punish Dezpont. As soon as Pere ordered Dezpont to appear before him, Joan wrote to the king beseeching him to spare his chancellor.\(^{86}\) It was clear that Pere was intent on retaining control of the Jews, and by extension, power over all of his officials and subjects.

**Conclusion**

Pere’s stance in the letters exchanged about the host desecration investigations of 1367, 1377, and 1383 provides a glimpse into the pitched struggle regarding royal power that took place in the Crown of Aragon during the reign of Pere III. Previous scholarship has drawn attention to some of the mechanisms of power such as military aggression, royal officials, and

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\(^{84}\) “…eosdem nullam reperimus culpam de premissis.” ACA C, Reg. 1219, f. 62.

\(^{85}\) “Per que tenim per he et volem eus pregam que segons que ja altre vegada vos hauiem escrit nos trametats lo proces qui es estat fet contra la dita aljama o singulars daquella…” ACA C, Reg. 1259, f. 134.

\(^{86}\) ACA C. Reg. 1261, f. 113. This conflict between the king, Bernat Dezpont, and Prince Joan is also discussed in Miret i Sans, “El procés de les hòsties contra eles jueus d’Osca de 1377,” 77-78.
rhetorical strategies that Pere used to consolidate power in the office of the king. The letters reveal how Pere implemented these mechanisms to support his unprecedented authoritarianism. But more significantly, the royal missives reveal that control over the Jews represented an important facet of royal power. Pere relied on Jewish revenue and implemented policies concerning the Jews more than any ruler before him to demonstrate the singularity of his office and defend and advance his political status as the ultimate governing authority. The king’s approach to the Jewish communities of Aragon encouraged his subjects to associate the Jews with the king and his policies, especially his unpopular political efforts to expand royal power and exclude other elites from participating in the governance of the realms. As a result, those who opposed and intended to resist the king’s objectives, including Prince Joan and the count of Urgell, targeted the Jews by pursuing accusations of host desecration. King Pere responded by interfering in the investigations and attempting to control their outcome. In this manner, the Jews in the Crown of Aragon became an axis around which the negotiation of royal power and its limits took place.
CHAPTER 3
PRINCE JOAN: THE MAKING OF A KING

Introduction

In December of 1377, Joan, the Crown Prince of Aragon, wrote a letter to King Pere III in response to his father’s appeals to halt his investigation in the city of Osca of six Jews accused of purchasing stolen pieces of the Eucharist with the intention of desecrating them. With extraordinary gall, Joan declared:

You said that I should dismiss the investigation. Senyor, I humbly implore you to consider the burden of your soul, and take care to remember the grace that God has given to you….in good faith, Senyor, consider that the body of Christ is in peril while it remains in the possession of the Jews. Senyor, I believe that I would have found the sacred hosts if not for your commands in your previous letters.¹

Instead of the obedience and respect that one might expect from the son of a powerful king, Joan’s rhetoric reflected his contempt for his father, especially with respect to royal policies protecting Jews in the Crown of Aragon. The prince articulated his objection to the king’s interference with his investigation with a particular lack of deference or esteem for his father’s office that had developed over time. A decade earlier, in 1367, Prince Joan investigated a nearly identical accusation against four Jews in Barcelona. In this instance, in contrast to the disrespect that Joan expressed in 1377, Joan politely explained his prosecution so that the king could “see and know that all was done with deliberation, and that all agree with me in the matter.”² It thus

¹ “Pero, Senyor, les dites vostres letres et sepcialment la ultima de sobresehiment contrestants aço fer no he pogut, perque he delbierat de consultar vos, Senyor, sobre lo dit fet e sobreseure en aquell…entre que haia vostra resposta. Per ço, Senyor, supplich a vos humilment per descarrech de la vostra anima, have men vostra memoria les assenyalades gracies que nostre Senyor Deu vos ha fetes…E a bona fe senyor, sguardat que lo cors de Deu ese n poder de juheus es peril en l’triga; jo, Senyor, enten et crech que jo haguera trobades les dites osties consegrades si no fossen, Senyor, los alongaments et torps que vos me havets manats ab vostres letres.” ACA C, Reg. 1723, f. 62.

² “Veus, senyor, en sustancia tot lo process. Voleu vos, senyor, certificar daquell. Suplican a la vostra senyoria, que si veu o coneix, que als si puxe o si deja fer per mi, que hauda deliberacio plenaria man ami ço que s amerce sera, car jo son apparrallat de complir en totes aquelles maneres, que fer se puxe ne vos manets a mi.” ACA C, Reg. 1780, f. 103.
appears that in a matter of ten years Joan evolved from a son who acted with concern for his father’s good opinion, to a confident prince who acted according to his own principles. During the two investigations, he appeared to hold a similar stake in the outcome of each. Existing scholarship about Prince Joan has suggested that his determination to prosecute Jews accused of attempted host desecration in Barcelona in 1367 and in Osca in 1377 was driven by religious extremism or even mental instability. These explanations, however, are insufficient, because, as Nirenberg argues, defining violence as irrational only serves to suppress analysis. I argue that, when examined within the context of Pere’s efforts to consolidate his own royal power, Joan’s use of judicial processes created space for himself to exercise political power that had been monopolized by his father. He understood the relationship between royal power and the Jews and the importance his father placed on maintaining complete oversight of them. Joan thus exploited the accusations of host desecration as a political tool for his own ends.

The letters exchanged between the king and the prince during the host desecration investigations of 1367 and 1377 provide insight into the development of Joan’s political philosophy. They indicate that Joan learned what it meant to be king while he was still the heir apparent, which in turn led him to challenge his father in the cases of these investigations.

Scholars who have analyzed the political education of princes have confined themselves to works belonging to the “mirror of princes” genre, texts that offered instruction on aspects of domestic rule and international relations. Study of these texts in isolation is problematic because

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5 Ronald Truman, Spanish Treatises on Government, Society and Religion in the Time of Philip II: The ‘De Regimine Principum’ and Associated Traditions (Leiden: Brill, 1999), see in particular Chapter 2; Donna Sadler,
not only are they prescriptive in nature and tend to reflect the interests of the author more than the prince in question, but also there are a limited number of these texts in existence. The only extant “mirror of princes” within the context of the late-medieval Crown of Aragon was written in 1392 by Francesc Eiximenis (1340-1409), a Franciscan theologian and political theorist, for Prince Martí, Pere III’s second son and Joan’s younger brother.⁶ In contrast, the royal letters concerning the host desecration investigations of 1367 and 1377 provide a unique window into the prince’s mindset, marking specific milestones of his political development by showing how he applied his education and experiences as heir apparent to his duties as governor general. The letters offer evidence that, over time, Joan shaped an inclusive style of kingship, rooted in sharing power with municipal leadership and the nobility, that stood in opposition to and as a corrective action for his father’s authoritarian, exclusive style of governance.

The Host Desecration Case of 1367: Barcelona

From birth, Prince Joan represented one of the mechanisms of power that King Pere used to shape and support his status as the ultimate governing authority. Like most medieval rulers, Pere understood that a male heir was crucial for protecting his position as king.⁷ The fact lacked a son for the first fourteen years of his reign encouraged others to believe that they would and should succeed the king, including Jaume, Pere’s brother and the count of Urgell (1321-1347).

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⁶ Nuria Silleras-Fernandez analyzes the mirror of princes that Eiximenis wrote for Martí alongside instructive works written for his wife, María de Luna, within the context of evolving ideas and ideals of female piety. Silleras-Fernandez, Chariots of Ladies: Francesc Eiximenis and the Court Culture of Medieval and Early Modern Iberia (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2015), 108-115.

⁷ The emphasis on producing a male heir and the connection of such to the current ruler’s authority to govern appears to have been a continent-wide practice. For an example of this in England, see Lisa Benz St. John, Three Medieval Queens: Queenship and the Crown in Fourteenth-Century England (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 98.
This question of succession created instability within the monarchy and detracted from Pere’s claim and ability to exercise unilateral governing authority in the realm.\(^8\) As scholars like Teofilo Ruiz and Thomas Bisson have demonstrated, Joan’s birth in 1350 provided the dynastic continuity that secured Pere’s right to rule and helped to legitimate the king’s entire political program.\(^9\) However, although Joan was a necessary component of the king’s authoritarian approach to governance, Pere had no intention of sharing power with his son. In the same manner that he expected complete acquiescence from the nobility and the urban centers of the realms, Pere expected Joan to comply with the will of the king, the supreme authority in the Crown of Aragon. Consequently, while Joan, as heir apparent, received offices from the king that nominally granted him authority, the prince had very little leeway to implement that authority without constant interference from his father.

Records from the 1350s and early 1360s that make note of Joan’s presence and actions reveal his significance to the king’s political program. For example, in 1362, the king convoked a 
*Corts* session in Montsó in order to gather more resources and troops for the war against Castile.\(^10\) Noble and municipal representatives at the *Corts* session expressed reluctance to provide the king with the amount of money that he requested, and they wrangled with him over the ways in which he could use it. This reception provoked an angry outburst from the king, who complained that representatives were more concerned with protecting their “privileges and


\(^10\) For transcripts of the sessions, see: J.M. Pons Guri, *Actas de las Cortes Generales de la Corona de Aragón de 1362-1363* (Madrid-Barcelona, 1982).
“liberties” than the good of the realm.\textsuperscript{11} In order to convince representatives to give him the revenue he requested and the power to use it as he wished, Pere demonstrated his own stake in the war by bringing in his family, including twelve-year-old Prince Joan. Rafael Tasis i Marca claims that Joan’s presence prompted an outpouring of generosity from \emph{Corts} representatives in conformation of the king’s demands.\textsuperscript{12}

Throughout his youth, Pere provided Joan with titles that in theory should have allowed him to exercise a degree of power. In reality, however, the prince was only permitted to exercise the power authorized by his titles when it aligned with the king’s interests. In 1363, Pere appointed Joan as his governor general, which gave the prince the jurisdiction to prosecute crimes in the kingdom and act as the king’s second in command politically and militarily.\textsuperscript{13} On the surface, it appears that Pere respected his son’s newly acquired authority. A few months after bestowing the title, Pere ordered his son to visit Barcelona, Girona, and Castelló d’Empúries to mobilize troops and bring them to Lleida, where Pere was stationed at the time.\textsuperscript{14} Again in 1364, the king placed his teenage son in command of an army. In both cases, however, Joan carried out his orders under the close watch of the viscount of Cardona and with the understanding that he would not actively participate in the war against Castile (meaning that Joan’s army remained

\textsuperscript{11} Próspero de Bofarull y Moscaró, ed., \textit{CDACA}, vol. 48 (Barcelona, 1847-1910), 63-64. This incident is also described by Donald Kagay, “A Government Besieged by Conflict: The Parliament of Monzón (1362-1363) as Military Financier,” in \textit{The Hundred Years War: A Wider Focus}, ed. Andrew Villalon and Donald J. Kagay (Leiden: Brill, 2005), 128-130.

\textsuperscript{12} Rafael Tasis i Marca, \textit{Joan I: El Rei Caçador i Músic} (Barcelona: Editorial Aedos, 1959), 31.

\textsuperscript{13} For the document bestowing the title of governor general on Joan, see ACA C, Reg. 1608, f. 1r-4r.

\textsuperscript{14} ACA C, Reg. 1385, f. 31.
While his office as governor general implied that Joan had the authority to act, in reality Pere left little room for Joan to exercise power or express a political voice.

Royal decrees, ordinances, and records from Corts meetings that describe Pere’s association with Joan focus on the king’s expressed desires, whether in the form of commands or requests. Because these documents do not reveal Joan’s reactions, scholars have assumed that Joan remained acquiescent and passively supportive of his father’s political objectives throughout his youth. As a result, Joan’s persistent and defiant prosecution in 1367 and 1377 of Jews accused of host desecration appears arbitrary. Royal missives, however, reveal some of Joan’s responses to Pere and his royal representatives, giving him the voice he lacks in official documents. They demonstrate that the prince was not necessarily accepting of his father’s authoritarian brand of kingship and that as a young man he already exploited political opportunities to exercise independent power. For example, in a letter dated 1365 to the Infant Ramon Berenguer, King Pere’s uncle, the fifteen-year-old prince warned Ramon not to intervene in any criminal cases corresponding to the authority of the governor general since that power belonged to him alone. Ramon Berenguer was an advocate of Pere’s authoritarian kingship, and as a result, the king occasionally trusted him to carry out military and political maneuvers in his name. Joan’s 1365 letter thus reveals his initial steps to carve out space to act as governor general without infringement or interference from the king or his representatives.

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15 Tasis i Marca, Joan I, 34-35.
17 Tasis i Marca, Joan I, 43.
18 This was evidence by his military support of the king during the Unión uprising of 1347-1348. See Pere, Chronicle, vol. I, 192.
Joan’s resistance to the king’s orders in the 1364 case of Bernat de Cabrera, an adviser to the king and Joan’s former tutor, also evidences the prince’s early opposition to the king’s political dominance. Although Bernat had been one of the king’s closest confidants for many years, this did not save him in the face of the king’s desire to preserve an image of authority and control. When Cabrera’s enemies accused him of treason in 1364 (accusations that Pere admitted years later were unfounded), the king was forced to condemn one of his closest allies in order to demonstrate control over his subjects.\(^{19}\) In this instance, Pere ordered his fourteen-year-old son to execute his former tutor immediately. Although Pere formally recognized Joan’s function as governor general in this instance, his order to execute Cabrera reduced the prince’s role to being a passive tool of the king. Joan’s office should have provided him the authority to investigate Cabrera’s crime in his own time and issue a sentence; instead, Pere merely ordered the prince to carry out his sentence. Rather than support his father’s show of strength by obediently carrying out his orders, Joan refused to act for more than a week. He finally carried out the execution only after his mother, Queen Elionor of Sicily, wrote to him, sharply commanding that “the justice of [Cabrera’s] death be carried out” without further delay.\(^{20}\) It is unclear whether Joan resisted because he was being forced to execute someone he knew well or because he disagreed with Pere’s posturing. Regardless, Joan’s active opposition suggests that he was beginning to develop his own perspective on the proper relationship between a king and his subjects, one that did not necessarily align with that of his father.


Considering the king’s infringement on the prince’s power as governor general, Joan’s response to the host desecration accusation of 1367 against Jews in Barcelona suggests that he understood the significance of Jews to the king’s political program (as discussed in the previous chapter) and used the investigation as a tool to resist that program. In doing so, it appears that the prince was grappling with concepts of appropriate royal power and forms of kingship. According to Joan’s letter to Pere on July 6, 1367, a Christian thief named Pere Fuster of Morella confessed to stealing a silver pyx and its contents, seven consecrated hosts, from the church of Santa María de Muntblanc. He testified to taking them to the Jewish quarter in Barcelona and selling them to an unidentified Jewish buyer for 12 florins and 60 shillings. Joan described an elaborate scheme in which he and his counselors took Fuster to a house located on the Plaça de Sent Jacme and told him to point out the buyer when he walked by. Fuster pointed out Provençal de Piera, a member of the Barcelona Jewish community, whom Joan ordered to be taken into custody and tortured. Under torture, Piera admitted to buying the pyx and host pieces and reselling them to another Jew named Struch Biona. In turn, Biona confessed under torture to buying and reselling them to Salamo Sescalta and Mosse Badroch Gallart, both members of the Jewish community.21 In his letter to his father, Joan followed his accounts of the accusation and the subsequent confessions with an explanation of how he ensured their veracity. First, when he and his counselors took Fuster to the Plaça de Sent Jacme, they ordered him not to “incriminate a Jew falsely.”22 In addition, when they could not persuade Sescalta to admit his guilt, which encouraged Biona to retract his own confession, Joan sent for Fuster’s companion and witness to

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21 The records offer different spellings of these names. Struch Biona is sometimes spelled “Astruch Biona” and Salamo Sescalta is occasionally spelled Salomó s’Escaleta. See Anna Rich Abad, La comunitat jueva de Barcelona entre 1348 i 1391 a través de la documentació notarial (Barcelona: Fundació Noguera, 1999), 35.

22 “No le volgues dampnar, car si bens seren juheus sin series dampnat, si acusava negu, qui colpa noy hagues.” ACA C, Reg. 1780, f. 102.
the original transaction, Guillem Terraça, who was currently serving a sentence in the galleys.\textsuperscript{23} The prince explained that Terraça’s descriptions of the series of events and of Provençal de Piera’s physical appearance corroborated Fuster’s account.\textsuperscript{24}

Significantly, Joan only notified his father of the host desecration accusation after he had taken these steps to resolve it. This delay gave him room to act according to the authority of his office as governor general without the king’s interference. The office of governor general gave Joan the authority to prosecute crimes in the realms, including those carried out by the Jews.\textsuperscript{25} While the bailiff of the city often judged and sentenced local criminal activity, since it was impossible for the governor general to oversee every single case, the prince could take charge of any case that he deemed worthy of his attention.\textsuperscript{26} King Pere, however, intended to remain in control of all of his subjects, including Joan, and consequently, he inhibited his son’s ability to exercise power as the governor general. In the same letter that he introduced the accusations and his investigation, the prince explained that he had already ordered and overseen the execution of three of the Jews implicated in the investigation and the two Christian thieves.\textsuperscript{27} It appears that Joan realized if he only notified his father after the fact, the king could not prevent him from

\textsuperscript{23} In this case, the galleys were royal ships that served the king’s military endeavors. Criminals were often used as slave labor. For more information, see William Monter, \textit{Frontiers of Heresy: The Spanish Inquisition from the Basque Lands to Sicily} (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 32-35.

\textsuperscript{24} It is interesting, however, that whereas Fuster had described Provençal as an older man with a white beard, Terraça claimed that he was about forty years old and had a black beard. I believe that Joan’s acceptance of the large difference in descriptions speaks to the influence of his political concerns on his willingness to see the Jews accused as guilty. ACA C, Reg. 1780, f. 103.

\textsuperscript{25} The king legally possessed the minority religious communities, but their crimes fell under the legal jurisdiction of the governor general.

\textsuperscript{26} For information about the duties of the municipal bailiff in relation to the Jews, see Mark Meyerson, \textit{Jews in an Iberian Frontier Kingdom: Society, Economy, and Politics in Morvedre, 1248-1391} (Leiden: Brill, 2004), Chapter 3.

\textsuperscript{27} Joan executed the imprisoned Jews, Provençal de Piera, Struch Biona and Mosse Badroch Gallart. He would have likely executed Salamo Sescalta as well, but Sescalata died from the torture he endured not long after his refusal to confess. ACA C, Reg. 1780, f. 101-103.
acting. It is reasonable to conclude that Joan’s decision to investigate the host desecration accusation and sentence the accused without the king’s consent reflected an attempt to act autonomously in resistance to Pere’s all-encompassing control.

In addition to exercising independent power as governor general, it is likely Joan also pursued the host desecration accusation of 1367 without his father’s approval to express his disapproval of Pere’s reliance on the Jews. As other scholars have shown, the body came to represent “the metaphor of metaphors” in the High and Late Middle Ages. Concepts of the body could be applied to consider the cohesion and stability of a variety of formations, including kingdoms, government institutions, spiritual and social organizations, as well as the very body of Christ. Perceptions of the kingdom as a body politic incorporated political and spiritual aspects. Consequently, anxiety about Jews, who possessed a special legal and religious status within Aragonese society, often played a central role in considerations about the health of the state. The concern seemed to come from uncertainty about the societal role of Jews, who were designated property of the Crown, yet retained a visible presence in the cities. In addition, they were not Christian, yet served an integral role in Christian identity. For many, these contradictions pointed to ruptures, or at least vulnerabilities, in the borders that structured society. It followed that the king condoned the existence of these ruptures and endangered the Crown of Aragon by relying on the Jews for political power. From this perspective, although the king’s relationship with the


Jews provided him fiscal and administrative benefits, it was at the expense of the Crown of Aragon’s religious and social integrity. Furthermore, by excluding all others forms of power from governance, the king appeared to overstep appropriate political boundaries. Since many nobles and municipal officials believed that a ruler was supposed to act with the guidance of his subjects and an eye to their objectives and aspirations, it may have appeared that neither the king nor “his” Jews had respect for the boundaries that maintained order and balance in the kingdoms. The result of this disregard for boundaries and the political imbalance it caused was the misappropriation of the Eucharist. In this sense, Pere’s consolidation of power and the accusation against the Jews of Barcelona had significant overlap.

The theory that Joan pursued the accusation of host desecration in 1367 due to anxiety over the inappropriate nature of the king’s relationship with the Jews is admittedly less verifiable than the argument that he did so to exercise political power. It is significant, however, that according to Joan’s description of the proceedings, the Jews themselves did not steal the host pieces. Instead, they were accused of buying them from Christian thieves who took them from the sacred, protective space of a church to the Jewish quarter of Barcelona, a complete inversion of their proper location. This detail points to the fact that physical spaces were permeable, allowing Jews and Christians to interact with the sanction of the king, primarily to facilitate economic exchange that benefited the Crown. In this case, the consequence of this unchecked

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30 See Chapter 1 for more information about the philosophical discussions of the time about kingship and boundaries of power.

31 Several scholars have noted the symbolism and significance of inversion. David Biale has demonstrated that Christians tended to express anxiety about and ridicule towards Jews through inversion. Consequently, the placement of the host in the Jewish quarter as opposed to the church offers a stark contrast between the sacred nature of the host and the profane nature of the aljama and its inhabitants. Biale, Blood and Belief: The Circulation of a Symbol between Jews and Christians (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007), 116.
freedom was the displacement and possible desecration of the body of Christ and, by extension, the Christian kingdom.\textsuperscript{32} Although Joan’s letter to the king does not offer clear evidence of his intention to reinforce the boundaries between Jews and Christians by pursuing the accusation of host desecration in 1367, it does suggest that popular anxiety regarding Pere’s dependence on the Jews may have strengthened the prince’s resolve to act outside of the king’s surveillance.

Joan’s prosecution of the Jews accused of host desecration in 1367 offers evidence that the prince used the accusation to take a stand against his father’s efforts to become the ultimate governing authority. Throughout his investigation, Joan kept a council comprised of nobles and municipal officials who advised him. In his letter, he named the members of his council twice, once at the beginning and once towards the end, and he explained that they had all agreed to continue the investigation so that they may “correct the crime in order to find where the hosts are located.”\textsuperscript{33} He ends by stating that he wrote to the king because he wanted the king “to see and know that all was done with deliberation, and that all agree with me in the matter.”\textsuperscript{34} By noting the constant presence and participation of this council, it is possible that the prince intended to demonstrate the cooperative relationship he enjoyed with his advisers. At the very least, it suggests that he was beginning to shape an inclusive approach to governance in opposition to his

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32 Miri Rubin presents other narratives about Jewish misbehavior that appear to demonstrate the dangers that result from the king’s protection and the royal sanction of Jews and Christians sharing of physical spaces. For example, the \textit{Passio judaeorum secundum Johannem rusticus quadratus} details that in 1389 in Prague a Jew threw a stone at a monstrance carried by a priest near the local aljama. This action resulted in Christians attacking and killing the entire community, which had been previously carefully protected and cultivated by King Wenzel. Rubin, \textit{Gentile Tales: The Narrative Assault on Late Medieval Jews} (Philadelphia: The University of Pennsylvania Press, 1999), 135-136.

33 “Es ver, senyor, que jo, ans quells dits crestia e juheus prenessen mort ni justicia alcuna ne fos feta, haut consell de aço fiu prometre e de fet los fera exsequir, de fer los remissio plenaria del crim a persones e bens, e quen dixesen, les hosties on eren o quen havien fet, que hanc james jo asso, senyor, no he pugut saber.” ACA C, Reg. 1780, f. 103.

34 “Veus, senyor, en sustancia tot lo process. Volent vos, senyor, certificar daquell. Suplicant a la vostra senyoria, que si veu o coneix, que als si puxe o si deja fer per mi, que hauda deliberacio plenaria man ami ço que s amerce sera, car jo son apparrallat de complir en totes aquelles maneres, que fer se puxe ne vos manets a mi.” ACA C, Reg. 1780, f. 103.
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father’s exclusive form of kingship, working with the nobles and municipal officials against a
group emblematic of Pere’s authoritarian policies. According to his letter, Joan oversaw an
orderly, collaborative process: he ordered his officials to carry out an investigation; their findings
led the prince to judge the accused guilty; he oversaw the execution; and, as the law dictated, his
council members collected money, which went to the prince’s treasury, paid by the family
members of the accused Jews for the return of property seized during the trials.\textsuperscript{35} The prince
presented a picture of a joint effort that produced a solution to the problems created by the king’s
lack of regulation concerning the Jews. Furthermore, by emphasizing the composition of his
council of nobles and municipal leaders, Joan appeared to advocate a balance of power dispersed
among the different estates, which allowed the different parties involved to influence and
participate in the governance of the kingdom. In this manner, Joan used his investigation to
demonstrate that sharing power produced an effective, efficient outcome, in contrast to Pere’s
practice of exclusion, which upset the body politic.

Although it appears that the prince’s evolving inclusive style of kingship was primarily
influenced by Pere’s authoritarian approach to governance, it is possible that the political
traditions of the realm and contemporary medieval thinkers in the Kingdom of Aragon also
established a precedent. The concept of “pactism” or contractual government, which emphasized
partnership between a king and his subjects, was deeply entrenched in the realm, dating back to
the rapid expansion during the \textit{Reconquista} in the eleventh and twelfth centuries. It was an
established practice for rulers ascending the throne to receive the allegiance of their subjects after
they promised to respect the customs of the land. These customs provided the nobility and

\textsuperscript{35} Records show that Bonadona, Struch Biona’s wife, paid 30,000 sueldos, and Ascaro, Mosse Badroch Gallart’s
wife, first paid 9,000 sueldos. ACA RP, Barcelona, tomo 579, f. 19.
municipalities with some degree of autonomy and a say in the king’s endeavors, and as a result, facilitated a reciprocal form of government and limited royal power.\footnote{Donald Kagay, “Rule and Mis-Rule in Medieval Iberia” in \textit{War, Government, and Society in the Medieval Crown of Aragon} (Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishing Company, 2007), 56-57; Donald Kagay, ed. and trans. \textit{The Usatges of Barcelona: The Fundamental Law of Catalonia} (Philadelphia: The University of Philadelphia Press, 1994), 47.} Throughout the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, rulers took steps to expand royal authority legally and geographically, but the philosophy of pactism remained firmly rooted in the political culture of the kingdom. When members of the nobility rebelled against rulers’ attempts to expand royal power, they nearly always accused the king of disregarding their established customs and privileges to participate in the governance of the realms.\footnote{The nobility made this claim in 1282, 1347, 1372, and 1383. See Bisson, \textit{The Medieval Crown of Aragon}, 88; Pere III, \textit{Chronicle}, 401; Suzanne F. Cawsey, \textit{Kingship and Propaganda: Royal Eloquence and the Crown of Aragon c. 1200-1450} (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2002), 81-83.} We should also consider that the aforementioned Francesc Eiximenis contributed to the continuing idealization of pactism in the fourteenth century in his work \textit{Lo Dotzè}. He argued for a limited monarchy and declared that the king’s subjects had the right to dictate the conditions and extent to which a ruler could exercise royal power.\footnote{Elias de Tejada, \textit{Las doctrinas políticas en la Cataluña medieval} (Barcelona, 1950), 154-158. Hillgarth, \textit{The Spanish Kingdoms}, vol. II, 212.} While it is not clear to what degree Eiximenis’s ideas influenced the prince’s political development, Joan found the Franciscan agreeable enough to offer him an appointment as his confessor in 1384.\footnote{ACA C, Reg. 1748, f. 118-119.} More generally, however, established political traditions and the works of contemporary theorists, like Eiximenis, provided a foundation that supported Joan’s construction of an inclusive kingship during his time as crown prince.

Although it appears that Joan was taking initial steps to share power as a corrective to his father’s exclusivity, aspects of the prince’s letter in 1367 point to his insecurity and uneasiness in
acting without the king’s permission or oversight. The amount of detail the prince provided to his father about his investigation and his lengthy explanations about why he proceeded as he did suggest that Joan hoped to avoid the latter’s criticism. As discussed, King Pere depended on the Jews to expand and consolidate royal power and had made an extraordinary effort to demonstrate his possession and control over them. Joan understood the significance of the Jews to his father’s political program, and he appears to have pursued the host desecration accusation in order to undermine a valuable resource of that program. Joan’s defensive explanations suggest that he was bracing for the king’s disapproval and objections. Beyond the fact that Joan targeted Jews, the prince’s unsanctioned actions were indicative to the king and perhaps others of Pere’s inability to control his own son and heir, and by extension, his subjects. As a result, Joan’s judicial process was certain to elicit a response from the king.

As expected, Pere’s reaction to Joan’s implementation of power through his investigation of the Jews accused in Barcelona was swift and decisive. In November, while the investigation concerning the stolen host pieces was still in progress, Pere wrote to his son commanding him to lock up the Jews of Barcelona “great and small, men and women, without food” for three days in order to find the truth. In addition, after Joan carried out the king’s order to imprison the Jews, Pere dictated a circular letter to his officials that proclaimed that the Jews of Barcelona had been proven innocent, and consequently, the investigation against them was concluded. He reminded recipients of the circular that “all Jews of our dominion with their wives, children, and families with their things and properties are guarded under Our royal protection and have received assurance of such.” He noted that recipients of this correspondence should all be united in this

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40 “per tres dies tots los juheus de Barchinona, grans e pochs, homens e fembres, sens tots vianda e no havem res pogut trobar del dit fet contra ells o alcun dells.” ACA C, Reg. 732, f. 189.
goal and share an “indignation against the effort taken against so many Jews either jointly or separately.”\(^{41}\) Pere’s response to Joan and his other officials points to an attempt to regain the upper hand. By taking control of the investigation and announcing a sentence that contradicted Joan’s decision, Pere reiterated that the king was the ultimate governing authority, and everyone, including his son, was subject to his control.

Considered alongside the prince’s previous known effort to resist the king’s obstruction of his power, Joan’s unauthorized prosecution of the Jews in the 1367 host desecration case sheds light on the development of his governing style. Although the anxiety and insecurity he expressed in his letter to the king suggest his immaturity as a political leader, Joan’s letter and recorded actions indicate that he used the accusation against the Jews as a political tool to resist his father’s high-handed approach to governance. Furthermore, Joan’s depiction of his interaction with his advisers to carry out and conclude a judicial process hints at the possibility that the prince was laying a foundation for an inclusive style of kingship that served as a corrective to Pere’s exclusion of others from power.

The Host Desecration Case of 1377: Osca

Scholars have noted that King Pere’s approach to governance proved detrimental to his relationship with his son in the second half of the fourteenth century, as Joan continued to experience the negative effects of his father’s drive for control.\(^ {42}\) Moreover, as shown above, the visible consequences of Pere’s authoritarian kingship throughout the realms reinforced Joan’s perception that the appropriate role for a ruler was first among equals, not ultimate governing

\(^{41}\) “omnes judeos nostre dominationis cum eorum uxoribus filiis familiis rebus et bonis suis sub nostra proteccione…Ideo vobis et vestrum singulis dicimus et mandamus expressius injungentes sub pene ire et indignacionis nostre incurs quatenus adversus quoscumque judeos occassione premissorum conjunctim vel separatum nullatenus procedatis…”ACA, C, Reg. 1219, f. 62.

\(^{42}\) Bisson, The Medieval Crown of Aragon, 116 and Tasis i Marca, Joan I, 69.
authority. As a result, when Joan learned of another host desecration accusation in 1377, he zealously pursued it in a renewed attempt to undermine his father’s power by wresting control of valued members of his royal apparatus, the Jews of Osca. In contrast to his timidity in 1367, Joan appears to have confidently implemented his full power as governor general against the Jews accused in this second instance.

Records show that in the years after 1367, Pere nominally granted Joan more rein to implement authority as governor general, but ultimately refused to delegate power, with the result that the endeavors in which the prince was allowed to participate turned out to be humiliating failures. In 1368, Charles V of France, an ally of Enrique Trastámara, the newly-crowned king of Castile, deployed Free Companies, troops originally gathered in France for the Hundred Years War, to eradicate any remaining sympathizers of the dethroned, former king, Pedro I. Reflecting a lack of respect for Pere III, Charles did not bother to ask permission for his armies to pass through Pere’s realms. In response, Pere sent his son, at the age of 18, to lead 400 horsemen and 1500 foot soldiers from Osca to Monstó in order to defend the realm against the Free Companies who "burnt, laid waste [to], and damaged" Aragon and Catalonia as they made their way to Castile. Embarrassingly, due to the insolvency of the royal treasury, Joan was unable to pay his troops. The kingdom had been driven into debt because of Pere’s continuous military endeavors and his reluctance to grant privileges and authority to the nobility and municipalities in exchange for revenue. Pere eventually conceded that the Free Companies had been able to enter royal territory due to the treachery of some nobles who had shifted their


44 ACA C, Reg. 1519, f. 115-118.
support to the French Crown in opposition to the King of Aragon’s policies.45 It likely appeared then, as it does now, that Pere’s authoritarian approach to governance was responsible for the military disaster and Joan’s inability to act effectively as commander.

In 1374, Jaume of Mallorca and his sister, the children of the late King Jaume III of Mallorca, invaded Aragon with the goal of retaking territory that had belonged to their father. Joan, then 24 years old, expressed a desire to lead an army to defend the realms, but the king refused and instead ordered the inhabitants of the cities and towns to take cover in fortified locations, essentially leaving his subjects to protect themselves from an estimated 6,000-7,000 armed knights.46 Joan Toralles, a chronicler, recorded the result: “[Jaume of Mallorca and his sister] traveled through all of Catalonia and all of Aragon without any danger, and everyone fled from their path as they caused great damage in the kingdoms.”47 Eventually, Pere permitted Joan to lead an army to fight Jaume and his sister, but his prediction of their direction and maneuvers proved incorrect. This allowed the enemy forces to further terrorize the realms.48 Joan likely recognized that if he had been allowed to intervene earlier, he could have prevented much of the damage inflicted. In his ongoing efforts to maintain direct control over the kingdom and his unwillingness to delegate power, Pere had in fact lost control, resulting in a catastrophe for his subjects. Undoubtedly, this led to a loss of confidence in the king at every level of society.

Despite these military failures, Pere continued to demonstrate that, as king, he stood above all others and would implement policies according to his own interests. In 1377, two years


47 Quoted in Manuel Sánchez Martínez, Pagar al Rey en la Corona de Aragón durante el Siglo XIV (Barcelona: Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas, 2003), 192-193.

after his third wife, Elionor of Sicily, died, Pere married his mistress, Sibil·la de Fortià, the recent widow of Artal de Forces, a member of the lower nobility in Aragon.49 During Elionor’s lifetime, Pere showed great admiration for her, and for good reason: as a Sicilian princess, she possessed royal blood; she had produced two heirs for King Pere; and she played an active political role, often to the advantage of the realms. Perhaps Pere felt that after decades of marrying and undertaking ventures for the sake of royal authority and the kingdom, he could afford to enjoy the pleasures of life. Zita Rohr has argued that, from the perspective of Joan, his younger brother Martí, and other members of the nobility, Pere had debased the Crown by marrying a woman of considerably lower status without royal blood and who brought no political or economic benefit to the crown. As a result, neither Joan nor Martí attended the wedding or acknowledged it in any way.50 Not only did he marry a woman judged unworthy by his court, Pere further affirmed his disregard for traditional authority structures by promoting Sibil·la’s relatives, all lesser nobles, in offices with authority over more established members of the high nobility. For example, Pere appointed Sibil·la’s brother, Bernat de Fortià, as his chamberlain, an extraordinarily powerful position that permitted intimate access to the king.51 Bernat and the other members of Sibil·la’s family proved easy for Pere to control, thus expanding the reach of his royal power at the expense of members of the high nobility.

49 Pere III, Chronicle, vol II, 593.
51 Rohr, “Lessons for My Daughter,” 48-51. In her study of the bureaucratic development of the royal household during the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, Marta VanLandingham explains that during Pere III’s reign, the position of chamberlain came to rival that of the majordomo in importance. VanLandingham, Transforming the State: King, Court and Political Culture in the Realms of Aragon (1213-1387) (Leiden: Brill, 2002), 166.
Pere’s military failures, his marriage to a low-ranking woman, and his political maneuvering contributed to a perception among the nobility and urban leaders that the king’s unrestricted power was unacceptable and unsustainable. In 1372 at the Cortes session in Zaragoza, noble and municipal representatives presented a list of grievances to the king. Similar to those presented to the king during the Unión rebellion in 1347, the grievances in this case described the king’s lack of respect for their status and privileges. The stance at the Cortes meeting suggested clear opposition to Pere’s authoritarian kingship. Pere’s life-long efforts to expand royal power at the expense of all others had created a situation ripe for resistance and rebellion.

Within this environment, despite the king’s vocal opposition, Joan aggressively pursued an accusation of host desecration against Jews from Osca in 1377. It is possible that Joan had learned from Pere’s reaction to his prosecution in 1367 that he could grab the king’s attention by pursuing accusations against Jews. Moreover, he recognized the king’s continued dependence on Jews as a source of revenue and political power. Regardless, in contrast to the timidity present in his letter in 1367, Joan’s missives in 1377 suggest that the prince intended to prosecute the Jews accused as a direct challenge to the king’s power.

Joan’s letter to King Pere at the beginning of December in 1377 described a nearly identical accusation to the one he reported in 1367. A Christian thief by the name of Ramon Rafart had confessed to stealing five pieces of the consecrated host from the altar of a church in

52 Representatives demanded that from then on the General Justicia, a “middling judge” between the king and the nobility, of Aragon would be caballero (a noble) in status, which would prevent the appointment of someone who could be influenced by the king. In addition, they demanded an end to excessive dues and taxes in their home cities, which of course went directly to the king’s treasury. María Teresa Iranzo Muñio, Élites Políticas y Gobierno Urbano en Huesca en la Edad Media (Huesca: Ayuntamiento de Huesca, 2005). For a transcript of the Cortes session, see María Luisa Ledesma Rubia, ed. Cortes de Caspe y Alcañiz y Zaragoza, 1371-1372 (Valencia: Anubar, 1975).
the town of Tardienta, bringing them to the city of Osca. There he alleged, selling them to Haim Andalet, a member of the city’s Jewish community, who intended to desecrate them.

Significantly, Joan included his letter to the king as part of a circular of letters that he sent to all royal officials, municipal leaders, and members of the nobility in the Kingdom of Aragon. After describing the accusation, Joan explained that Haim Andalet had fled the city after confessing to buying the host pieces and should be returned to the prince in Osca to face justice. It seems that Joan did not intend to hide his investigation of the host desecration accusation from his father as he had done before. Instead, the prince demonstrated his political control over the process and reduced the king to equal status with other figures of authority by sending him an impersonal, public letter. He thus inverted and learned from the method Pere had used to undermine Joan’s authority during the investigation in Barcelona in 1367.

It was another week before the prince wrote privately to his father and only then to express his frustration with the established relationship between the king and the Jews and with the king’s interference with the performance of Joan’s authority. On December 7th, he asserted that he and his men had no doubt that the Jews of the city would “rush to You, seeking to disturb and delay the matter, which is in good order…I tell your lordship that those Jews who do not want me to handle the matter entice me further to do justice.” In another letter dated a few weeks later, Joan clarified this sentiment further. He claimed that the Jews were whispering to one another that they would be able to escape the prince’s grasp by paying him off. Joan exclaimed that he would not concede to their bribes. He argued that the king should not

53 ACA C, Reg. 1723, f. 42

54 “Ara, Senyor, dubtem que dels juheus de la dita ciutat Dosca no acorreguen a la vostra senyoria e aço Senyor, er torbar e dilatar lo dit fet…supplich a la vostra gran senyoria que a instancia de alsuns juheus ne daltres quals se vulla persones no vullats tocar en lo dit fet ne en aquell res innovar ans lexets a mi fer justicia de aquell e aço Senyor vos tendre a gran merce.” ACA C, Reg. 1722, f. 189.
challenge or punish him, but should instead allow him to complete his investigation without further interference.  

More confident than he was ten years before, Joan noted that the king’s inappropriate relationship with the Jews had resulted in an associated lack of political and religious restraint. As governor general, he intended to pursue the accusation in order to implement a punishment to the crime, the relationship, and his father’s political program.

Over the next few months, Joan continued his prosecution in Osca in the face of the king’s express opposition. When Pere warned the prince not to repeat the same mistakes he made in 1367 against the Jews accused in Barcelona, Joan replied that “I have proceeded, am proceeding, and will proceed in the present matter in such a way that truth will be found and God will be honored.” Adding to this, Joan explained that he and his council members had already sentenced and executed some of the accused. The prince had directed and overseen the execution by quartering Ramon Rafart, the Christian thief, and burning Jaffuda and Manases Abmabez, a Jewish couple that had been implicated by Haim Andalet prior to his escape. Furthermore, Joan confidently proclaimed that he had arrested three additional Jews- Salomo de Quatorze, Mosse Ambinax, and Abraha Abolbaça- to whom the Abmabez couple had confessed to selling the hosts after purchasing them from Andalet.  

Joan concluded his letter with a threat that “If I do not gain the truth from those Jews presently imprisoned, I will proceed against the whole Jewish community.” When the king encouraged the prince to halt his investigation

55 “…et alguns murmuren que jo e mon dispenser delatavem et prorogavem aquest fet per haverne dinners…Senyor, pusquam del dit get bon compte retre al Creador, lo qual prech devotement que de negligencia o triga no vulla vos, Senyor, ne mi reptar e punir.” ACA C, Reg. 1723, f. 62.

56 “…jo he procehit e procehesch e procehire en lo present fet an tal manera que veritat sera atrobada en aquell e Deus.” ACA C, Reg. 1723, f. 48.

57 “En cas, Senyor, que jo ab aquests juheus que ara tench preses no pusque saber veritat ço es que no pusca trobar les dites osties, lavors Senyor, haura loch procehir contra tota la dita aljama.” For Pere’s letter: ACA C, Reg. 1260, f. 186; For Joan’s reply: ACA C, Reg. 1723, f. 48.
because his advisers did not act under “the color of Justice”\(^{58}\) and because Joan had a tendency to pursue false accusations out of “hate and malevolence,”\(^ {59}\) Joan asserted that, rather than meddle in his investigation, the king should look after his own Christian soul.\(^ {60}\) Joan was clearly confident in his power as governor general and had no intention of allowing the king to interfere. Moreover, the more the king and the Jews protested his prosecution, the more Joan pursued the accusation. Joan wielded his power as governor general like a political weapon in order to retain control of the Jews and by extension, his father. In other words, it seems that Joan sought to acquire power for himself by targeting an important source of power for the king through judicial prosecution.

Adding more weight to his position, Joan adopted a pious tone in his letters to the king. In the same letter of December 28, he asserted that he would continue to search for the five stolen host pieces because “all Christians had an obligation to find them.”\(^ {61}\) And, on February 4, he declared,

> Senyor, I humbly implore you to consider the burden of your soul, remembering the grace that our Lord God has given you, and in doing so, Senyor, do not challenge or punishment me. We should take good care to honor our creator, who encourages devotion…And in good faith, Senyor, consider that the body of God is

\(^{58}\) “…per que no sien exequiats sots color de for justicia trossus quell dit vostra vicivanceller sia en vostra Cort.” ACA C, Reg. 2262, f. 10.

\(^{59}\) “…empero, moltes vegades ese stat vist que per odi et malvolença son estades posades moltes coses greus qui despuyes no eren res.” ACA C, Reg. 1262, f.1.

\(^{60}\) “Pero, Senyor, les dites vostres letres et sepcialment la ultima de sobresehiment contestants aço fer no he pogut, perque he delbierat de consultar vos, Senyor, sobre lo dit fet e sobreseure en aquell…entre que haia vostra resposta. Per ço, Senyor, supplich a vos humilment per descarrech de la vostra anima, have men vostra memoria les assenyalades gracies que nostre Senyor Deu vos ha fetes…E a bona fe senyor, sguardat que lo cors de Deu ese n poder de juheus es peril en la triga; jo, Senyor, enten et crech que jo hagueria trobades les dites osties consegrades si no fossen, Senyor, los alongaments et torps que vos me havets manats ab vostres letres.” ACA C, Reg. 1723, f. 62

\(^{61}\) “…e encara tot fel xrisptia donar loch e traballar.” ACA C, Reg. 1723, f. 48.
still in peril while it remains in the possession of the Jews. Senyor, understand and believe that I will find the said sacred hosts.  

Whether or not Joan actually believed that the Jews accused in Osca in 1377 (or in Barcelona in 1367) actually intended to desecrate pieces of the consecrated host is unclear. Since medieval religious and political concepts and developments cannot be wholly separated and in fact often went hand-in-hand, I suggest that Joan was able both to believe the accusations and utilize them for his own political advantage.

From a Christian perspective, the presence of Jews and Judaism simultaneously demonstrated the veracity of Christianity and posed a perpetual threat to the physical and spiritual well-being of Christians and their identity. For centuries, religious leaders, including popes, the clergy, and theologians, had explained that Jews continued to exist in Christian society to signal the punishment they merited for deicide and their repudiation of Christ, to carry on the books of the Hebrew Bible that contained prophecies of Christ, and to serve as harbingers for the end of days. As a result, ancient and medieval Jews were perceived as theologically identical, an idea that existed alongside of and in connection to the perception that Christ was both a historical figure as well a continuous presence in the world. This view was regularly reinforced by the celebration of the Eucharist, images of the Passion of Christ in churches,

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62 “Per ço, Senyor, supplich a vos humilment per descarrech de la vostra anima, haven en vostra memoria les assenyalades gracies que nostre Senyor Deu vos ha fetes, que la vostra resposta no tardets a fi que vos et jo, Senyor, pusquam del dit fet bon compte retre al Creador, lo qual prech devotement que de negligencia o triga no vulla vos, Senyor, ne mi reptar e punir…E a bona fe Senyor, sguardat que lo cors de Ceu es en poder de juheus es peril en la triga. Jo, Senyor, entem et crech que jo haguera trobades les dites osties consegrades… ACA C, Reg. 1723, f. 62.


64 Abulafia, Christian-Jewish Relations, 1000-1300, 7-8.
processions and plays carried out during Holy Week, miracle stories, and sermons from mendicant preachers. These traditions created a popular Christian perception that medieval Jews were secretly inclined to harm Christians and to re-create their role in the crucifixion of Christ. 65

Miri Rubin has demonstrated that beginning in the twelfth century scholarly thought, rituals of devotion, public processions, and stories about miracles reflected a shift in focus onto the physical body of Christ and the idea that one could encounter and interact with the divine through the Eucharist. By the end of the thirteenth century, Eucharistic devotion had emerged in the Crown of Aragon. 66 The first formal feast of Corpus Christi first took place in Barcelona sometime between 1319 and 1322 and then spread to other cities in Catalonia, Aragon, and Valencia. 67 As the emphasis on the Eucharist spread throughout Europe and the Crown of Aragon, Christians began to consider Eucharistic dignity and potential dangers to it, including those dangers posed by the Jews. This produced a new narrative revolving around the evil intentions of Jews towards Christ and Christendom that portrayed Jews as seeking to test and abuse the consecrated host. 68 In 1327 in the city of Valencia, Christians threw stones at Jewish burial parties and defiled the Jewish cemetery in response to an accusation that local Jews had desecrated the host. 69 Over the course of the next few decades, stories of Jewish host desecration, or at least their contempt for the Eucharist, became common tropes in the Crown of Aragon. 70

65 Rubin, Gentile Tales, 1-7 and Nirenberg, Communities of Violence, 214-221.
68 Rubin, Gentile Tales, 28-29.
70 Meyerson, Jews in an Iberian Frontier Kingdom, 90-92.
The popular expectation that the Jews would try to harm the body of Christ provided legitimacy to their prosecution by the prince and to his political motives in pursuing the accusation of host desecration. More significantly, as demonstrated by Joan’s curt directive to the king to consider the condition of his soul rather than meddle in the investigation, the prince recognized that pious rhetoric and reasoning enabled him to criticize and establish power over the king. Within the religious context of the fourteenth-century Crown of Aragon, Joan’s prosecution of host desecration accusations put the king in an uncomfortable political and religious position. If the king completely forbade the prince from continuing his professed search for the consecrated hosts, he would have appeared more concerned with political power than with the well-being of Christ and Christendom.

In addition to his piety, Joan also depicted himself as a ruler legitimated by an inclusive style of leadership. Whereas Joan’s letter in 1367 suggested that the prince was only beginning to shape an ideal of leadership based on the delegation and sharing of power, in 1377 he used the judicial process and his letters about it to portray himself unapologetically as the head of a group unified in their efforts to find the truth. For example, on February 4th, Joan listed the names of the advisers on his council, which, like his council in 1367, was comprised of both municipal leaders as well as nobles. He explained that “it pleased God that, during the last 60 days, it was the duty of my council to recover all justifiable information, and it was reported to me that the body of our savior Jesus Christ was and remains in the possession of the Jews.”

Similar to his

71 “…jo nom demostra massa sabent ni satrevit, maiorment envers les cases que toquen vostre manaments, no son tampoch sabent nit ant grossor or tant poch entes que si aucun de mon consell ere tant fol ho havia tant de atreviment quem gosas dir o consellar res que no faes a fer, que jo no li dixes que calles, les quals cases en lo dit consell meu deduides, en lo qual si a Deu plahia es verseblan que tot fet justiciable per gran que fos se degues be determenar, fo axi acordat per mi present lo dit Infant, que jatsie LX. Jorns et mes sien passats que aquest fet fos stat denunciate a mi e lo cors del Salvador nostre Jhesu-xrispt fos e romans encara en poder dels dits juheus. ACA C, Reg. 1723, f. 62.”
approach in 1367, Joan delegated power in 1377 to carry out a seemingly organized, efficient investigation that resulted in a judgment that the Jews were guilty of purchasing consecrated host pieces with the intention of desecrating them. On January 6, in response to his father’s accusation that his advisers were more interested in destroying the Jewish community than achieving justice, Joan declared that “my solemn council intends to carry out justice in this matter and also in the much higher sense concerning all types of injustice and partiality.” Joan appears to be suggesting that his collective effort served the interests of the entire kingdom, unlike the king, whose exclusive approach to governance only benefited himself and endangered his subjects.

Toward the mutually compatible goals of delegating authority away from the king and reducing the reciprocal reliance between the Jews and the king, Joan seems to have used his judicial process in 1377 as a political apparatus to shift power over the Jews from the king to his noble and urban advisers. Although Joan oversaw the judicial process, it was his advisers who interacted with the accused and determined whether information was significant and true. From the prince’s descriptions of these interactions, it is possible that the prince believed that, while the Jews should remain the property of the Crown, members of the nobility and urban officials should act as middle men in this relationship and participate in the act of governance. This shift in power is better reflected in the letter that Jewish leaders from Osca sent to the king. The letter explains that although Jewish leaders had encouraged Joan’s advisers to send all transcripts from the investigation to the king as he had commanded, the advisers had refused. Clearly, the

72 “…per falsa e sinistra informacio o per importunitat de alcun no romanga impunit…e jo havem tal e tant solemne consell aci que parria fos bastant a fer justicia no solament en lo dit fet, mas en molt major sens tot scrupol de injustice e parcialitat. ACA C, Reg. 1723, f. 51.

Jewish leaders primarily interacted with the prince’s advisers rather than the prince himself. This may have also been the case during the prince’s investigation in 1367, but the volume of letters produced in the 1377 investigation provides more clarity. It also appears that Joan’s advisers were intent on maintaining control of the investigation, and thus the Jews. Their refusal to send records to the king was likely intended to prevent the king from interfering in the investigation and retaking control of the situation. It seems that their inclusion in the host desecration investigation enabled the nobles and officials who served as Joan’s advisers to participate in the on-going debate over who should have power in the Crown of Aragon and to what extent.

Taking place over a period of six months, the investigation of the host desecration accusation in Osca only came to an end in May in 1378 when Joan fell ill. The letters exchanged during the investigation point to Joan’s development as a leader and his growing confidence that a good ruler shared power and included others in the act of governance. Similar to his approach to the accusation in 1367, Joan appears to have exploited the accusation of host desecration in Osca in 1377 as an opportunity to assert his rightful authority as governor general, which had long been curtailed by Pere’s unwillingness to share power. He thus used his control over the Jews on trial as leverage against the king. Through his actions described in the letters to the king, Joan declared that a ruler and his subjects should share power, and that, as sources of revenue and power, the Jews should be the responsibility of the nobility and municipal leaders, not just of the king. From his perspective, this approach would create the ideal balance of power.

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74 Joaquim Miret i Sans, “El procés de les hòsties contra els Jueus d’Osca de 1377,” Anuari d’institut d’Estudis Catalans 4 (December 1911), 78.
The Aura of a King

Joan’s actions and reactions during the host desecration case of 1377 marked a confident resolve that he would carry throughout the rest of Pere’s reign. The letters concerning the case indicate that the prince had succeeded in shaping a sense of self that was independent from the king’s authoritarian policies. Indeed, they offer a glimpse of Joan as a future king, standing outside of the shadow of his father’s imposing presence. His self-presentation as a suitable leader in contrast to his father was likely reinforced in subsequent years as Pere increasingly lost control over the different groups and individuals he had previously repressed in his efforts to consolidate and expand royal power.

Joan’s second marriage offered him an opportunity to demonstrate political autonomy. His first two relationships were designed to support his father’s consolidation of power. In 1370, Joan was betrothed to Joana of Valois, the daughter of the late Philippe VI of France (r.1328-1350), who embodied an alliance between France and Aragon against Castile. Unfortunately, Joana died in Béziers on her way to the wedding. In 1373, Pere arranged a marriage between Joan and Mata d’Armagnac, the daughter of a powerful Occitan lord and vassal of the King of France, a union that also guaranteed good insurance against Castilian attack. After Mata’s death in 1378, Joan married, against the wishes of his father, Yolande de Bar, the niece of Charles V of France. Although this act of independence resulted in tension

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75 This was not unusual. Joan’s brother, Martí, married María de Luna, who was the heiress to the County of Luna and a relative of Pope Benedict XIII (formerly Pedro Luna). Her marriage to Martí secured the county of Luna for the Crown. Ruiz, Spain’s Centuries of Crisis, 76 and Pere III, Chronicle, vol. II, 589.

76 Bisson, The Medieval Crown of Aragon, 121.


78 Although Yolande was not Pere’s first choice, as the niece of Charles V of France, she did offer some connections for the Crown of Aragon. Bisson, The Medieval Crown of Aragon, 111; Dawn Bratsch-Prince, “Pawn or Player?:
between the king and the heir apparent, shortly before the wedding in 1380, Pere sent the prince a letter that good-heartedly teased Joan for his obstinacy. \(^79\) Pere’s concession in the matter appeared to reflect his recognition and, to some degree, acceptance of Joan’s political and personal distancing.

Joan married Yolande around a time when Pere was steadily losing control over the nobility and municipalities. Between 1378 and 1387, Pere continued to spend freely. In 1381, the major banks in Barcelona, Girona, and Perpignan went bankrupt. In the process of resolving the issue, it became public knowledge that Pere owed the banks over 290,000 libri. To pay it off, Pere was forced to sell or mortgage parts of the royal patrimony, including one frontier region in the Pyrenees that served as a buffer between France and Aragon. \(^80\) Although this situation chipped away at Pere’s efforts to become the ultimate governing authority in the kingdom, he continued to implement policies that established royal power over the nobility and municipalities. For example, he attempted to weaken urban oligarchies by admitting lesser merchants and artisans into municipal systems of governance throughout the realms. \(^81\) Pere appeared to recognize that in order to keep the cities and nobility under his thumb, he needed to put those in charge who were beholden to royal power.

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\(^79\) On November 13\(^{th}\) of 1379, Pere wrote “Molt car primogènit: Vostra lletra havem reebuda e oïda la creença que ens ha vui portada Ramon de Planella, vostre armer. E si hagués plagut a vós lo matrimony de nostra néta de Sicília, nós ne förem molt pus pagat, lo qual pogra ésser vengut a acabament sit ant hi haguéssets treballat com en aquest.” ACA C 133, f. 64. The letter has been transcribed by Antonio Bofarull y Brocá, *Historia crítica de Cataluña*, vol. IV (Barcelona: Juan Aleu y Fugarull, 1876-1878), 592-593.

\(^80\) ACA C, Reg. 1520, f. 75-80. This situation is also described in Martinez, “The Invocation of Princeps Namque in 1368,” 322.

\(^81\) Baer, *A History of the Jews in Christian Spain*, vol. II, 42. Bisson argues that this was this was symptomatic of Pere's loss of authority. He was attempting to make up for the dissipation of the royal patrimony and the increasing authority of the nobility and Corts. Bisson, *The Medieval Crown of Aragon*, 118.
In reaction to these developments and the king’s previous financial, personal, and political indiscretions, in 1383 the Corts summoned Pere and again presented him with a list of grievances concerning his neglect of justice and “evil counsellors,” who had facilitated his authoritarian kingship. Refusing to yield to anyone he considered to be his political inferior, Pere declared that he was willing to hear the complaints of the Corts representatives, but he would not tolerate a rebellion like that displayed in 1347 by the Unión.82 On a municipal level, officials in the city of Valencia responded to the king’s request for financial support by bluntly stating that “It is nothing other than to turn each of his cities into a Jewry…we will not give into such a request for we would rather die than be like Jews.”83 Such a statement indicates a growing awareness and rejection of the connection between the king’s political program and his relationship with the Jews. Just as it had for the prince, this relationship made Jews targets for members of the nobility seeking the opportunity to regain power at the expense of the king. In 1383, the king’s nephew, the count of Urgell initiated an investigation of another host desecration accusation. The king’s letters to the count reveal that the accusation followed the same narrative as the 1367 and 1377 accusations: a Christian thief stole pieces of the consecrated host and sold them to Jews.84 This accusation and the subsequent judicial process will be further discussed in Chapter Six, but for now it suffices to say that the count appeared to appreciate the

82 Cawsey, Kingship and Propaganda, 81-83.

83 Quoted in Nirenberg, Communities of Violence, 173. The city of Osca also attempted to avoid financially supporting the king by claiming a higher, tax-exempt status. Ciudadanos pointed to the fueros of 1208 in which Pere I legally recognized all inhabitants to be free men rather than villanos. The ciudadanos argued that this meant that they were infanzones hermunionos and thus not required to pay certain taxes and not subject to seizures made by Pere’s royal officials. AMHu, Concejo Pergaminos, numeró 78, leg. 43, n. 2553.

84 ACA C, Reg. 1281, f. 122.
prince’s strategy to undermine the king’s political program by prosecuting accusations against the Jews.

While the active resistance of the nobility further eroded Pere’s precarious control over his subjects, it provided Joan with an opportunity to present himself as a superior leader. Furthermore, his role in mediating this conflict points to the increasingly positive relationship between the nobility and the prince. In 1381, the count of Empúries complained that the king was forcing him to defer to men who were his natural vassals by promoting Sibil·la’s relatives. Consequently, he called upon Gascon and Provençal barons, as well as Prince Joan, to take up arms against the king. The count’s appeal to Joan suggests that it was common knowledge that the prince opposed his father’s policies. However, rather than choosing open rebellion, the situation allowed Joan to demonstrate his diplomacy. The prince refused to back either the count or the king and successfully negotiated a truce between the two men.\(^85\) It is possible that the count agreed to back down due to his approval of future king Joan’s leadership style, which recognized the count’s authority. Regardless, Joan’s ability to navigate the situation successfully reflected well on him and poorly on his father, whose unyielding desire to consolidate power at any expense was the root cause of the dispute.

In addition to his accord with the nobility, Joan’s role in another dispute between the municipalities and the king in 1383 demonstrates his budding rapport with the cities. At a Corts session, representatives from Barcelona and other prominent cities called for the dismissal and prosecution of the king’s counselors, whom they accused of disclosing state information to the kingdom’s enemies, including Pedro I of Castile, rebels in Sardinia, the barons of Sicily, the Genoese, and the Duke of Anjou. In addition, the representatives accused the counselors of

\(^85\) Tasis i Marca, *Joan I*, 110 and Martínez, *Pagar al rey en la Corona de Aragón durante el Siglo XIV*, 467.
giving away much of the king’s patrimony, including castles, towns, and other holdings, to further their personal interests. It is not clear whether the king’s officials, many of whom were members of the lower nobility and thus out of place in the traditional structure of power in the royal court, were actually guilty. It seems likely that the accusation against them was motivated in part by cities’ attempt to recapture power that Pere had consolidated as king. Pere tried to shift discontent and suspicion away from himself and onto the prince by encouraging representatives to examine Joan’s officials instead.\(^8^6\) Joan, however, obtained intercession for his own officials from the representatives, while many of the king’s officials were found guilty and punished.\(^8^7\) These outcomes suggest that Joan and Pere had developed different relationships with the municipalities. Whereas Pere had suppressed the influence of city officials, Joan demonstrated willingness to respect urban autonomy by including municipal officials in his investigations and, in at least one case, giving them responsibility for the Jews.

**Conclusion**

The royal letters exchanged during the host desecration trials in Barcelona (1367) and Osca (1377) shed light on the development of Prince Joan’s philosophy of kingship in opposition to his father’s self-image as the ultimate governing authority. Within the context of Pere III’s attempts to repress all other political voices, including that of the prince, the exchange between father and son regarding the trials demonstrate Joan’s initial steps toward an inclusive kingship and later reveal how his determination to share power matured over time. Joan understood that his father intended to maintain complete oversight over the Jews of his realms because they

\(^8^6\) Joan’s defense of his Jewish treasurer Bartomeu Llunes, is particularly interesting. Joan claimed that Llunes should not be dismissed or prosecuted because he made money for the Crown: “se clama de ses extorsions e males obres que fa per haver-vos diners, e aitals diners no són bons ne fan fruit.” Quoted in Tasis i Marca, *Joan I*, 108-109 and Rohr, “Lessons for My Daughter,” 57.

\(^8^7\) Tasis i Marca, *Joan I*, 109.
represented an important source of power that enabled him to rearrange the traditional hierarchy of the ruling elite and consolidate royal power. Consequently, the prince exploited accusations against the Jews to advance an alternative style of kingship that served as a corrective to Pere’s authoritarian approach to governance. Supported by anti-Jewish views and ideas, Joan used judicial processes to exercise his rightful authority as governor general, resist the king’s political program, and shape an image of himself as first among equals. From this perspective, Joan’s leadership in the host desecration investigations reflects an intersection of religious and political ideals and objectives. Taken together, the royal letters suggest that Joan’s experiences as crown prince enabled him to shape a philosophy of inclusive kingship prior to ascending the throne in 1387. This insight into his development provides an important framework for understanding Joan’s efforts to decentralize power and weaken the relationship between the Jews and the Crown during his own reign.
CHAPTER 4
JOAN I: FIRST AMONG EQUALS

Introduction

In June of 1391, Christians in Seville, encouraged by the inflammatory anti-Jewish sermons of the Archdeacon Ferrand Martínez, carried out a violent attack against the Jews of the city. Soon after, officials in Córdoba and Toledo recorded similar attacks. As the riots spread from one Castilian city to the next, resulting in the deaths and forced conversions of thousands of Jews, it became apparent that these attacks were not singular events but part of a dangerous phenomenon that would soon reach the neighboring Crown of Aragon.¹ In July, a group of fifty boys gathered outside the gates of the Jewish community in the city of Valencia and, holding up pennants decorated with white crosses, they announced that Archdeacon Martínez was coming and that the Jews would have to choose between conversion and death. Soon a large mob formed and managed to force its way into the walled aljama. According to witnesses of the event, the baptismal fonts miraculously refilled themselves with anointing oil in order to accommodate the huge number of Valencian Jews who converted. These same witnesses failed to mention the hundreds of Jews who died at the hands of the mob.²

When King Joan I of Aragon (r.1387-1396) learned about the attack, he berated his brother and governor general, Prince Martí, for failing to protect the Jews, stating “Had you acted with the strictness and severity called for by the nature of the crime…especially when so abominable a crime was committed in front of you who represent Our person…you would have

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¹ For more details about the spread of the riots in Castile and Aragon and the documents that describe it, see Benjamin Gampel, Anti-Jewish Riots in the Crown of Aragon and the Royal Response, 1391-1392 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016).

² AMV, Lletres misives, g3-5, f.19-20.
put to the sword or hanged 300 or 400 men during these riots against the Jews.”

Recognizing the likelihood that the attacks would spread as they had done in Castile, King Joan wrote to municipal officials throughout the Crown of Aragon emphasizing the need to protect the Jews. He directed officials to form local militias and post guards near the local Jewish communities in order to defend inhabitants if riots took place. As the king predicted, between July and October of 1391, riots erupted in cities and towns across the Aragonese realms. Municipal officials in Barcelona, Lleida, Mallorca, and many other urban centers wrote to the king, beseeching him to come to their city and impose his royal authority in order to stop the attacks. In contrast to the intense concern Joan initially expressed to municipal officials about the safety of the Jews, his response to their requests for aid was less zealous. He simply thanked them for their efforts and encouraged them to contain the unrest. Joan refused to leave Zaragoza until the end of October, when the riots had ceased.

In addition to his inconsistent concern for the Jews, Joan also curiously focused much of his attention on embellishing his royal court as the riots of 1391 raged on. In August, at the same time that municipal officials across the realms were desperate for the king’s assistance, Joan wrote to King Carlos III of Navarre offering to exchange his camel named “Almogeri” for Carlos’s Breton greyhound and its pup. Joan intended to add the greyhounds to his menagerie of animals that he kept in his royal court for entertainment purposes. Throughout his reign, Joan surrounded himself with more nobles, knights, renowned artists, intellectuals, and officials than

4 ACA C, Reg. 1878, f. 86.
5 For Joan’s response to municipal officials in Barcelona, see ACA, C, Reg. 1961, f. 50v-51v. For his response to officials in Lleida, see ACA C, Reg. 1961, 77. For Joan’s response to officials in Mallorca, see ACA C, Reg. 1878, f. 136.
any of his predecessors ever had. He sent his minstrels to Germany and Flanders for training so
that he could claim that his court was home to some of the best musicians in Europe. The
medieval Catalan chronicler, Pere Tomich, declared that Joan and his queen, Yolande, had the
greatest household of any Europeans rulers in the fourteenth century.\(^7\)

The king’s actions during the riots of 1391 appear completely contradictory. On the one
hand, the possibility of attacks in the realms motivated Joan to convey great anxiety about the
fate of the Jews; on the other hand, he appears to have ignored them when the attacks actually
took place. Moreover, Joan not only failed to protect the Jews, but he also rejected the desperate
pleas of Christian municipal officials, choosing instead to focus on further enriching his already
opulent royal court. Existing scholarship has suggested that the contradictions in Joan’s actions
were the result of his distaste for ruling and his indifference to the needs of his subjects and the
politics of his kingdoms.\(^8\) The simple conclusion that Joan was an apathetic ruler, however,
serves to suppress analysis of the king’s leadership style. It also overlooks the possibility that he
implemented a different approach to governance than previous rulers.\(^9\) These discrepancies, and

\(^7\) Pere Tomich, Històries e conquistes dels excellentissims e cathòlics rehys d’Aragó e de lurs anteçessors, los
countes de Barçelona (Barcelona: Estampa la Renaixença, 1886), chap. XLV: 224. Tomich wrote his account in
1438.

\(^8\) Zita Eva Rohr, Yolande of Aragon (1381-1442), Family and Power: The Reverse of the Tapestry (New York:
Palgrave MacMillan, 2016), 34-35; Michael A. Ryan, A Kingdom of Stargazers: Astrology and Authority in the Late
Medieval Crown of Aragon (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2011), 7, 106; Nuria Silleras-Fernandez, Chariots of
Ladies: Francesc Eiximenis and the Court Culture of Medieval and Early Modern Iberia (Ithaca: Cornell University
Press, 2015), 34, 38; Donald Kagay, “Poetry in the Dock: The Court Culture of Joan I on Trial (1396-1398)” in War,
Government, and Society in the Medieval Crown of Aragon (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2007), 50; Benjamin R.
Gampel, “‘Unless the Lord Watches Over the City…’: Joan of Aragon and His Jews, June-October 1391” in New

\(^9\) I am building on David Nirenberg’s argument that dismissing an action as “irrational” serves to suppress analysis.
This causes “the interpretive landscape become monotonously flat.” While Nirenberg uses this explanation to
discuss the reasons for analyzing violence against minorities, I suggest that it may also be applied to royal
approaches to governance. If we dismiss apparent contradictions in royal behavior as evidence of indifference, then
there is no reason to study the context in which these contradictions occurred or the circumstances that may have
similar situations throughout his reign, compel a deeper analysis of the connection between the king’s political objectives and his changing relationship with the Jews and his Christian subjects.

I suggest that King Joan implemented a hands-off approach to governance. He decentralized royal power by delegating responsibility for the administration of his realms, including responsibility over Jews and Muslims, to nobles and municipal officials throughout the Crown of Aragon. He expected that sharing power would satisfy the political ambitions of the nobility and urban centers and, in turn, support his authority. This decentralization was particularly marked in the case of the Jews who traditionally were uniquely subject to the authority of the king’s office. Moreover, the delegation of power also allowed Joan to focus on constructing an ostentatious court to legitimize his reign and project an image of strength and sophistication to other rulers in Europe. From this perspective, Joan made himself into a figurehead of sorts. However, he assumed this role not because he was a reluctant ruler or did not care about his subjects. Rather, his policies resulted from the belief that doing so would create internal political stability while simultaneously increasing the international status of the Crown of Aragon.

The Decentralization of Royal Power

After ascending the throne in 1387, King Joan consciously instituted measures that reversed his father’s authoritarian decrees and shifted the center of power away from the king and his officials. As mentioned above, because it appears that Joan capitulated to the whims and desires of the nobility and municipal leaders, scholars have often labeled him “soft as a reed”

and, in one case, a “featherheaded escapist.” However, if we consider Joan’s efforts to decentralize royal power as an extension of the inclusive leadership style that he shaped and assumed as crown prince, it becomes clear that he intentionally offered the political elite of his realms control over certain aspects of administration. He believed that this approach would satisfy their desire to exercise more power over and against the Crown. From this perspective, King Joan was a savvy and deliberate ruler and recognized that it was possible to gain the trust of his subjects by providing them with enough say in governance to make them believe that the kingdom had achieved an ideal balance of power.

As I discussed in Chapter One, when Pere III ascended the throne in 1336, one of the ways in which he implemented his plan to consolidate royal power was by encroaching on the authority and autonomy of municipalities and the nobility. Whereas municipal officials had enjoyed the near-exclusive privilege of enacting ordinances and bans in their cities under Pere’s predecessors, Jaume II (r.1291-1327) and Alfons III (r.1327-1336), under Pere this privilege slowly disappeared. Between 1350 and 1359, counselors in Barcelona only issued about half of the ordinances put in place, and the other half was instituted by royal officials such as the mostassaf and bailiff. Between 1360 and 1387, ordinances issued by counselors were replaced by those issued by royal officials. Similarly, Pere attempted to exclude the nobility from governance by promoting members of the lesser nobility, many of whom were related to his

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11 Counselors were municipal leaders in Catalonia elected by elite citizens of the city. The mostassaf was a royal official responsible for policing weights and currencies within the marketplace. The bailiff exercised civil and criminal jurisdiction in the name of the king in urban areas. See Jordi Bolòs, *Diccionari de la Catalunya Medieval* (ss. VI-XV) (Barcelona: El Cangur, 2000).

12 AHCB, Ordinacions originals. IB.XXVI-1, f. 21.
fourth queen Sibil·la, in positions within his household and throughout the realms in place of or above members of the high nobility. In urban centers like Osca, where members of the nobility and wealthy merchants had established a monopoly over local political offices in the early fourteenth century, Pere reduced the number of municipal offices across the board in order to undermine the power of this traditional urban oligarchy.

In contrast to his father, King Joan boosted the authority of the non-royal elite throughout his realms. Joan restored property that his father had confiscated from the high nobility and provided them with additional titles. He also enhanced the power of municipal officials by minimizing the interference of royal officials in urban governance. Beginning in 1388, counselors in Barcelona began to issue ordinances again, indicating a restoration of their power. That same year Joan informed Martí, his brother and Governor General, that he had forbidden royal officials from intervening in the administration of judicial penalties and fines in Osca. It appears that Joan was determined to portray himself as a benevolent ruler in order to gain the loyalty and aid of the elite, who by their own perception had been undervalued by King Pere. In fact, although Joan was crowned king and received homage from his subjects, his


14 For example, in 1383, he reduced the number of jurados from ten to five. ACA C, reg. 942, f.114.

15 For example, when the count of Empúries heard about Pere’s death, he requested that Joan restore property to him that he had lost as a result of his previous rebellion. Recognizing an opportunity to gain the goodwill and support of a powerful noble, Joan immediately surrendered the confiscated castles and towns that had originally belonged to the count. In addition, in 1390 Joan bestowed the title of viscount of Vilanova and Chelva on Pere de Vilanova, whose lineage the Aragonese chronicler, Jerónimo Zurita, describes as dating back to the Reconquista and whose mother was related to the royal family. Jeronimo Zurita y Castro, Anales de la Corona de Aragon, ed. Angel Canellas Lopez, vol. IX (Zaragoza: Institución “Fernando el Católico”, 1978), 721 and 740-741.

16 AHCB, Ordinacions originals. IB.XXVI-1, f. 21.

17 AMHu, leg. 55, n. 3998.
actions suggest that he retained the attitude of a crowned prince. This was not necessarily because he lacked the will or ability to rule with the same strength and power that his father did, but because as crown prince, he was naturally first among equals. It is possible that he recognized that this role encouraged even the most proud, unbending subject to cooperate with him because doing so did not require unquestioned obedience.

Pere III had also effected a complete royal monopoly of authority over local Jews and Muslims during his reign. For example, in 1340 and again in 1358, Pere commanded municipal officials in the city of Osca to respect the rights of Jewish leaders to collect taxes from the members of their *aljama* which would be funneled directly into the king’s hands. Gaining exclusive control over the Muslims and particularly the Jews demonstrated King Pere’s uniqueness and superiority as ruler. In addition, the revenue that he collected provided financial support for his military endeavors and thereby the advancement and defense of his status as the ultimate governing authority.

As demonstrated by his leadership in the 1367 and 1377 host desecration cases, Joan, as crown prince, was aware that control of the Jews offered power. He understood that the close affiliation between the Jews and King Pere, a relationship that both parties had preferred and contributed to for different reasons, had encouraged an imbalance of power in the realms. As king, Joan sought to correct this imbalance by returning control over the Jews and Muslims to the nobility and municipal officials residing in royal cities. For example, in 1393, instead of placing the Oscan Muslim community under the protection of his royal officials, Joan gave that

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18 A. Blasco, "Los Judíos de Aragón y Los Juegos de Azar" in *Aragón en la Edad Media*, vol. XIV (Zaragoza: Universidad de Zaragoza, 1999), 97-98, n. 33 and 36.

19 For more information about the Jews as symbols of power and the relationship between Pere III and the Jews in royal territory, see Chapters 1 and 2.
responsibility to two nobles, Bernat Galcerán de Pinos and his son Pedro de Castro.\textsuperscript{20} Similarly, he placed the Jews of Osca under the protection of Miguel de Gurrea, a local noble active in city politics.\textsuperscript{21} Along with this redistribution of power, Joan also implemented policies that integrated the Jewish communities more fully within their resident cities. For example, in 1387, when Joan learned that Muslims continued to involve themselves in factional fighting between noble gangs in the city of Osca, he delegated authority to punish them to municipal officials.\textsuperscript{22} For the past two centuries, the local bailiff, a royal official, had retained the jurisdiction to investigate and judge crimes and civil issues between Jews, Muslims, and Christians. Now municipal officials controlled interfaith judicial processes in the same way in which that they oversaw the judicial processes of Christian residents.\textsuperscript{23} Although Jews and Muslims in royal territory continued to hold a special legal status as the property of the Crown, and Joan continued to collect revenue from them as king, he attempted to distance himself from the Jews by allowing municipal officials and members of the nobility to assume political and judicial power over them.\textsuperscript{24} Within

\textsuperscript{20} AMHu, leg. 18, n. 1918.

\textsuperscript{21} ACA C, Reg. 2045, f. 130 and AMHu, leg. 55, n.3998.

\textsuperscript{22} The document is transcribed in Maria B. Basáñez Villaluenga, ed. \textit{La aljama sarracena de Huesca en el siglo XIV} (Barcelona: Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas, 1989), n. 69.

\textsuperscript{23} In 1202, Pere I ordered that crimes committed by Jews or Muslims that involved Christians fell under the jurisdiction of the bailiff. ACA C, Reg. 903, f. 203-205. There were some deviations to the continuous authority of the bailiff over the Jews. In fact, both Jaume II (r.1291-1327) and Alfons III (r.1327-1336) allowed municipal officials to oversee Jewish cases within specific parameters (cases in which the Jewish or Muslim defendant faced corporal punishment). Jaume II and Alfons granted municipal officials this power in order to gain the support of urban centers against the nobility. Joan was thus not the first ruler to extend power to municipal officials vis-à-vis the Jews. Jaume and Alfons, however, were quick to chastise and correct municipal officials when they attempted to overstep the boundaries of their sanctioned authority over the Jews. Joan appears to have permitted municipal officials comprehensive control over the Jews with the exception of their revenue and their legal status, which continued to label them as property of the Crown. See Chapter 6 for more information about the exception to the bailiff’s historical authority over the Jews.

\textsuperscript{24} Another example of King Joan’s attempt to distance the Crown from the Jewish communities of the realms took place in 1390 when Joan authorized leaders of the Jewish community to try informers in accordance with the civil, canonical, or Jewish law. While Pere III had actually permitted this during his own reign in 1354, Joan took his ordinance a step further and added that royal officials were not permitted to appeal sentences against informers, but he said nothing about municipal leaders. This difference about non-Jewish interference reflects the divergent
this context, it is significant that in 1392 in Osca, Joan ordered local Muslims to precede Jews in processions, funerals, and other public events. This order further evidenced his intention to disassociate the Crown from the Jews. King Joan’s approach to the Jews and to the nobility and city leaders was a performance of power, but the antithesis of his father’s performance. Whereas Pere III sought to consolidate and expand royal power by appropriating it from others and demonstrating his claim to and sole authority over the Jews, King Joan shared power, including control over the Jews. From this angle, Joan’s policies do not appear to reflect a disinterest in governance, but rather a rejection of his father’s authoritarian kingship in exchange for an inclusive one that allowed others to participate in the governance of the Crown of Aragon.

Joan’s decentralization of royal power, however, was not only intended to benefit his noble subjects, but also to legitimize his rule. Both Pere III and Joan I sought a means to prevent anyone from questioning their authority, but whereas Pere attempted to do so by accumulating political power, Joan tried to acquire the favor of his elite subjects by sharing power. At least initially, it appears that Joan’s approach to governance was successful. This is particularly clear when we examine the fate of those who served as Joan’s advisers during the 1367 and 1377 host desecration investigations and their interactions with Joan after he ascended the throne. As previously discussed, Joan was aided by a council comprised of municipal officials and nobles during the 1367 and 1377 investigations. Jacme de Vallsecha was a municipal official who participated in the first investigation. It seems that he and his family members retained and

political philosophies of Kings Pere and Joan. Whereas Pere allowed royal officials to prosecute some Jewish and Muslim crimes (if they concerned Christians), he attempted to exclude all municipal interference. Joan, on the other hand, forbade royal officials from interfering and extended power to municipal officials. For more information about Pere III’s kingdom-wide policies that excluded municipal officials from interfering with Jewish matters, see Chapter 1. For information about his policies regarding the Jews in specific urban centers, see Chapters 4, 5, and 6. Thomas Bisson, The Medieval Crown of Aragon: A Short History (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986), 126.

25 ACA C, Reg. 1890, f. 53.
increased their political leadership in the city’s government during Joan’s reign, since they are listed in the election records on eight subsequent occasions. Under Joan’s reign, figures like Jacme de Vallsecha gained more control over the governance of the city, enabling them to enact ordinances that benefited them politically and financially. Likely in response, in 1393, Barcelona municipal officials offered Joan a larger financial donation than any other royal city towards his expedition to put down a rebellion in Sardinia. Tasis i Marca argues that this exchange in 1393 reflected “the highest point of emotional warmth and understanding between the sovereign and the city.”

A similar transaction of support occurred with the members of Joan’s council during the host desecration trial in 1377. When he became king, Joan appointed Lop de Gorrea to serve as his majordomo. Another noble advisor, Bernat Galcerán de Pinos, received authority over the Muslims of Osca in 1393. When Joan took the throne, he needed to retain control of his father’s widow, Sibil·la, and her household to make sure that they did not try to create alliances with the Crown’s enemies or try to carry off riches that belonged to the Crown’s treasury.

Bernat Galcerán de Pinos provided his service to the king in this effort by accompanying Martí, Joan’s brother and governor general, to arrest Sibil·la when she tried to flee to France in the wake of Pere III’s death. Finally, Bernat Galcerán de Pinos, as well as Johan Eximenez Durrea, Pere Arnau de França, and Jacme del Spital - all nobles who participated in the 1377

26 For a list of municipal officials in Barcelona during the late fourteenth century, see Carme Batlle, El “llibre del consell” de la ciutat de Barcelona, segle XIV: les eleccions municipals (Barcelona: Consell Superior d’Investigacions Científiques, 2007), 347-357.

27 Rafael Tasis i Marca, Joan I: El Rei Caçador i Músic (Barcelona: Editorial Aedos, 1959), 239-241.

28 Zurita y Castro, Anales de la Corona de Aragon, vol. IX, 770, 718.

29 AMHu, leg. 18, n. 1918.

30 Pere took a similar approach to his own stepmother. For more information, see Pere III, Chonicle, trans. M. Hillgarth, vol. I, (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of mediaeval Studies, 1980), 138-141.
investigation - agreed to go with King Joan to Sardinia in 1393 to put down the rebellion, the same endeavor to which Barcelona municipal officials donated generously.\(^{31}\)

However, it should be noted that Joan was not completely beholden to his former councilors once he became king. Berenguer d’Abella, one of Joan’s advisors during the 1367 host desecration trial, experienced a very different fate from the others. Listed as a member of Sibil·la’s entourage who tried to escape with her to France, it appears that Abella had allied himself with the queen, perhaps due to the political advantage provided to her followers during Pere’s reign. As a result, when Martí (along with Bernat Galcerán de Pinos) successfully captured Sibil·la and her household just south of the French border, Joan ordered Abella’s execution.\(^{32}\) In general, though, the fact that many of the figures identified as Joan’s advisors during the host desecration trial continued to support him as king suggests that Joan, both as prince and then as king, sought a mutually beneficial and cooperative relationship with the elite of the Crown of Aragon. In order to gain political and economic support from the nobility and urban elite, Joan was willing to play to their ambitions, and his elite subjects were open to supporting an amenable king.

The Royal Court

Another benefit for Joan in decentralizing and delegating royal power was that it allowed him to focus his attention on shaping a royal court that would reinforce the legitimacy of his reign and boost the international status of the Crown of Aragon. Between the thirteenth and fifteenth centuries, royal courts across Europe gained political and cultural significance. They

\(^{31}\) Zurita y Castro, *Anales de la Corona de Aragon*, vol. IX, 770, 718.

\(^{32}\) Núria Silleras-Fernandez, “Money Isn’t Everything: Concubinage, Class, and the Rise and Fall of Sibil·la de Fortià, Queen of Aragon (1377-87)” in *Women and Wealth in Late Medieval Europe*, ed. by Theresa Earenfight (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 88, f. 63.
grew in size and complexity as rulers developed bureaucratic systems that enabled them to gain and retain more control over the governance of their realms without personally having to complete all administrative tasks themselves. As a result, the royal courts evolved into an important locus of power from which kings governed their kingdoms. Because the royal court was the king’s residence as well as a functioning administrative apparatus, it became a symbol of both the king and kingdom. Rulers like Pere III created and implemented palatine codes that offered specific instructions about the duties of each court member and organized them into a hierarchy that reflected an idealized version of their kingdoms in miniature. The growing conspicuousness of the court in the Late Middle Ages encouraged rulers to use it as a theater through which to shape a particular image.  

Teofilo Ruiz and Thomas Devaney have demonstrated that rulers and nobles in medieval and early-modern Spain utilized public spectacles, including royal entries and local processions, to communicate with their subjects about power. The royal court, with its many courtiers, musicians, and colorful accoutrements, provided rulers with a visible and aural component through which to showcase their resources to audiences that included members of the elite as well as commoners. The public nature of this spectacle meant that audiences could participate in the discourse about royal power by expressing their awe and reverence or their discontent and irreverence for the court, and by extension, the ruler. In line with Ruiz’s and Devaney’s arguments that authority figures used public spectacles to communicate about power, it appears


that King Joan augmented the size and ornamental nature of his royal court in order to demonstrate to his subjects his right and ability to rule. Although Joan did not implement an authoritarian model of kingship like his father, he still needed to justify his right to wear the crown over any other person in royal territory. Joan also developed his royal court as a theater of power to address an international audience. In addition to legitimizing his rule, Joan created a spectacular court to project an image of the Crown of Aragon as a political and cultural powerhouse onto the European stage.

Throughout his short nine-year reign, Joan and his queen, Yolande, spent extravagantly on luxury items, festivities, and other forms of entertainment for the royal court. Joan’s royal court was visibly impressive. No other Aragonese ruler before Joan had as many nobles, knights, artists, intellectuals, and officials in his royal court, and according to the chronicler, Pere Tomich, they were all dressed in the finest of materials. At the center of his courtiers sat King Joan, adorned with luxurious fabrics and colors connected to the holy days – black on Good Friday, red and gold at Easter, etc. The members of Joan’s court also enjoyed elite forms of entertainment. He sent his minstrels to train with the best musicians in Germany and Flanders. Wherever he went, Joan and his courtiers hunted with falcons, goshawks, sparrow hawks, different kinds of dogs, and horses that the king acquired during his travels around the realms. Finally, records indicate that Joan and his court frequently enjoyed sumptuous feasts and

35 The fact that Joan had more courtiers and officials than any other ruler before him is substantiated in the complaints that Corts representatives issued during his reign. For a description of these complaints and an analysis of the Corts documents, see Bisson, The Medieval Crown of Aragon, 122-123. Tomich, Històrias e conquestas dels excellentissims e catòlics reys d’Aragó, chap. XLV: 224.

36 Gampel, “‘Unless the Lord Watches Over the City…,”’ 67.
festivals that could cost hundreds of thousands of florins each.\textsuperscript{37} The opulence of Joan’s court far exceeded that of any other ruler in the Crown of Aragon before him.

At first glance, Joan’s effort to promote his authority by investing in his court appears irresponsibly decadent and out of touch with the economic and political circumstances of the Crown of Aragon. In the fourteenth century, the realms and its residents had endured multiple famines, plagues, and wars that had resulted in the impoverishment of many, including the royal treasury.\textsuperscript{38} Within the context of his efforts to decentralize royal power, however, the king’s extravagance may be read as political maneuvering instead of an example of poor judgement. Although he had shaped an image of himself as the first among equals, Joan still needed to demonstrate why he should be “first” as king instead of someone else. He may have feared that if he appeared completely incapacitated, then someone else, even a member of the royal family, might try to take his place. His inclusive approach to governance prevented him from using blunt instruments to force his subjects to respect his rule as his father had done; instead, Joan attempted to earn his subjects’ respect and deference by creating an awe-inspiring court.\textsuperscript{39} These subjects included the elite and non-elite peoples who witnessed and hosted his court as it meandered its way through the Crown of Aragon. Indeed, Joan’s ambulatory court with all of its pomp, colors, and exoticism must have impressed many. The nature of the public spectacle, whether created by a ruler or someone else, allowed for the audience to respond. Consequently,

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\textsuperscript{37} Antonio Cortijo Ocaña, \textit{The Dream of Bernat Metge, Del Somni d’en Bernat Metge} (Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing Company, 2013), xviii.

\textsuperscript{38} For more information about the various plagues, famines, and wars that occurred in the Iberian Peninsula in the fourteenth century, see Teofilo Ruiz, \textit{Spain’s Centuries of Crisis: 1300-1474} (Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011), 42-50.

\textsuperscript{39} Vale demonstrates that rulers throughout Europe in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, such as Louis IX of France and Edward III of England, used their royal courts to shape particular images of power that were directed at their subjects as well as other rulers. With this in mind, it appears that Joan was utilizing an established political tool in his efforts to earn respect for his reign. Vale, \textit{The Princely Court}.
\end{flushright}
Joan’s extravagance did occasionally elicit complaints from representatives of the cortes and municipal officials about the king’s spending habits and their effect on the realms. I will further discuss his subjects’ response later in this chapter, but for now it will suffice to say that Joan intended to use his royal court as a mechanism of power so as to enable him to demonstrate his uniqueness as king without overstepping his self-prescribed limits of royal authority.

Although Joan used the conspicuousness of his itinerant royal court to encourage his subjects to respect him as king, he also shaped and expanded it in specific ways to bolster the status of the Crown of Aragon on the international scene. In contrast to his father, whose military aggressions reflected a desire to conquer the world unassisted, Joan sought to impress other rulers in the hope of creating alliances that could prevent attacks on Aragon and create opportunities that would benefit the Crown and its people.40 Records describing his interaction with other rulers suggest that his strategy had the potential for success. For example, in July of 1388, Wenceslas IV of Bohemia sent an ambassador, Roberto de Praga, to the Crown of Aragon to commend Joan for his genteel household and manners and to request the Infanta Joanna’s hand in marriage. While this particular arrangement did not actually reach fruition, the exchange points to a thoughtful political strategy that produced results.41

David Nirenberg notes that Joan I emulated French customs and rituals during his reign, but he offers no further explanation and mentions that no other works on the topic have been

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40 This argument responds to that posed by Zita Eva Rohr, who suggests that “Joan did not view cultural activity primarily as a way to enforce and emphasize his authority and political machinations; he evinced a genuine desire to involve himself in cultural innovation for its own sake.” In contrast, I assert that Joan utilized displays of cultural refinement and cultivation to project an image of superiority to the other rulers and kingdoms competing for preeminence on the world stage. Rohr, Yolande of Aragon (1381-1442), 39.

41 Zurita, Anales de Aragón, vol. IX, 730-731.
completed. I would like to suggest that Joan sought to emulate aspects of the French royal court because he believed the rest of Europe would find such a court impressive. Joan, like most other rulers in medieval Europe, received ambassadors and envoys from other kingdoms, and he expected that these officials would tell their rulers about what they saw in the Crown of Aragon. In this manner, Joan also used his royal court to showcase his political power, his resources, and his cultural sophistication to other rulers.

By the fourteenth century, the Crown of France had evolved into arguably the most powerful kingdom on the European continent. The Valois kings had successfully fashioned an image of themselves as cultural leaders. Their royal courts attracted famous artists, sculptors, musicians, and authors, including Christine de Pizan, whose works reflect the contemporary revival of courtly literature and manners. French kings did their best to create incentives for artists to flock to their courts: for instance, Charles IV (r. 1322-1328) initiated the Jeux Floraux, an annual poetry contest in which troubadours competed for a gilded flower and patronage in the presence of the king and his courtiers. In addition to the artistic magnificence of the royal court,

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42 Nirenberg, Communities of Violence, 248, f. 60. This remains true today. Silleras-Fernandez and Rohr mention the French influence in Joan’s court, but do not explain the reasons for it. Silleras-Fernandez, Chariots of Ladies and Rohr, Yolande of Aragon (1381-1442).

43 Records of ambassadors from other kingdoms to Joan’s court are scarce. One example, of course, is Roberto de Praga’s visit in 1388. There must have been others, however, since Joan’s himself utilized ambassadors frequently. For example, the financial banker, Luchino Scarampi, often acted as Joan’s ambassador in the Italian states. Kagay, “Poetry in the Dock,” 55. In addition, in 1387, Yolande communicated with Aragonese ambassadors to Avignon. Gampel, Anti-Jewish Riots, 281.


45 For a list of some of the individuals patronized by Charles VI, see Renate Blumenfeld-Kosinski, Poets, Saints, and Visionaries of the Great Schism, 1378-1417 (University Park, PA: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2006), particularly Chapter 4.

46 Silleras-Fernandez, Chariots of Ladies, 43.
the Crown of France also enjoyed political superiority in Europe. In 1389, during what would later be known as the Hundred Years’ War, Richard II of England requested a truce with Charles VI of France. Since Richard’s kingdom was teetering on the edge of financial collapse and his subjects had already revolted twice because of the financial burden of the war, it was clear that France had the upper hand. In addition, for much of the fourteenth century, the Valois kings maintained an intimate relationship with the Avignon popes, which produced political as well as religious benefits for the Crown of France. During that time, popes admitted numerous French officials into the college of cardinals on the recommendation of Valois rulers, while English kings had little success in installing a cardinal from their own kingdom. Since the college of cardinals advised the pope about church matters that could affect secular governance, such as the taxation of clergy, it was very important that a kingdom have representatives in the college of cardinals for its political health. In 1310, Edward II of England (r.1307-1327) explained to the Chancery that “great damage may happen to him and his realm and great setback to his business if there is not an English cardinal made by the pope.” Although the French Crown experienced its own internal discord towards the end of the fourteenth century, particularly among the nobles within the royal court, outwardly it appeared culturally progressive and politically stronger than any other kingdom.

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50 Quoted in Plöger, England and the Avignon Popes, 28.

Joan pursued an alliance with the French Crown rather than one with neighboring Castile. Toward this objective, King Joan established political connections with his northern neighbor and adopted French ideals and practices within his own royal court. Joan appears to have shaped this strategy prior to his ascension to the throne in 1387. His father, Pere, sought a match for Prince Joan with Maria of Sicily after the prince’s first wife, Mata d’Armagnac, died in 1378. Joan’s marriage to Maria would have officially reunited Sicily with the Crown of Aragon, but the prince defied his father, and in 1380 he married Yolande de Bar, niece of Charles V (r. 1364-1380) of France and the powerful dukes of Anjou, Bourbon, Berry, and Burgundy.52 Perhaps reflecting a hope that a shared cultural interest might in turn nourish a political rapport, Joan wrote to his new mother-in-law, Marie of France, six months after his marriage to request a manuscript by Guillaume de Machaut, the famous French poet and composer. The interest in alliance was apparently mutual since Louis I, Duke of Orléans, considered betrothing his two sons to Joan’s two daughters in 1381.53

As ruler, Joan emulated practices within the French royal court: he bestowed the title of Dauphin (Delfí in Catalan) on his young son, Jaume; and in 1393, he duplicated the French Jeux Floraux in nearly every respect to create the Jocs Florals in Barcelona.54 Joan paralleled these cultural developments with further political connections with France. For example, in 1389 Joan promised his daughter, Yolande, to Louis d’Anjou, King of Naples and brother of Charles V of


53 Rohr, Yolande of Aragon (1381-1442), 42, 14.

54 Silleras-Fernandez, Chariots of Ladies, 43.
France. Looking back on her brother-in-law’s reign, Maria de Luna explained that Joan “had a French wife and was completely Frenchified.”

It seems that Joan recognized the political and cultural preeminence of France and consequently hoped that by associating the Crown of Aragon with the Crown of France he could present his kingdom as politically and culturally commensurate. This presentation was directed toward other European rulers who might either subsequently choose to avoid conflict with Aragon or seek an alliance with it. If the Crown of Aragon established political ties with the Crown of France, through marriage or otherwise, and if Joan appeared to have the necessary revenue and domestic stability to devote his attention to building a royal court that rivaled the sophistication and extravagance of the French court, then other rulers might give his kingdom the same regard and respect. It is likely that, similar to his predecessors, Joan perceived his royal court as representing his kingdom in miniature, and it appears that he expected other rulers to perceive it the same way. From this perspective, Joan’s sumptuous court with its copious members, animals, and expensive pastimes reflected a political strategy rather than a reluctance to rule.

The Great Western Papal Schism

Joan initially sought to shape a royal court and, by extension, a kingdom that was recognized by his subjects and his international peers to be the equal of France. Like Charles VI of France, Joan I supported Pope Clement VII (r. 1378-1394) during the schism of the Catholic Church. Scholars have argued that Joan backed Clement to distinguish himself from his father, Pere III, who remained neutral in the schism between Avignon and Rome. While this may be

55 Quoted in Silleras-Fernandez, Chariots of Ladies, 42.

56 Ryan, A Kingdom of Stargazers, 142.
true, considering Joan’s persistent attempts to emulate the French within his court, I would suggest that his support of the French Clement over the Italian Urban VI (r.1378-1389) represented another means to highlight the correlation between the Crown of Aragon and the French Crown.

“The Great Western Schism,” as it came to be known, began in 1378 when the college of cardinals, dissatisfied with the Urban VI, chose another pope, Clement VII, who they believed would better serve their interests. Since both popes saw their own reign as legitimate, Urban and Clement established separate courts in Rome and Avignon, forcing rulers across Europe, and often individual members of the same royal family, to take opposing sides in the conflict.57 Perhaps wishing to benefit from a relationship with the Avignon papacy, as the Valois rulers in France had, Joan I interposed his voice in the conflict to support Clement. Joan claimed to have consulted the jurists of Barcelona in this decision, possibly in promotion of his inclusive kingship. However, it seems likely that because Charles VI of France backed Clement, Joan did as well.58 There is some evidence that Joan did indeed benefit from his choice. Clement financially supported Joan’s efforts to suppress a rebellion in Sardinia in 1391 by giving him the tithes that normally went to the Church.59 It is unclear whether the Avignon pope did so because he was convinced by Joan’s image of Aragon as comparable to France or because he was just grateful for the king’s support. Regardless, this payoff seemed to justify Joan’s attempts to

57 The rulers of Scotland, Castile, Aragon, Navarre, and Portugal supported Clement VII. The Holy Roman Empire, as well as the Kingdoms of England, Flanders, and Italy (except for Naples) supported Urban VI. Canning, Ideas of Power, 165-166. For a more in-depth look at this development, see Joëlle Rollo-Koster, Avignon and Its Papacy, 1309-1417: Popes, Institutions, and Society (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2015).

58 In February of 1387, Joan announced that he would support Clement VII because the jurists and theologians of Barcelona had pronounced his legitimacy and superiority over Urban VI. Bisson, The Medieval Crown of Aragon, 123.

59 Ocaña, The Dream of Bernat Metge, xvii.
project a positive image of his court and his kingdom as strong and worthy of respect. If Joan and his kingdom had appeared politically impotent, it is likely that Clement would not have acted at all, much less in Joan’s favor. Clement needed political support, and he needed it from those who could oppose Urban IV’s adherents, which included the kings of Portugal and England and the Holy Roman Emperor.

After Clement’s death in 1394, an Aragonese pope, Benedict XIII ascended to the papal seat in Avignon. Suddenly, instead of a need to ally with and model himself on the French Crown, Joan had the opportunity to use his connection with the new pope to supersede France in European politics. Aware that French popes had given the Valois kings a political edge over other rulers in the past, Charles VI immediately sent a letter to Avignon after learning of Clement’s death. In it, he asked the cardinals to wait to hear from his embassy before electing a new pope. His letter, however, arrived too late, and on September 28th, the cardinals elected Pedro Martínez de Luna, who took the name Benedict XIII.60 Nuria Silleras-Fernandez has explored the familial relationship between Joan and Benedict, who was a relative of Joan’s sister-in-law, Maria de Luna; however, the opportunity that Benedict’s election afforded the King of Aragon remains unexamined.61 Instead of the political table scraps that a French pope might throw Joan’s way, an Aragonese pope might give priority to the Crown of Aragon and its ruler; in the same manner that the French Crown had previously used their relationship with the Avignon Papacy to strengthen their political stance, Joan could now use his relationship with Benedict to make Aragon stronger, perhaps even superior to France.


Charles VI, however, did not passively accept this shift in political advantage to the Aragonese. Prior to his election, Benedict had proclaimed that if he was made pope, he would abdicate the papal throne in order to end the schism. Likely seeking to get rid of a pope who did not have France’s best interest in mind, Charles sent a royal embassy headed by the Dukes of Burgundy and Berry to convince the pope to fulfill that promise, but Benedict refused. When Charles and the bishops of Paris sent out circular letters to the rulers of Europe, urging them to join in their efforts to persuade Benedict to step down, Joan and Enrique III of Castile voiced their displeasure. They argued that Benedict was the legitimate pope and Clement’s rightful successor. Furthermore, Charles and his bishops should have consulted them before challenging Benedict, valuing their advice over any other rulers. Clearly, the rulers of the Iberian Peninsula identified more with Benedict XIII than previous popes, but for Joan at least, it seems that the existence of an Aragonese pope had given him the confidence to assert his preeminence over or at least his political equality with Charles VI. Considering the ongoing tension between Castile and Aragon, it is unlikely that Enrique III supported Benedict out of loyalty to Joan. It is more probable that Enrique hoped to undermine Charles’s political dominance in Europe by backing a pope who was not French. Joan, by contrast, took the initiative and attempted to demonstrate his control over Benedict and the Avignon papacy by announcing in 1395 that he intended to move the embattled pope to Barcelona where the king could protect him. It is also reasonable to


63 Enrique III of Castile asserted in a letter to Charles and the college of Cardinals, “Et appert bien que vous donnez à entendre que l’Eglise ne fait pas grant compte de moy, ni de mes royalmes en ces faits en la maniere qu’elle deust; de laquelle chose je me deuil.” Joan I of Aragon exclaimed that Charles should maintain his obedience to the elected pope as his forefathers had done before him. Joan also sent to Avignon Francés de Vilamarín, who told the Dukes of Burgundy and Berry that they should cease their persecution of the pope and his estate. Zurita y Castro, *Analects of the Kingdom of Aragon*, vol. IX, 789. For the letter, see *Thesaurus novus anecdotorum*, ed. by Edmond Martène and Ursin Durand, vol. II (Delaulne, 1717), 1136.

assume that Joan expected that Benedict would participate in his royal court due to his proximity. In addition to having the best minstrels and hunting animals, Joan would be able to claim that he was housing a pope. There was no better way to demonstrate his cultural and religious superiority. In this manner, Joan appears to have adopted the policies of French kings, who bolstered their prominence by associating themselves with the popes in Avignon. He intended to go beyond making the Crown of Aragon parallel to the Crown of France. He sought to show the rest of Europe that it was better; it was paramount.

King Joan’s attention to papal politics corresponds to his delegation of power over the administration of the Crown of Aragon. By giving control of domestic governance to the nobility and municipal officials, Joan would theoretically pacify his power-hungry subjects, and it enabled Joan to focus his energy on inserting his royal court boldly in international affairs. King Joan initially imitated political maneuvers and French customs in his court in order to emphasize a correlation between the power of Aragon and that of France. The election of an Aragonese pope, one whom Joan could bring to Barcelona and show off in his royal court, presented the king with an opportunity to showcase his court and his kingdom as superior to the rest.

**Encroachment on the King’s Authority: The Royal Court and the Corts**

In theory, the redistribution of domestic power away from the king’s office and to the nobility and municipalities should have initiated a period of political unity in the Crown of Aragon. Joan not only delegated more control over judicial processes and urban regulations to local elites, but he also gave these parties political control over Jews and Muslims, who traditionally represented royal power. Joan’s style of kingship as first among equals should have fulfilled the ambitions of the nobility and municipal officials who had resisted Pere III’s exclusive approach to governance, delegating the governance of the realm while allowing Joan to engage in international politics by means of his spectacular royal court. To some degree, this
arrangement was successful. As mentioned above, in exchange for power and status, Joan’s former councilors were willing to support some of his endeavors financially and militarily. In the long run, however, Joan’s efforts to decentralize governance and assume the role of figurehead at the center of his royal court created a power vacuum.

Although scholars have noted the growing tension between Joan and his subjects, the actions of the nobility and municipal leaders do not appear to have been a consequence of the king’s apathy, as many have suggested. Instead, the records indicate that tensions arose when the nobility and municipal leaders attempted to seize even more power and resources beyond those allocated by the king. Joan’s willingness to share power encouraged the non-royal elite of the realms to extend their jurisdiction beyond what Joan had permitted over the royal treasury, royal court, and cities, all steps that elicited resentment from the king. Furthermore, the nobility and municipal leaders rapidly became disillusioned with the reality of governing the realms, particularly when their king overspent and the people they sought to control refused to cooperate. Joan’s inclusive kingship did not produce the political harmony that the king and his subjects imagined. Instead, it created an environment that encouraged the depletion of the royal treasury, further undermined royal authority, and increased the severity of assaults on minority communities in 1391.

Joan’s officials took advantage of the king’s inclusive style of leadership to tap into the royal treasury. His efforts to delegate power meant that he was increasingly dependent on others to handle money owed to or by the crown, and he had less direct authority over his officials’

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65 Rohr, *Yolande of Aragon (1381-1442)*, 34-35; Michael A. Ryan, *A Kingdom of Stargazers*, 7 and 106; Silleras-Fernandez, *Chariots of Ladies*, 34 and 38; Donald Kagay, “Poetry in the Dock,” 50; Gampel, “‘Unless the Lord Watches Over the City…,'” 67-68.
actions. Not only had he relinquished a great deal of his direct oversight of officials, but the number of officials had multiplied spectacularly, in urban centers as well as in his royal court, where courtiers included a variety of nobles, knights, minstrels, and officials. It appears that the increased autonomy courtiers enjoyed encouraged some to sell off parts of the royal patrimony illegally – rents, taxes, and other financial debts and assistance owed to the king – without his consent and to embezzle the revenue. For example, in 1388, it came to light that Joan’s royal secretary, Bernat Metge, had squandered the revenue provided by Pope Clement VII to pay for an armed expedition to put down a rebellion in Sardinia.  

Unfortunately, the apparatus in place to address problems related to governance only furthered tension and infighting among Joan’s officials. The Corts, a body of representatives comprised of municipal elites and nobles who were not members of Joan’s royal court, prosecuted corrupt officials like Metge who appear to have committed legitimate crimes, but they also used accusations against Joan’s courtiers to gain more power for themselves. For example, in 1388, Alfons de Villena, a noble and representative in the Corts, accused Carroça de Vilaragut, a courtier and a close confidant of the queen, of adultery and promiscuity. The subsequent investigation revealed that Alfons had approached Carroça the year before to request that she recommend him for the position of head of the king’s royal council, but she had refused. It seems that Alfons had hoped that by ousting Carroça from the royal court, he could finally make room for himself.  

Around the same time, Count Joan de Prades, also a noble and Corts

66 Ryan, A Kingdom of Stargazers, 142 and Bisson, The Medieval Crown of Aragon, 123.

67 Silleras-Fernandez, Chariots of Ladies, 50. Zurita claims that the other individuals involved (all Corts representatives) were the Marquis de Villena, along with Bernaldo de Cabrera, Jaime de Prades, Pedro de Fenollet, Viscount of Illa, Ramón de Perellós, Viscount of Roda, Lope Ximénez de Urría, Juan Ximénez de Urría and of Atrosillo, Alonso Fernández de Ijar, Juan de Bellera, Pedro Queralt, Arnaldo de Eríl, Ramón de Bages and García de Sesé. Zurita y Castro, Anales de la Corona de Aragon, vol. IX, 733-734.
representative, accused Francesc d’Aranda, the king’s advisor, of poisoning the heir apparent, whose health was quickly declining (he died in September of 1388). Núria Silleras-Fernandez argues that Prades used the accusation in an attempt to create mistrust between Joan and his courtiers. And indeed, it might have allowed room for Prades to insert himself into the court and the confidence of the king had Aranda not been proven innocent. 68

King Joan attempted to defend his officials against the scrutiny of representatives in the Corts. At his one and only meeting with the Corts in 1389, Joan expressed his impatience with representatives’ accusations.69 He refused to meet with them again and instead sent Queen Violate, who managed to reach a legal compromise in which only a select few of Joan’s courtiers were punished. This included Metge, who was imprisoned for some time, and Carroça, who despite her confirmed innocence, was exiled from the royal court.70 The fact that some charges leveled by representatives proved unfounded motivated Joan and Yolande to reject all subsequent accusations against the courtiers as false, a policy that proved dangerous. In May of 1396, Luqui Scarampo, a merchant of Lombardy and one of Joan’s trusted confidants, secretly assembled mercenary troops in Villeneuve-lès-Avignon and intended to use them to force the king to pay back his debts. Municipal officials in Barcelona and Valencia who warned that

68 Silleras-Fernandez, Power, Piety, and Patronage in Late Medieval Queenship, 38.

69 The establishment of a parliamentary system in the Crown of Aragon originated from rulers’ objective to create political stability within their newly conquered territories. As Donald Kagay argues, by the thirteenth century, rulers like Jaume I had begun to use the Corts to demonstrate their superior power in the realms. Jaume stressed his control over the urban center and nobility by forcing representatives from these groups to gather before him annually and to agree to common laws that superseded local customs and traditions. By the beginning of the fourteenth century, however, Corts representatives used scheduled meetings with the king to question the legality of royal laws and taxes imposed. This was particularly the case during the reign of Pere III. Representatives used their meetings with the king to attempt to take control of the king’s ability to request financial and military support. Representatives maintained their aggressive approach to the Crown during Joan’s reign despite his willingness to share power. For a comprehensive study of the Corts between the twelfth and fourteenth century, see Donald Kagay, “The Development of the Cortes in the Crown of Aragon 1064-1327” (Ph.D. diss., Fordham University, 1981).

70 Bisson, The Medieval Crown of Aragon, 122-123.
Scarampo intended to sack Catalonia were not heeded until it was nearly too late to rectify the situation.71

Meanwhile, Joan continued to spend excessively. For example, when Joan arrived with his court in the city of Palma in Mallorca in July of 1395, he threw public festivals for his Mallorcan subjects and private banquets for his courtiers that cost over 100,000 florins.72 At this point, Joan’s own treasury was nearly empty, so he expected municipal leaders in the city of Palma to bankroll his events, and by extension, his display of his self-proclaimed status as the respected leader of the prosperous Crown of Aragon. It seems likely that Joan believed that this was the cost of power: nobles and municipals gained control over domestic governance in exchange for supporting the king’s international posturing. However, while these same nobles and municipal authorities relished their new-found power in the realms, they quickly tired of funding Joan’s extravagance. In 1396, city leaders from Valencia complained to Joan that

There are many days that the quartermaster (comprador) of Your household does not have the means to provide for Your table, and, even more seriously, that on many days there is not enough meat except for Your own plate, a state of affairs which is vituperous and brings great shame, because foreigners gossip about this and the merchants and others who travel outside of Your realms, they bring meat, saying that the King of Aragon cannot even feed himself.73

This state of affairs, of course, undermined Joan’s desired image. Officials knew just how to phrase complaints to impact Joan’s agenda. Clearly, the elite of Aragon were dissatisfied with

71 Silleras-Fernandez and Ocaña have suggested that the king ignored subsequent accusations, like the one leveled against Scarampo because many of the king’s courtiers were his personal companions and confidants. Silleras-Fernandez, Power, Piety, and Patronage in Late Medieval Queenship, 38-39 and Ocaña, The Dream of Bernat Metge, xviii.

72 Ocaña, The Dream of Bernat Metge, xviii.

73 Quoted in Silleras-Fernandez, Chariots of Ladies, 51.
the concessions Joan had given them, and with the expectations he had for their support. They wanted more power, and they wanted to pay less for it.

**Encroachment on the King’s Authority: Municipalities**

As previously discussed, in 1395 Joan announced that he intended to bring the embattled Pope Benedict XIII to Barcelona as part of his program to enhance the reputation of the Crown of Aragon. Lacking the revenue to cover the costs himself, Joan requested financial assistance from municipal officials in Barcelona. Although Barcelona officials had generously supported Joan’s projects in previous years, this time they refused to pay to host Benedict in their city.\(^74\) It is possible that because Joan requested the exclusive assistance of Barcelona officials instead of appealing to multiple municipal organizations, these officials understood the king’s reliance as an opportunity to gain a firmer grip on royal power than any other city or noble. Since Benedict did not move to Barcelona until 1409, it is also possible that their refusal prevented the king from acting.\(^75\) In the following spring of 1396 when Joan asked them to pay the winning troubadours of the *Jocs Florals*, these same officials also declined to assist.\(^76\) Considering that Joan instituted the *Jocs Florals* as a means to boost the cultural reputation of Aragon, the power to deny the king’s desire to continue this activity meant having power over his general approach to rule. As will be discussed in the next chapter, municipal officials in Barcelona initially applauded the king’s willingness to enhance their power over the governance of the city, but Joan’s insolvency

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\(^75\) It is also possible, though, that Benedict would not have agreed to come to Barcelona even if Joan had the money. This possibility is evidenced by the fact that Benedict refused to leave Avignon in 1398 even when threatened by a French army. Theresa Earenfight, “Benedict XIII, Antipope,” in *Medieval Iberia: An Encyclopedia*, ed. by Michael Gerli (London: Routledge, 2003), 158.

\(^76\) Tasis i Marca, *Joan I*, 270-272.
toward the end of his reign presented them with an opportunity to acquire wider power over royal policy.

In cities like Osca, reduced royal oversight led to the proliferation and intensification of noble factions that clashed with one another in a struggle to control urban centers. During the first half of the fourteenth century, Osca experienced an influx of lesser nobles who moved into the city from the surrounding region, a topic that I will describe in more detail in Chapter 5. Many of these figures peacefully and legally participated in the governance of the city through their election to positions specifically designated for the nobility. Others, however, engaged in feuds that tended to divide along familial lines, yet often embroiled the entire city in conflict. The factions used violence and crime to intimidate other inhabitants and induce them to offer allegiance to faction leaders. Pere III’s authoritarian approach had served to minimize the size of these factions and their impact on the city. When Joan I stepped back and allowed the cities more autonomy to rule themselves, however, the factions flourished. Records suggest that they regularly caused chaos in the streets of the city, negatively impacting the lives of all residents. Esteban Sarasa Sánchez has argued that noble factions mushroomed in medieval Aragon when authority was lacking as a result of plague, famine, and war. During Joan’s reign, the problem was more the dispersal of authority than an absence of authority, since municipal officials held primary control over the city’s governance as a result of the king’s policies. With this in mind, it

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77 This legal participation is demonstrated in the gradual integration of these lesser nobility into the municipal governance of the city, suggesting that many chose to participate peacefully by pressuring officials to create a space for them. More will be said about this process in Chapter 5.

78 For example, when Pere III reduced the number of officials in the city of Osca in 1383, he explained that one of the reasons that he had done so was due to the feuding between various noble factions who had contributed to the “destruction, poverty, and depopulation” of Osca. ACA C, Reg. 942, f. 114-115 and Reg. 944, f. 52v-53.

is possible to suggest that the noble factions that thrived in Osca at the end of the fourteenth century emerged because they saw an opportunity to expand their own power in the city at the expense of the municipal officials who did not have the necessary military or financial resources to fight back. When officials requested Joan’s assistance in 1388 to suppress factional feuding, the king merely issued a reminder to the nobility in Osca that municipal leaders had a right to act summarily against those who did not comply with the laws.80 Since municipal leaders continued to request royal assistance throughout Joan’s reign, it appears that he did little to nothing to rectify the situation.81 Municipal officials in Osca, like those in other urban centers, had initially welcomed the authority that Joan extended to them, but they quickly realized that the decentralization of royal power did not mean that they would necessarily enjoy unquestioned power in the city. Rather, it meant that the king would not interfere, even when other forces attempted to take control from them.

The absence of royal intervention in urban centers may have also tempted municipal officials to pilfer Jewish and Muslim revenue intended for the king’s coffers. Although Joan had provided officials with more judicial and administrative responsibility over the minority communities inhabiting the urban centers under their authority, he maintained control over the revenue those communities provided for the crown. Since the two minority religious communities, particularly the Jews, supported royal power, Joan believed that this arrangement struck a perfect balance of power in the realms. In theory, it satisfied the ambitions of the local elite while preserving the revenue the king needed to shape magnificent displays in the royal court. In practice, the lack of royal oversight tempted municipal officials to appropriate Jewish

80 AMHu, leg. 55, n. 3998.

81 For example, the letter that Oscan officials wrote to the king in 1394: AMHu, Concejo Pergaminos, n. 83.
and Muslim revenue for the city. In Osca in 1387, Joan forbade Christian authorities from demanding that the local Muslim community contribute to city taxes. The king indicated that the demands that municipal officials made on the Muslims meant that they were unable to pay their taxes to the Crown.82 Similarly, in Barcelona in 1387, Joan ordered city officials not to interfere in Jewish and Muslim fiscal matters, which he reminded them was the responsibility of the bailiff general of the kingdom, a royal official.83 It is difficult to assess the intentions of municipal officials in these cases. On the one hand, these figures may have viewed an increase in municipal autonomy as an opportunity to increase city revenue by appropriating money that was earmarked for the royal treasury. On the other hand, it is possible that, in compliance with Joan’s prescribed program to integrate minority communities into their urban environments, they innocently lumped Muslims and Jews together financially with their Christian neighbors. Regardless, Joan was forced to remind his subjects on multiple occasions what aspects of jurisdiction over Jewish and Muslims communities belonged to the municipalities and what remained under royal control.

The Effect of Joan’s Decentralization of Royal Power on Jewish Communities

Uncertainty and disagreement over who was in charge of Jews and Muslims only exacerbated the effects of crisis situations and caused municipal officials to experience further disillusionment with King Joan’s approach to governance. Christian mobs carried out attacks on Jewish communities throughout the Crown of Aragon between July and October of 1391. When the riots began in the Crown of Aragon in July, Joan directed municipal officials to prepare for

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82 This order is transcribed in Maria Blanca Basáñez Villaluenga, La aljama sarracena de Huesca en el siglo XIV (Barcelona: Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas, 1989), document no. 78, pp. 122-123.

83 This order is transcribed in Yom Tov Assis, ed. Jews in the Crown of Aragon, Regesta of the Cartas Reales in the Archivo de la Corona de Aragon, Part II, 1328-1493 (Jerusalem: Ginzey Am Olam, 1995), document no. 1183, p. 236.
attacks on their local Jewish communities, and in many cases, he reminded officials that they were responsible for the safety of the Jews residing in their cities. But when municipal officials wrote to the king and pleaded with him to come and quell the chaos in their cities with his presence, Joan responded by thanking them for their efforts and encouraging them to try to contain the unrest. Throughout the months of attacks, Joan stayed in Zaragoza. Although the manifestation and severity of these attacks differed from city to city depending on the relationship between local Jews and Christians and the resources that municipal officials had at their disposal, the riots of 1391 decimated the Jewish population in the Crown of Aragon.

Scholars have argued that the king refused to help municipal officials reestablish peace because he was reluctant to rule and that his inaction was primarily responsible for thousands of Jewish deaths. While it may be true that Joan could have prevented much of the destruction by acquiescing to municipal officials’ requests to travel to their cities, his refusal to do so in 1391 mirrored the response he gave to Oscan officials in 1388 when they requested his assistance with noble factional feuding. In both cases, Joan reminded officials that they had the authority to impose the law and reestablish order on their own. Consequently, rather than a reluctance to rule, it seems that Joan’s actions in 1391 corresponded to his intention to decentralize royal power. Although the Jews still belonged to the Crown, and Joan continued to claim their revenue, their physical safety was now the responsibility of municipal officials.

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84 This is clearly evidenced in his letter to municipal officials in Mallorca. ACA C, Reg. 1878, f. 49-50 and AHM, Lletres reials, f. 210.

85 For Joan’s response to municipal officials in Barcelona, see ACA, C, Reg. 1961, f. 50v-51v. For his response to officials in Lleida, see ACA C, Reg. 1961, 77. For Joan’s response to officials in Mallorca, see ACA C, Reg. 1878, f. 136.

In some cases, municipal leaders managed to suppress the riots that occurred in their city and diminish the resulting deaths and destruction they caused. However, in other cases, their efforts were ineffective due to the magnitude of the attacks. Perhaps attempting to head off recriminations from the king, since the safety of the city’s Jews was their responsibility, officials from the city of Valencia explained to the king that the forced conversion of thousands of Jews during an attack on July 9th was due to divine intervention, rather than their inability to impede the assault. Other city officials led municipal militias against rioters at the same time that they continued to urge the king to come to their location as soon as possible.

Significantly, it appears that in most cases the rioters were peasants and poor artisans, in other words, members of the lowest socio-economic class. On July 19, 1391, Joan noted in a letter that the uprisings were primarily the work of the “poble.” Supporting this, on August 7, the records reveal that rioters in Barcelona chanted “Long live the king and the people! The fat ones wish to destroy the little people.” It thus appears that the riots were not the work of the nobility and municipal officials, who were content to continue taking advantage of Joan’s tolerant policies, but of the population who had not benefited from the change in kingship. Although Joan did little to rectify the circumstances of commoners during his reign, the rioters’ anger appears to have been directed at the elite who had recently gained authority, and the Jews,

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87 AMV, Lletres misives, g3-5, f.19-20.
88 For example, in August of 1391, militias in Lleida attempted to defend Jews who had taken refuge in the bishop’s palace in the city. Gampel, Anti-Jewish Riots in the Crown of Aragon, 136-137.
89 ACA, C, Reg. 1878, f. 74v-75v, 77r-78r. The exception to this was Girona. Records describing the attacks there suggest that city officials also participated. Joan wrote to the officials giving them permission to reinstate those who took part in the unrest. ACA, C, Reg. 1961, f. 128r-v.
who were, among other things, an unambiguous symbol of power.\textsuperscript{91} It is possible that the participants in the 1391 riots saw the Jewish communities as an essential part of the dialogue about power, from which they had been excluded, and they perceived and targeted the Jews for their connection to the growing power of municipal officials and the nobility and their control over the Jews of the realms. Regardless of why the attacks occurred, it appears city officials were unhappy with Joan’s response, and more generally, his approach to governance. The frequency and desperation with which these officials communicated with the king in their letters indicates that they had not anticipated pleading with the king to interfere in municipal affairs. They wanted the respect and sense of dominance that came with exercising power without royal interference, not the responsibility to protect local Jews against angry, violent mobs.

\textbf{Conclusion}

With the royal succession, the balance of power in the Crown of Aragon appears to have shifted from one extreme, in the form of Pere III’s authoritarian consolidation of royal power, to another, in Joan I’s delegation of power. The latter allowed many of the nobility and municipal leaders of the realms attempted to assert their dominance over the king and over one another. In theory, a more inclusive model of kingship should have satisfied the ambitions of the nobility and non-noble elite while alloweing Joan to focus on shaping an image of himself and his kingdoms as culturally progressive and politically strong by adopting French mechanisms of power. In reality, it created a power vacuum and disillusionment with Joan’s approach to

\textsuperscript{91} Joan did make a few attempts to alleviate the suffering of peasants in his realms to little effect. In 1388, he tried to find some form of legal precedent in the royal archives to abolish the \textit{remença} and other \textit{mals usos} that allowed the nobility to impose servile obligations on the peasants inhabiting their lands. Finding nothing, he wrote to Clement VII, requesting that the pope direct ecclesiastical lords in the Crown of Aragon to release their claims to the \textit{remença}. In return, Joan promised financial compensation, but the pope refused Joan’s request. Joan appears to have given up after this second effort. Silleras-Fernandez, \textit{Power, Piety, and Patronage in Late Medieval Queenship}, 108-109.
governance that resulted in tension between the king and his subjects and political chaos on all levels of society. It is possible that given enough time Joan might have taken steps to rectify the situation, bringing peace to the kingdoms. The *Rota fortunae*, however, had different plans. On May 19, 1396, only nine years after ascending the throne, Joan fell from his horse while hunting and died suddenly. Contemporary and modern historians alike have offered various explanations ranging from foul play to seizures.\(^92\) Regardless, Joan I’s death brought an end not only to his reign, but also to his policies. Lacking a male heir, Joan was succeeded by his younger brother, Martí I, who sought to reestablish royal authority in a manner similar to his father’s. This approach was in response to and a salve for the discord and insolvency wrought by Joan’s approach to governance.

\(^{92}\) For more information about Joan’s death and the theories surrounding it, see Silleras-Fernandez, *Chariots of Ladies*, 102; Rohr, *Yolande of Aragon*, 44; Tasis i Marca, *Joan I*, 281; and Martí de Riquer, *Història de la literatura catalana*, vol. II (Barcelona: Ariel, 1964), 398.
CHAPTER 5  
BARCELONA: AN ECONOMIC POWERHOUSE

Introduction

Thus far, I have argued that Pere III and Joan I implemented distinctive forms of kingship that we can observe in their governance of the Jews of the Crown of Aragon. In addition to other mechanisms of power, Pere exploited his relationship with the Jews, and specifically their legal status as property of the Crown, to generate royal revenue. He thereby also excluded others from participating in the governance of the realms and to advance an image of himself as the ultimate governing authority. In contrast, Joan, as crown prince, used accusations of host desecration against Jews in Barcelona in 1367 and in Osca 1377 as a political tool to resist his father’s authoritarian policies and create space for himself to exercise his power as governor general. During his investigations of the accusations, Prince Joan developed an inclusive model of kingship as a corrective to Pere’s leadership style. When Joan became king, he promoted an image of himself as first among equals by sharing power of the administration of the Crown, including over the Jewish and Muslim communities. In this manner, the Jewish communities became another axis around which the discourse about legitimate royal power and its limits took place in the Crown of Aragon in the second half of the fourteenth century.

In addition to the divergent political ideals promoted by King Pere and Prince Joan, the letters they exchanged about the host desecration investigations also provide insight into the way that the local governing elite of the cities participated in the discourse about royal power. Joan’s letter to his father reveals that five city officials assisted in the 1367 investigation in Barcelona of Jews accused of buying stolen pieces of the consecrated host. He states that “Guillem Despuig, Jacme de Vallsecha, Berenguer des Cortey, Romeu de Busquets and Francesc de Clasqueri” helped him identify the Jews who allegedly purchased the host pieces, interrogate the suspects,
and sentence them to execution by burning.\(^1\) Their inclusion in the judicial process points to the intersection of urban and royal politics. Using the host desecration letters exchanged in 1367 as a jumping off point, this chapter examines how the governing elite of Barcelona responded to different forms of royal authority and the means by which they acquired political autonomy. Delving into the economic, political, and cultural particularities that shaped communal experiences and identities makes it possible to draw broader conclusions about royal authority. This approach builds on the works of Thomas Barton, Mark Meyerson, and Jaume Aurell, whose examinations of individual medieval Aragonese cities have revealed that local circumstances shaped residents’ choices and ideas and their relationship with the Crown. Their scholarship has demonstrated the need to avoid treating kingdoms as homogenous units and instead to see them as a conglomerate of different customs, values, and practices centered in urban centers throughout the realms.\(^2\) The piecemeal nature of the *Reconquista* in the Iberian Peninsula, and particularly the Crown of Aragon, encouraged municipalities to create individualized relationships with the Crown. Consequently, the close examination of individual urban centers enables scholars to avoid inaccurate generalizations.

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Beginning in the twelfth century, Barcelona became the most important administrative seat for the monarchy in the Kingdom of Catalonia. In combination with this, the increasing bureaucracy of royal governance in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries expanded the creation of records that which shed light on the interaction between the king and the emerging municipal government of Barcelona. As a result, much of the scholarship that examines the political relationship between the city of Barcelona and the Crown limits the scope of its analysis to the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. Stephen Bensch has demonstrated that the prosperity of merchants in Barcelona during this period encouraged rulers to depend on them financially to fund endeavors that supported the expansion of royal authority over the nobility.\(^3\) Elka Klein has offered a different perspective on this epoch by showing that the changing relationship between rulers and Barcelona motivated Jewish and Christian residents to take a vested interest in local government and in one another’s well-being. Productive interaction between Jews and Christians produced additional revenue that rulers relied on to fund their policies.\(^4\)

In contrast to the prevalence of studies on the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, very little work has been done on how the relationship between the residents of Barcelona and the Crown changed during the fourteenth century and what implications these changes had for royal authority. Carmen Batlle’s 1973 examination of Barcelona represents the most recent comprehensive study of municipal government in Barcelona during the fourteenth century, and even then, Batlle’s examination is not exclusively devoted to this time period. Instead, she

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focuses on how local political and economic circumstances in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries prompted conflict between members of different urban classes in the fifteenth century.\(^5\)

This chapter explores how the economic, political, and social circumstances of Barcelona’s governing elite in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries influenced their interaction with rulers and responses to different forms of kingship. The alliance that rulers and city officials enjoyed in the thirteenth century disintegrated in the fourteenth century because city officials moved to acquire full control over local governance at the expense of the Crown’s authority. In his effort to become the ultimate governing authority, Pere III engaged the municipal governing elite in a struggle for political dominance, which was carried out through a series of judicial processes that targeted representatives of the two competing forms of power: municipal and royal. In contrast, King Joan’s efforts to decentralize royal power permitted city officials to regain their control over the governance of Barcelona. These officials, however, ultimately took advantage of King Joan’s inclusive political approach by attempting to extend their power over the king and his policies. Although the governing elite of Barcelona influenced the city’s relationship with the Crown, there is little room for the idea of class solidarity. As demonstrated in the analysis that follows, the way in which residents and officials understood legitimate royal authority was shaped as much through conflict and tension within their own classes, as it was through conflict with rulers.\(^6\)

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\(^6\) My proposition responds to the argument advanced by Carmen Batlle and Jaume Vicens Vives that strife between classes whose members shared the same mindset, aspirations, and ideals motivated political development. Batlle, *La crisis social y económica de Barcelona* and Jaume Vicens Vives, *Historia de los Remensas (en el siglo XV)*
This study measures changes in the relationship between Barcelona’s governing elite and rulers by analyzing judicial processes alongside legal documents. Scholarship on the political evolution of medieval Barcelona has often relied on documented privileges that rulers granted and the ordinances issued by city officials. The prescriptive nature of these sources, however, offers little insight into the interactions and developments that influenced their issuance or the other tools that the parties involved utilized to further their political aspirations. These aspects become clearer when royal privileges and municipal ordinances from the reign of Pere III are paired with proceedings from contemporary court cases. These proceedings tend to be conversational in nature, recording the words and actions of the figures involved. Consequently, they provide a clearer window into the diverse relationships and ideas driving performances of power.

**Barcelona and the Crown: Cooperation (1249-1300)**

In the eleventh and twelfth centuries, at the same time that rulers in the Crown of Aragon endeavored to expand royal lands and suppress the nobility, urban centers grew in size and economic importance. European economic expansion motivated the revival of road systems, opened up sea routes, and allowed a merchant class to take root in cities across the continent. In particular, the population grew and economic prospects diversified in urban centers located on the Mediterranean due to their role as gateways for merchants crisscrossing land and sea with merchandise. The development of an urban bourgeoisie was particularly conspicuous in cities (Barcelona: Ediciones Vicens Vives, 1978). In *Jews, Christian Society, and Royal Power in Medieval Barcelona*, Elka Klein does not focus on class conflict, but her analysis of the evolving relationship between Jews and Christians in Barcelona and their relationship with the Crown as residents of the city compels her to portray Christian residents as homogeneous in their actions and ideas.

7 Batlle, *La crisis social y económica de Barcelona*; Cubeles, “L'evolució de les actuacions del Consell de Cent; Estragués, “El règim jurídic dels juristes de Barcelona”; Bensch, “Poder, dinero y control del comercio en la formación del regimen municipal de Barcelona.”
like Barcelona, which became one of the wealthiest port cities in the late-medieval Mediterranean and the most economically important city in Catalonia.\textsuperscript{8} Wealthy merchants in Barcelona invested their money in real estate, and many found that they were able to live comfortably on the revenue produced by their rental properties. These merchants-turned-landlords in Barcelona formed a new \textit{rentier} class. Their accumulation of wealth motivated them to find ways in which to distinguish themselves from other members of the bourgeoisie, a group that had come to include bankers, jurists, and artisans as well as merchants.\textsuperscript{9}

One of the ways in which members of the \textit{rentier} class sought to differentiate themselves was through the acquisition of political offices. Existing scholarship on Barcelona in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries has demonstrated that the ambition of the \textit{rentier} class for local political power and rulers’ efforts to acquire more revenue encouraged a collaborative relationship between the two. Stephen Bensch and Pere Ortí Gost have shown that rulers like Pere I (r. 1196-1213) and Jaime I (r.1213-1276) contracted huge debts to members of the \textit{rentier} class to pay for their military endeavors undertaken to acquire territory for the Crown and put down noble rebellions.\textsuperscript{10} Frequently unable to repay their urban lenders with actual currency, Pere I and Jaime I compensated them with administrative positions, such as the royal office of bailiff or

\textsuperscript{8} Steven Epstein also argues that growing emphasis on Mediterranean trade was motivated by a shift from fair-oriented Continental trade to maritime trade, and particularly trade in textiles. He explains that while merchants transported a diverse range of woolen products in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, they began to focus on luxury products in the fourteenth century, which proved lucrative. The growing wealth of merchants around the Mediterranean enabled them to invest in other prospects, such as real estate and craft production. Steven Epstein, \textit{An Economic and Social History of Later Medieval Europe, 1000-1500} (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009).


veguer. Acquiring administrative offices associated with the Crown enabled rentiers to distinguish themselves politically from other members of the bourgeoisie. In addition, because their administrative positions put them in close contact with rulers, rentiers gained more economic power because they were able to speculate on the needs of the Crown and the population. In the long run, the alliance between the Crown and rentiers helped to stimulate the development of municipal governance and cemented the rentiers’ control over incipient municipal institutions and the city as a whole.

To encourage the continual financial support of the rentiers who occupied administrative positions in Barcelona, rulers lavished municipal officials with political privileges that provided them with autonomy in the governance of the city. In 1249, Jaume I endowed Barcelona with a royal charter that permitted officials to establish the first municipal governing organization in Catalonia that functioned without royal interference. This institution would become known as the Consell de Cent, and it was made up of five counselors who presided over a council of 100 jurats, all of whom were elected officials. An equal number of jurats represented the three

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11 The bailiff was the official responsible for collecting royal income in the city. The veguer was responsible for keeping peace in the city. Other positions that rulers offered to rentiers included ambassador, naval admiral, tax collector, trade representative, and in one case, mayor of the Christian outpost in Tunis. Antonio M. Zalvídar, “Patricians’ Embrace of the Dominican Convent of St. Catherine in Thirteenth-Century Barcelona,” Medieval Encounters 18 (2012): 180-181. Bensch notes that the king may have also bestowed these offices on successful members of the bourgeoisie because they had a sufficient understanding of letters, were familiar with legal rhetoric and vocabulary, and knowledgeable of arithmetic. In other words, the same skills necessary to run a successful business were also necessary to help run a city in the king’s name. Bensch, “Poder, dinero y control del comercio,” 50-54.


13 The charter is transcribed in José María Font Rius, Orígenes del regimen municipal de Cataluña (Madrid: Instituto Nacional de Estudios Jurídicos, 1946), Appendix IX.

14 The number of consellers varied between 4 and 8 until 1274 when a reform fixed their number at 5. In addition, there were around 200 jurats until 1265, when the number was reduced to 100. Bensch, Barcelona and Its Rulers, 177.
socioeconomic classes or “hands” of the city: the mà maior (the rentiers, wealthy merchants, and jurists), the mà mitjana (the less prosperous merchants, bankers, and wealthy artisans, such as the drapers) and the mà menor (the menestrales, who were generally less prosperous artisans like spicers, tailors, tanners, and weavers). The counselors stood as an executive committee in regards to municipal affairs, but their control over the Consell was theoretically checked by their annual election by 12 jurats (called the dotzena).\textsuperscript{15}

Due to their focus on political developments in Barcelona during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, scholars tend to discuss how the Consell came to be rather than how it functioned after its establishment. They rely mostly on prescriptive documents, such as the charter of 1249, which details how the relationship between the crown and city officials should work in principle.\textsuperscript{16} But when we take into account the various municipal ordinances and recorded exchanges between city and royal officials in the late thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, we see that the relationship between the officials and the crown evolved over time. Ordinances from the second half of the thirteenth century indicate that municipal officials were reluctant to exercise fully the authority bestowed on them and were generally content to share political power with the Crown and its representatives. For example, when counselors received complaints from residents in 1255 about the pollution that the fustian weavers produced by dying their cloth, the consellers and jurats, rather than addressing the problems themselves, solicited the bailiff to establish industrial zoning regulations.\textsuperscript{17} In 1284, Pere II (r. 1276-1285) issued the


\textsuperscript{16} For example, see Bensch, Barcelona and Its Rulers, 75.

\textsuperscript{17} The municipal record of this interaction is transcribed in José María Font Rius, “Jaume I la municipalitat de Barcelona” in Discurs inaugural de l’any 1977-78 de la Universitat de Barcelona (Barcelona, 1977), 678-680.
Recognoverunt proceres, which gave the Consell de Cent the right to form an independent municipal court to prosecute criminal activity, but for years afterwards, counselors and jurats chose to assist the royal veguer in carrying out judicial processes rather than deploying this independent body. The hesitancy displayed by members of the Consell de Cent appears to have been partly the result of their inexperience and thus insecurity with procedure, an understandable reaction considering that such an administrative organization had little precedent in the thirteenth century. The political passivity of the counselors and the jurats may have also stemmed from the open nature of these socioeconomic classes at this time. Although the rentiers sought ways to distinguish themselves from other members of the bourgeoisie, entry into this group remained open to both the established and nouveau riche in the thirteenth century. This is evidenced by records listing the counselors and jurats between 1249 and 1291, which reveal a random assortment of surnames and suggest that no oligarchy yet had control of municipal governance in Barcelona. It is likely that the diversity of families and their short pedigrees encouraged cooperation among members of the Consell de Cent, and between these members and the king and his royal officials. Since the governing elite of Barcelona did not yet exercise local power based on familial relationships, they had to cooperate with royal power to maintain their political and social status.

**Barcelona and the Crown: Autonomy (1300-1336)**

The recorded policies issued by the Consell de Cent in the first quarter of the fourteenth century indicate that the Crown’s increasing financial dependence on the governing elites of Barcelona and the privileges that rulers bestowed on them in return encouraged city officials to

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act with more confidence. In contrast to the previous century, counselors and jurats expressed a stronger sense of independence and autonomy that weakened the cooperative spirit between the Consell and the Crown. The biggest catalyst for this shift in relations occurred in December of 1299 when Jaume II (r. 1291-1327), as a reward for their recent support of his military efforts in Sicily, granted the Christian residents of Barcelona freedom from any type of compulsory financial and military contribution to the Crown.\(^\text{20}\) City officials recognized that monetary contributions were key to acquiring privileges, so Jaume’s concession did not necessarily mean that they would never grant subsidies to the king. Instead, it meant that these subsidies would likely have to be negotiated rather than demanded. This change in the relationship shifted the political advantage from the Crown to the governing elite of Barcelona.

In addition to the voluntary nature of subsidies to the Crown, the transfer of power from the king to the Consell was reinforced when city officials began purchasing parts of the royal patrimony at the turn of the fourteenth century. Pere Ortí Gost has pointed out that members of the Consell de Cent bought royal mills, workshops, and markets in Barcelona when the Crown needed immediate funds.\(^\text{21}\) Within the context of the changing relationship between the monarchy and the Consell, it seems likely, and perhaps more significant, that city officials recognized that these purchases increased their power over the administration of the city at the expense of the Crown’s. Since the Consell now owned the mills, workshops, and markets, the fees that residents had previously paid to the Crown to use these spaces and services were now

\(^{20}\) AHCB, 1G, ms. 10, Llibre Verd, f. 285v.

\(^{21}\) At the end of thirteenth century, officials used city revenue to purchase for the city several mills for 125,367 sueldos, which provided the king with money that he needed for the conquest of Sicily. In 1320, they bought the rights to the Rec Comtal mills and census taxes for 178,495 sueldos, which the king needed for the conquest of Sardinia. Between 1342 and 1344, they gave the king 16,000 sueldos in exchange for the right to royal revenues from mills, butcher tables, and the emphyteusis census taxes on houses, tables, and royal workshops owned by the Crown. Ortí Gost, “El Consell de Cent Durant l’Edat Mitjana,” 37.
paid to the city. Although the Crown received the immediate revenue it required, its sales of parts of the royal patrimony ultimately left rulers with less revenue and increased their dependence on the generosity of the governing elite in Barcelona. Furthermore, since the bailiff was responsible for collecting taxes and fees owed to the Crown, including those paid by residents to use royal mills, workshops, and markets, Jaume II’s concession in 1299 and subsequent sale of royal patrimony contributed to a gradual decline of royal officials’ power, and thus representation, in the city.  

The royal office of veguer, which was responsible for maintaining peace in the city in the name of the king, also saw a decrease in authority. Initially, elected counselors gave an oath that included a statement obligating them to advise the veguer in his duties in the city. Beginning in 1338, however, counselors dropped this statement from their oath. Batlle has pointed out this change to demonstrate the evolution of the election process.  

Considered together with the decrease in the bailiff’s authority, the change is more indicative of a larger trend in which municipal officials sought to gain autonomy and chip away at the Crown’s control over the city. Officials no longer appeared interested in collaboration with the Crown or tentative in their own leadership. In the first quarter of the fourteenth century, they seem to have gained both confidence and the desire to govern the city without royal interference.

The change in how the urban governing elite associated with the Crown and its representatives in the first part of the fourteenth century suggests that municipal officials no longer saw themselves as secondary to the king in the governance of the city. Instead, they identified themselves as its primary leaders. Supporting this premise, in the early fourteenth century counselors and jurats began to issue ordinances and bans more frequently, while the


number issued by the bailiff and veguer decreased dramatically.\textsuperscript{24} Officials initiated a series of public projects to express their power visibly, an activity they had previously relied on the bailiff to carry out due to his control of revenue. For example, in 1301, officials took steps to bring water to the city from Monjuïc, and in 1315, they constructed a new porch on the Ribera de la Mar for the storage of imported grain.\textsuperscript{25} Finally, in order to make their administrative efforts more effective, the Consell de Cent created the Consell de Vint-i-Cinc in 1325. Members of the Consell de Vint-i-Cinc were also part of the Consell de Cent, but they had the responsibility of advising and representing the other jurats whose large number had a tendency to complicate and draw out Consell proceedings.\textsuperscript{26} The privileges that rulers provided and the initiative that city officials took to exercise their authority at the beginning of the fourteenth century served to diminish the presence and influence of royal power in the administration of the city and provided officials with the space to develop a sense of independence from the Crown.

Although the actions of the Crown were primarily responsible for the Consell’s growing sense of autonomy, rulers in the early fourteenth century expressed some discomfort with city officials’ emerging sense of confidence. In 1320, the Consell de Cent issued statutes and ordinances for the territories surrounding Barcelona, including Finestrelles, Collserola, Gavarres, Vallvidrera, and the town of Molins de Rei del Llobregat, which did not legally fall under its geographical jurisdiction. Jaime II wrote to the counselors and voiced his displeasure at their

\textsuperscript{24} Between 1312 and 1341, nearly all of the ordinances were issued by the Consell de Cent. These ordinances begin “Ordonne los consellers i els prohomes a la ciutat...” AHCB, Ordinacions originals. IB.XXVI-I, f. 21.

\textsuperscript{25} For officials’ effort to bring in water in 1301, see AHCB, 1B-I, Llibre del Consell, 1 (1301-1302), f. 94. For the porch in 1315, see AHCB, 1B-I, Llibre del Consell, 3 (1314-1315), f. 17.

\textsuperscript{26} Batlle explains that records of the Consell de vint-i-cinc during the first decades of its existence reflect some growing pains. For example, in 1325, there were 27 members, and in 1354, there were 63 members, and on some occasions some of its members were not identified as also being members of the Consell de Cent. Batlle, \textit{La crisis social y económica de Barcelona}, 76.
overstep, and he took the opportunity to question their right and cause to establish other recent statutes and ordinances for the city. The Consell sent two representatives before the king, and they proved that city officials had not in fact transgressed any legal parameters. Tomàs de Montagut Estragués has argued that this interaction reflected city officials’ increasing control over lawyers and the practice of law in Barcelona. 27 While Montagut Estragués’s argument is valid, it seems possible that Jaume II’s actions in 1320 also reflected an effort on his part to reassert royal authority over an institution that was beginning to test the limits of its legal power in the governance of the city. Similarly, in 1332, King Alfons III (r. 1327-1336) ordered counselors to acknowledge the authority of the Crown in their oath upon taking office. 28 Both Jaume II and Alfons III seem to have recognized that city officials no longer depended on the Crown to justify their power in the city, but instead located that authority within their own offices. But the efforts of Jaume and Alfons to reassert royal power appear to have done very little to stop this shift in authority, particularly because they continued to rely heavily on Barcelona for financial support.

The confidence and sense of autonomy that the Consell de Cent expressed correlates with the crystallization of the previously fluid socioeconomic hierarchy in Barcelona and the emergence of an established oligarchy made up of a small group of elite families that controlled municipal governance. Oligarchies emerged in urban centers throughout the Crown of Aragon and Europe in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries; the development of one in Barcelona was

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27 Montagut Estragués, “El règim jurídic dels juristes de Barcelona,” 202

28 King Alfons III ordered the consellers to add “salvis tamen dominio et jurisdiczione domini regis” to their oath. AHCB, Llibre del Consell 12, f. 5r. This document is transcribed Maria Cinta Mañé i Mas, Josefina Mutgé i Vives, Sabastià Riera i Viader, Manuel Rovira i Solà, “Corpus documental i índexs,” in El “Llibre del Consell” de la ciutat de Barcelona. Segle XIV: Les eleccions municipals (Barcelona: Consell Superior D'Investigacions Científiques, 2007), 441-442.
The presence of an oligarchy in Barcelona in the fourteenth century appears to have been both a product and a supporting feature of the autonomy of the Consell and thus, is significant to the evolving relationship between municipal officials and the Crown. Members of the Consell de Cent were still evenly divided among socio-economic classes at the beginning of the fourteenth century, but within a few decades, the balance had shifted so that all of the counselors and the majority of jurats were members of the mà maior. For example, in 1333, 64 of 105 jurats were rentiers and the wealthiest of merchants, and in 1338, 72 of 99 jurats belonged to this elite class. Consequently, the Consell was functionally comprised of two groups: a majority whose elite socioeconomic status only represented 10 percent of Barcelona’s residents, and a minority who belonged to the mà mitjana and mà menor and represented the rest of the city population.

Contributing further to the imbalance of power at this time, counselors and jurats belonging to the majority elite group rarely consulted with the other officials, which prevented members of the mà mitjana and mà menor from influencing municipal decisions. This exclusion was encouraged by the creation of the Consell de Vint-i-Cinc in 1325. As mentioned above, although the establishment of this group was intended to make decision-making more efficient, this elite, restricted political body instead facilitated the consolidation of power in the hands of a smaller number of wealthy, influential families. Election records from the Consell also reveal a shrinking number of families involved in municipal government. Batlle notes that in

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29 For example, Jeff Fynn-Paul traces the rise of an oligarchy in the city of Manresa in the early fourteenth century. See Flynn-Paul, The Rise and Decline of an Iberian Bourgeoisie. In Chapter 5, I will discuss the rise of an oligarchy in the city of Osca during the first part of the fourteenth century.


31 Batlle, La crisis social y económica de Barcelona, 81.
lists dated between 1300 and 1350, the name “Santcliment” is listed 142 times, “Marquet” 129 times, “Dusai” 129 times, “Llull” 72 times, and “Fivaller” 40 times. This pattern suggests that, by the mid-fourteenth century, a small group of rentier families united by ties of kinship and common interest had moved to distinguish themselves from and express their social superiority over other members of the urban bourgeoisie by excluding them from political power and taking control of local governance. Oligarchic families, however, did not just seek to exclude other inhabitants of Barcelona. Their efforts also sought to restrict the intervention of royal power. The Crown inadvertently facilitated this process by conceding financial power and privileges of autonomy to city officials over the course of the thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries. As a result, members of the oligarchy were able to imagine themselves as the governing sovereigns of the city.

**Barcelona and the Crown: Antagonism (1336-1387)**

Whereas rulers in the thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries were more or less willing to accept financial assistance in exchange for urban autonomy, Pere III (r. 1336-1387) viewed the reassertion of royal authority in Aragonese cities as an essential component of his identity as ultimate governing authority. In addition to subduing the nobility and demonstrating his military might to neighboring kingdoms, King Pere prioritized the expression of royal authority and the political subservience of urban officials in the urban sphere. This approach was particularly important in Barcelona, which was the largest and wealthiest city in the kingdom at the time. It seems likely that Pere believed that if he could dominate Barcelona, then municipal officials in

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32 Batlle, “Estudi històric: El “Llibre del Consell,” 35. In addition to these names, Romeu, Carbó, Gualbes, Sarrovira, Marimon, Bussot, and Desplà, and a few others are mentioned regularly in the records. Maria Cinta Mañé, Josefina Mutgé, Sabastià Riera, and Manuel Rovira have transcribed the names of consellers between the years 1300 and 1400. Mañé, Mutgé, Riera, and Rovira, “Relació dels consellers de Barcelona durant el segle XIV” in *El “Llibre del Consell” de la ciutat de Barcelona. Segle XIV: Les eleccions municipals* (Barcelona: Consell Superior D’Investigacions Científiques, 2007), 347-357.
other cities would fall into line. This, of course, does not mean that Pere refused money from Barcelona. He requested and accepted donations from them on a number of occasions, but he did so in addition to regularly appropriating funds from the city’s Jewish community.33 As previously discussed, Pere’s reliance on Jewish communities represented an important source of his power. Furthermore, King Pere did not offer any more political privileges to Barcelona’s officials regardless of their donations, and it appears that he was not afraid to risk losing this support if his authoritative policies proved unpopular. In light of King Pere’s apparent disregard for the political and financial power of the city, the once autonomous relationship between the Crown and Barcelona’s Consell de Cent, now under the control of an established oligarchy, now generated antagonism.

Pere’s policies toward Barcelona were evident from the very start of his reign. In May 1343, he revoked the privilege provided to the city by his father, Alfons III, who had endowed the Consell de Cent with the power to manage the organization of jurists in the city.34 During the previous ten years, oligarchic officials had controlled the appointment of judges and inquisitors, the salary of the jurists, and their procedures, such as when they could file appeals and how their sentences were executed.35 With this privilege, city officials were able to influence the interpretation of municipal law in their favor. Pere targeted this aspect of municipal authority first and sought to return it to the jurisdiction of the Crown. An acceptable supposition would be

33 For examples of donations provided by city officials in Barcelona to Pere III, see ACA RP, MR 312 (June 13, 1338), ACA C, Reg. 1314, f. 25 (Dec. 22, 1348), and ACA C, Reg. 700, f. 34 (1359). Jewish contributions, see ACA, C, Reg. 903, f. 124 (Oct 5, 1359), f. 122v-123 (Oct. 8, 1359), f. 138-138v (Nov. 6, 1359), f. 185v-186 (Dec 4, 1359), 245v (Feb 6, 1360).

34 Montagut Estragués, “El règim jurídic dels juristes de Barcelona,” 204.

35 ACA, C, Reg. 488, f. 88. This document is transcribed in Antoni Rubió i Lluch, Documents per l’Història de la Cultura Catalana Mig- eval, vol. I (Barcelona, 1908), 107-112.
that Pere’s extension of royal authority over the practice of law in Barcelona contributed to the subsequent split between the Consell de Cent and the Dominican friars at the Convent de Santa Caterina in 1369. Members of the Consell had conducted their meetings in the Convent since 1265 because of their affinity with the friars and the benefits of holding them in a large courtyard. In 1369, however, the counselors and the friars engaged in a struggle to control inquisitorial affairs. Counselors were no longer permitted to appoint inquisitors because Pere revoked their privilege in 1343. The friars thus appealed to the king for sole jurisdiction over the appointment of inquisitors, which the Crown granted. As a result, the Consell de Cent immediately abandoned the convent as their meeting place and began construction on the Saló de Cent where they would meet for the rest of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries.

In addition, Pere appears to have asserted the right of royal inclusion in municipal affairs when he intervened in 1348 in the emergency election of officials in the Consell de Cent. That year Barcelona lost two thirds of its population to the Black Death, including four of the five elected counselors. The only remaining counselor, Romeu Llull, quickly moved to rebuild the governing body to maintain control over the city by calling a meeting with the fourteen surviving jurats. Together, Llull and the jurats elected new members of the Consell de Vint-i-cinc and four additional counselors: Berneguer Vives, Berenguer Marquet, Guillem de Sentmenat, and Bernat Abril, whose familial connections indicate their membership in the prevailing oligarchy. When the king heard about this turn of event, he reacted angrily. Batlle argues that Pere’s displeasure was owed to the fact that he had not been consulted and that Llull and his associates had not

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37 Cubeles, “L’evolució de les actuacions del Consell de Cent, 134.
38 The four who died were: Arnau Dusay, Bernat Sarrovira, Miquel Roure, and Francesc Sabastida. AHCB, Llibre Verd, II, f. 374v. Batlle, La crisis social y económica de Barcelona, 77.
elected candidates in accord with the king’s preference for members not connected with the oligarchy.  

Furthermore, the king took advantage of the crisis to reorganize the Consell and attempt to reduce its political control over the city. Pere immediately wrote to Llull forbidding him from allowing the newly elected to take part in council meetings. In a subsequent letter, he accused all five of conspiring to undermine his authority as king, and ordered his current procurador general, Gilabert de Corbera, to conduct an investigation of the incident. Despite his orders, Berenguer Marquet and Guillem Sentmenat remained counselors. However, the other two were replaced, possibly by figures who were more likely to recognize the king’s authority. Perhaps the king was satisfied enough by the fact that city officials did not fully defy his command that he allowed Marquet and Santmenat to remain.

Over the next two decades, Pere’s actions served to reduce oligarchic power in Barcelona by boosting the power of royal officials in the city. Records reveal a shift in authority from city officials to the bailiff and the veguer. Whereas nearly all of the ordinances between 1312 and 1341 were issued by members of the Consell de Cent, in the 1350s almost half were issued by royal officials. Throughout the 1360s, all of the ordinances were issued by the bailiff and the veguer. This shift indicates that King Pere refused to curry favor with municipal officials as

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39 Batlle, *La crisis social y económica de Barcelona*, 77-78.

40 This document is transcribed in Amada López de Meneses, *Documentos acerca de la pesta negra en los dominios de la corona de Aragón* (Zaragoza: Heraldo de Aragón, 1956), no. 28.

41 ACA C, Reg. 1062, f. 142.

42 Mañé, Mutgé, Riera, Rovira have transcribed the names of consellers between the years 1300 and 1400. See “Relació dels consellers de Barcelona,” 352.

43 The mostassaf, a royal official responsible for policing weights and currencies within the marketplace, issued all ordinances in 1350 and twice in 1353; the veguer issued an ordinance in 1356; and members of the Consell issued ordinances in 1354, thrice in 1356, and twice in 1359. AHCB, Ordinacions originals. IB.XXVI-1, f. 21.

44 The bailiff issued ordinances twice in 1364 and twice in 1366. The veguer issued one in 1366. AHCB, Ordinacions originals. IB.XXVI-1, f. 21.
previous rulers had done. He was attempting to reverse the trend, first by demanding control over those who defined municipal laws, then by intervening in the election of officials, and later by strengthening the power of royal officials in Barcelona. It is within this context that we must consider a signature judicial process that took place in 1356. The previous incidents were all part of King Pere’s plan to weaken the power of the oligarchy by limiting the power and autonomy of the Consell de Cent. An investigation concerning the murder of a Barcelona oligarch in 1356, however, provided the king with an opportunity to intervene in feuds between members of the urban governing elite. The king’s interference in the judicial process enabled him to demonstrate his ability to control their circumstances, emphasize the superiority of royal authority, and subjugate an overly-confident collection of patriciate families.

**The Murder of Ramon de Sant Vincenç (1356)**

Between the mid-fourteenth and mid-fifteenth centuries, there was a surge of factional fighting within the Crown of Aragon and throughout Western Europe.\(^45\) Traditionally, scholars have argued that this struggle was at its essence an internecine class struggle between the elite and the non-elite. This was certainly the case in Barcelona during the fifteenth century when the conflict between the *Busca* and the *Biga* took place.\(^46\) Flocel Sabaté, however, has argued that viewing factional fighting, which took place in many different cities, as a uniform, unchanging phenomenon suppresses analysis of the circumstances that may have prompted or shaped the

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\(^{45}\) Records indicate that Catalonia saw some factional fighting during the thirteenth century, but this fighting was less pervasive and more controllable than it was in the fourteenth century. This is likely connected to the stronger royal presence in the thirteenth century and the amicable relationship between cities and the Crown at that time. Bensch, *Barcelona and its Rulers*, 339-340. Sabaté demonstrates the checks on factionalism in the thirteenth century by pointing to the Catalan constitutions of 1292 and 1333. Both versions forbid *veguers* from exercising power in the same district in which they lived in order to prevent membership in a particular faction from influencing their actions as a royal official. Sabaté, “Oligarchies and Social Fractures,” 5.

various documented struggles. Sabaté explains that when we consider the context of the location and the people involved in instances of factional fighting, it becomes clear that this type of conflict evolved over time in response to both local and kingdom-wide political, economic, and social developments. In addition, this approach reveals evidence that some cases were the result of disunion and competition within the patriciate class itself instead of between socioeconomic classes. By adopting Sabaté’s approach, it is possible to see that the recorded altercations in Barcelona during the second half of the fourteenth century frequently stemmed from a power struggle among the rentiers of the city. As the Consell de Cent became less inclusive and a handful of elite families took the reigns of municipal governance, aspirations for even more power and control drove many of these families to create alliances and identify enemies within the same oligarchic group. The desire to acquire one of the five prestigious counselor positions likely drove alliances and hostility among rentier families.

In 1356, the fighting between Santcliments and their allies, the Sant Vincençes, and the family of Macià Messeguer, who had allied with the Marquets, Fivallers, Romeus, Llaceras, Sarroviras, and others, became so violent in the streets of Barcelona that the king wrote to the Consell de Cent expressing his fear that they might injure or kill other innocent residents and that the brawls might extend to areas outside of the city. Sabaté posits that some instances of factional fighting took place because residents believed that the prosecution of local slights and transgressions by the bailiff or the king himself could be swayed by bribery and, consequently

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47 Sabate i Curull explains that traditionally, scholarship has argued that existence and actions of factions were due to the influence of the nobility. He suggests that we examine factions with an anthropological and sociological approach. We should see factions as part of the medieval social structure in which individuals tended to seek shelter in groups and solve their problems through cohesion to a faction or band. Sabaté, “Oligarchies and Social Fractures,” 4-5.

these forms of power were not a trusted or fair source of adjudication.\footnote{Sabate, “Oligarchies and Social Fractures,” 8.} Considering that members of the families involved were frequently elected as jurats and counselors in the first half of the fourteenth century and that city officials in Barcelona valued their political autonomy more than ever, it seems likely that participants in the 1356 conflict took part because they saw themselves as rival authorities in the city.

In 1356, the conflict between the factions came to a head when Ramon de Sant Vincenç died as a result of injuries sustained from a crossbow fired during a fight.\footnote{“Crònica del racional de la ciutat de Barcelona” in Recueil de documents i estudis (Barcelona: Arxiu Municipal Històric, 1921),130.} Sant Vincenç’s death provided the king with a legal reason to take control of the situation and assert his authority over those involved, and by extension, the city. The king reacted by sending Procurador General Pere de Montcada to oversee the judicial proceedings. The Montcada family had been closely associated with the Crown for the past two centuries. Members of their family had fought beside rulers as they conquered new territory and put down noble rebellions. Because of the trust felt for the Montcadas, rulers often appointed them to administrative positions to represent royal interests.\footnote{The association of the Montcadas is recorded in Jaume I’s Book of Deeds. The work describes several members of the family as being in the constant company of the king. More specifically, it shows that Guillem de Montcada acted as procurador general at least once during Jaume’s lifetime, and he was one of his chief creditors. In this manner, the Montcadas fit into the pattern of financial support in exchange for offices. Jaume I, The Book of Deeds of James I of Aragon: A Translation of the Medieval Catalan Llibre dels Fets, edited by Damian Smith and Helena Buffery (Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishing, 2010), 34. Members of the Montcada family also fought with King Pere III against the rebellious union in 1348. Pere III, Chronicle, trans. M. Hillgarth, vol. II (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1980), 393-394. Montcadas also served as representatives of the Crown in the city of Lleida in the late twelfth century. See Chapter 6 for more information.} Consequently, Pere de Montcada’s intervention in the 1356 case was the epitome of visible royal authority. Montcada quickly arrested Ramon Marquet, Joan Marquet, Macià Messeguer, Guillem de Llacera, Jaume Fiveller, Marc Sarrovira, Francesc de Castalarí, Guerau
and Bernet de Palou, and Pere Romeu.\footnote{ACB, Francesc de Ladernosa, vol. 250, f. 13v. (Aug. 25, 1356)} On the king’s order, Montcada had them imprisoned and chained in a dark room, harsh conditions for members of the urban governing elite.\footnote{AHPB, Francesc de Ladernosa, f. 109-112.}

With the possible exception of the Palou brothers and Pere Romeu, all of those arrested had been tonsured during their time as students in the Barcelona cathedral school. Although their education had ended years ago and none of the accused had gone on to become priests, their lawyers argued that they should be freed under ecclesiastical jurisdiction in accordance with canonical law and should not be subject to such abusive treatment at the hands of a royal representative.\footnote{The lawyers submitted documentation of the dates when the accused had been tonsured. AHPB, Francesc de Ladernosa, 23-35, f. 101-102 and 109-110. One document shows that Jaume Fitller had received the tonsure in 1336 in the house of the archdeacon of Barcelona. Maria Teresa Ferrer i Mallol, “Altres Families i Membres de L’Oligarquia Barcelonina,” in \textit{El “Llibre del Consell” de la Ciutat de Barcelona, Segle XIV: Les Eleccions Municipals} (Barcelona: Consell Superior d’Investigacions Científiques, 2007), 295.}

This infuriated the king who believed that such a claim was solely intended to prevent the proper performance of justice and to undermine his prerogatives as ruler. Pere refused to grant the imprisoned 	extit{rentiers} freedom or any leniency.\footnote{Ferrer i Mallol, “Altres Families i Membres de L’Oligarquia Barcelonina,” 202.}

Soon after, the lawyers returned to protest that their clients’ imprisonment was based solely on the denunciation of their enemies and that they had not received information from Montcada about the charges even after three months of imprisonment. In fact, Moncada had refused to grant the accused bail or publicly publish the proceedings of the investigation. At this point, the current counselors of Barcelona added their voice to the complaint about the oppressive and unjust treatment of their fellow citizens (and likely, relatives and/or friends).\footnote{AHPB, Francesc de Ladernosa,23-35, f. 111-112.}
Noticeably absent from these complaints were, of course, those urban elites connected with the Sant Vincenç family, who demanded atonement for crimes against their members.\(^{57}\)

Finally, after four months of imprisonment, all but two men, Macià Messeguer and Ramon Marquet, were released from prison, although Montcada continued his investigation against all of the accused. It seems that both Montcada and the king were determined to create as much trouble as possible for those who had fashioned themselves superior authorities of Barcelona over and against the Crown. Eventually, however, Montcada pronounced Ramon Marquet guilty and dropped the charges against the other nine. The king sentenced Marquet to death by drowning, which took place on June 21, 1358.\(^{58}\) The records reveal that Marquet and his lawyer only received documentation about the accusations in December, six months after his initial arrest, and Marquet was never allowed to defend himself.\(^{59}\) Many felt that the king and his official had acted wrongly and in transgression of the rights accorded to the residents and city officials by the Usatges and the privileges granted to them by previous rulers.\(^{60}\)

It seems likely that the rentiers of Barcelona recognized the king’s intervention in the judicial process of 1356 as an attempt to weaponize accusations against a handful of urban elites

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\(^{57}\) Moncada received letters from the brother of the deceased as well as the king that supported keeping the accused imprisoned. AHPB, Francesc de Ladernosa, 23-35, f. 123-124.

\(^{58}\) *Crònica del Racional*, 130.

\(^{59}\) “com lo senyor rei lo féu negar per la mort d’en Ramon Sentvicent, de què era inculpat, e defensions no li foren dades, si bé per la part foren demanades e requestes.” Pere el Cerimoniós, *Crònica*, in *Les quatre grans cròniques*, edited by Ferran Soldevila (Barcelona: Selecta, 1971), 1145.

\(^{60}\) Ferrer suggests that the king’s behavior should be considered alongside his treatment of the Aragonese noble Joan Ximénez d’Urrea, who was tried and executed as a result of his participation in the rebellion of the Uniónes in 1348, and Bernat de Cabrera, Count of Ausona, who was executed in 1364 as a result of his presumed collusion with Castilian enemies. In both cases, neither man was given the opportunity to defend themselves. She follows this by explaining that this evidence suggests the king’s deep aversion for the urban oligarchy and the nobility. Maria Teresa Ferrer, “Altres Families i Membres de L’Oligarquia Barcelonina,” in *El “Llibre del Consell” de la Ciutat de Barcelona, Segle XIV: Les Eleccions Municipals* (Barcelona: Consell Superior d’Investigacions Científiques, 2007), 204.
to demonstrate his power over the city, and bring the oligarchy to its knees. In many ways, Pere succeeded. He showed that he was willing and able to manipulate the lives of oligarchs and even execute them if it served his political goals. Through this show of force, however, the king introduced a new tool to municipal politics, one that the oligarchy could also exploit to resist Pere’s authoritarian approach. It is likely that the *rentiers* of Barcelona recognized that just as the king could exploit judicial processes to his own political ends, they too could use them to target representatives of royal power and undermine the king’s power. This approach of using accusations to further political interests is present in the three host desecration investigations that took place in the Crown of Aragon during the second half of the fourteenth century. In 1367, a little over ten years after the Sant Vincenç murder trial, members of the governing elite partnered with Prince Joan to pursue the first accusation of host desecration discussed in this work. The accusations presented the oligarchs with an opportunity to respond to the king’s political bravado. They used the judicial process to evince their control over local politics – to the exclusion of the king – by toying with an important source of Pere’s power: the Jews.

**Attempted Host Desecration in 1367**

On July 6, 1367, Prince Joan wrote to his father, King Pere, and explained that a Christian thief by the name of Pere Fuster of Morella had confessed to stealing a silver *paxy* and seven consecrated hosts from the church of Santa María de Muntblanc and selling them to a Jewish man in the Barcelona Call. According to this letter to the king, the prince discussed the matter with his council, which was comprised of Berenguer d’Abella, Jacme desMonell, Berenguer de Relat, Pere Sacosta, Guillem Despuig, Jacme de Vallsecha, Berenguer des Cortey, Romeu de Busquets, and Francesc de Clasquerí.\(^1\) Joan and his council took the Christian thief to

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\(^1\) ACA C, Reg. 1708, f. 101-103.
a house located on the Plaça de Sent Jacme, a busy square located near the Call, and directed him
to point out the buyer as he walked by their vantage point. It was not long before the thief
pointed out Provençal de Piera, a member of the Jewish community, who confessed under torture
to buying the host pieces with the intention of desecrating them. Piera’s identification represents
the beginning of a cycle of torture, confession, and accusation of others. By the end of the
investigation, Joan and his council had arrested de Piera, Struch Biona, Salamo Sescalta, and
Badroch Gallart, all members of Barcelona’s Jewish community. All but Sescalta, who died of
the injuries he sustained from torture, were executed by burning. Although Joan assured his
father that he had taken the necessary precautions to verify the thief’s testimony, the prince
carried out his investigation and the execution prior to writing to the king. By acting without
prior authorization from his father, it appears that Joan realized that King Pere, in line with his
aim to be the ultimate governing authority of the realms, would move to impede his investigation
in order to regain control over his son and the Jews who stood accused. Anticipating rebuke from
the king, Joan invoked his council to defend himself. He stated that “all agree with me in the
matter,” and claimed that he and his council had acted against the Jews accused so that they may
“correct the crime in order to find where the hosts are located.”

As suggested in Chapter 2, Joan used the accusation of host desecration in 1367 as a
political tool to shape an inclusive form of kingship in opposition to his father’s autocratic
approach to governance. The royal letters exchanged by Prince Joan and King Pere, however,
also point to the participation of members of the Barcelona oligarchy in the investigation. Royal
records indicate that Berenguer d’Abella, Jacme desMonell, Berenguer de Relat, and Pere

62 “Jo mentre hic sia hi, frare mon poder e encara, com hic partescha, enten a jaquir lo proces als dits Bng. deRellat e
P. sa Casta, qui ab los dits micer Jacme de Vall seccha e ab micer G. des Puig e ab en Bng. des Cortey continuuen
aquest fet, si per manera del mon sen pora saber veritat.” ACA C, Reg. 1780, f. 101-103.
Sacosta were all members of the nobility who did not hold an office in Barcelona’s municipal government. The others, however, including Guillem Despuig, Jacme de Vallsecha, Berenguer des Cortey, Romeu de Busquets, and Francesc de Clasquerí, were all members of rentier families, and active participants in the *Consell de Cent*, which meant that they cycled through the offices of jurat, member of the *Consell de Vint-i-Cinc*, and counselor. Consequently, all had reason to resist the stronger imposition of King Pere’s authority and encourage the prince to adopt a more inclusive form kingship. Their participation in the investigation of 1367 was, in part, a means to demonstrate their ascendancy in Barcelona over the king. It also represented a form of retaliation against the king’s exploitation of the 1356 case following the murder of Ramon de Sant Vincenç to dominate the oligarchy and the city. In short, it appears that, like the prince, city officials used the judicial process against the Jews accused since they were representatives of royal power. The judicial process became an apparatus to further their own political interests.

The five city officials listed were part of a web of political and personal relationships that had already crisscrossed for decades. In 1367, Romeu de Busquets, Guillem Despuig, and Francesc de Clasquerí were finishing their terms as counselors when the Christian thief confessed. This marked Romeu de Busquets’ fifth term as counselor, and he would be elected to this position twice more in the 1370s. Although Jacme de Vallsecha did not serve as a counselor

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63 According to municipal records, Guillem Despuig was a jurat in 1357, 1358, 1360, 1361, 1362, 1365, 1367, and 1373; a member of the vint-i-cinc in 1357, 1358, 1360, 1361, 1362, 1365, 1367, and 1373; and a counselor in 1366 and 1375. Jacme de Vallsecha was a jurat in 1354, 1355, 1356, 1358, 1360, 1361, 1362, 1365, 1366, 1367, 1373, 1374, and 1375; a member of the vint-i-cinc in 1354, 1355, 1356, 1358, 1360, 1361, 1362, 1365, 1366, 1367, 1373, 1374, 1375; and a counselor in 1357; Berenguer des Cortey was a jurat in 1354, 1355, 1356, 1357, 1358, 1361, 1362, and 1365; and a member of the vint-i-cinc in 1354, 1357, 1358, 1361, 1362, 1365. Romeu de Busquets was a jurat in 1350, 1354, 1355, 1357, 1358, 1360, 1362, 1365, and 1374; a member of the vint-i-cinc in 1350, 1354, 1355, 1357, 1358, 1360, 1362, 1365, and a counselor in 1353, 1356, 1361, 1363, 1366, 1373, 1375; Francesc de Clasquerí was a jurat in 1354 and 1362; a member of the vint-i-cinc in 1362; and a counselor in 1366. See Mañé, Mutgé, Riera, Rovira, “Corpus documental i índexs,” in *El “Llibre del Consell” de la ciutat de Barcelona.*
in 1367, he had been a counselor during the royal murder investigation in 1356. Along with the other counselors, he had complained about the procurador general’s treatment of the accused. Similarly, Bereguer des Cortey, along with other members of the Cortey family, had served continuously as a jurat between 1354 and 1365. Perhaps more significantly, Francesc de Clasquerí was one of the figures arrested for the murder of Ramon de Sant Vincenç in 1356. Under the direction of the king, he and his companions endured months of imprisonment without formal charges and in harsh conditions not suited to their status. He was powerless to stop the king from executing Ramon Marquet, who was probably Clasquerí’s political ally and friend. It seems likely that this experience in 1356 instilled a deep-seated anger in Clasquerí against the king that would not have abated by 1367. Although Romeu de Busquets was not physically affected by the judicial process of 1356, he was connected to the case as a result of his marriage to Sibil·la Marquet, the paternal aunt of Ramon Marquet. In his study on the development and function of oligarchies, Sabaté posits that the social structure of medieval Catalonia encouraged individuals to look to their kin as a primary source of their identity and rely on their familial relations to navigate the unstable world around them. Consequently, members of the Marquet family, related through marriage or otherwise, likely resented the king’s actions in the Sant Vincenç case. From this perspective, it is reasonable to assume that Busquets saw the king’s persecution of Ramon Marquet as a slight against himself as well.

As previously discussed, Pere exploited his legal possession of the Jews and their revenue more than any other ruler before him as a mechanism of power to advance his governing authority. The relationship between the Crown and the Jews was particularly obvious in

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64 Mañé, Mutgé, Riera, Rovira, “Corpus documental i índex,” in El “Llibre del Consell” de la ciutat de Barcelona, 217.

Barcelona due to the fact that the Jewish community there was the largest in Catalonia, comprising more than 1,000 families in the mid-fourteenth century. King Pere relied heavily on the Jews of Barcelona to pay for his military endeavors against the King of Mallorca and King of Castile. In addition, the Jews of Barcelona had requested Pere’s interference on a number of occasions since he ascended the throne in 1336. Although most of these requests were appeals for protection, they nonetheless invited the king to interfere in the governance of the city, and thus infringe on city officials’ leadership. Consequently, it is reasonable to assume that, like Prince Joan, city officials in Barcelona understood how significant the Jews were to King Pere’s efforts to expand royal power over all levels of society.

The accusation of host desecration in 1367 thus offered city officials an opportunity to retaliate against Pere’s exploitation of the judicial process in 1356 following the murder of Ramon de Sant Vincenç and diminish the power of the rentiers over municipal governance. The city officials listed were present when Joan took the Christian thief to identify the Jewish buyer of the stolen host pieces; they oversaw the torture of the accused; and they were likely in attendance when the prince made his judgement and ordered the subsequent executions. The active participation of city officials in the prosecution of 1367 sent a message to the king that they were serious about governing Barcelona, including its Jewish residents. Furthermore, city officials’ participation in this case indicated to the king that, just as he had done in 1356, they too

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66 Yitzhak Baer, *Historia de los judíos en la Corona de Aragón (s.XIII y XIV)* (Saragossa: Diputación General de Aragón, 1985), 47.

67 For example, in 1348 Pere created the position of commissioner for Jewish affairs. This official, appointed by the king, had the power to intervene in municipal affairs when they related to local Jews. In December of 1354, representatives from Jewish communities throughout the Crown of Aragon gathered in Barcelona to discuss the possible formation of a united association. In addition, they asked the king to appeal to the pope to issue bulls that condemned attacks on and accusations against Jews. Yitzhak Baer, *A History of the Jews in Christian Spain*, vol. II (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society of America, 1961), 24-25.
could use judicial processes to their political benefit. Yet instead of targeting the urban
governing elite, they used judicial processes against representatives of royal power in order to
criticize and undermine the king’s objective to exclude all other political voices.

The Poisoning in 1374-1377

In addition to targeting the *rentiers* through a judicial process in 1356, King Pere III also
sought to undermine their political and economic power in the city by favoring members of the
*mà mitjana* and the *mà menor* (the less prosperous merchants, bankers, and artisans of the city).
In doing so, the king established an alliance with groups that also resented the power of the
oligarchy and stood to benefit from the revitalization of royal power in the city. He used the
established method of demonstrating his favor by providing offices, such as the position of
almoner, to residents who belonged to the two lesser socioeconomic classes.\(^{68}\) It was apparent
that the king was using his partiality to create an avenue through which he could reassert royal
authority and weaken the oligarchy’s political monopoly. As a result, oligarchs likely identified
members of the *mà mitjana* and the *mà menor* as representatives of royal power, along with the
Jews.

In 1374, Arnau Marquès, his wife, Antònia Marquès, and her father, Pere Verger accused
one another of attempted poisoning. According to the reports, Arnau became suspicious of his
wife, Antònia, after he experienced symptoms so severe that he was in danger of death. After he
recovered with the aid of a “remedy,” Arnau spoke with his wife’s father, Pere Verger, and the
two agreed to work together to kill Antònia with arsenic. Their plan might have succeeded, but
the apothecary who sold Verger the poison suspected his intent and demanded it back. Later in

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\(^{68}\) Pere III delegated this position to members of the *mà mitjana* and the *mà menor* in cities throughout Catalonia. Anna Gironella i Delgà, “L’Hospital de Na Clara de Girona: Nous documents per a la història de l’assistència als pobres en època medieval” in *Miscel·lània en Honor de Josep Maria Marquès* (Girona: Publicacions de l’Abadia de Montserrat, 2010), 144.
the investigation, Antònia and her brother-in-law, Arnau Desprats, were charged with incest due to accusations made by Arnau Marquès and Pere Verger against their alleged affair. It is not clear from the existing proceedings whether an affair offered the impetus for the multiple poisoning attempts. 69

Although the details of the case are titillating, the figures involved and their responses to the accusations nonetheless offer insight into the struggle for power between the Crown and the oligarchy in Barcelona during second half of the fourteenth century. The proceedings describe Pere Verger as a jug maker and Arnau Desprats as a saddler, making them members of the mà menor. 70 The judges of the case, by contrast, were part of the mà maior. Municipal records reveal that the primary judge, Guillem Martina, was a “Barcelona man of law.” 71 Civic fiscal records identify the secondary judge, Castelló de Mallorques, as a lawyer as well as a rentier. 72 The main participants in the case were thus divided along the political and socioeconomic lines of their day. It is also significant that the judges’ investigation of the accusation began in July 1374 and only came to a conclusion in October 1377 after they interrogated 18 people, an abnormally long and complex judicial process. 73 In the introduction of his linguistic study of the case, Joan Anton Rabella suggests that there is a connection between the length of the judicial

69 The transcribed proceedings from the investigation and trials are presented in Joan Anton Rabella i Ribas, Un matrimoni desavingut i un gat metzinat: procés criminal barceloni del segle XIV (Barcelona: Institut d’Estudis Catalans, 1998), 29-64.

70 Pere Verger is recorded as a “gerrer,” and Arnaud Desprats is described as a “baster.” Rabella, Un matrimoni desavingut, 45, 62.

71 For mention of Martina in the proceedings, see Rabella, Un matrimoni desavingut, 62. For documentation of his role as “jurisperitus Barchinone,” see Carlos López Rodríguez, Sexe i violència en la Corona d’Aragó Processos criminals dels segles XIII at XV (Valencia: Universitat de València, 2014), Section 22.

72 For evidence of his rentier status in Barcelona, see Manuel Sánchez Martínez, Pagar al rey en la Corona de Aragón durante el siglo XIV: estudios sobre fiscalidad y finanzas reales y urbanas (Barcelona: Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas, 2003), 515.

73 Rabella, Un matrimoni desavingut, 64-66.
process and the ongoing tug-of-war between the Crown and the oligarchy. Since Rabella’s study is focused on the language of the documented investigation, he does not explain why or how the conflict between the king and governing elite of the city influenced the nature of the case. No other scholarship has examined the recorded judicial process. If one considers the two judicial processes in 1356 and 1367, it appears that the judges were aware that the king was using his relationship with the lower classes of Barcelona as a means of asserting power over the *Consell de Cent*. Moreover, they were quite conscious of the fact that the accusers and the accused belonged to the *mà menor*. As members of the *rentiers*, the governing elite of the city, the judges exploited the legal system to demonstrate their authority over the city and undermine the king’s political program.

For nearly two and a half years, the two judges, Martina and Mallorques, interrogated people connected to the case, while Antònia Marquès and Arnau Desprats remained in prison. After receiving numerous complaints from *jurats* belonging to the *mà mitjana* and the *mà menor* that described the harassment that artisans and merchants in Barcelona had endured at the hands of the judges, the king wrote directly to Judge Martina at the beginning of January in 1377. He demanded that the judge pronounce a sentence and conclude his investigation. When he did not get a response, he again wrote to Martina two weeks later. There is no record of Martina’s response, if he gave one at all, but it does not appear that he obeyed the king’s orders on either occasion. On February 10th, Jaume Gelida, the defense attorney for Antònia Marquès and Arnau Desprats, complained to the king that neither Judges Guillem Martina nor Castelló de Mallorques would provide him with documentation about the investigation or pronounce a sentence for his clients. King Pere wrote again to the two judges, explaining that he had already ordered them multiple times to issue a sentence. He threatened that if they did not act immediately, he would
direct his royal officials to intervene. It is likely that Pere was reluctant to intervene because
criminal activity that did not result in murder fell under the jurisdiction of city officials.
Considering Pere’s warning to the judges, however, it appears that if the king could demonstrate
that the judges were not performing their duties, he could legally impose royal authority in the
matter. We can assume that Guillem Martina and Castelló de Mallorques continued to resist the
king’s commands because, on March 6, 1377, King Pere wrote to the Governor General of
Catalonia, Ramon Alemany, directing him to take command of the case. In October of 1377,
Alemany absolved all of the accused due to the lack of evidence.74

This case represents a mirror opposite of the 1357 investigation concerning the murder of
Ramon de Sant Vincenç. In the Sant Vincenç case, the king and his official kept the accused
members of the oligarchy imprisoned for an amount of time that was deemed unjust without
providing official charges or appropriate document. In the 1374 case regarding attempted
poisonings and charges of incest, it was members of the mà maior who held the accused without
offering information about the process and without proper sentencing. Whereas the king used the
judicial process in 1356 to demonstrate his control over the governing elite and the city, judges
belonging to the mà maior used the poisoning and incest accusations of 1374 to target members
of the lower class, a group allied with the king and his interests. Although a royal official, the
governor general of Catalonia, eventually put an end to the trial, the judges made a clear
statement by pursuing accusations against Arnau Marquès, Antònia Marquès, Pere Verger, and
Arnau Desprats. By utilizing the same tool of persecution that the king had employed in 1357,
the judges revealed the impotence of the Crown to dominate the oligarchy or undermine its
control over the residents of the city, including those affiliated with the lower classes.

74 Rabella, Un matrimoni desavingut, 25, 61-66.
King Pere Prevails in 1386

Examined together, the cases of 1356, 1367, and 1374 demonstrate that the king, the prince, and the governing elite of Barcelona each used judicial processes to advance distinct political positions. These cases shed light on a mechanism of power not visible in royal privileges and concessions extended to the city or the ordinances issued by the Consell de Cent. In addition, they reveal the relationships among members of the oligarchy; the mà maior, mà mitjana, and the mà menor in the city; and between these groups and the king. Finally, these cases connect Pere’s political assault on the privileges and power of the Consell de Cent in the early years of his reign with his drastic action in 1386. In that year, the king implemented a monumental reform of the Consell de Cent that was intended to break the grip of the oligarchy over political administration in Barcelona.

More specifically, following the November election of 1385, jurats belonging to the mà menor complained about the unbalanced number of representatives from the three socioeconomic classes in the Consell and the heavy taxes that the counselors, all members of the mà maior, had imposed on the working people of the city while increasing their own salaries.75 Instead of making the necessary changes to placate the jurats from the mà menor, counselors responded by forbidding the urban guilds from meeting. Since the guilds of the city were primarily comprised of merchants and artisans from the mà menor and mà mitjana, this action was likely intended to prevent them from organizing in resistance to the oligarchy. Jurats from the mà menor immediately asked the king to intervene.76 As Gallart has noted, this invitation

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75 In 1379, at the same time that consellers increased taxes due to the high municipal deficit, they proposed to increase their annual salary from 60 libras to 100 libras. Batlle, La crisis social y económica de Barcelona, 87-89.

76 Batlle notes that jurats who complained were tanners and weavers and likely members of the guilds that Joan forbade to meet. Batlle, La crisis social y económica de Barcelona, 85-86.
presented the king with the opportunity to reform the entire Consell de Cent. Building on Gallart’s connection between the complaint and the reform, the power struggle that had taken place around the three cases of 1356, 1367, and 1374, one can posit that Pere reformed the Consell not only to weaken the power of the oligarchy and but also to assert royal authority over the administration of the city.

In September 1386, Pere replaced the five counselors from the mà maior with two counselors from each socioeconomic class (six in total). In addition, the king ordered that 100 jurat positions be divided evenly between the classes. The jurats representing one hand would designate the electors of another hand, so that members of the mà maior would appoint the electors of the mà mitjana, the mà mitjana would appoint the electors of the mà menor, and so forth. In order to prevent jurats from the mà maior from excluding those from the mà mitjana and mà menor, the king demanded that members from each group had to be consulted before a decision could be made. To impede the oligarchy from regaining their monopoly on political offices, the king instituted a law that forbade counselors from moving immediately to a different office within the Consell after their term was over.77 The final and most telling aspect of Pere’s reform came in November 1386. To start the reorganization of the Consell off on the right foot, the king personally appointed the six counselors, who were likely figures the king believed would support his policies. The king created an advisory board composed of two rentiers, two merchants, four artisans, and four menestrales, who were charged with making sure that officials in the Consell de Cent continued to abide by the measures of the king’s reform.78 It is evident

77 This jumping from one office to another is clear when we examine the positions held by the five officials who participated in the 1367 host desecration trial. See footnote 64.
78 AHCB, Miscelánea, caja 14.
that Pere did not trust the members of the oligarchy to give up their control in the city without a fight. King Pere’s reform might have succeeded, but for the fact that he died on January 5, 1387.

The Return of the Oligarchy under Joan I (1387-1396)

In opposition to his father’s authoritarian style of leadership, Joan implemented a more inclusive form of kingship that decentralized royal power and allowed room for other authorities, such as the Barcelona oligarchy, to take part in governing the realms. King Joan placed urban administration back into the hands of elite municipal officials, a development which they had requested for decades under his father. These changes likewise included the administration of minority religious communities, who traditionally fell under royal power. In theory, allowing municipal officials to govern the cities should have allowed Joan to focus his attention on cultivating an impressive international image for the Crown of Aragon while satisfying the political ambitions of urban oligarchs.

For a short period of time after Joan ascended the throne, it appeared that his inclusive approach to governance would succeed in producing the goodwill and cooperation necessary to establish political stability in the realms. Initial interaction between members of the Barcelona oligarchy and King Joan suggested that the two parties would carry on a mutually beneficial relationship based on respect for one another’s approach to governance. As soon as Joan received notice that his father had died, he acted to take control of his father’s widow, Sibil·la, and her household to make sure that they did not try to create alliances with the Crown’s enemies or carry off riches that belonged to the Crown’s treasury. Indeed, when Sibil·la realized that the king was dying, she and her supporters attempted to flee the kingdom. In response to Joan’s appeal for help in capturing Sibil·la, the Consell de Cent agreed to extend military and financial aid to the new monarch in his efforts. Significantly, some members of the Barcelona mà maior,
including the Marquets, also contributed money independently.79 With the assistance of the Consell de Cent, Prince Martí succeeded in catching Sibil·la and her followers just south of the French border.80 The financial and military support that the governing elite of Barcelona willingly provided sent a message to Joan that the oligarchs approved of his approach to governance. It is also possible that the individual donations that the Marquets and other members of the mà maior made to the new king were intended to remind Joan of their economic power. In either case, this action reminded Joan that he and the governing elite of Barcelona needed one another.

Joan appeared to hear this message loud and clear. One of his first acts as king was to revoke the reform of the Consell de Cent that his father had implemented just prior to his death. On January 25, a little over three weeks after his ascension to the throne, Joan returned power to the rentiers. He revoked Pere’s order that the counselors had to evenly represent three socioeconomic classes, which allowed members of the mà maior to monopolize these positions again. In addition, instead of obligating jurats from each hand to elect those of another, Joan directed each socioeconomic class to submit a list of potential jurats to the counselors, who were more likely to choose candidates who would support their power over the city. In addition, whereas the advisory board created by King Pere was composed of two rentiers, two merchants, four artisans, and four menestrales, under Joan, the board had four rentiers, four merchants, two artisans, and two menestrales, reflecting the shift of power back to the oligarchy.81 Furthermore, in contrast to the 1360s and 1370s, when all municipal ordinances were issued by royal officials

80 For more information about the relationship between Joan, Martí, and Sibil·la, see Chapter 3.
81 Batlle, La crisis social y económica de Barcelona, 99.
under King Pere, beginning in 1388 they were issued equally by members of the *Consell de Cent* and royal officials.\(^\text{82}\) The equitable promulgation of city ordinances paints an image of municipal and royal unification and the appropriate balance of powers in the city and throughout the kingdom. Joan’s actions bring to mind the late thirteenth-century collaboration between wealthy urban lenders and the Crown. By extending privileges and concessions to elite officials, Joan sought to follow in the footsteps of his predecessors who had exchanged rights and offices for financial and military support.

Joan also cultivated individual relationships with Barcelona oligarchs that may have originated during his prosecution of the Jews accused of host desecration in 1367. In 1393, the inhabitants of the town Sant Julià de Palau, hoping to be free from seigneurial authority and to become a royal city, gave “Berenguer Descortei” money intended for the king. It is unclear which noble had seigneurial jurisdiction over the town, but town officials likely wished to be free of seigneurial authority so that they could cultivate their own political autonomy, like so many other officials in towns and cities throughout the realms. Typically, when the Crown took possession of a seigneurial town or city, the ruler had to pay the noble authority an agreed upon amount.\(^\text{83}\) Located on the outskirts of Girona, Sant Julià de Palau was not a politically or economically significant urban center, so the Crown had no incentive to pay for its transition to royal jurisdiction. Instead, town leaders took the initiative of producing the necessary sum of money. The “Bereguer Descortei” to whom they gave the funds was likely the same Berenguer des Cortey who participated in the judicial process decades before.

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82 AHCB, **Ordinacions originals.** IB.XXVI-1, f. 21.

83 For example, when Jaume II annexed the county of Urgell in 1314, he used Jewish revenue to pay the stipulated 90,000 *suealdos barcelonesos.* ACA C, Reg. 219, f. 184-185 and Reg. 218, f. 11-12.
However, in this case, it appears that some sort of collusion took place. Indeed, King Joan claimed that he never received the stipulated amount from town officials in Sant Julià de Palau. Consequently, Francesc Marquet paid the sum necessary and received civil and criminal jurisdiction over town. Marquet was a member of the same oligarchic family that had suffered at the hands of Pere III and had privately funded Joan’s efforts to detain Sibil·la. Since Cortey was never punished and Marquet obtained jurisdiction, it seems likely that, with the help of Cortey, the king received extra revenue and rewarded Marquet, his supporter, at the expense of the autonomy of municipal officials in Sant Julià de Palau.84

However, the cooperation that Joan enjoyed with the governing elite of Barcelona did not extend below the surface of the oligarchy. The rest of the city recognized that Joan’s favoritism served to exclude the mà mitjana and mà menor from participating in municipal governing institutions, allowing the mà maior to govern solely for their own benefit. In reaction to Joan’s policies, a group of jurats from the mà menor rebelled by threatening to prevent the sale of taxes in the city, which would put a brake on the wheels of administration. Over the previous few decades, the Consell had acquired immediate loans by assigning revenue from municipal taxes to lenders for a set amount of time. This practice allowed the city to pay for public works, make loans to the king, and pay the salaries of officials and municipal troops even when the city did not have the necessary funds on hand. Up to this point, the jurats had exclusive control over the exchange of tax revenue for loans. In response to the threats made by the jurats of the mà menor,

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84 ACA C, Reg. 1935, f. 21-22. The king also sent a letter to the royal council about the affair: ACA C, Reg. 1860, f. 18.
Joan ordered the *Consell* to give exclusive authority over the practice to the counselors, thus preventing lower-class officials from interfering in the shift in power back to the oligarchy.\(^{85}\)

In addition to the opposition he faced from the lower classes of Barcelona, Joan soon realized that the oligarchy was not satisfied with simply regaining the powers they had had over municipal governing institutions. The oligarchic families wished to expand their power, dominate one another and, most of all, control the king by intervening in his affairs in the city. Following the trial regarding the death of Ramon Sant Vincenç in 1356, King Pere’s efforts to reassert royal authority in the city helped to subdue the violence and incivility that stemmed from oligarchic factions struggling for ascendancy in the city. When Joan returned power to the oligarchy, factional fighting returned as well. Although Joan sent letters to the *Consell* directing them to take measures to put an end to the factional feuding, he did not intervene personally or direct his officials to do so.\(^{86}\) The king’s nonaction reflected his approach to governance, which emphasized respect for municipal autonomy. As discussed in the previous chapter, Joan’s decentralization of royal power meant that instead of dispatching royal authorities to crack down on factional fighting in Barcelona, he invested municipal officials with the power to do so themselves. Since many of Barcelona’s officials took part in the factional fighting, however, Joan’s approach led to an increase in frequency and severity of fighting in the city, which would continue during Martí’s reign and throughout the fifteenth century.

This increase in factional fighting supports the arguments presented by Batlle and Yitzhak Baer that the 1391 riots that targeted Jewish communities across the realms took on a

\(^{85}\) ACA C, Reg. 1925, f. 29-31. For information about the sale of taxes in Barcelona, see Batlle, *La crisis social y económica de Barcelona*, 100.

\(^{86}\) AHCB, MS. B-44, f. 14-15.
classist tone in Barcelona.\textsuperscript{87} According to municipal records, on August 4, 1391, an angry mob composed of members from the \textit{mà mitjana} and \textit{mà menor} gathered outside of the \textit{Consell} meeting house to protest the damage that factional fighting had caused to their streets, storefronts, and houses, and more generally, the hegemony of the \textit{rentiers} in the city. Mossèn Pons de la Sala, a member of the oligarchy, recognized that the crowd intended to express their displeasure at the urban governing elite by destroying the meeting house. To save it, he convinced the crowd that the fighting was actually sparked by the Jews, whose community had already been twice attacked within the past month, and he succeeded in directing the mob against the Jewish community instead.\textsuperscript{88}

While factional fighting certainly disrupted the efficient administrative machine that Joan had hoped for when decentralizing royal authority, it did not directly insult his style of governance or necessarily undermine royal authority. As far as Joan was concerned, factional fighting was a problem which cities had to address. Joan’s repeated requests to the city for financial and military assistance, however, encouraged members of the oligarchy, emboldened by the king’s lenient approach to ruling, to make reciprocal demands on the king’s own council and his policies; they sought to extend their power even over the Crown itself.\textsuperscript{89} Between 1389 and 1390, the count of Armanyac, a powerful Gascon noble, invaded Catalonia, and revolts in Sardinia threatened Aragonese rule on the island. Joan requested money and armies from the \textit{Consell de Cent} for both crises. In a letter dated to July 13, 1389, however, the counselors stated

\textsuperscript{87} Batlle, \textit{La crisis social y económica de Barcelona}, 107 and Baer, \textit{A History of the Jews in Christian Spain}, vol. II, 104

\textsuperscript{88} AHCB, MS. B-44, f. 14-15.

\textsuperscript{89} For example of some of Joan I’s requests for money from Barcelona, see ACA C, Reg. 1099, f. 77-78 and Reg. 2014, f. 24.
that they would only provide the resources requested if Joan reformed his royal council and
ousted corrupt councilors who depleted the royal treasury for their own purposes and committed
immoral deeds. Such immoral deeds included adultery and promiscuity, of which Carroça de
Vilaragut, the queen’s confidant, had been accused in 1388.⁹₀ Although the counselors of
Barcelona were not the only ones to insist on reform, it is likely that Joan’s dependency on the
city’s financial and military contributions greatly influenced his agreement to expel some of the
officials accused of corruption. In return, the Consell contributed generously to the defense of the
kingdom.⁹₁ In addition, in 1395, the consellers refused to support Joan’s plans to bring Pope
Benedict XIII to reside in Barcelona.⁹² Joan hoped that by providing refuge to the embattled
pope, he could distinguish himself and his kingdom within Europe in the same way as the French
through their proximity and connection to the pope while he resided at Avignon. The counselors
of the Consell de Cent realized that they could dictate the actions of the king by denying his
requests. Soon after, in 1396, Joan asked the counselors to pay the winning troubadours of the
Jocs Florals. This annual poetry competition had originally been established in Toulouse, but
Joan, seeking to emulate French culture, had replicated it in Barcelona. Again, the counselors
denied his request.⁹³ The governing elite of Barcelona may have appreciated that Joan’s efforts
to decentralize royal power had enabled them to regain political power over the city, but the

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⁹² Donald Kagay, “Poetry in the Dock: The Court Culture of Joan I on Trial (1396-1398)” in War, Government, and Society in the Medieval Crown of Aragon (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2007), 59-62. For more information on the events that led to Joan’s request see Chapter Three.

⁹³ Rafael Tasis i Marca, Joan I: El Rei Caçador i Músic (Barcelona: Editorial Aedos, 1959), 270-272.
king’s financial dependence on them also offered them an opportunity to exert more influence over royal policy.

**Conclusion**

By the end of Joan’s reign in 1396, the *rentiers* of Barcelona had reestablished their control over municipal governing organizations and the city. All of the counselors belonged to *rentier* families, as did the majority of the *jurats*, and as a result, they were free to institute legislation that furthered their own interests. Even more significant, the oligarchy had succeeded in encroaching on the authority of the Crown, using Joan’s reliance on their financial support to manipulate the king’s policies. Between 1249, when the city received its charter to establish a municipal government, and 1396, when the *Consell* dictated how the king could express his royal image, the history of the *Consell de Cent* reflects both a history of the city and a history of kingship. The two histories are intertwined and impossible to completely separate. The revenue that wealthy merchants and *rentiers* – those individuals who would eventually become members of a closed oligarchy – provided to the Crown enabled rulers to assert and expand their power domestically and internationally. In return, rulers rewarded their lenders with the authority to govern the city. The collaborative spirit between rulers and the city officials began to deteriorate in the early fourteenth century when the urban governing elite sought complete political control over the city independent from the Crown and beyond their permitted limit. When Pere III ascended the throne and initiated a program to strengthen and centralize royal power, he recognized that his ability to carry out successfully his political objectives was partially linked to the governing elite of Barcelona, which was the most politically and economically significant city in Catalonia. In order to become the ultimate governing authority in the Crown of Aragon, King Pere needed to attain control over all segments of society. This included the urban centers of his realms, and particularly Barcelona. However, the king’s power in the city necessarily came
at the expense of the power of oligarchic urban officials. Consequently, throughout Pere III’s reign, the king and the urban governing elite of Barcelona engaged in a power struggle that was expressed via legal orders and judicial processes. That King Pere and the oligarchy of Barcelona used judicial processes to retain and advance their power to the disadvantage of the other is evident in the murder investigation of Ramon de Sant Vincenç in 1356, the host desecration investigation of 1367, and the poison investigation of 1374. Within the context of this power struggle, it appears that Pere used the murder investigation as a political tool to demonstrate his control over the oligarchy, and the oligarchs used the host desecration and poison investigations to display their control over representatives of the king: local Jews and members of the mà mitjana and the mà menor. When Joan I became king in 1387, both his efforts to decentralize royal power and his financial dependency on the city allowed the oligarchy to retake control of Barcelona and encouraged them to try to extend their power over royal policies. From this perspective, while the Crown and the municipal government of Barcelona were mutually dependent on the support of the other, their desire for dominance meant that they were unable to cooperate.
CHAPTER 6
OSCA: CITY OF NOBLES

Introduction

Ten years after the host desecration investigation concluded in Barcelona, an analogous event took place in the city of Osca. Just as in the 1367 allegations, records from the 1377 case reveal that a Christian thief confessed to stealing pieces of the consecrated host from a nearby church and selling them to members of the Oscan Jewish community, which he believed intended to desecrate them. The judicial process that followed lasted seven months, and it again prompted the Crown Prince of Aragon, Joan, and his father, King Pere III, to exchange a series of letters.¹ As with the Barcelona case, the letters exchanged in 1377 narrate the progression of the investigation that took place, and they reveal that local elite Christians served as the prince’s counselors in the process: they assisted him in the imprisonment and interrogation of the accused and the execution of the thief and two Jews. The two cases in Barcelona and Osca thus bear a strong resemblance to one another, and the pattern they reveal indicates that urban representatives took advantage of accusations against local Jews to counter expressions of royal power and promote municipal autonomy. However, whereas the five residents who assisted Joan in the 1367 process were all non-noble members of the urban oligarchy, the four Oscans cited in the prince’s letters in 1377 were from three different socio-economic classes: the non-noble urban elite, the lower nobility, and the high nobility.² The homogenous nature of Joan’s resident

¹ Most of the letters are transcribed in Joaquim Miret i Sans, “El procés de les hòsties contra els jueus d’Osca de 1377”, Anuari d’institut d’Estudis Catalans 4 (December 1911): 63-79.

² For the letter naming the five residents in the 1367 Barcelona case, see ACA C, Reg. 1708, f. 101-103. Transcribed in Yitzhak Baer, Die Juden im Christlichen Spanien (Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1929-1936), 399-404. For the letter describing the four Oscans in 1377, see ACA C, Reg. 1723, f. 62. Transcribed in Miret i Sans, “El procés de les hòsties,” 72.
councilors in Barcelona and the diversity of those in Osca point to different urban histories and approaches to municipal governance. Recent scholarship has explored shifting sites of authority by examining connections between municipal politics and the development of kingship in the medieval Crown of Aragon. This approach has proven fruitful in demonstrating that a city’s particular circumstances influenced local perceptions and reactions to different forms of royal power.\(^3\)

Located in northern Aragon, the city of Osca was known for its production of wheat, wine, and cloth.\(^4\) The city was populated by sizeable numbers of Christians, Jews, and Muslims who produced a respectable amount of taxes and donations for the Crown. Yet, compared to the financial resources of Barcelona, Osca’s contributions were uninspiring.\(^5\) As discussed in the previous chapter, the wealth of Barcelona’s merchants encouraged a mutually beneficial relationship between rulers who needed financial funding and rich non-nobles who sought offices and control in the governance of the city. Landlocked and dedicated to local production,


\(^4\) Federico Balaguer and Antonio Durán Gudiol used ecclesiastical tithe accounts to reconstruct the overall amount of wheat and wine produced at the end of the fourteenth and beginning of the fifteenth centuries in Osca. See Balaguer and Gudiol, “Notes sobre relacion comercials i econòmiques d’Osca (segles XIV i XV) in IV Congrés d’Història de la Corona d’Aragó (Cagliari, 1957), 221-239. The emphasis on cloth production is visible through the king’s orders and concessions to the city that prevented the import of cloth into the city or the immigration of cloth makers from other areas into the city. Cloth making was particularly prevalent in the Jewish community. See Antonio Durán Gudiol, *La Judería de Huesca* (Zaragoza: Guara Editorial, S.A., 1984), 35 and 98-99.

\(^5\) For a perspective on the different financial circumstances of Osca and Barcelona, we might compare their gifts to Pere III in 1338 when he married Maria of Navarre. The residents of Osca gifted the royal couple a few thousands *sueldos jaqueses*, while the clothiers of Barcelona alone offered “cloths of gold, silk, wool, and furs” worth an estimated 110,000 *sueldos barceloneses*. For Osca, see *Documentos Municipales de Huesca* (1100-1350), ed. C. Laliena Corbera (Huesca: Ayuntamiento de Huesca, 1988), n. 159. For Barcelona, see ACA, RP, MR 213.
Osca was unable to generate enough revenue to facilitate a simple exchange of money for autonomy. Lacking the necessary wealth to access a linear, progressive route to self governance, residents exploited the on-going power struggle between the nobility and the Crown to gain and maintain control of local governance. During the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, Aragonese rulers moved to expand royal territory and consolidate their power at the expense of the upper nobility, sparking legal and military battles with hostile magnates. Osca, along with other cities in the Kingdom of Aragon, vacillated in its support of the Crown or the nobility: it sometimes created alliances with rulers and at other times backed rebellious noble unions. In their examinations of the development of bureaucratic institutions in Osca, Carlos Garcés Manau and María Teresa Iranzo Muñío have examined the effect that the Crown and the nobility had on the development of the city’s municipal government in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. Because they are looking at how different forms of authority influenced the experiences of residents, Garcés and Iranzo do not consider if or how residents influenced and responded to these forms of authority. This line of analysis portrays Oscans as pawns in the power struggle between rulers and nobles instead of active participants in the advancement of their political autonomy. Moreover, it isolates political developments in the city from broader trends taking place throughout the kingdom. This chapter examines how residents responded to the objectives and actions of the Crown and the nobility and, specifically, what prompted municipal officials to offer or rescind the city’s political and economic support of these two sources of power. In their studies of late-medieval Morvedre and Tortosa, Mark Meyerson and Thomas Barton show that municipal officials and Jewish leaders consciously negotiated and challenged royal and

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6 This development is discussed in more detail in Chapter 1.

7 Manau, El Ayuntamiento de Huesca and Iranzo, Élites políticas y gobierno urbano en Huesca.
seigneurial authority to the benefit of their particular communities.\(^8\) Adopting their approach, this study suggests that Oscan leaders supported the Crown’s efforts against the nobility when its policy was to provide and respect urban autonomy. By contrast, when rulers sought to extend their power over municipal governance, leaders created alliances with the nobility.

Although Antonio Durán Gudiol, Blanca Basáñez Villaluenga, and John Boswell have examined the experiences of the Muslims and Jewish communities in Osca, these scholars tend to look at Muslims and Jews separately and outside the context of the contemporary development of municipal governance.\(^9\) The host desecration letters of 1377 to show that Christian Oscan officials tried to assert authority over local Jews to influence the Crown’s policies towards urban centers. To demonstrate the interconnection between the city’s minority religious communities and municipal politics, an examination of the interaction between Christians, Jews, and Muslims nuances understanding of the alliances the city created with the Crown and the nobility. Oscan Christians dichotomized religious minority communities, presenting Muslims as members of the broader Oscan community and Jews as outsiders who embodied royal policies. These contrasting perceptions were prompted, on the one hand, by Muslim resistance to any royal interference and the Crown’s indifference due to Muslim insolvency, and on the other hand, by the Jews’ preference for a strong central government and rulers’ financial dependence on them. While it would be misguided to assume that it was part of a consistent, diagrammed plan, Oscan

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\(^8\) Meyerson, *Jews in an Iberian Frontier Kingdom* and Barton, *Contested Treasure*.

Christians did see the legal and physical subjugation of local Jews as a viable tool in the acquisition and defense of political autonomy.

**Jaume I: The Foundation of Self-Governance**

During the long reign of Jaume I (r. 1213-1276), Oscan leaders first offered the city’s support to the nobility to encourage the king to change his approach to governance and later backed the Crown to acquire political concessions. When Jaume ascended the throne at the beginning of the thirteenth century, all of Osca’s officials, including the *justicia*, the *zalmedina*, the *jurados*, and the bailiff were royally appointed, and they implemented ordinances, penalties, and the collection of taxes under the direction and scrutiny of the Crown. Osca’s situation was not unique; rather, the monarchy’s complete control of urban governance extended to all royal cities in the Kingdom of Aragon. In contrast, Jaume needed to find a way to assert royal power over a contumacious nobility whose members were just as likely to challenge one another and disturb the peace as they were to challenge the Crown. To do so, he first rejected their established authority in the kingdom by refusing to consult with them about his military ventures, and then, during the conquest of Valencia, he instituted compulsory military service. The tension between the nobility and the Crown finally reached a boiling point.

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10 In Chapter 3, footnote 52 I mentioned a “general *justicia*,” who stood as a judge between the king and the nobility. In addition to this official, each city also had its own *justicia* who was the local supreme authority on laws. Marie A. Kelleher, *The Measure of a Woman: Law and Female Identity in the Crown of Aragon* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2010), 32.

11 The office of *zalmedina* was peculiar to the cities of Osca and Zaragoza. The *zalmedina* served as a sort of second-in-command judge to the *justicia*. Kelleher, *The Measure of a Woman*, 32.

12 *Jurados* were the equivalent of the Catalan counselors. They were magistrates who formed the municipal council, the governing body of the city. Iranzo, *Élites políticas y gobierno urbano*, 117-118 and 160 and Manau, *El Ayuntamiento de Huesca*, 28.

13 The bailiff exercised civil and criminal jurisdiction in the name of the king in urban areas. See Jordi Bolòs, *Diccionari de la Catalunya Medieval (ss. VI-XV)* (Barcelona: El Cangur, 2000), 43.

14 Iranzo, *Élites políticas y gobierno urbano*, 59.
when one of the king’s supporters killed a rebellious nobleman, Pedro de Ahones.\textsuperscript{15} A few months later, in November 1226, Aragonese nobles and representatives from numerous cities, including Osca, gathered in Jaca to make a pact to stand together against anyone who sought to undermine their \textit{fueros} and customs, a charge clearly aimed at the king.\textsuperscript{16}

Donald Kagay has argued that urban centers joined the rebel union out of fear of retaliation from the nobility, but the subsequent actions of Oscan residents suggest that their opposition to the king’s authoritarian approach to the royal cities motivated their membership.\textsuperscript{17} In his autobiographical \textit{Llibre dels Fets}, Jaume I explains that in 1227, Oscan locals attempted to imprison him in his own castle.\textsuperscript{18} Since Aragonese rulers were itinerant, traveling in circuits around the realm with their royal courts until the late fifteenth century, it was necessary for them to maintain palaces in multiple cities.\textsuperscript{19} According to his account, when the leading \textit{ciudadanos} learned that the king was traveling in the area, they invited him to come to the city. Although the urban elite of Osca first offered Jaume a warm reception, as soon as the king retired to bed in the royal palace, a hundred armed men surrounded the building in a threatening manner.\textsuperscript{20} When he woke in the morning, the \textit{jurados} had closed all of the gates with the intention of holding the


\textsuperscript{16} The \textit{jurados} of Osca are listed in the pact. They claimed to act “for us and for all the council and city.” Muñío, \textit{Élites políticas y gobierno urbano}, 117.


\textsuperscript{19} Osca’s royal palace was completed in the second half of the twelfth century by Alfons I (r. 1162-1196). Manau, \textit{El Ayuntimiento de Huesca}, 30.

\textsuperscript{20} It seems likely that due to the absence of space needed to house his troops, the armed guard that Jaume traveled with made camp outside the walls of the city. This, however, is not entirely clear in Jaume’s \textit{Llibre dels fets}.
king hostage until union nobles and their armies could arrive. It was only under the guise of obtaining mutton for dinner that Jaume was able to escape.

Documentation from the city at this time is scarce, but the king’s account offers some insight into the socio-economic and political dynamic that not only prompted the city to join the rebel union, but also betray the king to the nobility. Marià Teresa Iranzo Muñío notes that the title “ciudadano” began to appear in Oscan documentation in the 1220s as a way for economically successful residents, and frequently those who held royally appointed offices, to distinguish themselves from common vecinos, legally-recognized citizens in Osca. However, more than evidence for the inception of an oligarchy, Jaume’s pointed use of “ciudadanos” and “jurados” reveals that he was betrayed by men who were theoretically supposed to support the Crown. Existing documentation suggests that most royal offices in the city, including that of jurado, were held by ciudadanos. Yet, because all political offices at this time were appointed by the king, ciudadanos possessed no autonomy in the operation of urban governance. The actions of the ciudadanos in 1227 and the city’s membership in the union suggest that the urban governing elites of Osca were displeased with the king’s policies and agreed with the nobility’s claim that the king had overstepped the limits of appropriate royal authority. It thus seems likely that the motivation of the attempted kidnapping was to gain political privileges. Although it is not certain whether the ciudadanos planned to release the king once he agreed to their terms or if

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21 From 1210 until 1291, only 6 lists of Oscan officials exist and many of these are incomplete in regards to the names of officials, their connection with the Crown, and their profession. Iranzo, Élites políticas y gobierno urbano, 153.

22 The oligarchy in Osca can be defined with the same basic criteria as that applied to the urban elite in Barcelona. They were a small group of wealthy men connected by family and marital ties who held a monopoly on local political power. This criteria connects the development of the oligarchy in Osca to the formation of similar groups throughout many European cities between the twelfth and fifteenth centuries. Yves Barel, La ciudad medieval: Sistema social, sistema urbano (Madrid, 1981), 81.
they actually intended to hand him over to the nobility as Jaume believed, it appears that they tried to take advantage of an opportunity to loosen the king’s grip on urban administration.

Soon after Jaume escaped from Osca in 1227, he and his supporters succeeded in putting down the rebel union through military might. Over the next few decades, the king conquered Mallorca, Menorca, and Valencia, accomplishments that emphasized the strength of the Crown. Recognizing that urban support was key to preventing another uprising, the king attempted to gain the royal cities’ favor by offering political concessions. He extended them first to those cities like Barcelona and Zaragoza whose economic and military resources could change the balance of power in his realms, but eventually he conceded privileges to Osca and the other cities as well. Iranzo has pointed to Jaume’s permission in 1257 to Oscan merchants, who he permitted to create a confraternity and name members to represent them before royal officials. This privilege was not a concession of political autonomy, since it only allowed the confraternity to make known the financial needs of its members. By contrast, the confraternity made no claim to represent the city or oversee its governance. The first obvious concession towards political autonomy that Jaume I offered Oscan officials dated to 1260. At the time, Oscan ciudadanos formed a union with the cities of Zaragoza, Jaca, Barbastro, Tarazona, Calatayud, Daroca, and Teruel in opposition to noble violence and misconduct. A few months later, Jaume endowed the Oscan urban elite with the power to elect the jurados of the city, positions that were previously

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23 Although nobles from both Aragon and Catalonia had aided the king’s conquest of Valencia in 1238, Jaume instituted “furs,” an entirely new territorial legal custom instead of the “fueros” that the Aragonese nobility valued so much. In addition, he invited Catalanian nobles to settle the area, conspicuously ignoring the Aragonese. Bisson, The Medieval Crown of Aragon, 66, 70-71.


25 This development, however, did encourage the growth of the oligarchy since it provided another means for the urban elite to distinguish themselves. Iranzo, Élites políticas y gobierno urbano, 108.
appointed by the king. While Iranzo and Manau note that Osca joined an urban union in 1260 and received the power to elect *jurados* the following year, they do not connect the two developments. Although a union membership offered a certain amount of protection against potentially hostile nobles, Oscans also joined in order to trigger or at least hasten political privileges from the king. There appears to have been no political middle ground when it came to hostility between nobles and the Crown. An urban alliance against the nobility was an alliance in support of the king. Recognizing this, the king approved an election process in which 50 men from the top two social classes - 25 from *melioribus* and 25 from *medicribus* - would elect eight *jurados*. He also endowed these officials with the authority to decide the amount of municipal taxes collected from residents and establish a system of collection for both municipal taxes and taxes designated for the Crown’s treasury. This privilege thus decreased royal interference in municipal operation.\(^\text{26}\) Moreover, since the top two social classes were permitted to elect the *jurados* and would likely elect those who represented their own economic and political interests, it is probable that the privilege encouraged the advancement of a nascent oligarchy.

Significantly, at the same time that Osca’s alliance with other cities and the Crown resulted in the city’s first steps towards self-governance, Jaume also implemented policies that widened the existing rift between the Crown and the Muslim community. When Muslim-controlled Osca had been conquered in 1096 by the besieging armies of Pere I, royal officials forced the remaining Muslim population into a separate, less valuable section of the city, and allowed Christian settlers to inhabit their former homes and places of business.\(^\text{27}\) Although all Muslim and Jewish communities located in royal territory belonged to the Crown, contemporary

\(^{26}\) *Documentos Municipales de Huesca (1100-1350)*, n. 25.

rulers were generally uninterested in Muslim experiences and activities as long as they did not collaborate with enemy forces or hinder the progress of the Reconquista.\(^{28}\) This approach resulted from the fact that the Muslim population was primarily engaged in agriculture or craft production that was, at best, modestly profitable.\(^{29}\) Although Villaluenga notes the negligence of rulers toward the Muslim community of Osca in the twelfth century, she does not suggest what sort of precedent this policy may have set for subsequent rulers or how it impacted the community’s relationship with the Crown in later years.\(^{30}\) In 1274, Jaume built a new cathedral on the same property as a Muslim cemetery. It seems likely that Jaume did not intentionally target the Muslims and likely was not even aware of the cemetery’s location. Instead, his concession to the bishop suggests obliviousness of the king to his Muslim subjects. When local Muslim leaders complained, Jaume ignored their pleas and began construction on the new cathedral immediately.\(^{31}\) In addition to cultivating a better relationship with Church officials, Jaume may have understood his orders regarding the cathedral as a means of furthering the development of Osca as an urban center. In privileging the city further, the king did not see the Muslims of Osca as a priority.

Unfortunately, there are no existing documents revealing Jaume’s interaction with the Oscan Jewish community, so it is impossible to make a direct comparison of the king’s treatment of Jews and Muslims in the city. It is possible, however, to compare the king’s negligent approach to the Oscan Muslim community to his frequent interference with other Jewish


\(^{31}\) Carlos Laliena Corbera, *Huesca: Historia de una ciudad* (Huesca: Ayuntamiento de Huesca, 1990), 211.
communities throughout his realms. In his study of the Jewish community of Morvedre, Meyerson reveals that Jaume often appointed Jews to the municipal office of bailiff, and he suggests that the king did so because he trusted that Jews would not disobey him or rebel against him as Christians might. In addition, in 1258, Jaume sent a letter of protection to the Jews of Montpellier, declaring that although they suffered a life of servitude, he was opposed to their humiliation, oppression, and persecution under his rule. Yom Tov Assis argues that the king was attempting to place Jews on equal financial footing with Christians, which would increase the amount of revenue they produced for the Crown. Jaume also frequently intervened on behalf of individual Jews and entire Jewish communities accused of usury and suspended legal proceedings against them. It thus appears that the King Jaume I was more concerned about the well-being of the Jewish community than he was about that of the Muslim community due to the differences in their financial circumstances and what they could offer the Crown.

**Pere II and Alfons II: Autonomy through Coercion**

In contrast to his father’s established policies, Pere II (r. 1276-1285) sought to extend royal power by diminishing the local autonomy of all royal cities throughout Aragon, Catalonia, Valencia, and Mallorca. Consequently, Oscan leaders, along with those in other urban centers, shifted their support away from the Crown and back to the nobility as a way to resist the king’s policies and encourage him to change his aggressive approach to rulership. Together, city leaders

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35 See Chapter 1 for more information about the financial circumstances of the Muslim and Jewish communities in the Crown of Aragon and the amount of revenue that rulers acquire from the Jewish communities.
and the nobility succeeded in eroding royal authority to such a degree that neither Pere II nor his son Alfons II (r. 1285-1291) were able to recover preeminence for the Crown during their reigns. This shift in power enabled urban centers, including Osca, to coerce kings Pere and Alfons into political concessions that provided city leaders with more autotomy over municipal governance.

In 1278, Pere II announced his intention to reform the structure and operation of municipal government throughout all the royal cities of his realms. He reduced the number of jurados from eight to six and dictated that these six officials must be comprised of two men from each of the three socio-economic classes. This order was designed to undermine the political power of evolving local oligarchies since it forced the inclusion of men from different ranks. To allow for more royal supervision of urban activities, the king ordered that jurados must establish the amount of municipal taxes and carry out the collection process in the presence of the zalmedina, a royally-appointed official. The king also demanded that the zalmedina witness all oaths and be present at all municipal council meetings and anytime jurados dictated orders.\footnote{Iranzo, Élites políticas y gobierno urbano, 152-153.}

Pere II’s reform clearly permitted frequent royal interference and a constant royal presence in the daily operation of the cities.

At the same time that Pere II expanded royal authority at the expense of the cities’ autonomy, his constant meddling in the affairs of Jews in Osca and throughout his realms encouraged Oscan Christians to associate them with the Crown and its policies. In 1278 and 1279, soon after he had initiated his reform of urban government, Pere ordered an investigation of current Jewish charters, since he suggested that they undermined his authority.\footnote{Assis, The Golden Age of Aragonese Jewry, 35.} He also forced the Jews of his realms to buy the animals that he had received through the quinta tax at an
inflated cost. It seems reasonable that Oscans would have been aware of a royal investigation of the charter belonging to the local Jewish community. Since city records show that Christians visited both Jewish and Muslim meat markets, they probably knew that local Jews were being forced to purchase animals from the Crown. It is possible that the Christian residents of Osca recognized that the king’s orders were an attempt to extract more money from his Jewish subjects to further his authoritarian approach to governance. This recognition may have influenced an event that was documented later in 1279. At that time, a mob carried an imitation Torah scroll through the streets of Osca; they proceeded to “baptize” the scrolls, and mockingly selected a “Jewish king” while participants and onlookers yelled derisive chants and insults.

Previous scholarship has suggested that this event was influenced by Pope Nicholas III’s recent bull that directed preachers to visit Jewish communities throughout Europe with the goal of conversion. Indeed, Pere II adhered to the pope’s bull by instructing his officials to compel Jews throughout his realms to attend the sermons of friars. Within the context of the king’s municipal reforms and his conspicuous financial demands on the Jewish communities, the mob’s

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38 Assis, *Jewish Economy in the Medieval Crown of Aragon*, 100. The *quinta* tax appears to be a carry over from the border raids of eleventh and twelfth centuries when raiders were legally compelled to give the Crown a fifth of all gains. By the fifteenth century, it appears to have evolved into a sort of import tax. It is unclear what the *quinta* tax represented at the end of the thirteenth century, who all was forced to pay it, and why payment was in the form of animals. For more information about the *quinta* in the fifteenth century, see Brian Catlos, *Muslims of Medieval Latin Christendom, c. 1050-1614* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 277-278.

39 See ACA C, Reg. 1968, f. 4 for evidence that Jews, Muslims, and Christians frequently sold and bought meat in the same market.

40 The king’s letter describing the event is transcribed in Yitzhak Baer, *Die Juden im christlichen Spanien*, vol. I (Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1929-1936), no. 117.


42 Meyerson, *Jews in an Iberian Frontier Kingdom*, 60. For Pere’s letters prohibiting Christians from entering the synagogue during mendicant preaching, see ACA C, Reg. 42, f. 148v-149v.
actions may also be read as a performance of dissent against the king’s policies.\textsuperscript{43} Mob participants vented their frustration on those within their community who appeared to embody royal power.

This performance of dissent existed alongside other forms of resistance. In 1283, Queen Constanza demanded that the jurados of Osca establish a court for the zalmedina in the city, which was supposed to have been completed in 1278 to facilitate the royal official’s oversight of municipal governance in the name of the king.\textsuperscript{44} The fact that Constanza issued the order five years after Pere implemented his municipal reform points to Oscan officials’ defiance. At the very least, they were not concerned about fulfilling the king’s order; at most, their failure to establish a court for the zalmedina reflected their refusal to acknowledge this royal official’s authority.

King Pere soon came to regret his authoritarian approach to the cities of Aragon. In 1282, at the behest of Sicilians dissatisfied with their current king, Charles of Anjou, Pere proclaimed himself ruler of the island by right of his marriage to Constanza, the daughter and heir of Manfred, the former king of Sicily. Pope Martin IV, a Frenchman and close ally of Charles’ nephew, King Philippe III of France, consequently excommunicated Pere, placed Sicily under interdict, declared the Crown of Aragon forfeited, and offered it to Philippe’s son, Charles of Valois. Fearing a French invasion, Pere requested military and financial assistance from the

\textsuperscript{43} It should be mentioned here that Pere II issued very few royal ordinances concerning the Oscan Muslim community or any royal documents about them. In 1280, the king learned that the Muslim community wished to dismiss a Muslim official that the king had appointed. He sent Juan de Próxima to investigate the community’s motives. The community informed the queen that they were so intent on deposing the official that they would pay a charge to do so. See ACA, Reg. 42, f. 238v. In 1285, the king deposed the current official and replaced him with another who agreed to pay him 50\textit{ morabetinos} annually in exchange for the honor. See ACA C, Reg. 43, f. 34. This scarcity of documents about the Muslim community makes it difficult to compare local perceptions of Jews and Muslims, but it does fit within a larger pattern of royal disregard for the Muslim communities and preoccupation with the Jewish communities.

\textsuperscript{44} Documentos municipales de Huesca, n. 41.
nobility and cities, including Osca.\textsuperscript{45} Instead of complying, 70 Aragonese cities, towns, and villages joined the nobility in forming another rebel union.\textsuperscript{46} The union presented the king with a list of grievances and demands, in which Oscan \textit{jurados} presented seven of their own, including control over the appointment of the \textit{almutazaf}, an office currently assigned by the \textit{zalmedina}, a royal official. Scholars have suggested that Oscan leaders took advantage of the nobility’s revolt to acquire privileges. Considering the city’s established pattern of interaction with the Crown and the nobility, this premise seems likely.\textsuperscript{47} The revolt also presented Oscans with an opportunity to articulate their opposition to Pere II’s kingship and specifically, his authoritarian policies concerning municipal governance. In 1283, in a document known as the \textit{Privilegio General}, the king conceded to the demands of the union, including those presented by the Oscans. This event heralded a significant reduction in royal authority and a shift in the balance of power toward the nobility and urban centers.\textsuperscript{48}

For nearly ten years, Oscan leaders continued to support the rebellion, going so far as to host the annual meeting of union members in March 1285.\textsuperscript{49} Pere II never recouped authority for the Crown and neither did his son, Alfons II; both rulers were forced to extend privileges to cities out of coercion instead of political ingenuity. Furthermore, the submissive state of the Crown at times motivated Oscans to disregard all forms of royal authority. In 1284, the bishop of Osca

\textsuperscript{45} For more information about what came to be known as the “Sicilian Vespers,” and Pere II’s subsequent financial problems, see Meyerson, \textit{Jews in an Iberian Frontier Kingdom}, 64 and 101-102.

\textsuperscript{46} For the list of cities involved, see Iranzo, \textit{Élites políticas y gobierno urbano}, 134.


\textsuperscript{48} For the contents of the \textit{Privilegio General}, see \textit{Documentos municipales de Huesca}, n. 45.

\textsuperscript{49} Iranzo, \textit{Élites políticas y gobierno urbano}, 135.
complained to the king that the jurados had illegally seized cathedral property. Pere II directed the justicia of the city, a position still appointed by the king, to decide the issue. Although the justicia ordered city officials to return the property, it seems that they ignored the order since the bishop was still trying to regain the property in 1296.\(^{50}\) In 1288, the king complained that his Aragonese subjects, both Christian and Muslim, refused to repay Jewish lenders for their debts and threatened to kill any Jews who dared to journey to villages and towns to collect payment.\(^{51}\) While it is possible that these Christians and Muslims knew that Alfons taxed Jewish revenue heavily and relied on this income, and so used this means to undermine the power of the Crown, it is more likely that they refused to pay because they recognized that the king would be unable to compel them to do so in his weakened state. Regardless, this development reveals a general association of the Jews with the Crown, making them a target for the contempt that people had for the king. Finally, in 1289, a mob of Oscans attacked the royal palace in the city.\(^{52}\) As the king was not present at the time, the mob’s attack on the castle was likely a symbolic move intended to intimidate the king and demonstrate disrespect for royal authority.\(^{53}\) In response, Alfons traveled to Osca and granted the jurados the privilege of nominating candidates for the position of justicia. According to the documented concession, jurados were to send four names to the king, who would pick one.\(^{54}\)

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50 ACH, Extravagantes. Papel (1284.VIII.11.) and (1284.IX.9).
51 ACA C, Reg. 74, f. 68v. See also Assis, Jewish Economy in the Medieval Kingdom of Aragon, 36 and 40.
52 Documentos Municipales de Huesca, n. 61.
53 This argument builds on David Nirenberg’s assertion that violence aimed at representations of royal power enabled people to demonstrate dissent against the Crown without actually attacking the king. David Nirenberg, Communities of Violence: Persecution of Minorities in the Middle Ages (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996).
54 The king gave this privilege to other cities like Zaragoza and Amudévar. Manau, El Ayuntamiento de Huesca, 28.
These various forms of contempt for the Crown, in combination with Osca’s alliance with the nobility, ultimately helped compel rulers to grant more power to municipal officials and their elite electors. Scholars have examined the three events individually, and their analysis has offered insight into different aspects of city life. For example, Antonio Durán Gudiol has viewed the conflict between Oscan officials and the bishop within the context of the relationship between the city and the canons to shed light on evolving ideas about the proper role of Church officials in the secular sphere. While this assessment does not disagree with Gudiol’s interpretation, the conflict and city officials’ unwillingness to follow royal orders takes on additional meaning when considered alongside anti-Jewish behavior and the city’s relationship with the Crown. The recorded activities of Oscans at the end of the thirteenth century was laden with multiple methods and motivations, one of which was disrespect for king’s authority and those who were extensions of his power, including royal officials and Jews.

**Jaume II: Confidence through Self-Governance**

In 1291, Jaume II (r. 1291-1327) took the throne and, like his namesake, he privileged the cities to gain their favor and suppress noble rebellion. Jaume’s charitable approach to the cities influenced Oscan city officials to shift their support back to the Crown. Following their success in dominating previous rulers, however, the king’s benevolence encouraged these officials to push the boundaries of his political generosity with varying results. While Jaume permitted them room to reshape the composition of the governing body in a manner that reinforced the city’s autonomy, he intervened when officials attempted to expand their control over local Jews.

Nearly all of Jaume’s initial orders were intended to undermine the power that the nobility had established over the last 15 years. With the royal treasury low on funds, Jaume annulled the nobility’s exemption from salt dues and extended to them other taxes which they had previously avoided as a result of their bullying the Crown.\textsuperscript{56} When the nobility called for a union to renew their resistance to the Crown, Jaume was ready with his armies and emerged victorious on the battlefield in June of 1292.\textsuperscript{57} In addition to military might, Jaume also demonstrated his legal control of the realms. When the Aragonese nobility attempted to use aspects of Roman law to subdue the king in 1301, Jaume employed statutes that union members had imposed on his predecessors and successfully defended his own policies.\textsuperscript{58}

In contrast to his treatment of the nobility, Jaume indulged the royal cities. In 1301, the king raised the number of jurados in Osca and elsewhere from the six prescribed by Pere II to the original eight. He also lifted the regulation that there must be two jurados from the top three socio-economic classes. Instead, Jaume II directed officials to elect two from each of the four districts of the city, which in principle would create a democratic system of governance.\textsuperscript{59} In reality, however, it allowed the elite to elect more of their own to positions of power. In Osca, records listing the names of jurados exist from 1291 onwards, and they offer evidence that a


\textsuperscript{57} For information on the individual nobles involved and the chronology of the military skirmish, see C. Laliena, “Violencia feudal en el desarrollo del estado aragonés. La Guerra de Artal de Alagón (1293)” in \textit{XV Congrés d’Història de la Corona d’Aragó. El poder real en la Corona de Aragón (siglos XIV-XVI)} (Zaragoza: Gobierno de Aragón, 1997), 151-184.

\textsuperscript{58} Jaume also increased the number of times he summoned the Catalan Corts and Aragonese Cortes in order to gain a better perspective on the ideas and plans, and particularly the discontent, of his subjects. He began summoning the Catalan Corts three times a year instead of once a year. He increased the Aragonese Cortes to twice a year, up from once a year. Kagay, “The Aragonese Union and Royal Law,” 33.

\textsuperscript{59} Documentos municipales de Huesca, n. 90.
small group of families had succeeded in monopolizing positions in the city’s municipal government. Between 1291 and 1342, the family names of Aniés, Alayés, Arascuás, Zacarías, Campaneros, Aysa, Sariñena, Tamarite, and Bespén are repeated over and over again, demonstrating their dominance in the political life of the city.\(^6^0\)

Recognizing Jaume’s intent to gain the goodwill of the urban centers, Oscan jurados sought to influence the shape of local governance even more. In the second decade of the fourteenth century, members of the lower and upper nobility began to move into Osca and its surrounding territory.\(^6^1\) Officials recognized the economic advantage of incorporating the lower nobility, whose members were referred to as infanzones, into municipal governance since they would have to pay taxes to the city. Moreover, their inclusion might offer a certain amount of protection against future royal infringement. In addition, political association with the lower nobility might enable members of the oligarchy to distinguish themselves further from their common neighbors.\(^6^2\) Consequently, in 1319, city officials approached the king about allowing members of the lower nobility to hold municipal offices. Although Jaume reacted with some caution, likely in light of the city’s previous collaboration with the nobility against the Crown, he ultimately agreed to the request. The king first sent a judge from the royal court to Osca to

\(^6^0\) In Élites políticas y gobierno urbano, Iranzo provides the names of jurados elected between 1291 and 1342. In doing so, she demonstrates the repetition of names that evidence an established oligarchy. See pp. 156-157.

\(^6^1\) Concerning the lower nobility, this immigration continued throughout much of the fourteenth century. In the 1320s, there were 17 infanzoni families. In 1340s, eight more infanzoni families established their residence in the city and presented their titles to royal officials for confirmation of their status. Documentos Municipales de Huesca, n. 183 and AMHu, Libro de Privilegios, I, f. 37-39. Concerning the high nobility, we know for certain that in the 1350s and 1360s, Pere III offered members of the Urríes family patrimonial territory in return for their service. This land, which was comprised of the villages of Ayerbe, Peña, Biniés, and Larrés, was located on the outskirts of Osca. The documents suggest that this reward was intended to enlarge territory that they already possessed and that the family actually resided in it. Eventually the family sold the towns of Apiés, Lienas, and others to Osca. Muñío, Élites políticas y gobierno urbano, 248.

\(^6^2\) Iranzo, Élites políticas y gobierno urbano, 128-130.
arbitrate between the ciudadanos and infanzones as they established appropriate regulations. Three years later, he sent the crown prince to review and complete the arbitration process. In the end, the two parties agreed that the infanzones would receive two jurado seats, thus increasing the number of jurados in the city to 10. The fact that officials were able to convince the king to permit the entry of the lower nobility into municipal governance, as well as increase the number of city-controlled positions reflects the elites’ ability to navigate the king’s policies and increase their control over the city.

Oscan municipal officials also sought to expand their authority vis-à-vis local Jews. For example, in 1309, the jurados issued an ordinance authorizing Jews to sell meat in accordance with Christian jurisdiction, without the royal taxes the minority communities were obligated to impose on their wares. Jaume immediately revoked the ordinances. Although Villaluenga notes this incident, she does not consider why officials implemented the ordinances due to her focus on how royal activity shaped the experience of the religious minorities in Osca. Within the context of the city’s objective to gain political autonomy, the 1309 ordinance reflected more than a struggle for revenue; it represented an attempt on the part of officials to acquire more power at the expense of the king. The Crown’s financial dependence associated the Jews with the monarchy, and it contributed to the perception that Jews were an extension of royal power. This association was encouraged by the fact that local Jews demonstrated a preference for a strong central government: it provided them with more protection and security against capricious locals.

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63 The agreement also noted that the offices of prior, justicia, almutazaf, the procuradores of La Caridad, and the veedores would remain ciudadano positions. Manau, El Ayuntamiento de Huesca, 28 and Iranzo, Élites políticas y gobierno urbano, 167-171.

64 The ordinance also included Muslims. Jaume’s revocation of the ordinance is transcribed in Villaluenga, La Aljama Saracena de Huesca, appendix n. 8

65 Villaluenga, La Aljama Saracena de Huesca, 52.
who occasionally vented their religious, political, and financial frustrations on their Jewish neighbors. Consequently, and antithetical to their Muslim neighbors, Oscan Jews welcomed royal intervention and opposed the interference of municipal or ecclesiastical officials in the function of their community. As other scholars have demonstrated, this approach to royal authority as a means by which to survive in a majority Christian environment was not unique to the Jews of Osca or even Jews in the fourteenth-century Crown of Aragon.

In many cases, as in Osca, the relationship between the king and the Jews emphasized their outsider status. For example, in 1301, the bishop of Osca attempted to conduct a usury trial against local Jews. Jewish leaders responded by writing to the king, who immediately intervened and entrusted the investigation to his own officials and judges. Similarly, in 1318, likely after the king received complaints from Oscan Jews, Jaume II decreed that municipal officials were not allowed to torture Jews accused of criminal activity (with the exception of murder) without the king’s express permission. He ordered that the bailiff, a royal official, should always act as judge in such case. Due to the constant interaction between rulers and the Jewish community and the view that Jews were royal possessions, acquiring authority over local Jews and their finances would have represented a symbolic victory in Oscan Christians’ long-


68 ACA C, Reg. 216, f. 80v.
term effort to achieve political autonomy over the city. It is possible that in 1309 Jaume recognized that this was the *jurados*’ purpose in issuing an ordinance authorizing Jews to sell meat without royal taxes under municipal jurisdiction, which motivated him to offer a prompt and forceful response to remind city officials of royal jurisdiction over the Jewish community and their revenue.

By contrast, the king responded very differently when city officials attempted to expand their authority over the Muslim community, which suggests very different royal approaches to Jews and Muslims. John Boswell has demonstrated that although Jaume II dictated in 1317 that legal cases between Muslims should be handled according to Koranic law by a Muslim judge, nonetheless, more than two-thirds of qualifying cases reported in Osca during the fourteenth century contravened the king’s order.69 The king, however, made no effort to rectify the situation. Jaume’s lack of interest in this transgression was likely due to the financial insignificance of the Muslim community to the Crown.70 The fact that very few Oscan Muslims complained about being judged by a Christian official according to municipal law is also pertinent. Boswell argues that this is because Muslims manipulated court systems in their favor, often choosing the court that they believed would offer the most favorable outcome. While evidence supports Boswell’s claim, municipal records reveal that, in general, the Muslims of Osca rarely complained about city officials and instead objected to the meddling of royal

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70 The impoverishment of the Oscan Muslim community is evident when we compare it to the financial contributions of its neighboring Jewish community. Whereas the king demanded and received 16,166 *sueldos jaqueses* in 1314 from the Jews of Osca for his purchase of the county of Urgell, the Muslims of Osca were unable to come up with the 5,000 *sueldos* that Jaume requested in 1323 to put down a rebellion in Sardinia. For the king’s demand to the Jews in 1314, see ACA C, Reg. 219, f. 184v-185. For Jaume’s request and his subsequent reduction of the amount, see ACA Cr., Jaime II, C88, n.10.761.
officials in their affairs. Considered together, the king’s approach (or lack thereof) to the Muslims of Osca, their aversion to royal interference, and their acceptance of municipal intervention suggest that local Muslims were associated and associated themselves with the city instead of the Crown. This association may have motivated a Muslim attack on local Jews in 1324. When city residents paraded through Osca in celebration of the crown prince’s victory in Sardinia, a group of Muslims gravely injured 20 Jews as they passed by singing their hymns.

Existing scholarship has suggested that the attack was motivated by tension between the Muslim and Jewish communities of Osca over their place in Christian public events. Indeed, in light of their different relationships with the city and the Crown, it is possible to take this interpretation a step further and suggest that the attack served as a means for Muslims to affirm their rank above the Jews in the social structure of the city. In support of this, they reiterated the evolving dichotomy of themselves as insiders and the Jews as outsiders.

After Jaume II’s death in 1327, Alfons III (r.1327-1336) continued his predecessor’s policy of pacifying the cities to keep the nobility in check. Alfons’s death in 1336 marked the

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71 In fact, there are no recorded Muslim complaints against municipal officials during Jaume II’s reign. This may be compared to the multiple complaints Muslims filed against royal officials: in 1299, Oscan Muslims complained to the king that when they tried to move away, the bailiff imprisoned them and tried to impose a tax of five sueldos a year for their freedom of movement. ACA C, Reg. 114, f. 138v. In 1313, Muslim leaders complained that the almotacén, a royal official, had violated the royal privileges of the community by seizing and fining Muslims without collaborating with the bailiff. In 1323, Muslim leaders again complained when the bailiff attempted to take a field that had been granted to the Muslim community as a place to build their mosque. Villaluenga, La Aljama Sarracena de Huesca, 54 and 70.

72 For Muslim leaders’ defense of those charged, see ACA C, Reg. 248, f. 133-135. For the results of the king’s investigation, see ACA C, Reg. 248, f. 154 and 160. For the fine levied on the community as a result of the attack, see ACA C, Reg. 226, f. 26.

73 Nirenberg, Communities of Violence, 179-181.

74 This builds on Elena Lourie’s argument that when there is more than one minority group in a location, they do not tend to share affinity as a result of their shared experience of discrimination. Lourie, “Anatomy of Ambivalence: Muslims under the Crown of Aragon in the Late Thirteenth Century” in Crusade and Colonisation: Muslims, Christians and Jews under the Crown of Aragon (Hampshire, VT: Variorum, 1990): 24.
end of good relations between the Crown and the cities and the conclusion of a century-long increase in urban autonomy. His successor, Pere III, intended to redefine the relationship between the king, the nobility, and the cities by centralizing royal power in his person. In response, Oscan officials and residents, and particularly members of the urban elite, relied on their established means of resistance: creating alliances and, when the opportunity presented itself, dominating local Jews.

**Pere III: Dissention in Defense of Political Autonomy**

Unlike Jaume II and Alfons III, Pere III was not content with merely retaining control of his realms through a careful balance of urban bribery and noble suppression. As king, he believed that he should have complete control over the legal and fiscal administration of his realms on both a municipal and kingdom-wide level and the right to implement his authority without restraint or challenge from any other sector of society. This approach to governance was, of course, unacceptable to Oscan city officials, who now shifted their support from the Crown to the nobility.

When Pere ascended the throne in 1336, he immediately implemented a program of royal consolidation that touched every level of administration, starting with his immediate surroundings. He established palatine ordinances to centralize the operation of the royal court around his needs and support his claim to be the ultimate governing authority. The newly crowned king seized property and revenue that his father had willed to his late wife, Leonor of Castile, and his stepbrothers; he also proclaimed his brother-in-law, Jaume of Mallorca, to be an insubordinate vassal and moved to confiscate his lands, the island of Mallorca and the counties
of Roussillon and Cerdanya. Pere also quickly appointed officials who supported his vision of a strong central government.\textsuperscript{75}

In an attempt to assert his authority on the local level, Pere interfered in the operation of municipal governance. In 1345, he ordered that the election of \textit{infanzones} to their two \textit{jurado} positions in the Oscan municipal council take place every two years instead of every four.\textsuperscript{76} This maneuver enabled the king to reduce the power of the lower nobility in the city by increasing their turnover rate. This policy undermined the political protection they generated for the autonomy of the municipal council. Perhaps, more importantly, it demonstrated his royal presence and reestablished his authority over an autonomously minded urban organization. Municipal records of the elections indicate that \textit{infanzones} from the Gabardiella and Redón families had gained a firm grip on the \textit{jurado} seats available to the lower nobility, making them members, along with their \textit{ciudadano} counterparts, of a well-established oligarchy in Osca.\textsuperscript{77} Due to the leniency of previous rulers, the oligarchy had grown confident in its ability to govern and accustomed to being the primary authority in the city. To demonstrate the supremacy of the Crown in Osca, Pere needed to undermine the oligarchy’s political power.

By halting the established exchange of privileges for urban support, Pere created an environment ripe for rebellion. The proverbial last straw occurred in 1347, when the now-widowed, still son-less king attempted to name his daughter heir to the throne. The upper nobility of Aragon claimed that Pere was violating the established customs of the kingdom, and

\textsuperscript{75} See chapter 1 for more information about Pere III’s kingship.

\textsuperscript{76} ACA C, Reg. 879, f. 51.

\textsuperscript{77} Iranzo, \textit{Élites políticas y gobierno urbano}, 156-157.
they formed a union in opposition to the king. With few exceptions, all of the cities of Aragon, including Osca, had joined the union by the beginning of 1348. Over the course of the next year, it appeared that the union would dominate Pere III in the same manner that it had dominated Pere II in 1283. Consequently, the city leaders of Osca sought to take advantage of the situation to accrue more authority at the expense of the Crown. When the rebel union succeeded in forcing the king to accept its members into his royal council, the list included Gilbert Redón, a recent Oscan jurado and member of the oligarchic infanzón Redón family. At the same time, Oscan jurados took the opportunity to seize the neighboring royal towns of Apiés and Lienas, and they besieged Barbués, the stronghold of the king’s right-hand man, Pedro de Luna. By absorbing these towns and their inhabitants into Osca’s territory, the city stood to gain more revenue and thus more political and economic influence in the Kingdom of Aragon.

The union’s luck ran out in 1348 when the king emerged victorious from the battlefield, and Pere immediately moved to regain the political ground he had lost. At a Cortes session in Zaragoza, he personally destroyed the union’s seal with a knife (cutting his own hand in the process), and he ordered their records burned. Afterwards, he confiscated the estates of the nobility who had participated in the uprising and, in some cases, ordered their execution. He also sent his officials out to punish rebel cities. Oscan officials were forced to return the towns and lands they had seized; the city was fined 46,000 sueldos jaqueses for its treason; and some of the

78 See chapter 1 for more information on the rebellion of 1347.
79 The only cities in Aragon that did not join the union were Teruel, Daroca, and Calatayud. See Pere III’s chronicle, Chronicle, ed. by M. and J.N. Hillgarth, vol. II (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1980), 397.
80 Iranzo, Élites políticas y gobierno urbano, 194-196.
81 See chapter 1 for more information about Pere III’s actions following his victory over the union in 1348.
city’s residents were sentenced to hard labor in the galleys or exile.\(^{82}\) Iranzo explains that the king mostly punished members of the oligarchy, both ciudadanos and infanzones, due to their enthusiasm in the union’s campaign.\(^{83}\) It is possible, however, that Pere also took the opportunity to weaken the oligarchy, which stood in the way of his aim to reassert royal authority in the city. In 1352, to undermine further the power of the oligarchy, the king wrote to the merino of Osca, a royal official, directing him to assist in the election of the jurados.\(^{84}\) This order enabled the king to supervise and perhaps influence, vis-à-vis his official, the selection process of a group that was primarily comprised of oligarchic ciudadanos and infanzones.

Although Pere succeeded in putting down the union’s rebellion and took legal steps to humble the nobility and cities of his realms, Oscan officials and residents continued to challenge the king’s authoritarian policies through a variety of means. On some occasions, city officials challenged the actions of local royal officials. In 1349, the jurados and justicia complained to the royal chancery that recent provisions established by the almutazaf, a local royal official, infringed on the established rights of the city, but their protests fell on deaf ears.\(^{85}\) In 1367, a group of ciudadanos instigated an inquisitorial investigation against the captain that the king had appointed to lead a defense of the city during the war with Castile. They claimed that the captain

\(^{82}\) The Crown’s approach to Osca was repeated throughout Aragon in Zaragoza, Jaca, Barbastro, and many other cities in Aragon. In Osca, the following were punished for their participation in the rebellion: Fernando de Biota, García de Orna, Juan Sánchez Civader, García Bailo, Anraldo de Igríes and Miguel Dezmero were condemned to the galleys. Martín de Fermosiella, Sancho de Ruesta and Berenguer Fortaner were sentenced to four months in the galleys and permanent exile from the kingdom; Lope de Embún, Pedro San Ciprián, García Lanaja, Sancho de Ayerbe, Salvador Fortaner and García Faro were punished with hard labor and four months of exile from the kingdom; and Martín Romeo, Martín de Ahones, el maestre Pedro Calaf and Pelegrín de Sádaba were simply expelled permanently from the kingdom. ACA C, Reg. 895, f. 94r-v. Documentos Municipales de Huesca, n. 181 and 182.

\(^{83}\) Iranzo, Élites políticas y gobierno urbano, 197.

\(^{84}\) ACA C, Reg. 1142, f. 52v.

\(^{85}\) Documentos Municipales de Huesca, n. 182.
had abused his authority in the exercise of his office, but ultimately the charges against him were dropped.\textsuperscript{86} Considered together, it seems likely that the \textit{almutazaf} and the captain had not done anything punishable, but rather residents targeted them because they were royal officials.

Oscan officials and residents in the city also resisted the king’s domineering approach to governance by ignoring his orders and those of his officials. In 1352, Pere wrote to city officials in Osca to complain that many of those convicted for their participation in the union had avoided punishment. Although the union had been defeated, it appears that some Oscans continued to sympathize with its principles concerning appropriate royal power and with their neighbors who had fought for the preservation of local autonomy.\textsuperscript{87} In 1359, the king ordered residents to repair the city wall in anticipation of a Castilian invasion, but the records indicate that residents often neglected their assignments to carry out the repair, much to the chagrin of royal officials.\textsuperscript{88} In addition, in 1364, the king expressed frustration that the \textit{jurados} had not hung any of the residents who had refused to answer the royal call to arms. He stated that because he was their natural lord, all qualifying Oscans were required to provide military assistance; he argued that those who declined should be “executed by beheading or through some other guise.”\textsuperscript{89} It seems that officials and residents alike realized that while they could not stop the king from issuing orders, they did not have to obey readily. Whereas scholars have discussed King Pere’s demands as they affected the daily lives of Oscans, they have no examined the king’s ordinances and the

\textsuperscript{86} AMHu, \textit{Libro de Privilegios}, f. 33-34v.

\textsuperscript{87} AMHu, \textit{Libro de Privilegios}, f. 12v-13. The king also wrote to the abbot of nearby Montearagón and ordered him not to receive any of the condemned or offer them any assistance, implying that the abbot might have done so otherwise. Ricardo del Arco, “Documentos inéditos del Archivo Municipal de Huesca” in \textit{Linajes de Aragón} 4:12 (1913).

\textsuperscript{88} Muñío, \textit{Élites políticas y gobierno urbano}, 210.

\textsuperscript{89} “escabeçandolos o en otra guise.” ACA C, Reg. 1202, f. final and Reg. 1187, f. 146r-v.
city’s responses to the Crown together. When this is done, a discernable pattern emerges that suggests a power struggle between the king and municipal officials.

While the king and Oscans carried out their struggle for control over the city, Pere III continued his predecessor’s contradictory policy toward Jews and Muslims, serving to widen the perceived divide between the Crown and the Jewish population, on the one hand, and the City and Christians and Muslims, on the other. From the start of his reign, Pere introduced measures in Osca and throughout his realms that were intended to funnel Jewish revenue to the Crown more effectively. In 1337, he ordered that every Jew residing in royal territory be assessed for taxation, he forbade Jews from relocating to other towns and cities with their property, and he ordered royal officials to identify Jews who resided in one town and kept property in another and force them to establish residence in one place.\(^{90}\) As Elka Klein has demonstrated in her work on twelfth-century Barcelona, rulers of that time realized that allowing Jews more control over the finances of their communities actually increased the amount of Jewish revenue earmarked for the royal treasury.\(^{91}\) Pere III adopted this approach, and in 1340, he amended an ordinance to recognize the authority of the Jews of Osca over their distribution and collection of taxes.\(^{92}\) In 1358, the king extended to Jewish leaders the right to exercise the juego tax when they needed to gather money in response to the Crown’s demands.\(^{93}\) To protect his financial assets, Pere moved quickly to defend the Jews when he believed that contemporary developments might endanger them. In 1348, fear and misunderstanding of the plague prompted mobs of Christians to attack

\(^{90}\) ACA Cr., Pere III, C26, f. 3617; ACA Reg. 1054, f. 116r. These orders are partially transcribed in Meyerson, Jews in an Iberian Frontier Kingdom, 157.

\(^{91}\) Klein, Jews, Christian Society, & Royal Power in Medieval Barcelona.

\(^{92}\) Asunción Blasco Martínez, “Los judíos en Aragón durante la Baja Edad Media” in Destierros Aragoneses i Judíos y Moriscos (Zaragoza, 1988), n. 36.

\(^{93}\) This was also extended to the Muslim community. Villaluenga, La Aljama Sarracenade Huesca, appendix, n. 65.
Jewish communities throughout the realms. In response, the king established a new royal post for
the protection of the Jews in his realms, although he dissolved it soon afterward when he found
that the position holder was more concerned with the money he received from the Jews than with
protecting them. Moreover in 1376, when the Jews of Osca were forced to pawn the valuable
decorations that adorned their Torah scrolls to meet their financial obligations to the king, Pere
wrote to the Christian lender, directing him not to resell the decorations and to allow the Jews
time to repay his loan. Pere’s preferential treatment for and interference in the affairs of the
Jews, in combination with his suppression of urban autonomy, reinforced the perception that
Jews were representatives of the king, thereby making them targets.

In contrast, Pere’s approach to the Muslims of Osca and their own actions emphasized
their connection to the city. Throughout his reign, the king offered the Muslims of Osca a near-
continuous exemption from paying taxes to the Crown due to their insolvency. Instead of
money, Oscan Muslims contributed skilled archers to the city’s military efforts during the war
with Castile. City officials and other Christian residents may have looked upon these Muslim
archers as enduring the same hardships as Christian soldiers, making their military contribution

94 The Jews of Osca entrenched themselves inside their walled quarters and successfully escaped most of the
violence that the plague prompted. This was not the case in many cities, including Barcelona. For more information,

95 ACA C, Reg. 1257, f. 10.

96 The Jews themselves also continued to actively associate with the Crown. For example, in 1354, Jewish leaders
from across Aragon, Catalonia, and Valencia attempted to create a united association that pledged its allegiance to

97 The records indicate that Pere offered Oscan Muslims exemptions in 1337 for five years: he pardoned part of the
tax amount they owed to the Crown in 1341 (ACA C, Reg. 630, f. 7v); in 1344, he exempted them for 10 years from
paying the third owed to the king when they sold property (ACA C, Reg. 888, f. 151v); in 1357, he conceded to
them a moratorium of four years for the amount owed on a loan the community had taken from a local Jew (ACA C,
Reg. 1151, f. 179); in 1358, he lowered the mount the Muslims were obligated to pay towards the upkeep of the
Estudio General (Villaluenga, La Aljama Sarracena de Huesca, appendix, n. 34).

more meaningful than the impersonal financial contributions of the Jewish community. Oscan Muslims also demonstrated their connection with the wider Christian community by denigrating Jews spiritually. In 1360, a local Muslim wrote an anti-Jewish polemic that emphasized the Jews’ rejection of Christ and the Virgin Mary. David Nirenberg has argued that this polemic along with other contemporary anti-Jewish literature produced by Muslims utilized Christian theological ideas to demonstrate their superiority over Jews in the hierarchy of society.99 As with the Muslim attack on Jews in 1324, this polemical literature further emphasized the Jews’ outsider identity and reinforced the inclusion of Muslims in the city of Osca. This is not to say that the author wrote the work specifically to exclude Jews; rather, it fits within contemporary religious and political trends to identify Jews as a potential danger to society, and a greater threat than Muslims.

By the 1370s, the residents appear to have been split in their political interests. On the one hand, city officials, as well as Christian and Muslim residents, resented the king’s intrusion and his attempts to minimize their autonomy, and they responded by carrying out different forms of resistance to undermine Pere’s authority. On the other hand, the Jews, through the king’s financial demands and their own actions, identified and were identified with the Crown and the king’s authoritarian style of leadership.

**Two Host Desecration Cases: 1371 and 1377**

It is within this context that two host desecration accusations recorded in Osca, one directed against a Muslim in 1371 and the other, as described at the beginning of this chapter, against six Jews in 1377, should be understood. Existing scholarship has examined the two accusations separately and strictly within the framework of Muslim and Jewish experiences and

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religious developments, a line of analysis that has proven fruitful in challenging assumptions about the riots of 1391 and understanding the medieval development of Christian identity. But when we consider the two accusations together and alongside the ongoing power struggle in Osca regarding appropriate royal authority and local autonomy, they demonstrate that, in addition to other forms of dissent, Oscan officials and residents occasionally took advantage of accusations against Jews to resist the king’s policies. This argument is not meant to suggest that Christian officials and residents targeted Jews as part of a planned program in connection with their struggle for political power. Instead, their exploitation of accusations against Jews was opportunistic, and pursuing existing charges served their political purposes. As Nirenberg has demonstrated, violence against Jews had “strategic value.”

In 1371, Pere sent a missive to Oscan officials regarding an accusation of host desecration against a Muslim man named Çalema Alaroç. In the document, the king presents his understanding of the situation: Alaroç had desecrated the consecrated host during festivities related to the Feast of Corpus Christi, and city officials had arrested him and taken him into custody soon afterward. Public processions, religious plays, and other events related to the Feast would have brought much of the city out of their houses, workshops, and other buildings and into the streets for an extended period of time during the day, potentially providing good


101 Nirenberg, Communities of Violence, 93.

102 ACA C, Reg. 757, f. 85r.
cover for criminal activity. Consequently, one may imagine that Alaroç was accused of taking and desecrating pieces of the host from the local cathedral during the chaos of the Festival, but this is mere speculation. Pere’s letter offers no detail as to how Alaroç obtained the consecrated host, how much of the host he acquired, how he desecrated the host, and how his misdeed came to light. In fact, the letter is incredibly brief considering the serious nature of its contents. Instead, Pere concludes with an order to Oscan officials not to proceed against Alaroç unless they had sufficient evidence that he was culpable. The lack of subsequent documentation after Pere’s letter in 1371 suggests that city officials did not pursue any sort of investigation or trial; rather, they complied with the king’s orders and allowed Alaroç to go free. The case of Çalema Alaroç came and went, seemingly with little consequence for anyone involved.

Whereas the 1371 case garnered little more than a flicker of interest from city officials or the king (although Alaroç himself may have been justifiably perturbed), the accusation of host desecration against six Jews in 1377 lasted for seven months and generated 29 letters from the king, the crown prince, and Jewish leaders. In contrast to the ambiguous information provided in the missive about Alaroç’s crime in 1371, the letters exchanged in 1377 offer concrete details about how the crime took place and who was involved. According Prince Joan, a Christian thief named Ramon Rafart confessed to stealing five pieces of the consecrated host from the altar of a church in the nearby town of Tardienta, bringing them to Osca, and selling them to Haim

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103 For information about the Feast of Corpus Christi in the late Middle Ages, see Miri Rubin, *Corpus Christi: The Eucharist in Late Medieval Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991).

104 A search of municipal records also produces little insight into Alaroç’s life, only revealing that a possible family member by the name of Alí Alaroç was imprisoned for a different crime between 1364 and 1378. Villaluenga, *La Aljama Sarracena de Huesca*, 42.

105 As mentioned above, most of these letters are transcribed in the letters are transcribed in Miret i Sans, “El procés de les hòsties contra els jueus d’Osca de 1377.”
Andalet, a member of the city’s Jewish community in exchange for three rings and 30 sueldos. When Andalet was brought in for questioning, he implicated another Jewish couple, Jaffuda and Manases Abmabez, who in turn, implicated Salomo de Quatorze, Mosse Ambinax, and Abraha Abolbaça. Throughout the process, Prince Joan and a group of men comprising his advisory council zealously pursued the accusations against the six Jews. The persistence of Joan’s councilors motivated the king to express his suspicion that they had other motives beyond carrying out justice or concern for the Catholic faith. In addition, Oscan Jewish leaders wrote to the king to complain that the prince and his men refused to provide them or their lawyers with documentation from the investigation with which they could defend the accused. They also ignored the Christian thief’s later admission to having eaten the consecrated hosts himself instead of selling them to Haim Andalet. Further evidencing Pere’s allegation, Joan and his councilors quickly ordered the execution by quartering of the thief and the burning of the Abmabez couple without prior notification of the king first.106

The royal letters exchanged regarding the 1377 host desecration reveal the names of some of Joan’s councilors. Consequently, these documents offer unusual insight into the reasons why they pursued the accusation against the six Jews but not the charge against the Muslim Alaroç in 1371. The prescriptive nature of royal and municipal ordinances issued in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries tends to obscure these relationships due to their formal

106 With the exception of usury and murder, all criminal activity committed by Jews and Muslims that did not include Christians was theoretically judged by members of their own religious communities. Criminal activity carried out by Jews or Muslims that concerned Christians fell under the jurisdiction of municipal officials. Host desecration, however, was perceived to be a fatal assault on the body of Christ, and consequently it was prosecuted by royal officials. As the governor general, Prince Joan had the authority to investigate and judge any and all criminal cases in the kingdom, but it was a matter of choice. If Joan did not judge a case, then the municipal bailiff did. For more information about jurisdiction in the medieval Crown of Aragon, see Ánchel Conte Cazcarro, La Aljama de Moros de Huesca (Huesca: Instituto de Estudios Altoaragoneses, 1992), 100-102; Nirenberg, Communities of Violence, 177-178; Assis, The Golden Age of Aragonese Jewry, 43-44. Kelleher, The Measure of Woman, 30-31.
addresses to or from groups of officials, such as the “jurados.” Moreover, records regarding alliances with the nobility or the Crown often speak of the city as an entire unit, offering only the occasional brief glimpse of individual figures.\textsuperscript{107} Although Joan also frequently referred to his advisers as a whole, in one of his letters to his father, he reveals that in addition to his normal entourage of nobles, his council included four figures with ties to Osca:\textsuperscript{108} Guillem d’Alcolea, a ciudadano and the current notary of the city;\textsuperscript{109} Exemeno Doscha, an infanzoni and previously a jurado in the Oscan municipal council;\textsuperscript{110} Garcia Lopez de Sesse, a member of the high nobility and a resident of Osca;\textsuperscript{111} and Lop de Gurrea, also a member of the high nobility and a resident of Osca, who temporarily served as the city’s zalmedina in 1352.\textsuperscript{112} The diverse socio-economic statuses of the individuals named suggests that the four figures shared a similar stake in the continuation and outcome of an investigation that transcended class lines and went beyond concern for the body of Christ.

\textsuperscript{107} Such as Gilbert Redón in 1348 during the union rebellion. Iranzo, \textit{Élites políticas y gobierno urbano}, 194.

\textsuperscript{108} For the letter, see ACA, Reg. 1723, f. 62.

\textsuperscript{109} Alcolea’s title is mentioned in another letter. ACA, Reg. 1723, f. 47.

\textsuperscript{110} The sixteenth-century chronicler, Jeronimo Zurita, explains in his \textit{Anales} that in 1357, during the war with Castile, the king ordered the \textit{Justicia} of Aragon to go to Osca and defend the region with the council of six Oscan jurados, Pedro Garces de Añon, Juan Duerto, Pedro Lopez Sarnes, Gil Lopes del Castellar, Martin Sanchez de Barcelona, Garci Ximenez de Murillo, and two caballeros, Ramon de Tarbe and Juan Ximenez de Huesca. We can assume that Juan Ximenez de Huesca is the same Exemeno Doscha and that he and Ramon de Tarbe held the two infanzoni jurado positions in the municipal council of Osca that year. Zurita, \textit{Anales de la Corona de Aragón}, vol. IV, Book IX, 256.

\textsuperscript{111} The Sesse family is quite visible in royal records from the fourteenth-century Crown of Aragon. A Juan Lopez de Sesse was a member of the king’s court in 1348 and supported his struggle against the nobility. This same figure served as Justicia of Aragon in 1357 and was probably the Justicia mentioned in connection with Exemeno Doscha. City records document the residence of the Sesse family in Osca. There are a number of family members named Garcia Lopez de Sesse, and thus we can only assume that this Garcia Lopez de Sesse had connections with the city. Zurita, \textit{Anales de la Corona de Aragón}, vol. IV, book VIII, 227 and book 9, 256.

\textsuperscript{112} Villaluenga, \textit{La Aljama Sarracena de Huesca}, 72.
Since Oscan residents were members of Joan’s council during the 1377 investigation, it seems likely that their different responses to the two accusations of host desecration partly stemmed from their divergent views of Muslims and Jews in the community. Pere’s letter concerning the 1371 accusations suggests that officials did little more than notify the king of the situation, and he responded with a dispassionate reminder to evaluate the evidence carefully. The nonchalant nature of both parties and their apparent indifference to details about how and why Alaroç carried out his crime suggests that the accused was not perceived as a threat to the community or of any particular value to the Crown, despite the religious accusation made against him. Beginning in the twelfth century, the body of Christ became the focus of religious ardor across the continent. It prompted many to consider Eucharistic dignity and potential dangers that non-Christians posed to it. But Jews were more likely to be accused of host desecration (and religious crimes in general) than Muslims. As scholars have pointed out, from a contemporary point of view, the Jews had crucified Christ and had thus demonstrated their contempt for his divinity and Christendom as a whole.113 Perhaps officials and the king understood the accusation against Alaroç as a misguided expression of piety that should be briefly explored and then dismissed. Regardless, within the context of the relationship between Oscan Christians and Muslims, it seems that because Muslims were perceived as members of the wider community and their interests were assumed to align with those of the city, there was no reason to initiate a more thorough investigation of the accusation in 1371. The Jews of Osca, on the other hand, enjoyed neither the same inclusion nor trust as their Muslim neighbors. Their established

113 In contrast, Muslims in the Crown of Aragon were more frequently accused of political crimes like collusion with Muslim enemy forces in Granada or planning to overthrow Christian leadership in an attempt to return the realms to Muslim rule. For more information about Christian perceptions of the threat Muslims represented, John Tolan, *Saracens: Islam in the Medieval European Imagination* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002). See chapter 1 for more information about the rise of the Eucharist and how this influenced different views of Christians and Muslims and the accusations they faced.
association with the Crown was evidence that the Jews did not share the same political vision. In combination with the pervasive idea that Jews were secretly inclined to harm Christians and recreate their role in the crucifixion of Christ, their financial and political collusion with the king emphasized and affirmed their identity as outsiders and a potential danger to the community and its values. Consequently, it was more plausible to local Christians that the Jews accused of host desecration in 1377 were actually guilty.

At the same time that Oscan officials and residents may have genuinely believed that the Jews accused could have carried out the crime, the accusation also presented an opportunity to advance their own interests. This idea seems to have occurred to the Pere, because in a number of his letters he alleges that the men advising Joan encouraged the investigation despite having no evidence beyond a thief’s confession to support it. For example, on December 31st, the king claimed that “those individuals that you put on your council” are “well pleased with the accusations” and seek to punish the Jewish community without reason. A few weeks later, Pere expressed his skepticism that a Christian would even consider selling the body of Christ for only 30 sueldos and three rings. Similarly, on January 26, he urged the prince to stop “those who do not act under the color of justice” from harming the Jews of Osca. Finally, on February 25th, the king complained that “your officials have resorted to twists and injustice” to continue the judicial proceedings against the Jews, with the consequence that their actions “neither serve God or Us or you.” The king was convinced that Joan’s councilors were

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114 ACA C, Reg. 1259, f. 134.
115 ACA C, Reg. 1261, f. 8.
116 ACA C, Reg. 1262, f. 10
117 ACA C, Reg. 1261, f. 27. As noted above, the king also claimed that Joan and councilors persisted in their investigation of the matter more for “the destruction of the Jewish communities than for justice or out of concern for
encouraging the investigation against the Jews accused of host desecration for their own personal gain rather than out of a sense of justice or religious duty.

The dialogue between the prince and the king indicates that Joan’s councilors recognized the 1377 host desecration accusations as an opportunity to undermine the king’s authority. On February 4th, Joan lost his patience with his father’s claims that his councilors were up to no good. He retorted, “During the last 60 days and more, it was the duty of my council to determine all justifiable information, and they reported to me that the body of our savior Jesus Christ was and remains in the possession of the Jews, and some whisper that through the enticement of money, I will refrain from extending or prolonging the matter.”  

Joan suggested that because the Jews were in the practice of financially supporting the monarchy to secure their safety, they assumed that they could also solve this problem with money. In a letter dated a couple weeks later, the king confirmed his financial dependence on Jewish revenue when he explained to the prince that if he and his councilors continued the investigation, the Jews would leave royal territory, which would “weaken Us and you.” Since both the prince and the king enjoyed their “services,” this was not a good outcome. The letters thus suggest that Christian Oscans were also aware that the king relied on Jewish revenue and that it formed the basis of the relationship between the Jews and the Crown. More than just a way to disable an important financial source of the king’s power, the pursuit of accusations of host desecration against local Jews enabled Oscans to assert their own authority over and against royal power. As previously noted, due to their association with the Crown, the Jews were thought by contemporaries to embody the king’s

118 ACA C, Reg. 1723, f. 62.

119 ACA C, Reg. 1262, f. 10.
authoritarian policies. This understanding was clearly evidenced by Pere’s strong response to the actions of the prince and his councilors in the investigation. Consequently, whereas the 1371 accusation represented an unusual, but insignificant occurrence, the 1377 accusation provided Oscan Christian residents with an opportunity to express their resentment of the king and his policies in a manner that attracted the king’s attention.

The Expansion of Noble Power

The host desecration trial against the Jews came to an end in May 1378 when the crown prince fell ill.\(^{120}\) It is possible that Oscan Christians might have continued to search for the pieces of the consecrated host that the prince and his council were so convinced remained in the Jews’ possession were not for the distraction that the nobility presented. Christian Oscans had hoped that opening their doors to the lower nobility in municipal governance and allying with the upper nobility would protect them from the encroachment of the king and promote political autonomy. In reality, however, the nobility brought interests and conflicts with them that created chaos and political instability in the city that began in the last years of Pere III’s reign and lasted into the next century. In line with his authoritarian approach to ruling, Pere sought to suppress noble strife by imposing royal authority, but his approach ultimately proved unsuccessful in eradicating the ongoing discord and lawlessness. Scholarship about the nobility in Osca tends to focus on the how conflicts between nobles influenced the experiences of other residents and the administration of the city.\(^{121}\) When we consider the problems that resident nobles caused for Pere

\(^{120}\) Joan appears to have struggled with a life-long illness of some sort. He frequently visited shrines and both he and his second wife, Yoland, made short versions of pilgrimages in order to cure him. Thomas Bisson has speculated that Joan may have had epilepsy. Bisson, *The Medieval Crown of Aragon*, 122.

III’s municipal policies, we gain a unique angle on the different ways that Oscans responded to Pere III’s expression of royal authority and his perceived weaknesses as a ruler.

The 1322 agreement between the *ciudadanos* and *infanzones* was intended to include members of the lower nobility in the governance of the city without upsetting the balance of power in the city. The *ciudadanos* would maintain primary control over administration, and those *infanzones* who wished to participate would be permitted to hold the few positions available to them in exchange for paying taxes. Although this arrangement appeared to work for decades municipal documentation suggests that the *infanzones* grew restless with the established political constraints placed on their influence in Osca in the years following the 1377 host desecration investigation. It is possible that they viewed the king’s vulnerability during the investigation as a sign that they could expand their authority in the city over and against the other residents without much difficulty. In 1380, Prince Joan confirmed a local ordinance that extended political inclusion to all *infanzones* regardless of whether they expressed desire to take part in municipal governance.\(^{122}\) Iranzo suggests that this development points to continuing good relations between the *infanzones* and the *ciudadanos*. At first glance it would appear so since their sweeping incorporation meant that all *infanzones* had to pay taxes to the city.\(^{123}\) However, considered alongside subsequent municipal documentation and the king’s interference, this development actually reflects the lower nobility’s growing power in the city at the expense of the non-noble urban elites. In 1381, Oscan *jurados* and the *justicia* decided to create five points of order that the municipal council should follow in the future if disagreements between the

\(^{122}\) AMHu, *Concejo Pergaminos*, n. 79. See also *Documentos Municipales de Huesca*, n. 112, 113, 114, and 116.

\(^{123}\) Muñío, *Élites políticas y gobierno urbano*, 250.
ciudadanos and infanzones arose.\textsuperscript{124} While documentation of this meeting does not specify whether this decision originated as a result of a previous disagreement, it is possible that such a disagreement had occurred either immediately before the meeting or that there was a chance of it taking place in the future. It is certain that a conflict took place in 1383 because the king responded to it by reducing the number of jurados from ten to five (four positions for ciudadanos and one for infanzones).\textsuperscript{125} It seems that Pere took the opportunity to quiet simultaneously the discord and extend his authority by limiting the number of non-royal officials managing municipal affairs. This method of suppressing the power struggle between the two groups failed, however, since the next year the king blamed the “destruction, poverty, and depopulation” of Osca on the bad governance of officials and the system of election that had been established.\textsuperscript{126}

In addition and in correlation with the problem that the infanzones presented to municipal governance, the high nobility in Osca engaged in factional fighting amongst themselves and embroiled members of the lower nobility, ciudadanos, and members of the Muslim community in the violent exchanges that ensued. Documentation from the city suggests that factional brawls occasionally occurred in Osca beginning in the 1350s, but it was not until the late 1370s that it became a perpetual disturbance and caused residents to fear for their lives and livelihoods.\textsuperscript{127} By all accounts, the fighting that took place in the streets, houses, and places of business in the city echoed on a smaller scale the noble feuding of centuries past that created death and destruction.

\textsuperscript{124} ACA C, Reg. 1453, f. 66.

\textsuperscript{125} ACA C, Reg. 942, f. 114-115; Municipal documentation reveals that the city was permitted to retain 10 officials for one more year before it was reduced to the amount specified by the king: AMHu, leg. 55, n. 3998.

\textsuperscript{126} ACA C, Reg. 944, f. 52v-53.

\textsuperscript{127} Pere references fighting between noble families once in 1353. Muñío, Élites políticas y gobierno urbano, 244.
throughout the realms before Aragonese rulers managed to enforce the "Peace and Truce." As with the lower nobility’s attempt to gain control over municipal governance, the rise of noble factional fighting toward the end of the fourteenth century may have been connected with a perception of royal weakness. Municipal documentation indicates that the brawls generally took place between the Gurrea and Urríes families with support of members from infanzoni families including the Azlors, Marchas, Arbeas, Berguas, and Embúns. Interestingly, both Miguel de Gurrea and Pedro Jordán de Urríes, leaders of the two feuding families, began as loyal supporters of the king in the 1340s. In subsequent years, however, it appears that the two men and their families began to view royal power differently. As discussed above, Lop de Gurrea was one of the four Oscans on Prince Joan’s council during the 1377 host desecration investigation. It is possible that the Gurrea and Urríes families supported Pere III’s consolidation of royal power as long as it benefited them, but once it no longer directly privileged them, they looked to other opportunities to accumulate power, such as the 1377 investigation.


129 ACA C, Reg. 1830, f. 38r-v.

130 Both men fought alongside the king during the rebellion of the Union in 1347. It is possible that the Miguel de Gurrea who was involved in the Oscan factions had also served as Pere III’s governor general in the 1340s and that his enemy, Jordán de Urríes, served as the king’s majordomo at that time. This is unclear because for both the Gurreas and the Urríes a father and a son held the same name. For the roles that Miguel de Gurrea and Jordán de Urríes played in the rebellion and their possible offices, see Pere III’s chronicle, Chronicle, ed. by M. and J.N. Hillgarth, vols. I and II.

131 Pere’s Chronicle offers one clue about why Miguel de Gurrea began to oppose the king. In 1357 during the war with Castile, the king blamed Miguel, then Governor of Tarazona, for the city’s surrender to the enemy. He says “Because of the great wickedness of En Miguel de Gurrea, a knight of Aragon, to whom We had given the command, he would not defend [the city] as he should have done. He entered into treaty with the king of Castile and, with some conditions, surrendered the city within three days, during which the said captain, with his wife and his whole household and with all the furniture he could carry, went to the kingdom of Navarre.” Pere III, Chronicle, ed. by M. and J.N. Hillgarth, vol. II, p. 512. Again, it is unclear which Miguel de Gurrea this was, but it seems likely that the Gurrea family did not enjoy the same favor from the king after this event.
While it is unclear what conflict prompted the two men, their families, and other resident nobility to engage in physical altercations, the fact that other Oscans took sides and joined in the fighting suggests that it was part of a redistribution of power in the city. Within the same royal decree that reduced the number of jurados in 1383, Pere also ordered that infanzones and ciudadanos that associated with a noble faction would not be eligible to hold a municipal office.\textsuperscript{132} It seems that the king’s threat was not successful in stemming the violence since the next year he imposed a penalty of 1000 florines on any jurado who participated in factional feuding in the city or surrounding territory.\textsuperscript{133} At the same time that he was trying to prevent the lower nobility and non-noble elite from taking part in the fights, Pere learned that members of the Muslim community had also pledged their allegiance to the noble factions. In 1386, he threatened to fine and imprison Muslims who committed crimes in connection with the factions.\textsuperscript{134} A few months later, the king wrote again to forbid Muslims from offering shelter to Christians (noble or otherwise) involved in the feuding, and he ordered royal officials to confiscate the property of and expel those found guilty.\textsuperscript{135} The fact that the Muslims participated in the factional fighting and the nobility fled to the Muslim community to avoid punishment fits with their longstanding association with the city. In contrast, the lack of similar documentation about local Jews suggests that they kept their heads down and avoided any interaction with the anarchic nobility who tended to view manifestations of royal power as oppressive and illegitimate.

\textsuperscript{132} ACA C, Reg. 942, f. 114-115.

\textsuperscript{133} ACA C, Reg. 944, f. 52-53.

\textsuperscript{134} ACA C, Reg. 850, f 72.

\textsuperscript{135} ACA C, Reg. 1892, f. 26- 27.
Over the course of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, the urban Christian elite of Osca formed alliances with the nobility or the Crown as it suited their pursuit of self-determination. They occasionally tried to shape royal policies in support of this goal by defying royal officials and extending legal and physical authority over the Jews. Consequently, Pere III’s authoritarian approach to governance prompted residents to ally with the nobility and pursue accusations of host desecration against local Jews. Because their approach to acquiring political autonomy appeared to work in the past, Osca’s urban elite did not anticipate that their noble allies would take advantage of the city’s welcoming reception by dominating it. Although King Pere attempted to stamp out noble tyranny by asserting royal authority, he was not successful. When Pere III died in 1387, Joan I ascended the throne and attempted to handle the situation and the city’s desire for self-governance in a different manner.

Joan I: The Withdrawal of Royal Power

As king, Joan I implemented his inclusive style of kingship rooted in power sharing with municipal leadership and the nobility. In opposition to his father’s authoritarian style of governance, Joan delegated authority, including responsibility over the Jewish and Muslim communities, in the urban centers and throughout his realms. In theory, this approach should have satisfied the political ambitions of the nobility and urban elite, but in reality, it created a perception of Joan as an ineffective ruler. In the end, it only privileged the nobility and strengthened their control over Osca, leaving the non-noble elite with less power to govern their city.\(^{136}\)

Joan recognized that the Crown’s traditional jurisdiction over the Jews and Muslims in its realms emphasized the uniqueness of the king’s office. In an effort to demonstrate distance

\(^{136}\) See Chapters 2 and 3 for more information about the development and implementation of Joan’s kingship.
between the monarchy and the Muslim and, particularly, the Jewish communities, Joan abstained from interfering to the same degree as his predecessors. In 1388, Joan authorized the Jewish leaders of Osca and in communities throughout the realms to try informers at their discretion instead of doing so under the supervision of royal officials. This authorization allowed leaders to judge Jewish offenders with or without verbal or written indictment, published evidence, and counsel for the defense “in accordance with civil, canonical, or Jewish law, or even not in accordance with these legal codes.” Furthermore, once Jewish leaders issued a judicial sentence, the king and his officials were not permitted to question whether or not these sentences reflected a perversion of justice. The Jews of Osca and elsewhere quickly recognized the danger this imbalance of power in the community presented and persuaded Joan to restore the previous judicial process that allowed royal oversight, but his efforts demonstrated a willingness to relinquish exclusive claim to the Jews. In 1392, Joan demonstrated that the Crown no longer favored the Jews by ordering that the Muslims of Osca should precede the Jews in processions, funerals, and other public events as a favor for the military service they provided to the king.

Joan also relinquished some control over local Jews and Muslims, but instead of offering jurisdiction to city officials, he gave it to the local nobility. When the riots of 1391 encouraged Christians throughout the kingdom to attack local Jewish communities, Joan placed the Jews of Osca under the protection of the resident noble, Lop de Gurrea. It is not likely a coincidence that Joan gave responsibility over a prosperous Jewish community to the same Lop de Gurrea

137 Joan continued to lay claim to their financial resources, however. See, for example, ACA C, Reg. 1830, f.39r.

138 ACA C, Reg. 1099, f. 77v-78r.

139 Baer, Die Juden im christlichen Spanien, vol. 1, n. 398.


141 ACA C, Reg. 1901, f. 50.
who collaborated with him in 1377 against King. Although Iranzo suggests that the Jews generously funded Gurrea’s protection in 1381, it seems more likely that their payment was actually the result of extortion that enabled the community to avoid the same devastation that their contemporaries experienced in other cities and towns.\textsuperscript{142} This is evidenced by the fact that the Jewish community continued to pay Miguel de Gurrea, the head of the family, 600 sueldos a year until Joan’s death in 1396.\textsuperscript{143} Similarly, in 1394, he directed the noble Bernardo Galcerán de Pinós to guard the Muslim community and its property since its residents were “people of little defense.”\textsuperscript{144} While not a permanent resident of the city, Pinós was a member of Joan’s royal court and served as an advisor during the 1377 investigation.\textsuperscript{145} It is possible that Joan’s generosity to the two nobles was both an expression of gratitude for their earlier support and an incentive to support his authority as king. Nevertheless, King Joan diminished the reach of royal power in the city of Osca, but it was not in support of ciudadanos’ control of the city. Due to the historically symbolic nature of authority over the Jews and Muslims, it appears that Joan consciously honored the nobility by offering them a piece of royal power at the expense of the non-noble urban elite who had fought for so long to control municipal governance.

Although Joan gave the nobility control over local Jews and Muslims, he sought to empower city officials to solve the problem of factional violence themselves. This empowerment conformed to his desire to decentralize royal power, but it also supported his desire to avoid agitating the nobility against the Crown. When Oscan officials requested royal assistance in

\textsuperscript{142} Iranzo, Élites políticas y gobierno urbano, 213.

\textsuperscript{143} ACA C, Reg. 2045, f. 130.

\textsuperscript{144} AMHu, leg. 18, n. 1918.

\textsuperscript{145} ACA C, Reg. 1723, f. 62.
1388, Joan responded by proclaiming his support of the council’s right to issue statutes and establish laws against factional feuding and to prosecute nobles and ciudadanos who participated.\textsuperscript{146} The king genuinely seemed to believe that respect for urban autonomy represented an effective solution. Later that same year he wrote to Martí, his brother and governor general, explaining that given the damages incurred in Osca, he had ordered royal officials not to interfere in municipal officials’ administration of judicial penalties and fines in the city.\textsuperscript{147} However, Joan’s solution did not succeed in tamping down on the rampant fighting. In 1394, city officials again wrote to the king about factional feuding. He replied by writing to individual members of the nobility and directing them to respect the ordinances and resolutions of the municipal council.\textsuperscript{148} It was apparent to these nobles, however, that the king had no intention of taking actual steps to impede their actions and city officials did not have the military strength or the political support necessary to do so. Consequently, the problem continued. City officials next requested permission to appoint an extraordinary justicia to assist officials with keeping order. Viewing this as a proper corrective to a local problem that lay beyond his responsibility as king, Joan readily agreed, and Oscans acquired the assistance of the Arnaldo de Erill.\textsuperscript{149} As lord of Selgua, Erill resided nearby but did have ties to the local noble factions. He nonetheless had the necessary military and financial resources to demand respect.\textsuperscript{150} Recognizing this, the local nobility protested the legality of Erill’s assistance, but the Justicia of Aragon


\textsuperscript{147} AMHu, leg. 55, n. 3998.

\textsuperscript{148} AMHu, \textit{Concejo Pergaminos}, n. 83.

\textsuperscript{149} AMHu, leg. 18, n. 1918.

\textsuperscript{150} Muñío, \textit{Élites políticas y gobierno urbano}, 255-256.
dismissed their appeal. While it is unclear whether having the lord of Selgua’s backing had any effect on the situation, it certainly did not offer a long term solution. In 1395, city officials complained again to Joan. He repeated his support of their legal authority in the matter, but also encouraged them to find a compromise with the nobility if faction members agreed to enter the city peacefully and unarmed. Despite quickly acquiescing verbally, the nobility continued their feuding into Martí’s reign after Joan died in 1396.

Conclusion

For all intents and purposes, King Joan gave Oscan officials and residents exactly what they had demanded for nearly the past two centuries: the Crown’s relinquishment of control over municipal governance. For nearly two centuries, Oscan leaders had tried to influence royal policy toward municipal governance by establishing alliances with the nobility and the Crown. When the Crown conceded and respected urban autonomy, the city backed its efforts against the nobility. However, when rulers tried to expand their power over municipal governance, the city shifted its support to the nobility. In addition to creating alliances, Oscan Christians also sought to shape royal policies by targeting groups who appeared to embody royal power, including local Jews. In contrast to the Muslim community, which rejected royal intervention and accepted municipal authority over its operation, the Jewish community preferred a strong central government and welcomed royal interference. As a result, Oscan Jews occasionally became targets for the contempt that people had for the king and city officials understood that acquiring

151 AMHu, leg. 18, n. 1918.

152 AHPH, n. 2877, f. 70r-v.

153 For information about the noble factions during the reign of Martí I, see Michael Ryan, “Power and Pilgrimage: The Restriction of Mudéjares ’ Pilgrimage in the Kingdom of Valencia,” Essays in Medieval Studies (2008): 115-128.
jurisdiction over them and their finances represented a symbolic victory in their efforts to
achieve political autonomy. This difference in popular perception of the city’s minority
communities drove officials to pursue host desecration accusations against Jews in 1377, but not
the accusation made against a Muslim in 1371. Ultimately, Osca’s alliance with the nobility
during Pere III’s reign culminated in political chaos as nobles attempted to take control of the
city. Moreover, Joan’s surrender of municipal governance when he ascended the throne in 1386
did not produce the results for which Oscan leaders had expected or hoped. Instead of an idyllic
society in which ciudadano and infanzoni officials collaborated peacefully, satisfied with the
established balance of power, and residents that cheerfully obeyed, political autonomy meant
constant fighting to keep control of a community that threatened to implode as a result of this
internal struggle for power. In the end, neither the nobility nor the Crown provided the non-noble
urban elite with the authority or esteem which they craved.
CHAPTER 7
LLEIDA: THE KING’S ALLY

Introduction

In 1383, the count of Urgell, a nephew of King Pere III, initiated an investigation in response to an accusation of host desecration in the county of Urgell, the territory under his seigniorial authority. Like the two host desecration cases in 1367 and 1377, the royal letters of 1383 – seven in this case – reveal the details and progress of the accusation and the ensuing judicial process. The exchange between the count of Urgell and King Pere is lopsided since none of the count’s responses survive, leaving only the missives authored by Pere. The extant letters, however, offer insight into the process and circumstance prompting the host desecration investigation of 1383.

The accusation as detailed in Pere’s letters in 1383 generally replicates the narratives recorded in 1367 and 1377: a Christian thief stole twelve pieces of the consecrated host from a church in Castelló de Farfanya, a town in the county of Urgell, and sold them to two Jews, Sentou Levi and Mosse Xicacella, both from Lleida. Just as Prince Joan pursued the accusations in spite of King Pere’s expressed disapproval, so too did the count of Urgell, as demonstrated by his continuation of the investigation even after the king articulated his skepticism about the charges. The host desecration case of 1383, however, deviates from the previous ones in three

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1 One of the letters (ACA C, Reg. 1281, f. 122) is transcribed in Joaquim Miret i Sans, “El procés de les hòsties contra els jueus d’Osca de 1377”, Anuari d’institut d’Estudis Catalans 4 (December 1911), 80. The others may be found in Arxiu de la Corona d’Aragó: ACA C, Reg. 830, f. 144-145; Reg. 1106, f. 91-92; Reg. 828, f. 173-174; Reg. 1105, f. 47; Reg. 1455, f. 17-19.

2 ACA C, Reg. 1281, f. 122; ACA C, Reg. 830, f. 144v-145r.

3 Compare, for example, in a letter to the Count of Urgell in 1383 to a letter the king wrote to Prince Joan in 1377. In 1383, the king wrote to the count “we understand that you have imprisoned Sento Cequens after we wrote last wrote to you that the matter was not possible” (entens havem que vos tenits…en poder vos el Sentou Cequens, juheu de leyda, despr que nos remetre vos que el fet…no es possible) ACA C, Reg. 1106, f. 91. In 1377, the wrote to the prince “I am aware of those things that you have prosecuted…We ask again that you act in accordance with the plan that we have already written you concerning the process” (jassia quells fets per que procehits o fets procehir contra
significant ways. First, the Jews accused of host desecration were from Lleida, a royal city, and appear to have been passing through Castelló de Farfanya, a town under the seigniorial authority of the count of Urgell, when they were arrested. As he carried out his investigation, the count kept the accused Jew from Lleida imprisoned in Castelló de Farfanya. In contrast, in the 1367 and 1377 investigations, the Jews accused were residents of the same cities in which they had supposedly purchased the consecrated host pieces and were imprisoned and interrogated. Second, whereas the records from the 1367 and 1377 case reveal that city officials and residents from Barcelona and Osca assisted Joan in his investigations and appeared as eager as the prince to pursue charges, in 1383 the count of Urgell appears to have carried out the judicial process alone, without the help of officials from Lleida or any other town or city.4 Finally, the count of Urgell initiated the judicial process against the king’s wishes, but after four months of refusing to acquiesce to Pere’s requests to cease the investigation, the count permitted the king to take control.5 The count’s eventual willingness to yield to the king represents a significant departure from the previous cases in which Prince Joan stubbornly held on to authority until the conclusion of the process.

The similarities among the three cases suggest that the count of Urgell viewed accusations of host desecration against local Jews to be an effective tool in achieving his political objectives. By contrast, the discrepancies among them indicate that the count did not recognize municipal officials in Lleida as potential allies in his judicial endeavor. His objectives may have differed from those motivating Joan and officials from Barcelona and Osca to participate in 1367

l’aljama dels juheus Doscha…Per que tenim per be et volem eus pregam que segons que ja altre vegada vos haviem escrit nos trametats lo process qui ese stat fet contra la dita aljama o singulars daquella) ACA C, Reg. 1259, f. 134.

4 ACA C, Reg. 1281, f. 122 and Reg. 830, f. 144v-145r.

5 ACA C, Reg. 1105, f. 47.
and 1377. Blending established features of recent host desecration accusations and trials with new elements, the composite nature of the 1383 case prompts an examination of the triangular relationship among the residents of Lleida, the count of Urgell, and the Aragonese monarchy.

Recent scholarship on late-medieval Lleida has devoted much of its attention to the city’s minority communities, including the Jewish and Muslim *aljamas*. It has shed light on the previously-neglected experiences and perspectives of a significant segment of the city’s population. Due to its near-exclusive reliance on sources generated by and about these minority populations, however, scholars have tended to depict them as insular organizations that operated outside the majority, Christian community. Furthermore, because they tend to ignore municipal and royal sources, they interpret the accusation and judicial process of 1383 as evidence of widespread Christian antipathy for members of other faiths. Josep Lladonosa i Pujol’s works about Lleida remains the most comprehensive examination of the city’s political development between the twelfth and fourteenth centuries. While his analysis of municipal and royal records portrays the evolving relationship between Lleida and the Crown, Lladonosa’s narrative fails to

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recognize the presence of Jews and Muslims in the city, much less their prosecution at the hands of the count of Urgell in 1383.

The royal letters regarding the 1383 investigation offer a unique opportunity to examine the connections between interfaith relations, the development of municipal governance in Lleida, and the city’s relationship with the Crown. In her study of twelfth-century Barcelona, Elka Klein demonstrates how royal policies similarly affected the political and economic operation of both Jews and Christians in the city, revealing common ground between the two communities.⁸ Adopting Klein’s approach, this chapter presents a study of Lleida’s responses to different forms of authority and the effect these responses had on the political identities and ideals of Lleidan Christians, Jews, and Muslims individually and as a community. The royal letters thus act as a snapshot of sorts, providing a unique perspective on the culmination of centuries-long interaction among different religious communities in the city and between the residents of Lleida and different forms of political power. Conquered in 1149, Lleida was a seigniorial city under the jurisdiction of the counts of Urgell for nearly a century before Aragonese rulers extended royal authority over the city. It is thus suggested here that Lleidans – Christian, Jewish, and Muslim – valued a strong central government in reaction to their previous experience under seigniorial rule; they consciously established a positive, intimate relationship with the Crown that would ensure their continued status as royal subjects. As a result, Lleidans of all faiths affiliated themselves with the Crown instead of against it, and they avoided developing the dual antagonistic identities seen Osca and Barcelona that necessitated, on the one hand, an association between local Jews and the king, and on the other, among Christians and Muslims and the city.

This shared identification with the Crown encouraged the count of Urgell to see all residents of Lleida, regardless of which religion they practiced, as symbols of royal power.

In contrast to the conspicuous affection that the residents of Lleida had for their rulers, the relationship between the counts of Urgell and the Crown was increasingly degraded by the monarchy’s expansionist policies. Over the course of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, kings manipulated and took advantage of the counts’ political and economic circumstances to lay claim steadily to more of their authority in the county of Urgell. In recent decades, much of the scholarship on the late-medieval county of Urgell has focused on the towns and cities in the county and the effect that seigniorial power had on their political and economic development.9

Existing works dedicated to the counts of Urgell tend to examine their experiences and relationships in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, and as a result, Diego Monfar y Sors’s seventeenth-century survey remains the only comprehensive survey of the counts.10

Because Monfar and the other scholars writing about the county of Urgell only examine sources produced by or about the geographical area, they assume the immutability of royal and seigniorial jurisdiction. As Thomas Barton has shown in his study of the Jews of Tortosa, the boundaries constraining these different forms of power were never completely settled and always


10 Diego Monfar y Sors, Historia de los Condes de Urgel, vol. IX, in Coleccion de Documentos Inéditos del Archivo General de la Corona de Aragon, ed. by D. Próspero de Bofarull y Mascaró (Barcelona: J.E. Monfort, 1853). For scholarship on the counts of Urgell in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, see Àngels Masià i de Ros, El dissortat comte d’Urgell (Barcelona: Aedos, 1956); Ll. Domènech i Montaner, La iniquitat de Casp I la fi del comte d’Urgell (Barcelona, 1930); and Ferran Soldevila, El Compromís de Casp (Barcelona, 1963). Ramon d’Abadal’s Els primers comtes Catalans (Barcelona, 1961) and Santiago Sobrequès’s Els barons de Cataluna (Barcelona, 1957) explore the counts of Urgell prior to the fifteenth century but only as part of a wider historical development.
up for renegotiation. This chapter builds on this theory by tracing the evolving relationship between the counts of Urgell and Aragonese rulers between the twelfth and the fourteenth centuries and the tools that these two power brokers utilized to gain or regain authority at the expense of the other. Lacking the necessary military might at the end of the fourteenth century, the count of Urgell exploited his right to prosecute criminal activity in his territory in order to challenge the limits of his political authority. Documents from two judicial processes that the count oversaw, the first against a Lleidan Christian in 1380 and the second regarding the host desecration investigation of 1383, illustrate the count’s exploitation of local accusations against the residents of Lleida. This offered a means of resisting the Crown’s expansionist policies and reasserting his own authority.

**Lleida under Seigniorial Power**

In October 1149, The Count of Barcelona Ramon Berenguer IV conquered the city of Lleida and its surrounding territory with the assistance of Count Ermengol VI d’Urgell. This achievement was part of a military push that completed the reconquest of “New Catalonia.” Based on a previously established agreement between Ramon Berenguer and Ermengol, economic and political authority over Lleida was split equally between the two men and their heirs. For nearly eighty years afterwards, the city of Lleida and its surrounding territory existed under the dual jurisdictions of the counts of Urgel and the counts of Barcelona. The counts each

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14 The agreement was established on May 25, 1148. Lladonosa, *Història de la ciutat*, 47.
appointed a castellan, Ramon de Montcada for Ramon Berenguer and Guillem de Cervera for Ermengol, who implemented procedures and penalties according to the two jurisdictions of the city.\textsuperscript{15} Over the course of the late-twelfth and early-thirteenth centuries, the counts of Barcelona continued to expand their geographical and legal authority throughout the former Carolingian Spanish March. In 1150, Ramon Berenguer’s marriage to Petronilla unified the county of Barcelona with the Kingdom of Aragon. By 1192, the count-kings of Aragon had secured control over the entire Kingdom of Catalonia with the exception of the counties of Urgell, Pallars Sobirà, and Empúries. The expanding authority of the now count-kings of Barcelona and Aragon compelled the nobility to unite in opposition to the king to defend their established jurisdiction, creating a tense political atmosphere in the realms. In addition, the counts of Urgell, Pallars, and Empúries took steps to represent themselves as rulers of micro-kings by mimicking the administrative actions of the monarchy. For instance, they issued coinage and peace-making decrees within their counties. This legal imitation served to depreciate royal authority by suggesting that counts possessed the same degree of power as the king.\textsuperscript{16}

In his study of medieval Lleida, Lladonosa suggests that the residents were the primary architects of the city’s initial administrative system following its transition from Muslim to Christian rule.\textsuperscript{17} Changes in the balance of power between the counts of Urgell, the count-kings, and the residents of Lleida in the late-twelfth century, however, suggest that the increasingly-

\textsuperscript{15} We have no documentation of legal proceedings in the local curia prior to the establishment of the municipality. We know only a few of its procedures and penalties through the town charter. Lladonosa, Història de la ciutat, 47-49.


\textsuperscript{17} See for example, his description of the election process in the late twelfth and early thirteenth centuries. Lladonosa emphasizes the democratic nature of this process and downplays the fact that rulers or the counts of Urgell nominated all candidates. Lladonosa, Història de la ciutat, 50-53.
hostile, political dynamic in the realms influenced rulers to placate the counts by ceding primary administrative control of the city to them. Although the Crown of Aragon was growing in size and strength, physical and legal battles with the nobility were expensive, and they sapped the energy and attention of rulers juggling the administrative, financial, and military needs of their growing territory. Existing records reveal that members of the Cervera family, representatives of the count of Urgell, became the sole castellans of the city in 1178. By contrast, the Montcadas, the representatives of the count-king (at this time, Alfons I, r.1164-1196), disappeared from the records, suggesting that the counts of Urgell became the dominant authority in the city. Lladonosa posits that this consolidation was merely intended to simplify and create an unbiased administration of justice in Lleida for the benefit of residents. Although having one principal authority figure certainly would have simplified governance in the city, this explanation does not explain why the counts of Urgell and not the count-kings assumed primary administrative control. In light of the hostile political climate, it appears that the count-kings retained legal authority in Lleida as one of its lords, but relinquished power over governance of the city to alleviate tension with the counts. In doing so, the shift in the balance of power in the late-twelfth century had little to do with the preferences of the residents of Lleida; rather, it represented the Crown’s attempt to limit conflict and obstacles to its policies.

Over the next fifty years, the counts retained primary power over the governance of Lleida. In connection with his argument that residents were responsible for Lleida’s system of governance after its conquest, Lladonosa argues that rulers were uninterested in the city and had

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even forgotten about their jurisdiction in it by the reign of Jaume I (r. 1213-1276). Yet, municipal records reveal that rulers frequently bestowed privileges and concessions on the city with the approval of the counts of Urgell. For example, in 1192, Alfons I (r. 1164-1196), with the support of Ermengol VIII (b.1158- d.1208), gave Lleidans the power to impose and collect taxes to fund municipal expenses. In 1197, Pere I, in association with the same Ermengol, granted the establishment of a consulate in which municipal officials called paers, all crown- or count-appointed, could direct actions in defense of the city and its residents. Building on this, in 1200, Pere I (r. 1196-1213), with Ermengol, permitted members of the consulate to deprive residents of their communal privileges if they refused to contribute to the municipal expenses of their communal privileges. It is unclear whether rulers intended to shape an image of the Crown as benevolent in contrast to the counts’ administrative role. However, taking a secondary role in the governance of the city allowed rulers to act generously while also appearing to respect the counts’ preeminence.

In addition to privileges, rulers also demonstrated a genuine affection for the city through their constant presence, which in turn contributed to their positive reception in Lleida. As Thomas Barton has argued in his work on royal and seigniorial authority in Tortosa, rulers were better able to promote obedience and a good relationship with the cities under their control.

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21 Lladonosa, *Història de la ciutat*, 49.
23 In 1197, there were 12 officials. This number would grow over the next century. This privilege is transcribed in Valls Taberner, “Les fonts documentals,” doc. VIII, pp. 152-153. The establishment of a consulate appears to be part of a larger political trend. Consulates were also established in Girona in 1182, Cervera in 1182, Vilagrassa in 1185, Perpignan in 1197, and Cervera in 1202. Turull Rubinat, *El Gobierno de la Ciudad Medieval*, 207.
24 For the transcribed privilege, see Rafael Gras y de Esteva, *Història de la Paeria* (Lleida: Lleida Ajuntament D.L., 1988), doc. 19, pp. 257-258. Communal privileges included the use of common pastures and forests. For more information, see Turull Rubinat, *El Gobierno de la Ciudad Medieval*, 74-75.
through their physical presence and personal attention. Aragonese rulers were mostly itinerant in their governance of the realms, and they used their visits to royal towns and cities to administer justice or demonstrate their favor. Since the counts of Urgell had primary control of Lleida’s governance in the late twelfth and early thirteenth centuries, royal visits were largely unnecessary. And because they were not obligated to visit Lleida, rulers’ documented visits represent an important gauge for their preference for the city. This becomes clear through a comparison with Tortosa. Alfons I traveled to Lleida twenty-three times during his reign and to Tortosa six times. Pere I traveled to Lleida seventeen times and to Tortosa once, and Jaume I went to the city a total of 54 times, in contrast to the fourteen times he is recorded having visited Tortosa. The favor that rulers showed Lleida may have been prompted by the location of the city on the border of Catalonia and Aragon, making it an appropriate stopping point for itinerant rulers. Due to its location, the city would become the most important administrative center in Catalonia, outside of Barcelona, in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. In addition, although it would never surpass Barcelona, Lleida was already emerging as an economic center by the time of its conquest in 1149. From the perspective of the Crown, Lleida was an important city,


27 Robert Ignatius Burns, *The Worlds of Alfonso the Learned and James the Conqueror: Intellect and Force in the Middle Ages* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2014), 24; Barton argues that due to its location, Lleida became the most important administrative center for the crown in Catalonia, outside of Barcelona, in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. *Contested Treasure*, 197.

28 Lladonosa claims that Lleida was the first industrial center in Catalonia, although it would retain its agricultural importance as well due to its location on the Segre river. Lladonosa, *Lèrida medieval*, 76 and *Història de la ciutat*, 81.
economically and geographically. Again, the intentions of rulers are not apparent, but it is possible that their frequent visits to Lleida were driven by a desire to create a rapport. As tension between the nobility and the Crown grew, rulers increasingly initiated alliances with royal cities, particularly those as important as Lleida.29

By the turn of the thirteenth century, as a result of the legal privileges and favor that rulers showed to Lleida, the city and the Crown had established a positive, intimate relationship. In addition to demonstrating a predilection for the city, frequent royal visits also served to boost the economy of Lleida. When the king visited, he brought his entire household with him, whose care necessitated a large, local administrative staff. Recognizing that rulers frequented Lleida and that this had increased the population of the city, merchants and artisans flooded the city looking to sell their goods to an augmented consumer base.30 Over a century later, when Pere III considered offering Lleida to Jaume III of Mallorca (a topic that will be discussed later in this chapter), municipal officials emphasized that seignioral rule would be “extraordinarily cruel and result in great destruction to the city and its privileges.”31 Although the recorded reaction of Lleidan officials in 1344 is articulated from a fourteenth-century perspective, it demonstrates a clear preference for royal authority that appears to harken back to the city’s previous experience under seigniorial rule. Due to the absence of documentation, it is unclear just how onerous the


30 Barton, Contested Treasure, 66 and Burns, The Worlds of Alfonso the Learned and James the Conqueror. As a result of its economic growth, Lleida, like Barcelona and Osca, saw the establishment of a bourgeois class whose members sought to distinguish themselves socially and legally from less wealthy residents. Identified as ciutadans honrats or prohoms, members of families like the Clavells, Solsonas, Sanaüjas, Roderas, Giners, and Grallas began to invest in urban and rural real estate and took an interest in offices within the consulate, forming the foundation of a local oligarchy. Lladonosa, Història de la ciutat, 52-53, 78.

31 “sie fort cruel e de gran destrucció de la ciuat...” A.M.Ll, Reg. 397, f. 24r.
financial, military, and legal burden of the Urgell’s seigniorial authority was for Lleidans. It seems likely that Lleidans preferred royal to seigniorial authority in the early thirteenth century due to their growing rapport with the Crown rather than because of some abuse they suffered at the hands of the counts. Moreover, the concessions and privileges that rulers offered may have contributed to the idea that self-governance was more assured under the sole authority of the Crown and less so under seigniorial rule.

With the preference for rulers already in place, Jaume I faced no documented resistance among residents when he brought the city completely under royal authority in 1228. That summer Aurembiaix, the countess of Urgell, appeared before Jaume I while he was visiting Lleida. Before he passed away in 1206, her father had named Aurembiaix, his only child, heiress to the county, and she had been placed in the convent Sant Hilari of Lleida until she was old enough to claim her inheritance. In the meantime, Guerau de Cabrera, a descendant of Ermengol VII, had overseen the administration of the county. When Aurembiaix attempted to assume her position as the countess of Urgell, however, Guerau declared himself the rightful heir as the closest-related male relative to the deceased. With the help of her stepfather, Guillem de Cervera, and the Lleidan jurist, Guillem de Sassala, Aurembiaix made her case, and Jaume ruled in her favor. However, when Guerau refused to relinquish control despite the king’s ruling, Aurembiaix agreed to relinquish her comital rights to Lleida in favor of the Crown on the condition that Jaume recover the county of Urgell for her. It seems likely that Aurembiaix recognized the

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32 Barton suggests that taxes and other contributions were split equally among the three lords in Tortosa. Consequently, it was not that residents had to pay more to each lord, but rather, the lords received smaller amounts. It is unclear whether this was also the case in Lleida. Barton, *Contested Treasure*, 67.

33 My argument builds on Lladonosa’s assertion that Lleidans disliked living under seigniorial rule and would later live in fear of returning it. Lladonosa, however, offers no reasons for Lleidans’ aversion to seigniorial rule. Lladonosa, *Lèrida medieval*, 50. I suggest that this perception was not entirely based on a reality of hardship under the Counts of Urgell, but was shaped in opposition to the rapport Lleidans had established with the Crown.
significance of Lleida to the Crown and knew that this would represent a strong incentive for the king to protect her rights. Over the next six months, Jaume and his noble and urban allies took one town and castle after another in the county of Urgell. By the end of November of 1228, Aurembiaix had gained her rightful status as the countess of Urgell and Lleida had become an exclusively royal city.  

**Lleida: A City of Royal Representatives**

After Lleida became a royal city, the residents and rulers maintained a mutually beneficial relationship. Rulers provided privileges and concessions that contributed to the political autonomy of the city, and in return, Lleidans offered military and financial support. This exchange was not unusual as rulers sought the support of urban centers in their efforts to suppress a contumacious nobility. Unlike Osca and Barcelona and most other royal cities, however, the Lleidans identified and were identified as representatives of the Crown.

The unique self-identification by Lleida’s notables as representatives of the Crown appears to stem from the city’s circumstances. As previously mentioned, Lleida was a prosperous city, but its location in the interior of Catalonia on the Segre River – instead of on the coast of the Mediterranean - meant that merchants did not control as much wealth as those in Barcelona. Unlike the wealthy merchants of Barcelona, Lleidans were not under the impression that the Crown needed them more than they needed it. By contrast, the significance of Lleida as a stopping point for itinerant rulers meant that it received more attention and favor than the Aragonese city of Osca. Medieval Lleida thus represented a middle ground between the two extremes of Barcelona and Osca. Officials in Lleida appear to have valued their political

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34 This account is well documented. See Bisson, *The Medieval Crown of Aragon*, 62-63; Lladonosa, *Història de la ciutat*, 54-56; Monfar, *Historia de los Condes de Urgel*, 460-472. Jaume I also presents a detailed account of the event in his *Llibre dels Fets*. See The Book of Deeds of James I of Aragon: A Translation of the Medieval Catalan Llibre dels Fets, ed. by Damian J. Smith and Helena Buffery (Surrey, Eng.: Ashgate, 2003), 54-68.
autonomy, but they did not view autonomy as the antithesis of royal interference. Instead, their previous interaction with rulers appears to have encouraged the association of privileges with the Crown. As a result, the city developed a political affiliation with the Crown rather than in opposition to it, as occurred in Barcelona and Osca.

Jaume I applied the same generous approach to Lleida that he did to Barcelona, Osca, and other royal cities after he put down the union rebellion in 1227. He frequently intervened in the city’s governance, but he did so first, to bring order to the city and then, to delegate authority to municipal leaders so that they could handle problems on their own. For example, in 1255, when the king learned that factional fighting between two noble bands was disrupting the livelihoods of Lleidans, he banished the leaders of the factions and their supporters for two years. In addition, Jaume provided the consuls with the power to punish those who disrupted the peace of the city. In 1255, members of the consulate were still selected from a list of individuals appointed by the king. In 1264, however, in the place of the consulate, King Jaume established the Consell General de la Paeria. This system did not create a new urban political organization, but instead provided the city’s prohoms – those belonging to the mà maior – with the right to elect the city’s paers without interference from the Crown.

Jaume, like his predecessors and successors, courted urban centers with privileges that supported municipal autonomy to keep the nobility subdued. This does not disprove his fondness for the city, considering that he visited the city 54 times during his reign. The privileges of self-governance that he provided to Lleida, however, were part of Jaume’s general approach to all royal cities.

35 A.M.Ll., Armari, Privilegi, doc. 34.

36 A.M.Ll, Armari, Privilegi, doc. 45. Like those in Barcelona, the mà maior represented an elite social class comprised of wealthy merchants, rentiers, and jurists. For information about the election process, see Turull Rubinat, El Gobierno de la Ciudad Medieval, 207-210.
Although Jaume I’s successors continued his benevolent approach to Lleida, some of the privileges they granted to the city clearly evidence their favoritism. In 1300, Jaume II established the Estudi General de Lleida, the first university in the Crown of Aragon.\textsuperscript{37} Similar to residents in Osca who paid taxes towards the upkeep of the Estudio General d’Osca, residents in Lleida were responsible for financing the university.\textsuperscript{38} Unlike those in Osca, however, Lleidan officials were given the power to oversee the operation of the institution. For example, in 1328, Alfons III authorized the \textit{Paeria} to expand the Estudi. The \textit{paers} built four classrooms with chairs for four new disciplines. To assist in the cost of this expansion, officials charged students an annual fee (the \textit{bancatge}) to use the benches in the classrooms. In addition, Alfons gave officials the authority to designate where students could live in the city.\textsuperscript{39} Lladonosa argues that the students of the Estudi General de Lleida constituted a separate community within the city. While this may be true culturally, academically, and even judicially (students were considered members of the clergy and were thus to be tried by the Church), royal privileges to city officials indicate that the institution was very much a part of the developing system of municipal governance.

Furthermore, although Josefina Mutgé i Vives points out instances of violence carried out by residents of Lleida against students, officials appear to have viewed the Estudi General de Lleida as evidence of their political self-sufficiency.\textsuperscript{40}

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\textsuperscript{37} Bisson, \textit{The Medieval Crown of Aragon}, 100. One of the reasons that Jaume II chose Lleida for the Estudi General was due to its central location. Josep Lladonosa i Pujol, \textit{Relacions entre Mallorca i Lleida a l’època medieval} (Lleida: Rafael Dalmau, 1977), 35.

\textsuperscript{38} See Chapter 5 for a discussion of Oscan residents’ responsibility for the Estudio General d’Osca.


\textsuperscript{40} Mutgé points out two instances of violence carried out by locals against students at the Estudi General in 1391 and 1393. She argues that residents were perturbed by the legal and financial privileges students received. Mutgé, “Els Reis Catalanoaragonesos i l’Estudi General de Lleida,” 2-4.
\end{flushright}
At the same time that rulers granted privileges to Lleida, residents of the city appear to have made an extraordinary effort to demonstrate their support of the king’s military endeavors. According to chroniclers from the time period, Lleidan soldiers, regardless of socio-economic class, fought and dedicated themselves to rulers with more energy and courage than those from other cities. In 1229, soon after the city became exclusively royal, Lleidans fought in the conquest of the city of Mallorca. Regarding this event, Jaume I exclaimed in his *Llibre dels Fets* that “if ever men of the world have received their lord with processions and joyfully, [the Lleidans] did it with us wherever we went.”

And, in 1235, when they took Ibiza, Jaume explains that Joan Xicó from Lleida was the first man to enter through the opened wall of the city. Concerning the union revolt of 1282, the royal chronicler Bernat Desclot praised the Lleidans’ loyalty to Pere II (r. 1276-1285) in his fight against a dangerous combination of rebellious cities and nobles, including the city of Osca and the count of Urgell. As indicated, many of the descriptions of Lleidans acting in support of the Crown come from royal chronicles, which scholars have established were frequently more concerned with bolstering rulers’ legitimacy them than with providing facts. Despite this, the frequency and intensity with which chroniclers describe residents of Lleida suggests that Lleidans made a conscious choice to associate themselves with the Crown regardless of its objectives.


43 “El rei sabé que aquí s’havien aplegat tots. Eixí d’Aragó amb 500 cavallers i cavalcà de nit i de dia. Passà per Lleida i, sense aturar-s’hi, manà als homes de la ciutat que el seguissin amb llurs armes. I tots foren atendats amb les seves hosts entorn de Balaguer.” Bernat Desclot, *Cronica del re yen Pere e dels seus antecessors passats*, ed. by Miquel Coll i Alentorn, vol. III (Barcelona: 1949), 41-42.

This association is even more apparent in the documented interaction between the *paers* of Lleida and Jaume II in 1293. On June 21, the minutes of the *Paeria* note that Jaume I had established an agreement with the *paers* whereby they were declared royal officials. According to the details presented, officials had been unsure how to proceed if another *paer* committed some sort of criminal offense. Contemporary laws stated that only a representative of the Crown could investigate such a situation since municipal officials did not have the necessary jurisdiction to rule in a case concerning so elevated an official. The *paers* present believed themselves to be representatives of the Crown, but they wished to obtain reassurance from the king. Jaume’s affirmation of their status thus legally permitted them to proceed against any of their delinquent peers.\(^{45}\) Such an idea never appears in the records of Barcelona and Osca since officials in these two cities were more inclined to establish an identity in opposition to the Crown and its authority, particularly by the turn of the fourteenth century.\(^{46}\) In apparent contrast to these two cities, Lleida cherished its relationship with the monarchy and the privileges it provided to such an extent that its officials actively sought to become representatives of the Crown.

**Jews, Muslims, and Christians in Lleida: A Unified Identity**

Lleida’s affiliation with the Crown rather than against it also shaped the relationship among the religious communities in the city. Municipal officials attempted to extend their authority over local Jewish and Muslim communities, but they did so because of their status as representatives of the Crown and not as a means to undermine the Crown’s authority. Furthermore, due to the city’s affiliation with the Crown, residents avoided developing the two

\(^{45}\) A.M.Ll, Armari, privilegis, doc. 59.

\(^{46}\) For more information about the development of political identities in Barcelona and Osca, see Chapters 4 and 5.
antagonistic identities seen in Barcelona and Osca that forced Jews, Muslims, and Christians to side with the city or the monarchy.

Although not as big as the *aljama* of Barcelona, the Jewish community of Lleida represented one of the largest in Catalonia. Lleida also contained a substantial Muslim community due to the fact that many Muslims living in other areas of Catalonia migrated to the lower Ebro valley during the conquests of the previous centuries. In 1202, Pere I placed both *aljamas* under the direct authority of the bailiff, but granted Jewish and Muslim officials the freedom to oversee criminal and civil cases as long as the process did not result in corporal punishment for the defendant or involve members from the other religious communities. In 1297, the two *aljamas* were permitted to elect many of their own officials and both enjoyed the power to allocate and collect taxes intended for the Crown.

Although the Muslim and Jewish communities received privileges that enabled them to function autonomously in many aspects of their lives, their protected status under the Crown and the privileges they received from rulers emphasized their connection to the monarchy. Consequently, Jews and Muslims were often associated with the performance of royal power.

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47 Guerson de Oliveria, “Coping with Crises,” 21.


49 For elections, see ACA C, Reg. 195, f. 57-58. Jews and Muslims were permitted to annually elect two people to serve as *adelantats*, municipal officials who represented the communities’ interests before the king, but rulers continued to appoint bailiffs for the two communities. For example, in 1270, Jaume I appointed Nasi Hasdai to act as *rab* and *dayyan* to the Jews of Lleida. He was to judge disputes according to Jewish law with the legal advice of the *adelantats*. Yitzhak Baer, *A History of the Jews in Christian Spain*, vol. I (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society, 1961), 216. For the collection of taxes, see Jean Régné, *History of the Jews in Aragon: Regesta and Documents, 1213-1327* (Jerusalem: Magness Press, 1978), doc. 335.
This association was reinforced in Lleida by the revenue that rulers collected from the two communities. In addition to fixed annual taxes, Jews in Lleida often provided specific sums to the king when he requested it for royal endeavors (called extraordinary contributions) that reflected their importance alongside other prominent aljamas in the realms.\footnote{The Jews of Lleida paid fixed taxes named the pieta, questia, tallia, and tributum. The annual tributum required Jews to pay 3\% of their moveable property and 1.5\% of their immovable property. Yitzhak Baer, Historia de los judíos en la Corona de Aragón (s. XIII y XIV) (Saragossa: Diputación General de Aragón, 1985), 30-31.} In 1314, when Jaume II purchased the county of Urgell, he requested a sum of 115,000 libras jaqueses, which was divided among the Jewish aljamas of Lleida, Valencia, Tortosa, Barcelona, and Girona.\footnote{Pedro Sanahuja, Lérida en sus Luchas por la Fe: Judíos, Moros, Conversos, Inquisición y Moriscos (Lérida: 1946), 44.} Like their Jewish neighbors, Lleiden Muslims also contributed to extraordinary expenses. Due to their general impoverishment (a condition that affected many Muslim communities in the realms), they paid much less. For comparison, in 1317 the Muslim aljama of Lleida paid 2,200 sous jaqueses towards the purchase of the county of Urgell.\footnote{ACA C, Reg. 327, f. 232. Unfortunately, records of Lleidan Muslim contributions towards extraordinary expenses do not appear to exist prior to 1294. See Mutgé, L’aljama Sarraïna de Lleida, 131-137 for the documented contributions Muslims made to the Crown. Like the Muslims of Osca, those in Lleida were more often granted moratoria on their debts they contributed to the royal treasury. For example, on September 18, 1332, Alfons III granted the community a postponement of two years regarding its debt to local Christians. ACA C, Reg. 452, f. 98. And in October of 1337, Pere III granted it a three years postponement to pay its debts. ACA C, Reg. 591, f. 56.}

As in Barcelona and Osca, Christian officials attempted to assert their authority over Jewish and Muslim communities at the beginning of the fourteenth century. They did not, however, do so by surreptitiously contravening the established law as officials in other cities did. There is no record of Muslims being compelled to use Christian judges instead of Muslim ones or municipal officials providing privileges to Jews and Muslims in the market place in defiance to the king’s authority, as took place in Barcelona and Osca.\footnote{See Chapters Five and Six for these examples.} This is not to say that Jews and
Muslims in Lleida did not occasionally experience forms of abuse at the hands of their Christian neighbors as a consequence of their religious otherness. For example, in 1325, Jews from Lleida complained to Jaume II that some Christians were preventing them from baking unleavened bread during Passover.\(^{54}\) However, Lleidan officials’ efforts to expand their authority over the Jews and Muslims of the city reflected a genuine belief that such was their rightful jurisdiction as royal officials. In 1307, in response to the appeals of the \textit{paers}, Jaume II granted them the right to preside over cases in which Muslims and Jews faced corporal punishment for their crimes.\(^{55}\) Prior to this point, the bailiff had carried out this duty, which was the case in most other royal cities, and royal documents confirming the right do not explain why Jaume extended it to the \textit{paers} of the city. It is possible that this change was connected to the 1293 decision to make \textit{paers} royal officials or perhaps the king was swayed by his favor for the city. Over the next few decades, Lleidan officials carefully guarded their newfound authority. For instance, in 1327, the \textit{paers} complained to the king again when the bailiff prosecuted a Muslim accused of having sexual relations with a Christian. In their complaint, the municipal officials claimed that the bailiff’s actions represented an attack on their well-deserved privileges.\(^{56}\) The candid exchange between the \textit{paers} and the king about jurisdiction over local Jews and Muslims suggests that municipal officials laid claim to such because they believed it was their rightful authority as representatives of the Crown and not because they sought to erode royal power in the city.

Although municipal officials were convinced that it was their right to oversee judicial processes for Muslim and Jewish crimes deserving corporal punishment, the leaders of the two

\(^{54}\) ACA C, Reg. 228, f. 37.

\(^{55}\) ACA C, Reg. 141, f. 52v. At the time, the privilege specifically concerned Muslims and Jews who cursed Christians, but it would become more generalized over the next few years.

\(^{56}\) ACA C, Reg. 190, f. 132r. Jaume confirmed the privilege in 1322. ACA C, Reg. 175, f. 227.
aljamas complained to the king about the paers’ overreach. Jewish and Muslim leaders emphasized that according to the laws and customs of their communities, the bailiff should have jurisdiction over cases that included members of other faiths or that required corporal punishment. The fact that leaders from both aljamas complained to the king about the municipal officials suggests the absence of dual identities that in Osca, for instance, encouraged Muslims to oppose any form of royal intrusion in favor of municipal authority and Jews to oppose any form of municipal intrusion in favor of royal authority. The existence of this possible alliance is further supported by other documented complaints from Muslims and Jews who objected to prompts from both the paers and the bailiff to pay taxes to the Crown from which they had been previously exempted. Since these complaints were lodged against municipal, as well as royal officials, it appears that Muslims and Jews, in addition to local Christians, trusted the monarchy and the protection it offered. As a result, all residents of Lleida appeared to represent the Crown and its royal power and objectives.

The Counts of Urgell: Submission to the Crown

Previous scholarship on the topic of the medieval count of Urgell has demonstrated that Countess Aurembiaix’s invitation to Jaume I to intervene in her conflict with Guerau de Cabrera provided the Crown with the opportunity to expand into the county of Urgell, one of the

57 Jewish leaders first complained in 1307. Muslim leaders complained in 1327 regarding the case of a Muslim who was arrested because he had sex with a Christian. Mutgé Vives, L’aljama Sarraïna de Lleida, 112-116.

58 For example, in 1332, Alfons III responded to a complaint made by the Lleidan Jew, Bonanat de Pedralba, by explaining to the veguer, a municipal official, that Bonanat was not obligated to pay the censo. ACA C, Alfonso III, c. 11, n. 1412. In 1334, however, Alfons III responded to a complaint made by Jewish leaders by ordering the bailiff not to condemn or fine the Jews in violating of the customs of the aljama. ACA C, Alfonso III, c. 18, n. 2155. Similarly, in 1297 Jaume II ordered the bailiff to respect the privilege of the Muslim community not to pay the taxes of the lands of the Crown of Aragon. ACA C, Reg. 108, f. 41r. In 1335, the Infant Pere (the future Pere III) responded to the complaints of the Muslim community and ordered the veguer and paers not to act according to any law other than the sunna. ACA C, Reg. 585, f. 80-81
remaining bastions of seigniorial jurisdictions in the realms.\textsuperscript{59} And indeed, over the remainder of the thirteenth and early fourteenth century, rulers steadily gained territory and authority at the expense of the counts of Urgell. This scholarship, however, suggests that while the counts were not pleased by royal intrusion, they passively accepted it.\textsuperscript{60} Although the counts were ultimately unsuccessful, they utilized a variety of means, including military resistance, to preserve their established authority and prevent royal expansion.

After gaining jurisdiction over Lleida in 1228, Jaume I sought to acquire the county of Urgell as a fiefdom of the Crown of Aragon. His opportunity arrived when Aurembiaix married the Infant Pedro of Portugal in 1231; Jaume offered Pedro the prosperous Balearic Islands in fief in exchange for the county of Urgell under the pretext that Aragonese territory should not pass to foreign power. For a few years, Jaume gained exclusive control of the county and because he gave the islands to Pedro in fiefdom, they remained a royal possession even if the king did not actively govern them.\textsuperscript{61} This arrangement, however, angered Ponç de Cabrera, the son of Guerau de Cabrera, who believed that the king had manipulated the conflict between his father and the Countess Aurembiaix to gain the county of Urgell for the Crown. In 1236, after Ponç initiated a military protest, Jaume recognized his right to the county – with the exception of Lleida. However, the king decreed that Ponç and his descendants could only hold the county in fief since it was illegal for the king to alienate parts of the royal patrimony.\textsuperscript{62} This arrangement pacified


\textsuperscript{60} As mentioned in the introduction of this chapter, this scholarly view is likely due to the focus on the towns and cities of the County of Urgell.

\textsuperscript{61} Bisson, \textit{The Medieval Crown of Aragon}, 65 and Monfar y Sors, \textit{Historia de los Condes de Urgel}, 508-509.

\textsuperscript{62} Jaume also retained control of Balaguer, but agreed to give that city to Ponç in fiefdom as well in 1242. Bisson, \textit{The Medieval Crown of Aragon}, 71 and Monfar y Sors, \textit{Historia de los Condes de Urgel}, 518-522 and 524.
Ponç de Cabrera while allowing the king to remain the ultimate authority in the county. The count of Urgell became a vassal of the Crown. Consequently, if he or his descendants died without an heir, the monarchy would regain sole jurisdiction in the county again.

Over the next fifty years, the kings of Aragon took advantage of the missteps of Ponç’s son, Àlvar, and grandson, Ermengol X to expand royal territory and reach. In accordance with Jaume I’s orders, Àlvar married Constanza de Montcada in 1253, but he quickly developed a distaste for his new wife. Àlvar tried to have the marriage annulled and in the meantime, married Cecilia de Foix. While the sources provide little insight into why Àlvar disliked Constanza, it is possible that his preferences were influenced by contemporary politics. The Montcadas were a family with established ties to the Crown, and Àlvar’s marriage to Constanza presented an opportunity to bring the counts of Urgell further under royal control. The counts of Foix, however, as leaders of an independent county in the Pyrenees, opposed the Crown of Aragon’s efforts to expand its authority. By marrying Cecilia de Foix, Àlvar gained an important ally against the monarchy. Regardless of the reason why, Àlvar found himself married to two women, which led to a lengthy and expensive legal dispute. Eventually, in 1267, Àlvar fled with Cecilia, leaving his son, Ermengol X, with a huge debt of 250,000 sueldos. King Jaume agreed to pay Àlvar’s debts in exchange for the towns of Agramunt, Linyola, Ager, and Castelló de Farfanya, all located in the county of Urgell. Jaume thus used Àlvar’s misconduct to expand royal territory and power.

63 Bisson, The Medieval Crown of Aragon, 71 and Monfar y Sors, Historia de los Condes de Urgel, 5-6.

64 The king also initially took the towns of Vallobar and Tamarit but gave them to Gueru de Cabrera, Àlvar’s brother, in 1273 as a result of negotiations between the two. Monfar y Sors, Historia de los Condes de Urgel, 6 and 11-14.
After Pere II ascended the throne, Count Ermengol X tried to recover his family’s lost authority and territory by joining the union uprising of 1282. During the uprising, Ermengol seized the towns that Jaume had gained from his father, Àlvar. Although the nobility would eventually force the king to submit to their demands, Pere did succeed in taking Ermengol prisoner. After Ermengol performed homage to the king, Pere released him and returned the county to him (with the exception of the towns and cities acquired from Àlvar), but the experience was likely humiliating.  

After his disgrace in 1282, Count Ermengol remained obedient to the king with few exceptions. In 1314, Ermengol died without an heir, and thanks to the legwork performed by Jaume I in the previous century, Jaume II annexed the county for the Crown. In order to prevent any outside claims to the county, the king married his son, Alfons (the future Alfons III) to Teresa d’Entença, Ermengol’s niece and the only potential claimant to his possessions. When Alfons III (r. 1328-1336) ascended the throne, he gave the county to his second son, Jaume, making him the count of Urgell. Although the county remained part of the royal patrimony from the fourteenth century onward, its legacy as a bastion of resentment and rebellion against the king of Aragon would continue. When Pere III (r. 1336-1387) became king and implemented his political plan to exclude all other forms of power and become the dominant governing

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65 He was imprisoned along with the Viscount of Cardona Ramon Folc, the Count of Pallars Arnau Rager and his brother Ramon, and Bernardo Roger de Erille and Ramon de Anglesola. Lladonosa, *Història de Lleida*, 108-109 and Monfar y Sors, *Historia de los Condes de Urgel*, 16-19 and 32-33.

66 Representing one last feeble attempt, the count claimed jurisdiction over some towns located on the border of the County of Urgell in 1307. But when the king sent the bishop of Lleida to investigate the legitimacy of the count’s claim, Ermengol dropped it, perhaps recognizing the futility of his efforts. Monfar y Sors, *Historia de los Condes de Urgel*, 43-44.


authority in the realms, he encountered resistance from the nobility, including Count Jaume of Urgell. It thus appears that legal and judicial jurisdiction in the county of Urgell over the course of the thirteenth and early-fourteenth centuries was malleable. The region experienced exclusive royal authority and feudal authority as a fiefdom, and its borders shrunk and expanded with the actions of the counts and rulers. From this perspective, jurisdiction in the county of Urgell was neither immutable nor guaranteed in favor of the Crown or the counts; rather, the nature and limits of this jurisdiction were constantly challenged and negotiated in the struggle for power.

**Lleida, The Count of Urgell, and Pere III: A Triangular Relationship**

As demonstrated in previous chapters, Pere III’s authoritarian policies reflected disregard for the established autonomy of the cities and the authority of the nobility. The king’s policies encouraged officials in Lleida and the counts of Urgell to fall back into their established relationships with the Crown. Whereas Lleidans responded to Pere’s lack of respect for their historical affiliation with the Crown by emphasizing their loyalty and essentiality, Jaume, the count of Urgell and the king’s brother, rebelled against the Pere along with other members of the nobility.

Despite Lleida’s intimate relationship with its rulers, Pere appears to have taken the same authoritarian approach to Lleida that he did to Barcelona and Osca, at least initially. Pere reversed the judgment of his predecessors in 1344 when he insisted that the bailiff and not the city’s paers had jurisdiction over cases concerning Jews and Muslims. According to John Boswell, King Pere issued his order in favor of the bailiff because this official had the most

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69 ACA C. Reg. 695, f. 149.
knowledge of the *aljamas* of the city and was thus better suited to intervene in their affairs. Yet, when Pere’s policies concerning the Muslims and Jews of Lleida (and other cities, for that matter) are examined alongside his other urban policies, they point to his efforts to expand royal authority in urban centers at the expense of municipal officials. His ruling in 1344 suggested that Pere aimed to consolidate power in the figure of the bailiff, the traditional representative of the king in royal cities. Perhaps more significantly, this same ruling implied that the *paers* of Lleida were not in fact representatives of royal power but were instead representatives of the municipal power that Pere intended to diminish. Pere also introduced measures that reinforced his claim to Jewish revenue and helped funnel it to the Crown more effectively. For example, in 1345, Pere ordered Bonjuhà Hasday, a Jew from Lleida, and Salomó Sullam, Jew from Tárrega, to arbitrate the conflict between the *aljamas* of Lleida and Tárrega over the amount that each had to contribute to the king. It is likely that Pere wanted to find a solution that would allow him to receive the full amount more efficiently. And in 1358, the king ordered the city’s *paers* to observe the privileges granted to the *aljama*, which exempted them from municipal taxes. Any violation would incur a fine of 1,000 gold *morabati*. Pere’s measures concerning Jews and Muslims suggested that all of the religious communities of Lleida did not in fact share the same relationship with the king but were instead distinguished by their legal status as property of the Crown or subjects of the king.

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At the same time that he moved to consolidate royal power by retaking control of the Lleida’s Jews and Muslims, Pere also demonstrated his indifference to the historical rapport among residents. Between 1336 and 1344, King Pere and Jaume III of Mallorca engaged in a power struggle initiated by Jaume when he declined to perform homage to the new king of Aragon. Although scholars have demonstrated that Pere’s underlying objective throughout the conflict was to secure Mallorca and Jaume’s other territory, Rousillon and Cerdagne, for the Crown of Aragon, there were moments of attempted accord and amity between the two royal figures. In 1344, just prior to Pere’s invasion of Mallorca, he offered Jaume seigniorial authority of Lleida and the towns of Tàrrega and Cervera as a gesture of reconciliation. Pere’s willingness to relinquish Lleida suggests that he was unconcerned with the city’s enduring loyalty to the Crown and unconvinced that he needed the city in order to defend or expand royal authority. The shock and utter dismay of Lleidan officials is evident in the minutes of the Paeria from July 23, 1344:

The [king] has indicated to the Paeria that he intends to give the city of Lleida and Cervera and Tàrrega to Jaume of Mallorca, an act that displeases God and that would be very cruel and would greatly damage the city. And so, members of the Paeria have appointed four prohomens, all wise men who are knowledgeable of the privileges of the city and all things pertaining to it in order to prevent the fulfillment of this arrangement.

73 Because Jaume I had named his second son king of Balearic Islands, Roussillon, and Cerdagne, this territory had belonged to a junior branch of the House of Barcelona since 1276. Beginning with Pere II, Aragonese rulers expressed a desire to reunite Kingdom of Mallorca with the Crown of Aragon. Pere II had attempted to force Jaume II of Mallorca to admit that he held the territory as a fief of Aragon. Jaume II also insisted on his claim to Mallorca and initially refused to recognize Jaume III of Mallorca as ruler. Consequently, Pere III’s objective had precedence. Bisson, The Medieval Crown of Aragon, 97 and Joseph F. O’Callaghan, A History of Medieval Spain (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1975), 415.

74 “Item el feyt que és estat proposat al consell General que han entès que·s diu per alguns en la ciutat que·l senyor rey estén a donar la ciutat de Leyda e Cervera e Tàrrega a·n Jaume de Mallorcha, la qual casadi·s fahie, ço que Déus no vuylle, sie fort cruel e de gran destrucció de la ciutat, ordenà lo dit Consella que sien assignats ·III· prohòmens e savis e que aquells reconeguen los privilegis de la ciutat e totes altres coses per què açò no·s pugue fer e que si·ls affers anaven en avant que sie tornat conseyll general.” A.M.LI, Reg. 397, f. 24r.
Clearly, officials in Lleida loathed the idea of returning to seigniorial rule, and they intended to do whatever they could to prevent the alienation of the city from the royal estates. When discord between Pere and Jaume flared up again a couple months later, Pere changed his mind about giving Jaume the city of Lleida and instead invaded Mallorca.\textsuperscript{75}

Although scholars have noted Pere’s attempt to place Lleida under seigniorial authority in 1344, the king’s actions are only part of the story. Municipal and royal records also reveal the other side of the story, namely the city’s response after the unfulfilled agreement. These records demonstrate that in subsequent years, Lleidans made an effort to emphasize their commitment to the king’s endeavors and policies, likely in order to establish a relationship like the ones they had enjoyed with Pere’s predecessors. As mentioned above, for the first 14 years of his reign, Pere failed to produce a son, which meant that his brother, Jaume, was the legal heir to the throne. This changed in 1347, however, when Pere publically named his daughter, Constanza, his heir. Pere’s announcement resulted in a union uprising, prompting Lleida to send men to fight in the royal armies. During this time, Pere exclaimed “Oh blessed land, people with loyalty!” when he escaped the clutches of union leaders in Zaragoza and crossed the Catalonian border into Lleida, thus acknowledging the importance of the city to his political objectives.\textsuperscript{76} During the war between Aragon and Castile from 1356 to 1375, the Lleidan militia also helped to repel invading Castilian troops from the west and French mercenary troops from the north. Moreover, the king often used the city as a gathering point for troops coming from different cities before sending

\textsuperscript{75} Bisson, \textit{The Medieval Crown of Aragon}, 106-107.

\textsuperscript{76} “O terra beneyta poblada de lleialtat!” Pere III, \textit{Chronicle}, vol. II, 419.
them to fight the enemy.\textsuperscript{77} It appears that Lleidan efforts to establish a rapport with King Pere succeeded, because in 1361 he confirmed Jaume II’s decree that Lleidan \textit{paers} were royal officials, an apparent reversal of his stance at the beginning of his reign.\textsuperscript{78} For the sake of comparison, it is important to consider that in 1360 Pere ruled that \textit{paers} could continue to implement statutes and ordinances in Lleida. This ruling came at the same time that the king was suppressing corresponding privileges for \textit{consellers} in Barcelona.\textsuperscript{79} Pere’s concessions to Lleida simultaneously boosted the city’s political autonomy while also reinforcing its connection to royal power.

In contrast to Lleida, whose residents responded to Pere’s disregard by making efforts to reestablish their affiliation with the Crown, the king’s authoritarian policies encouraged the counts of Urgell to challenge the legitimacy of his authority. Initially, Jaume, the count of Urgell and Pere’s brother, supported the king’s endeavors. Prior to Pere becoming king, rulers had come to Barcelona first to celebrate their coronation and swear to uphold Catalanian customs and privileges before going on to Zaragoza and Valencia to do the same for Aragonese and Valencian customs and privileges. This order reflected the Crown’s preference for the Kingdom of Catalonia, and particularly the city of Barcelona. Pere III, however, chose to go to Zaragoza first, a decision that prompted loud criticism from the Catalanian nobility who saw the new king’s actions as a slight against them and their relationship with the Crown. Jaume stood by the king despite the political instability Pere’s initial actions caused and the harm it could cause the

\textsuperscript{77} Lladonosa, \textit{Història de Lleida}, 479-485.

\textsuperscript{78} A.M.Ll, Armari, Privilegi, doc. 131.

\textsuperscript{79} A.M.Ll, Armari, Privilegi, doc. 130.
count’s own reputation and relationships.\textsuperscript{80} In 1344, Jaume also contributed militarily and financially to the conquest of Mallorca.\textsuperscript{81} Perhaps more significantly, Jaume resided in Lleida rather than within the seigniorial borders of the county of Urgell, demonstrating his affection for the royalist city.\textsuperscript{82} Demonstrating their strong relationship, Pere made Jaume governor general of his realms when he became king in 1336. This office indicated that Jaume was not merely his second in command but also first in line to inherit the throne should Pere die without a son.\textsuperscript{83}

In 1346 the relationship between the two brothers changed when Pere announced that he had named his daughter, Constanza, heir to throne.\textsuperscript{84} Considering the balance of power between Pere and his brother Jaume, the count of Urgell, prior to his announcement, I argue that the decision was also connected to Pere’s goal of consolidating power in the person of the king. Previously, the count of Urgell’s status as heir to the throne suggested a sharing of power between the king and a powerful noble; but later, that power was limited to the king and his daughter, whose young age and gender meant that she was likely more of a symbolic heir and would hold little actual power. It appears that Pere expected Jaume to continue as his second in command without the legal status of heir to the throne. Since this move essentially subsumed the count’s office as governor general below that of the king, it comes as little surprise that Jaume

\textsuperscript{80} Pere III, \textit{Chronicle}, 24.

\textsuperscript{81} Monfar y Sors, \textit{Historia de los Condes de Urgel}, 135 and 167.

\textsuperscript{82} His residence and stance towards the city of Lleida is evident in a municipal document dating to 1342, in which he promised that any lawsuits he brought before the \textit{Paeria} would not result in harm or attempt to undermine the freedom and privileges of the city. A.M.Ll, Armari, Privilegi, doc. 107. The context of this document is unclear, but it is possible that the count’s promise originated from the fears of city officials that his presence might somehow enable him to extend his authority over the city.

\textsuperscript{83} O’Callaghan, \textit{A History of Medieval Spain}, 415-417.

\textsuperscript{84} Bisson describes Pere’s decision as driven by his fear that he would not produce a male heir, which is the same reason that the king provides in his chronicle. Bisson, \textit{The Medieval Crown of Aragon}, 107; For Pere’s explanation in his chronicle, see Pere III, \textit{Chronicle}, vol. II, 391-396.
emerged as a leader of the union uprising a few months later. Along with numerous Aragonese and Valencian nobles and urban representatives, Jaume loudly accused the king of violating the laws and customs of the realms.\textsuperscript{85} Pere’s goal to become the ultimate governing authority by suppressing other forms of power thus motivated Jaume to reassume the historically adversarial role of the counts of Urgell to the Crown. Over the course of 1347, the count of Urgell took on massive debt to fund union armies and combat King Pere and his troops.\textsuperscript{86} In November 1347, the count suddenly died, and public knowledge of the animosity between Pere and Jaume encouraged rumors that the king had poisoned his brother. This event helped cement the hostile relationship between the Crown and the counts of Urgell.\textsuperscript{87}

Monfar y Sors suggests that Jaume’s son, Pere, submissively obeyed and sought out the king’s affection after his father’s death in the hope of recovering some of the authority that his predecessors had lost to the Crown.\textsuperscript{88} The new count of Urgell’s recorded actions and relationships in subsequent decades, however, suggest otherwise. Although he dutifully answered the king’s calls to defend the realms against Castilian invasion and other threats, the count physically distanced himself from the Crown by moving from the family residence in Lleida to Balaguer, the administrative center of the county of Urgell.\textsuperscript{89} In addition, the count appears to have sympathized with those who actively defied the king, even if he was unwilling to take a leading role himself. For example, during the war with Castile, King Pere’s half-brother


\textsuperscript{87} In his chronicle, Pere attempts to exonerate himself by describing his interaction with Jaume the day before his death. In his description, the king notes his brother’s declining health and that he had expressed concern for the count before innocently parting ways prior to his death that evening. Pere III, \textit{Chronicle}, vol. II, pg. 420.

\textsuperscript{88} Monfar y Sors, \textit{Historia de los Condes de Urgel}, 215

\textsuperscript{89} Monfar y Sors, \textit{Historia de los Condes de Urgel}, 196 and 203-204.
Ferran occasionally initiated or accepted solicitations for alliances with the king of Castile when it suited his political purposes. In 1363, King Pere called Ferran before him to answer to charges that he had carried out “many evil acts” against the Aragonese ruler. Ferran arrived with a posse of powerful nobles, including his nephew, the count of Urgell, and a brawl between the king’s men and the nobles ensued and resulted in Ferran’s death. The king notes in his chronicle that when Ferran was killed, the count and the other nobles accompanying him “were much terrified at this deed and…asked Us whether their persons were in danger.”90 It thus appears that the count of Urgell would offer his friendship and emotional support to those who openly challenged the king’s authority even if he was unwilling to do the same. Perhaps recognizing the danger of taking a militant stance, the count of Urgell adopted a different approach to defending his authority and undermining the king’s power. Rather than committing treason or any other illegal act, as his father and uncle had done, the count exploited his jurisdictional right to prosecute criminal activity in the county of Urgell and thereby target the residents of Lleida whom he saw as beneficiaries of royal power.

**Rightful Jurisdiction: The Cases of 1380 and 1383**

The affiliation between Lleida and the Crown, and the seigniorial history between Lleida and the counts of Urgell, likely influenced the count’s prosecution of Lleidans in 1380 and 1383 as means of attacking royal power. Scholarship to this point has examined these two cases separately. Lladonosa briefly characterizes the count’s prosecution of a Christian resident in 1380 as evidence of the inimical relationship between the city and the count of Urgell but overlooks the count’s investigation of three Jewish residents in 1383.91 Miri Rubin and

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Alexandra Eni Paivra Guerson de Oliveria have examined the count’s investigation of three Lleidan Jews accused of host desecration in 1383 to demonstrate evolving religious ideology and perceptions of non-Christians, but they disregard the case of 1380. When these two cases are examined together and contextualized within the triangular relationship among the city of Lleida, the Crown, and the count of Urgell, it appears that the count used judicial processes to resist the king’s policies and recoup some of his predecessor’s authority.

As the seigniorial lord, the count had jurisdiction over crimes committed within the borders of the county of Urgell. However, the counts lost their unrestricted jurisdiction over juridical matters in 1236 when they agreed to hold the county in fief; in 1314, they regained their judicial authority when Jaume II purchased the county. Like the king and his officials in royal towns and cities, the count could judge the accused and sentence them to imprisonment, fines, or corporal punishment based on the established laws and customs of the territory.

The minutes from a meeting held by the Paeria on June 12, 1380, shed some light on the way in which the count of Urgell used his jurisdiction to target representatives of the king and his policies, and thus challenge royal authority. The notes from this meeting reveal that members of the Paeria sent the prohom and jurist, Simón Caldera, to Balaguer to request that the count of Urgell release a Christian resident of Lleida whom he was currently holding in prison. Unfortunately, the minutes do not indicate what crime the Lleidan was accused of committing. They do, however, reveal that Caldera intended to argue that the count could not keep the Lleidan imprisoned in Balaguer without the approval of the veguer, the municipal official.


93 See Barton, *Contested Treasure*, for more information about the jurisdiction of seigniorial lords, 55-58.
responsible for judging crimes committed by Christian residents.\textsuperscript{94} The fact that city officials were not implying that the count had accused or judged the Lleidan improperly suggests that they recognized that he was acting within the limits of his jurisdiction. Instead, they were looking for a loophole that would enable them to bring the Christian Lleidan back under the authority of city officials.

The minutes from a subsequent meeting of the \textit{Paeria}, reveal that while the count had agreed to release the Christian Lleidan, he did so three months later.\textsuperscript{95} Although we lack the count’s reasoning for acceding to the \textit{paers’} request via Caldera, his delayed actions indicate that he was sending a message to officials in Lleida that he did so only because he wished to and not because he was legally required to do so. In other words, he acted within his jurisdiction, was free to exercise his authority, and daunted the fact that the people of Lleida could do little about it.

In the case of 1380, the count of Urgell seems to have used his jurisdictional rights to harass his Lleidan neighbors. It is likely that the imprisoned Lleidan had actually committed some crime, and the count took the opportunity to create unnecessary judicial procedures for officials, which would cost the city money for legal services. In doing so, he presented an obstacle to the previously unchecked support that Lleidans offered the Crown. Perhaps more significantly, although the \textit{paers} do not appear to have sought King Pere’s assistance in the process, it is likely that the count pursued charges against the resident to target self-identified representatives of royal power who had historically rejected the authority of the counts of Urgell.

\textsuperscript{94} A.M.II, \textit{Llibre d’actes del Consell Generall}, Reg. 460, f. 32v-34r.

\textsuperscript{95} A.M.II, \textit{Llibre d’actes del Consell Generall}, Reg. 460, f. 116r-117v.
Thus, the judicial process and the count’s subsequent interaction with city officials provided him with a means to express his opposition to King Pere and Lleida’s support of the Crown.

Whereas the 1380 case lacks sufficient documentation for clear insight into the count’s intentions, that of 1383 prompted a reaction from King Pere. Similar to the case of 1380, the count’s responses were not preserved in 1383; nonetheless, the missives sent by the king to the count regarding the judicial process support the idea that the count was exercising his jurisdictional rights to target perceived representatives of royal power. In this case, however, instead of a Christian, the count of Urgell pursued accusations of host desecration against Jews from Lleida. Considered alongside the count’s prosecution in 1380, and within the context of the host desecration investigations in 1367 and 1377, it appears that the count used judicial processes against Jews as a tool to articulate his aversion to the king’s policies. Nonetheless, this does not mean that the count did not believe that the Jews he had arrested were guilty. As noted in previous chapters, the religious atmosphere of the late fourteenth century made it possible for people to believe that the accusations of host desecration were true, or at least embrace the possibility that Jews could carry out such a deed, and use them to further their political aims.\textsuperscript{96}

On September 7, 1383 Pere wrote to the bailiff of Lleida, and on September 26, he sent a letter to the count of Urgell. In both letters, the king explained that he was aware that the count had imprisoned and charged two Lleidan Jews with the crime of host desecration. The narrative of the accusation in 1383, as described by the king in his missives, was nearly identical to those presented in Barcelona (1367) and Osca (1377). King Pere notes that Sentou Levi and Mosse Xicacella, Jews of Lleida, had been accused of buying twelve pieces of the consecrated host from a Christian thief named Pere de Vilanova with the purpose of desecrating them. The thief

\textsuperscript{96} For a discussion on the contemporary perception of Jews, see Chapter 1.
had allegedly stolen the host pieces from a church in Castelló de Farfanya, a town in the county of Urgell.\textsuperscript{97}

Many of the details of the 1383 accusation echo those presented in 1367 and 1377. Although it is improbable that the count devised the accusation himself, it is possible that he pursued the accusation originating in his territory because it would appear more credible in light of the two previous investigations. Furthermore, it is feasible that the count was cognizant of the anxiety the other cases had caused the king and his subsequent efforts to regain control of the Jews and Muslims and their revenue in Lleida and in other royal cities. In short, the count of Urgell recognized that power over Jews meant power over the king. Altogether, this made the accusation of host desecration in 1383 the perfect tool through which the count could express his opposition and resistance to royal policies.

Pere’s letters regarding the count’s host desecration investigation reveal the power struggle that ensued between the king and his nephew. As indicated above, the king contacted his bailiff in Lleida on September 7 before writing to the count on September 26. After explaining the charges that the two accused Jews faced, Pere directed the bailiff to carry out his own investigation discreetly and not to involve “some ecclesiastic judge” who might create scandal for the Jewish community of Lleida.\textsuperscript{98} While Pere’s circuitous communication may have been prompted by his desire to avoid scandal for the Jews in Lleida or elsewhere, it also indicates that he recognized that the count was acting within his jurisdiction to oversee the prosecution of criminal activity in the county. Throughout his reign, when Pere believed that municipal officials

\textsuperscript{97} For the letter to the Count of Urgell, see ACA C, Reg. 1281, f. 122; For the letter to the bailiff of Lleida, see ACA C, Reg. 830, f. 144-145.

\textsuperscript{98} “Et caveatis ne ipsum alicui acclesiasticio judici remitattis doneca nobis aliud habueritis mandamendum”. ACA C, Reg. 830, f. 144-145.
or nobles had overstepped their authority, he was not shy about contacting them directly and ordering them to rectify the situation. Pere’s actions in 1383 thus suggest that he had no legal basis to intervene in the count’s investigation.

When King Pere finally wrote to the count at the end of September, he made claims about the investigation that were nearly identical to those he made in 1367 and 1377. He declared that the count’s persistence in pursuing the accusation was motivated by “false information and measures issued by people of ill will.” Significantly, although the king suggested that “people of ill will” concocted the accusations, he never alleged that the count utilized local advisers or councilors in the matter. Whereas municipal officials and Christian residents from Barcelona and Osca assisted the prince in the investigations taking place in their cities, the count appears to have pursued the accusation on his own. It is possible that this was partially due to his status and objectives as a seigniorial lord, which stood in contrast to Joan’s interaction with royal subjects who greatly valued their autonomy. Considering his recent prosecution of the Christian from Lleida and his delayed response to the paers’ request to release the resident, it seems likely that Pere was uninterested in working with Lleidan officials because they represented the same royal power as the Jews and Christians he had prosecuted. Moreover, in the same letter that he sent to the count in September, the king claimed to know that the accusation of host desecration was baseless. He alleged that the Jews of Lleida had notified him that “according to their precept and beliefs, Sentou Levi and Mosse Xicacella are not guilty of the deed because such acts cannot and should not reasonably occur to a Jew.”

During the trials in 1367 and 1377, Pere relied on

99 “…ab falses tractaments e maneres, per persones quils volen mal…” ACA C, Reg. 1281, f. 122.

100 “E com per alguns jueus sia estat nouellament proposat davant Nos que, segons lur presumpcio e creença lo dit Sentou no es culpable en lo fet, allegants diverses raons per les quals pretenen que semblant acte raonablement no pot ne deu caure en cor de jueu, mas que daço son estats acusats ell e Mosse Xicacella.” ACA C, Reg. 1281, f. 122.
testimony from royal officials, which the count of Urgell would have found more authoritative. The king’s inclusion of Jewish testimony in this case may have been intended to demonstrate his continuing relationship and control over the Jews. From this perspective, it appears that the king found demonstrating his power over the Jews to be more important than convincing the count that the accused were innocent.

Pere’s next letter to his nephew on October 26 suggests that the count of Urgell was unmoved by the king’s efforts and that he was intent on exercising his jurisdiction over the case a while longer. Pere wrote that he was aware that the count had charged another Lleidan Jew, Sento Cequens, with host desecration while Levi and Xicacella remained imprisoned in the town of Castellò de Farfanya. It was not until January of 1384 that King Pere succeeded in taking charge of the case, and by extension, the Jews of Lleida. At that time, he directed the count to send all documents related to the investigation to the royal court and to release the Jews to officials in Lleida. Both letters lack evidence indicating that Pere had found a legal way to force the count of Urgel to relinquish control. Instead, similar to his reaction to the paers’ request in 1380, it appears that the count intended to demonstrate the extent of his authority before deciding to accede to the demands made of him on his own terms. In doing so, the count of Urgell had succeeded in demonstrating his power over the Jews of Lleida and the king without carrying out any illegal acts deserving of punishment. This enabled the count to redefine and reinforce his own authority over and against that of the Crown.

101 ACA C, Reg. 1106, f. 91.

102 ACA C, Reg. 1105, f. 47. Alexandra Guerson de Oliveira argues in her dissertation that Pere took charge of the case in September when he contacted his bailiff, but Pere’s letter to his nephew requesting that he drop the charges indicates that he did not take charge until later in January when he requested all documents relating to the case. Guerson de Oliveira, “Coping with Crises,” 161.
Perhaps recognizing the fragility of his authority, Pere continued his own investigation of the three Jews accused of host desecration for another two and a half years before finally declaring them innocent of all charges.\textsuperscript{103} It seems that the king wished to leave no stone unturned and no room for anyone to claim that his ruling was prejudiced in favor of the Jews. Furthermore, by carrying out a comprehensive investigation, Pere created a legal obstacle that hindered the count from reasserting his authority by reopening the case. Unlike Prince Joan, whose letters in 1367 and 1377 reflect an attempt to shift power over the Jews from the king to the municipalities, the count of Urgell’s recorded actions in 1380 and 1383 suggest a desire to demonstrate his authority by controlling the residents of Lleida, regardless of their religious identity.

\textbf{Joan I: A King for the Count of Urgell}

Unlike his predecessors, Joan showed little interest in Lleida, despite the city’s desire to maintain a familiar relationship with the Crown. He only visited the city once during his nine-year reign and then only to punish those who attacked local Jews during the riots of 1391. From the shalter of his palace in Barcelona, Joan even issued a confirmation of the city’s privileges and customs in 1387 rather than traveling to the city as previous rulers had done.\textsuperscript{104}

In line with his general approach to governance, King Joan delegated power to Lleidan municipal officials to oversee the operation of the city. He directed municipal officials to oversee judicial processes that previously would not have fallen under their jurisdiction. In 1393, a resident of Lleida, Jaume Niubó, attacked and mortally wounded Pere Bertran, a student of the

\textsuperscript{103} ACA C, Reg. 1455, f. 17-19.

\textsuperscript{104} A.M.L.I., Armari, Privilegi, doc. 150.
Estudi General de Lleida, while shouting “murder, murder the students!”105 Although municipal officials had overseen the operation of the Estudi General during the previous century, the fact that the students were technically members of the clergy meant that the case should have fallen under the jurisdiction of the Church.106 King Joan also extended municipal officials’ authority over the city’s minority religious communities. For example, in 1387, when the Jewish community of Lleida was attacked during Holy Week, the king ordered the paers to protect the Jews and fine anyone who “dared to presume” to cause harm to the aljama 1000 gold morabati.107 In addition, in 1391, Joan directed the paer and lawyer, Berenguer Colom, to resolve a conflict over personal property between the Muslim Brafim Abenferre and the Christian convert Brafim Dacayten.108 Both of these directives stand in contrast to the policies of Pere III, who was adamant that matters between Jews or Muslims and members of the Christian population fell under the exclusive jurisdiction of the bailiff.

During the riots of 1391, officials in Lleida communicated their discomfort with Joan’s impersonal approach to the city. In July, after learning that Christians in the city of Valencia and other nearby places had attacked local Jews, Joan authorized city officials in Catalonia and Aragon to organize militias to prevent the spread of the riots and protect Jewish residents should the need arise.109 The king expected city officials to take responsibility for the quality and quantity of the defense and implement it effectively. It appears that Joan’s vague directive did not instill a sense of confidence in Lleidan officials. Feeling a rise in tension in the city, officials

105 “muyren, muyren que studiants són!” ACA C, Reg. 1885, f. 4-5.
107 ACA C, Reg. 1825, f. 96.
108 ACA C, Reg. 1850, f. 79-80.
109 ACA C, Reg. 1878, f. 86.
wrote to the king at the beginning of August to request that he either come to the city or send a royal official with the power to prevent a riot. In response, Joan merely reminded officials to protect and defend the aljama should the need arise.\(^{110}\) Four days later on August 12, the Jews of Lleida were attacked by a crowd comprised of poor artisans and fieldworkers from the city and residents from other Catalanian cities and Castile. It is not clear why these people participated in the riot. Benjamin Gampel cites a letter from the paer, Guillermo de Rajadello, who noted that locals only initiated attacks after they received news of riots in Mallorca and Barcelona.\(^{111}\) It is also possible that the city’s connection with the Crown, which appeared to unite residents of different faiths in the past, lacked the strength it had before or perhaps it had never extended beyond the elite of the city, that is – the paers and prohoms. While the lack of sources obscures their motivations, we can trace the rioting crowd’s subsequent actions. After the initial attack, Lleidan officials moved members of the Jewish community to the city’s royal castle to better protect them. However, the next day, on August 13, the same crowd stormed the building and killed 78 Jews. It appears that Lleidan officials and their militia followed the king’s order and attempted to protect the Jews. The account presented in government records explains that many of the defenders and their horses were wounded by stones thrown by attackers and the castellan of the castle was burned alive when rioters set the main entrance on fire.\(^{112}\) After the attack took place, the paers of Lleida notified the king and again requested that he come to the city to establish peace. In response, Joan simply thanked officials for their efforts, because of which “the city and its inhabitants [could] be preserved from scandal and evil, and[could] live in


\(^{111}\) Gampel, Anti-Jewish Riots in the Crown of Aragon, 134-135. For the letter from Rajadello, see ACA C, Reg. 1961, f. 62.

\(^{112}\) Gampel, Anti-Jewish Riots in the Crown of Aragon, 136-137.
tranquility and concord until we, God willing, arrive in a few days.” The king evidently had little intention of helping control the uprisings with his presence.

When the king finally came to Lleida in October, he did so to punish attackers rather than offer a disincentive for future attacks. In preparation for Joan’s visit, officials created a plan that reflected their anxiety over his disinterest in the city and their desire to establish a more familiar relationship with the king. When officials learned that Joan was travelling to Lleida to carry out justice, a handful of paers traveled to the nearby town of Bel-loc in the county of Urgell to speak with Queen Yolande, who had stopped there with her attendees during her travels. The paers explained that they intended to carry out a choreographed reception for the king that would express their contrition for their crimes. According to the plan, when the king was within one league of the city, male residents of all classes would come out to greet Joan and beg for forgiveness. Following this, the children of the city, and then the women, and finally the bishop and members of the clergy would perform the same gesture. Yolande clearly thought that this performance was inappropriate because she explained to her visitors that the king would not respond to such expressions of remorse. He would instead simply carry out justice “as you wished” for the rioters that officials had imprisoned. Although the people of Lleida did not carry out their performance of contrition, the existence of such a plan points to anxiety on the part of officials and possibly the residents as well about the king’s hands-off approach to governance. While they may have feared the king’s vengeance in response to the recent attack on


the city’s Jews, it seems likely that officials also hoped to use the occasion to establish a relationship with Joan like the ones they had enjoyed with rulers in the past. By having different categories of residents approach the king and ask for forgiveness, officials may have hoped to demonstrate the extent of their devotion and affiliation with the Crown. This strategy had worked in the past with Pere III after he tried to give the city to Jaume III of Mallorca in 1344. In the decades after Pere rescinded the offer to Jaume, residents tried to bolster their relationship with the king by supporting all of his endeavors militarily and financially. King Joan arrived on October 26 and stayed in Lleida for three weeks until November 18, 1391. It appears that the visit went relatively well, because when Joan left, he ordered his governor general and younger brother, Martí to grant immunity to all who participated in the attack on the Jews and any associated crimes, with the exception of a select few.116

Significantly, King Joan also delegated power to the count of Urgell. In August of 1391, Joan requested that the count go to Barcelona to prevent any more riots in the city.117 It is reasonable to assume that he did this because the count had clout as an elite nobleman to assert his authority effectively. However, it is also likely that Joan saw him as an ally and friend of the Crown. The count’s relationship with Joan stands in complete contrast to his relationship with Pere III. Whereas Pere aimed to expand royal authority at the expense of other forms of power, including the count, Joan demonstrated a willingness to treat his cousin as an associate in the governance of the kingdom and recognize his authority as the count of Urgell. Consequently, instead of resisting the Crown by targeting representatives of royal power in the form of Christians and Jews from Lleida, the count of Urgell worked with Joan to stabilize the realms.

116 ACA C, Reg. 1900, f.106-107. For more information about those would still be punished, see Gampel, Anti-Jewish Riots in the Crown of Aragon, 252.

117 ACA C, Reg. 1961, f. 82-83.
Further evidence of the rapport between the two men may be found in a letter dated to August 25, 1391, in which Joan wrote to the count of Urgell to inform him that the queen intended to visit Balaguer, where the count resided. He requested that the count “have the castle at Balaguer emptied for our companion, the queen.” In his letter, Joan indicated that he would join the queen in Balaguer a few weeks later. After Count Jaume’s death in 1348, King Pere III did not set foot in the county of Urgell, perhaps pointing to his awareness of the suppressed resentment that his nephew held for the Crown and its current policies. During Joan I’s reign, however, the king and queen felt comfortable visiting the count in Balaguer and requesting his help in the riots against the Crown’s Jews, who were previously a target of his antipathy for royal power.

Conclusion

Unlike officials in Barcelona and Osca, the paers of Lleida sought to associate themselves from the Crown as evidence of their political autonomy. Perhaps in reaction to their experience under seigniorial rule, Lleidans over the course of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries shaped a political identity in affiliation with royal power and not in opposition to it. In contrast, hostility grew between the counts of Urgell and the Crown as a result of the latter’s attempts to expand royal authority at their expense. After Count Jaume died during the union uprising of 1348, his son looked for a means other than military resistance to articulate his opposition to royal policies. When accusations against Christians and Jews from Lleida – symbols of royal power – emerged in the county of Urgell in 1380 and 1383, the count of Urgell pursued them to demonstrate his authority over and against the Crown. Using his legitimate authority over criminal activity in the county, the count initiated judicial processes that Lleidan

officials and the king were powerless to stop. When Joan took the throne in 1387, the balance of power shifted. In contrast to the familiarity that residents of Lleida had enjoyed with rulers for so long, they were confronted with a ruler who showed little interest in their performances of loyalty or requests for affirmation. From the perspective of the count of Urgell, however, the Crown of Aragon finally had a king who recognized the appropriate limits of royal power and offered the count the respect he and his predecessors had long deserved.
CHAPTER 8
EPILOGUE

This dissertation has used letters exchanged about three host desecration investigations that took place 1367, 1377, and 1383 to demonstrate that Jewish policies played an important part in shaping the contrasting kingships of Kings Pere III and Joan I. That two consecutive rulers developed rather different political philosophies suggests that there were multiple approaches to governance available to rulers in the fourteenth-century Crown of Aragon. Indeed, medieval kingship did not progress into the absolutism of later centuries without deviation. Understanding kingship as a flexible process also allows us to make sense of the leadership style of Joan’s successor. In May 1396, Joan I of Aragon died unexpectedly after falling from his horse while hunting near Girona.1 Dying without a male heir, Joan was succeeded by his younger brother, Martí I (r. 1396-1410). Martí had served as Joan’s governor general during the late king’s nine-year reign.2 Unfortunately, scholars lack documentation that provides the same level of insight into the development of Prince Martí’s political ideals that the letters about the host desecration investigations offer about Prince Joan. Since Joan used his time as crown prince to grapple with concepts of power and legitimate royal authority, Martí may have also developed a political philosophy while serving as governor general under Joan, or perhaps earlier, during his father’s reign. In fact, the political chaos that derived from Joan’s efforts to decentralize power likely influenced Martí’s decision to advance an authoritarian style of kingship when he became

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king. It was intended to undo his brother’s policies and shift the balance of power back to the Crown. From this perspective, it appears that Martí advanced a political philosophy in direct opposition to Joan’s kingship, just as Joan had shaped his own leadership style in rejection of Pere III’s political ideals.

King Martí implemented an authoritarian style of kingship similar to that advanced by Pere III but used different political tools than his father to centralize royal power. Suzanne Cawsey and Michael Ryan have demonstrated that King Martí used notions of piety and moral regulation to shape an aura of authority, whereas Pere III tended to rely on rhetoric, royal officials, and military aggression against other rulers.\(^3\) Earning the sobriquet, \(l’Ecclesiàstic\), Martí was known for his frequent attendance at masses, constant prayer, and patronage of churches. Without questioning the authenticity of King Martí’s authentic spiritual convictions, it is important to recognize that this aura of resolute piety served an overt political purpose.\(^4\) Creating the perception of divine support and moral and spiritual rectitude helped Martí legitimize his rule, and it facilitated the consolidation of royal power. Martí employed the concept of “divine majesty,” which defined rulers as divinely ordained and deputies of God and thus endowed them with a sacred royal nature.\(^5\) Martí relied on this concept to justify his arrest of Joan’s widow, Yolande, and many of the late king’s key advisers for conspiracy, treason, and corruption. Martí explained that, through their crimes, Yolande and Joan’s advisers had

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undermined the authority of the king, who was an agent of “divine majesty.” As a result, they had revealed themselves to be the “cruel enemies” of God. Martí’s emphasis on a unique royal essence legitimized his attempt to gain control over a royal court that, under Joan I, had become accustomed to influencing the king’s policies to their advantage. By framing his actions as an attempt to right the profane actions of Joan’s widow and advisers, King Martí could effect power over his subjects and silence any and all who were not entirely supportive of his sovereignty.

In addition to taking control of the royal court, Martí also implemented a series of moral reforms and enterprises that enabled him to reassert royal power in urban centers. He authorized various ordinances intended to stifle prostitution, gambling, and occult practices. In addition, he enacted legislation that punished “most wicked” blasphemers who “from the heart or the mouth irreverently utter something against the goodness of the divine or deny its majesty.” These measures, which the king characterized as necessary for the spiritual well-being of the realms, permitted Martí to interfere and make clear his domination in the daily operation of cities and towns. In addition, Martí initiated a military campaign to redirect the aggression displayed by nobles participating in factional feuding in cities like Osca. In 1397, Benedict XIII issued a series of bulls in support of a crusade against the Muslims on the coast of Barbary. A group of Muslim pirates had sacked the Valencian town of Torreblanca, and during the process, they had supposedly stolen a chest that contained pieces of the consecrated Eucharist. Focused on returning the body of Christ to its proper place in Christendom, the military offensive encouraged rapport between King Martí and his Christian subjects. For example, on November

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9, 1397, Martí wrote to the prohoms of the city of Valencia to express his pleasure at their proposal to join the crusade and compare their efforts to those of St. Paulinus of Nola, a Roman saint who allegedly gave away all of his possession to ransom Christian captives from barbarian invaders. Although the crusade against the Barbary Muslims amounted to very little, it appears to have increased the affinity between Martí and his subjects even as he infringed on the meticulously guarded autonomy of the cities. Kingship thus remained a dialectical process during Martí’s reign. Like Pere and Joan, he advanced his kingship in dialogue with the nobility and the urban governing elite.

Although Kings Pere and Joan shaped different political philosophies, they both did so via the Jews because their royal office entitled them to exclusive control over the Jewish communities. Like Pere III, Martí used his exclusive claim to the Jews to advance an authoritarian form of kingship, but the high number of Jewish casualties and conversions during the 1391 riots compelled him to emphasize his right to the minority community using a different approach than Pere. During the riots, many Jewish communities were nearly or completely obliterated, their residents murdered, forcibly converted, or forced to flee to strongholds in other towns and cities or even to other kingdoms. Consequently, the 1391 riots were a watershed event for the Jewish communities since most never fully recovered demographically, economically, or socially. They were also a turning point for Aragonese rulers who were forced to...

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10 For example, according to contemporary reports, over 500 Jews were killed and thousands were converted in Barcelona during the riots of 1391. Very few escaped to strongholds in neighboring towns. In 1393, King Joan expressed some interest in reestablishing a Jewish community in the city, but such a small number of Jews were willing to return or move from other cities that in 1394 that the king announced that Christians could take up residence in the neighborhood designated for the Jews. Barcelona would not have an official Jewish neighborhood again until the twentieth century. Bisson, The Medieval Crown of Aragon, 124.
to revise their approach to the Jews and consider the presence of another minority group – the newly converted Jews, also known as *conversos*.\footnote{For more information about Jewish converts in fourteenth- and fifteenth-century Crown of Aragon, see Paola Tartakoff, *Between Christian and Jew: Conversion and Inquisition in the Crown of Aragon, 1250-1391* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2012) and Mark Meyerson, *A Jewish Renaissance in Fifteenth-Century Spain* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004).} Martí stood to gain more revenue for his treasury by rehabilitating the remaining Jewish *aljamas*. Yet, if he recovered royal control of the Jews from municipal officials and nobles and devoted all of his attention to implementing new policies to rejuvenate the Jewish *aljamas*, Martí ran the risk of appearing to prioritize the Jews and their revenue over the spiritual health of the *conversos* and their integration into the wider Christian community.

Many Christians feared that if *conversos* continued to associate with local Jews (often their relatives and former neighbors), the new converts would either return to Judaism or continue to practice their former faith in secret.\footnote{Meyerson, *A Jewish Renaissance in Fifteenth-Century Spain*, 37-42.} Consequently, Martí paired policies that demonstrated unquestioned royal power over the Jewish communities of the realms with strict legislation regarding the *conversos*. He issued orders that were intended to prevent Jews from consorting with *conversos*. For example, in Barcelona and the city of Valencia, he forbade traveling Jews to lodge in *converso* households.\footnote{Mark Meyerson, “Samuel of Granada and the Dominican Inquisitor” in *The Friars and Jews in the Middle Ages and Renaissance*, ed. by Steven J. McMichael and Susan E. Myers (Leiden: Brill, 2004), 179.} He also encouraged inquisitors to identify Judaizing among *conversos* and punish those who relapsed and their Jewish abettors.\footnote{ACA C, Reg. 2220, f. 60. For information about the criteria by which inquisitors identified Judaizing, see Meyerson, “Samuel of Granada and the Dominican Inquisitor,” 179-181.} These measures suggested that the Crown was dedicated to the welfare of its Christian subjects. At the same time, the king made it clear that anyone who attempted to harm or control the Jews – the
Crown’s property – would be severely punished. In 1399, Martí issued notices throughout the realms that specified that the Crown had sole control over the internal regulation of all Jewish communities. These notices effectively overturned Joan’s delegation of power over local Jews to municipal officials and nobles. In addition, when inquisitors began to harass and forcibly convert Jews instead of just policing the conversos, the king expressed outrage that anyone would damage his “treasure” in such a manner. King Martí demanded that the inquisitors cease their harassment since the Jews were not members of the church, and thus fell under the king’s jurisdiction. He also attempted to improve the circumstances of the remaining Jewish communities. Martí permitted Jewish leaders to reclaim property that Christians had confiscated during the riots. For example, in 1400, Martí ordered officials in Lleida to allow the remaining members of the former Jewish community to rebuild their quarter in the center of the city, which had been burned during the riots. The king also directed Lleidan officials to provide compensation for the cost of rebuilding a new synagogue. Although Martí’s policies suggested that he was genuinely concerned about the spiritual wellbeing of the conversos in their realms, they also helped mitigate any criticism garnered by his reclamation of the Jews as the sole property of the Crown. Martí implemented different Jewish policies than Pere and Joan, but following in the footsteps of his predecessors, he continued to use royal possession of the Jews to advance royal authority. Consequently, the Jewish communities in the Crown of Aragon remained one axis around which the wider debate about appropriate forms of kingship pivoted.

15 ACA C, Reg. 2340, f. 100.
16 Meyerson, A Jewish Renaissance in Fifteenth-Century Spain, 48.
Martí I died in 1410 without a male heir, his only son having died in Sicily from malaria one earlier. As a result, the dynasty of the House of Barcelona came to an end. Ferran (“Fernando” in Castilian) de Antequerra (r.1412-1416), a member of the Trastámara dynasty of Castile, became the new king of the Crown of Aragon.\(^\text{18}\) Although Ferran’s coronation marked a complete regime change, the questions of “who should rule and by what authority?” remained relevant in the Crown of Aragon and perhaps took on even more importance considering Ferran’s familial connection to the Crown of Castile. Significantly, concerns about the place of the remaining Jewish population in Aragonese society continued to be closely connected to questions of royal authority. Some scholars have suggested that Isabella of Castile and Ferdinand of Aragon attempted to assert royal power over their realms at the end of the fifteenth century by first trying to bring the Inquisition and its investigation of Jews and *conversos* under their control and later by expelling the Jews.\(^\text{19}\) The possibility that rulers in the fifteenth-century Crown of Aragon continued to articulate their political philosophies via their treatment of the Jews suggests the continuity of royal authority across dynasties and eras that future scholarship should explore.

\[^{18}\] It was two years after Martí’s death before a new king was named. There were due five contenders for the throne. Ferran was chosen to be king by *Corts* representatives from Aragon, Valencia, and Catalonia at a meeting known as the Compromise of Caspe on June 28, 1412. Ferran was Martí’s nephew through his sister Elionor, who had married Juan I of Castile in 1375. Theresa Earenfight, *The King’s Other Body: Maria of Castile and the Crown of Aragon* (Philadelphia: The University of Pennsylvania Press, 2010), 24.

\[^{19}\] See Henry Kamen, *The Spanish inquisition: A Historical Revision*, 4\(^{th}\) ed. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2014). In particular, see Chapter Three.
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BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Alana Lord graduated from Elon University in 2008 with a Bachelor of Arts with Honors. She received a Master of Arts in 2010 and a Ph.D. in 2017 from the University of Florida. Her research interests include medieval Spain, interfaith relations, and medieval kingship. More specifically, her work examines how rulers and the urban governing elite in the fourteenth-century Crown of Aragon used Jewish policies and accusations against Jews to create and negotiate political power.