



# The Compromise of Casp. Violence and parliamentarism\*

Rafael Narbona Vizcaíno\*\*  
Universitat de València

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## ABSTRACT

The death of King Martin the Humane on 31 May 1412 left the throne of the Crown of Aragon without a direct heir, despite the different degrees of kinship of those aspiring to inherit it. The predisposition of the kingdoms' political society to participate in an investigation into their rights until the best candidate was determined ushered in a new stage in the development of mediaeval parliamentarism. Simultaneously, the aspirants and their supporters among the nobility, urban elites and regents of the governing institutions participated in an increasing wave of violence and even open warfare over the years of the interregnum in an effort to secure the crown.

**KEYWORDS:** Compromise of Casp; Mediaeval parliamentarism; Crown of Aragon; Violence and political conflict; Elites, oligarchies and estates

The Compromise of Casp as a topic is almost exclusive to Spanish historiography, with hardly any international impact were it not for the ties that connect it with the Church Schism through the figure of Pope (or Antipope) Benedict XIII, or the indirect importance it had in papal obedience over the political domain of the western Mediterranean. This event has been analysed in a long series of studies, as well as in laudatory mediaeval and Renaissance chronicles, with the trail of a bibliography that started in the seventeenth century and reached a peak in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.<sup>1</sup> Today, a historiographic overview of Catalonia can hardly ignore it, even though the outcome of this exercise is always considered tangential vis-à-vis the density of the whole. More than 600 years after that unorthodox event, there are still contrasting interpretations of the Compromise because as the end result of a process that extended from 1410 to 1412, it gave rise to the subjects' participation in the succession after the death of King Martin the Humane. Moreover, the same subjects ended up arrogating the capacity to determine who inherited the Crown of Aragon for themselves, thus undermining the existing dynamic of blood trans-

mission of these rights within the royal family, the only roadmap that had guided dynastic succession until then. The confluence of interests among a heterogeneous group of jurists, men of the Church, friars, citizens, royal officials and delegates from the parliaments of the kingdoms served to assess the degree of proximity between the dynastic kin and the deceased monarch and to determine the heir to the throne.

## THE WEIGHT OF HISTORIOGRAPHY

Much of the difficulty in providing an overview of those events stems from the attempt to articulate a discourse that combines both the traditional peaceful, juridical arguments—which, in this interpretation, prevented a fratricidal civil war—and the perspectives of social and political history, where factors like diplomatic pressure, institutional coercion and violence in its most diverse forms are fundamental factors in interpreting the past. In this sense, until recently, the previous historiography has been heavily conditioned by the controversy that arose between Ramón Menéndez Pidal and Ferran Soldevila in the mid-1960s, when the most important objective of the analysis was to construct the grand story of Spain's national unity on the one hand or to explain the decline of Catalonia within the Crown of Aragon on the other. These debates still persist to a greater or lesser degree, overlaid by the emotional charge of the most immediate present.<sup>2</sup>

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\*\* **Contact address:** Department of Mediaeval History. Faculty of Geography and History. Universitat de València. Avda. Blasco Ibáñez 28, pis 7, 46010 Valencia. E-mail: Rafael.Narbona@uv.es

That debate concealed the possibilities that the future—different or inevitable—could have harboured for Spain or for Catalonia. After all, the Compromise of Casp, which was announced on 28 June 1412, has been considered the first step in the union of the Iberian kingdoms through the marital bonds of the royal houses. These kingdoms were supposed to be led under a single monarchy, without bearing in mind that those bonds reflected the varying interests of the state and the dynasties and were not inspired by collective or particular identities and idiosyncrasies. These circumstances, however, do enable us to understand a subsequent historiography laden with censure and justifications. In contrast, the vindicative interpretations have painted the episode as the first of the causes of Catalonia's decline, even though these causes were more internal than external and more political than economic. On the other hand, they have also led James I of Urgell to be identified with Catalonia, despite the fact that there were other sensibilities and interests within the Catalan parliament, but especially because mediaeval patriotism and the mediaeval nation had little to do with the nomenclatures and content of these notions in more recent centuries, even though they originate from that period.<sup>3</sup>

Nor can we ignore that what can be glimpsed through these interpretations is a backdrop with two apologetic visions, because while to Menéndez Pidal the Compromise of Casp put an end to the long duel between good and evil, to Soldevila it was a clash between victims and oppressors, led by either an *infante* from Castile, Ferdinand, considered a treasure trove of virtues beside a Count of Urgell who was violently and poorly advised, or by a Machiavellian Ferdinand versus an innocent, pitiable James of Urgell. In fact, this literature even pitted two male psychological stereotypes against each other: that of James, wavering and poorly advised, always subjected to the whims of an inflexible mother, Margaret of Montferat, versus Ferdinand, the victorious hero over the Muslims and proven knight as the protector of his minor nephew, the future John II of Castile.

The historiography has pitted the supporters of James of Aragon, Count of Urgell, against those of Ferdinand I of Castile, as well as their rights and flaws, based on the traditional succession to the crown, while it has also compared their accomplishments and choices and the opportunities they seized. It has even assessed the possible strategy and socioeconomic, political and religious importance of the decision, which brought in a new dynasty to replace the former royal house of Aragon and the counts of Barcelona. In fact, choosing only one of these interpretations or their respective offshoots means viewing the event from a perspective that largely excludes the other, because historians still cannot reach agreement after a significant series of conferences and publications. The interpretations continue to fluctuate between the origin and precedents of dynastic unity on the Iberian Peninsula versus the regional and cultural assessments, with no dearth of legal interpretations of the procedure in application of

succession law, which also oscillates between considering the sterility and equanimity of the process versus the anomalies—if not injustices—to which some of the aspirants to the legacy were subjected.

Despite the divergent interpretations, those two substantial lines of scholarship, filled with analyses and valid document references, have led to two sometimes concurrent lines of inquiry. The first underscores the procedure used to ascertain who should succeed to the throne, with an institutional tenor that was supposed to justify the legitimacy and legality of the result, a posture backed by arguments of conscientious action by a small group of wise judges, which included the well-deserved moral participation by renowned personalities from the era, like Saint Vincent Ferrer.<sup>4</sup> In clear contrast, the second one focuses on the political power that the estates of the kingdoms acquired after a long period in which they had gained prerogatives, which resulted in their open participation in exercising sovereign authorities which had been reserved for the monarchy until then. This process of growth in the political authorities of the estates of the Courts (Church, noble and royal estates), in which they were attributed with representing the land, ran parallel to the weakness demonstrated by the royalty in the exercise of power in the last few decades of the fourteenth century, associated with continuous financial woes, a meagre royal fiscal capacity, the fragile articulation of the central power and the repeated hesitations and stumbling blocks of the defenders of foral law, at the same time that the authority of the different kingdoms was being strengthened via their parliaments.<sup>5</sup> However, the invigoration of the courts' political role since the reign of Peter the Ceremonious did not negate the fact that the diverse interests converging in them engendered tensions within and among the estates, as well as constantly shifting balances at different junctures, which led to the fact that the presumably antagonistic branches of the different parliaments coexisted with synergies that extended beyond the frontiers of the kingdoms. Either way—or perhaps both at the same time—the analysis of the succession of events and the prosopography of the parliamentarians, stakeholders, influential figures and judges of the Compromise (called *compromissaris*) were crucial in accepting that the outcome of Casp was guided by those who enjoyed the principle of authority, of institutional and Church power, as well as by the structure of loyalties associated with the Aragonese Pope Benedict XIII. In any case, with the convergence between the legal proceeding undertaken and the allocation of more political authorities to the estates, the Crown of Aragon's model of state took another step forward towards pactism as a formula of governance and towards the burgeoning identities of the kingdoms by means of parliamentary development guided by the particular juncture and the violence it unleashed. In this sense, we should view the contributions of several decades of research positively, as new documentation on the coeval realities of the kingdoms has been exhumed from the archives.<sup>6</sup>



FIGURE 1. Painting by Dióscoro Teófilo Puebla, *El Compromiso de Caspe*, 1867

### A CROWN WITHOUT A KING

The history of the Compromise of Casp starts with the death of Martin the Humane on 31 May 1410. The authenticity of his last will and testament has finally been acknowledged after having been subjected to serious doubts, suspicions of falsification and possible distortions.<sup>7</sup> The death of the direct heir to the throne, Martin the Younger, on 25 July 1409 in Sardinia, one year before the death of his father, King Martin the Humane, was actually the true start of the interregnum in that it was when the problem of succession came into being. Under those dramatic circumstances, the conflicts that were already endemic to rival groups of aristocrats and urban elites were rekindled and gradually took on proportions theretofore unseen, creating an acute split within the societies of the kingdoms and leading to the coalescence of exclusionary choices among the supporters of aspirants to inherit the crown.

Dynastic succession had no written regulation in the Crown of Aragon, nor was there any Salic law which excluded women, even though the custom and royal wills had established a pattern which preferred the male lines, descendants first and collateral descendants afterwards, sometimes subject to different vicissitudes depending on the particular juncture. Paradoxically, the very origin of the Crown of Aragon was a woman, Peronella, the heir of the kingdom who married Ramon Berenguer IV, Count of Barcelona, who engendered the dynasty with their descendants in the twelfth century. However, in 1347, James I of Urgell, the brother of Peter IV the Ceremonious, was opposed to allowing Constança, the firstborn royal child, to inherit the crown, unleashing the wars of the Union in Aragon and Valencia. Likewise, passing over Violant, the

firstborn of John I of Aragon, in 1396, brought the absent Martin the Humane, the brother of the deceased, to the throne thanks to the prominence of Barcelona's political society, which at the time was able to ignore Pope Benedict XIII's intercession in the succession to the crown.<sup>8</sup> In contrast, the judges assembled in the village of Casp decided that Ferdinand had priority to the succession through the rights received from his mother, Elionor, daughter of Peter the Ceremonious and sister of the two previous kings, John I of Aragon and Martin the Humane. This backdrop confirmed not only that the lack of direct male descendants meant that collateral transmission came into play, but also that if this occurred not among siblings but among more distant relatives, it could end up creating a problem, as it did with the death of Martin the Humane.<sup>9</sup> The absence of a sovereign created or heightened instability, which in this case dovetailed with the start of a search procedure that had never before been attempted regarding the possible rights to the throne led by subjects who supported the different relatives of the deceased king, which soon extended beyond the legal pretexts to unleash violence. In fact, the procedure regarded as peaceful and parliamentary gradually shifted as the interregnum proceeded, and there was a simultaneous use of force by the leading candidates, driven by their personal aspirations and sustained by the champions supporting their cause.

The last will and testament, the death throes and the death of Martin the Humane were recorded in the journal of the royal protonotary Ramon Sescomes between 29 and 31 May 1410. At midnight on 30 May, the king received a delegation from the Courts of Barcelona led by Ferrer de Gualbes to ask him to declare a successor, even though shortly before that he had not wanted to speak out in favour of James I of Urgell. The next day, that delegation appeared again in the same place with the same purpose before a now dying king, the moment he uttered his last words—three times in a row and before witnesses—that justice would determine the succession in favour of whoever deserved the throne. That decision was crucially important in triggering a two-year interregnum, between late May 1410 and late June 1412, because if Martin thought that justice would favour his grandson Frederic, James I of Urgell thought that it would favour himself and Violant of Bar assumed it would favour her grandson, Louis III of Anjou.<sup>10</sup> Historiographic speculation on the king's altered mental faculties, the possible falsification of the document or a premediated conspiracy to prevent natural succession, along with other suppositions, were alleged by subsequent historians because no original document but only a copy of it was presented. The reason for its absence was the demand for fees by the protonotary, who also wanted to deliver the deed to a general parliament of the crown to take the route of justice, not to a private Catalan individual. The heir would have to defray this expense by funnelling it to the royal treasury, but in this case the lack of the document and a precise heir meant



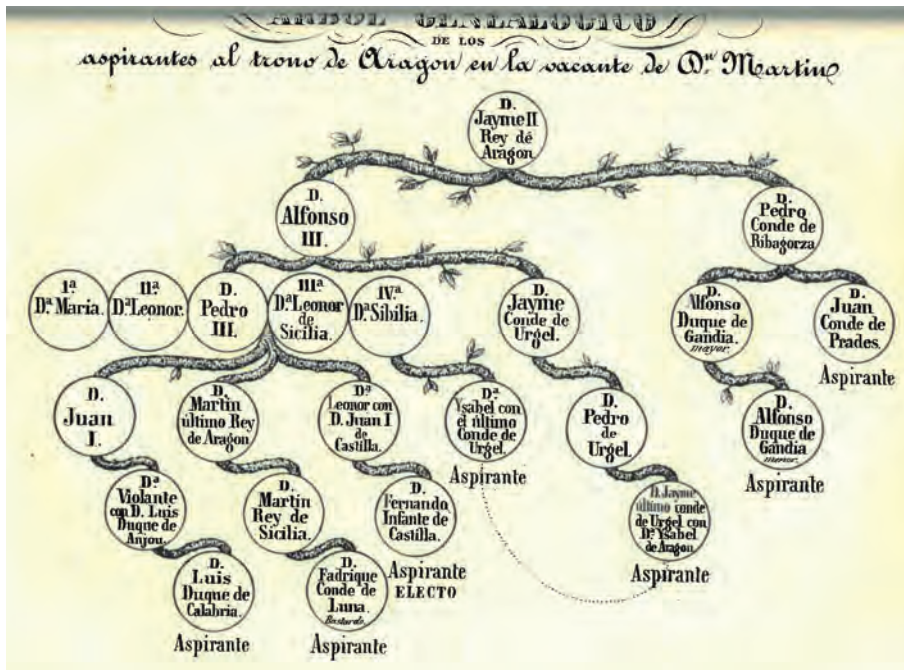


FIGURE 2. Genealogy and kinship of the royal house of the Crown of Aragon and counts of Barcelona, taken from *Procesos de las antiguas cortes y parlamentos de Cataluña, Aragón y Valencia*, edited by Próspero Bofarull y Mascaró, vol. III, Barcelona, 1848.

that the Catalan Parliament did not pay it either. Later, in June 1412, Ferdinand, by then king of the Crown of Aragon, evaded the expenses, given that he reached the throne by an arbitral decision by judges meeting in Casp and not by royal will and testament. Therefore, the original document was never issued and was only registered in the protonotary's minutes, as was the draft of the deed, although among his papers he did leave a note that he had forwarded a copy of it to the Catalan parliament. One of the first mentions of the determination to call a general assembly of the crown dates from 13 June 1410, that is, 13 days after Martin the Humane's death. In order to appoint the representatives of the kingdoms, the different regional parliaments were called, the first one the Catalan parliament, which met on 23 September of that same year.<sup>11</sup>

Sescomes's notebook contains 27 different kinds of documents granted by the king over the last two years of his life, which reveals that he was fully lucid. In fact, Martin rejected the proposals to give the courts of Catalonia the power to choose who governed the Principality, while he also confirmed the governors of Mallorca and Catalonia in their posts, as well as other officials.<sup>12</sup> After his death, the pioneering initiative of governor Guerau Alamany of Cervelló to summon the parliament of Catalonia to carry out the monarch's wishes, that is, for the subjects to use justice to determine who would inherit the crown, was imitated in Aragon and Valencia. Thus, governors and parliaments authorised themselves to investigate and decide on the rights claimed by the pretenders.<sup>13</sup> This ushered in a turbulent period in which the parties resorted simultaneously to parliamentarianism and violence.

A total of seven aspirants claimed rights to the throne through the indirect kinship that linked them to the deceased monarch: 1) James II, Count of Urgell, the king's brother-in-law because he was married to his sister Isabel,

the great-grandson of Alphonse IV the Benign and the closest descendant to the royal house on the male side; 2) Frederic, Count of Luna, grandson of the king, born from Martin the Younger's illegitimate relationship with the Sicilian Tarsia Rizzari, who had scarcely any support except at the outset; 3) Louis III of Anjou, the designated duke of Calabria and son of Yolande of Aragon—the first-born child of John I of Aragon—and of Louis II of Anjou, Duke of Provence and claimant to the throne of Sicily, Naples and Jerusalem by pontifical investiture, who had the patronage of Charles VI of France; 4) Alfonse of Aragon, named the Elder, first duke of Gandia, grandson of James II until his son, 5) Alfonse the Younger, received the rights after his death in 1412; 6) John of Aragon or of Ribagorça, count of Prades, brother of Alfonse, the first duke of Gandia; and 7) Ferdinand I of Castile, or Ferdinand of Antequera, son of Eleanor of Aragon and John I of Castile, co-regent of that kingdom, who used his hegemonic position to lead the Castilian Courts to approve a diversion of money from the war of Granada to his campaign to secure the Crown of Aragon.<sup>14</sup>

This long list of candidates was swiftly reduced to two main rivals: Ferdinand I of Castile and the Count of Urgell. The kingdoms' political society did not see any potential in the other aspirants' claims, neither for two boys with no financial resources or military backing with the consequent minorities of age stemming therefrom (Frederic and Louis III of Anjou), nor for two elderly men with projections of quick succession after them (Alfonse the Elder and his brother John of Aragon), nor for Alfonse the Younger, who was at odds with his father from the beginning and was disinherited, such that he never received the rights to the crown. In reality, the aspirants' support was based on an assessment of their possible dynastic arguments; therefore, the political realities of the

time, the leading classes of the kingdoms and the effective power of the two main aspirants were quite different. Ferdinand had proven military experience, the fortune of his wife Eleanor of Albuquerque and an army experienced in fighting the Muslims due to the recent conquest of Antequera; he soon dispatched troops to the frontiers of Aragon and Valencia and enjoyed the sympathies of Benedict XIII and his extensive ecclesiastical circle in the Spanish Church. On the other hand, James of Urgell had not gotten the deceased king's expected blessing upon his death but instead his explicit rejection, and he bore the burden of the harmful action by the governor of Catalonia when he promoted the parliamentary route and thus prevented the transmission of power to the closest male relative. Furthermore, his performance as the royal lieutenant, a common post among heirs to the throne, had earned him the open enmity of the Aragonese political class and some of their Catalan counterparts, while at the same time, the parliament of Catalonia suffered from the entrenched presence of supporters of the Angevin cause because of the continued ascendancy of Violant of Bar, the last wife of John I of Aragon. James of Urgell's candidacy only had institutional and actual power in the kingdom of Valencia thanks to the absolute loyalty of governor Arnau Guillem de Bellera.

### THE INTERREGNUM AND THE SCHISM

Two months after the death of Martin the Younger on 17 September 1409, Martin the Humane married Margaret of Prades in order to procreate a new heir to the throne. Given the futility of that endeavour, Benedict XIII, King Martin and his closest advisors weighed the possibility of declaring Frederic legitimate, with the possible institutional and Church support of his kingdoms. However, this plot was met with the unease of Violant of Bar, the grandmother of Louis III of Anjou and James of Urgell, the presumptive natural successor, and their respective supporters. All plans were called off with the king's death.<sup>15</sup> Until then, the preferred candidate in Aragon had been Louis III of Anjou via García Fernández de Heredia, the archbishop of Zaragoza, while the Valencians supported James of Urgell with the governor's mediation. Therefore, Martin's requests to summon a council of jurists to court to clarify the succession, if not legitimise the bastard Frederic, never materialised. The murder of the archbishop of Zaragoza on 1 June 1411, just one year after the death of King Martin the Humane, ended up destroying the Angevin cause, especially when the governor and the justice of Aragon called on the Castilian army's assistance to pursue a series of criminals. This military assistance soon became a consensual invasion which boosted the candidacy of Ferdinand of Antequera (Ferdinand I of Castile), while the Catalan parliament was divided among three choices—James of Urgell (the Urgellists), Louis II of Anjou (the Angevins) and Ferdinand I of Castile (the Tras-

tamarists)—although the parliament's sympathies towards Urgell declined as the interregnum wore on.

The roadmap that the judicial solution to the interregnum was supposed to follow started with the parliamentary route inspired and guided by Benedict XIII, who leaned towards Ferdinand's candidacy after the archbishop had been assassinated and favoured the transformation of the justice route entrusted to the subjects of the deceased Martin the Humane. In fact, it has been noted that without the Church Schism, or without a striking military defeat, the problem of succession to the Crown would have had a different outcome.<sup>16</sup> Through Benedict XIII's indirect intervention, and based on events, the initial general parliament of the kingdoms of the crown called to investigate who should succeed Martin the Humane gave way to gatherings of the particular parliaments of the different kingdoms in locations conveniently near the papal residence in Peníscola (Tortosa in Catalonia, Alcanyís-Mequinensa [Alcañiz-Mequinensa in Spanish] in Aragon and Vinaròs-Traiguera in Valencia). Finally, the parliaments of Tortosa and Alcanyís agreed to delegate their self-attributed political competences over the succession to a small group of arbiters, three per kingdom, who would decide to whom the throne went, as we shall see below.

Benedict XIII travelled to Peníscola on 1 July 1411, one month after the death of the archbishop, and at that point ordered wholesale defensive logistics for his residence, measures that were imitated for the city of Valencia that same summer to deal with an imminent, colossal danger.<sup>17</sup> Artillery, guards, intendency, enlargement of the cistern, repairs of walls and towers, construction of a shipyard, a mill and a palisade by the seacoast, as well as the secret staircase leading down from the castle to where the galley *Santa Ventura* was anchored, among other measures, seemed to prepare the town of Peníscola—and Valencia with identical measures—to withstand a full-out military campaign. The danger of the situation, the fear inspired by the murder of the archbishop and the not-too-distant memory of the siege that Benedict XIII had endured at the papal palace in Avignon between 1398 and 1403 advised him to make sure that the construction work not only was domestic and decorative but could also guarantee safety, given that the conflagration far surpassed the traditional framework of the classic private factional wars.

In reality, the restrictive procedure reproduced the strategy used by Pope Luna to put an end to the Church Schism, because the general council which was supposed to deliberate on the rights of the three popes into which Western Christendom had been divided to declare the legitimate one shifted to holding councils of each of the three rivals for papal obedience (Perpignan, Rome and Pisa) and their futile attempt to appoint a small expert commission. Thus, Benedict XIII ended up discarding the three ways proposed by the University of Paris to conclude the Schism—cession, council, compromise—given his in-

terest in adapting the process to place himself in the best possible position to be recognised as the sole, legitimate pope. Years later, despite that resounding failure in the Church, the same strategy was in fact successful in choosing the right candidate to succeed to the crown.<sup>18</sup>

Yet this peaceful way of solving it had a much darker undercurrent. The longstanding connivance between Benedict XIII and Ferdinand I of Castile had unquestionably been hatched by June 1411, just one month after Ferdinand made his interest in inheriting the crown known through letters and legations, who sought to choose—between the two—loyal bishops who should participate in the general parliament of the crown.<sup>19</sup> Saint Vincent Ferrer had preached before the Castilian court in Ayllón late that year and would remain there until the start of the next year, where he met with Ferdinand, when he was a faithful advisor and legate of Benedict XIII. On 23 January 1412, Benedict XIII sent letters to advise the Catalan and Aragonese parliaments to proceed with investigating an heir, including considerations and admonitions to avoid dividing the crown and sowing violence. He also promoted the dialogue needed via a restrictive parliamentary route by selecting a small number of delegates from the parliaments, and he even suggested the profile of those who would participate in a process that he wished to accelerate.

That is, Benedict XIII inspired the Catalans and Aragonese to reach a protocol, called the *Concòrdia d'Alcanyís*, signed on 15 February 1412, where the Mallorcans' participation in any solution was rejected, as was the Valencians' until the unsolved disputes between the Centelles and the Vilaragut families were solved; if that turned out impossible, they would have to accept the foundation of the *Concòrdia d'Alcanyís*.<sup>20</sup> The predominance of Urgellists in Valencia and the well-grounded suspicions of an identical affiliation among the Mallorcans cannot be considered coincidental. Nor should the role played by Saint Vincent Ferrer be downplayed; his moral ascendancy and reputation for sanctity were recognised in all the kingdoms, to such an extent that James of Urgell accepted his candidacy as a *compromissari* at the last minute, when his sermons were crucial both before and after the Compromise of Casp. On 17 April 1412, during the opening of the sessions, he delivered a sermon entitled, 'There will be one Flock, one shepherd'; furthermore, he was the first to vote, even before an archbishop and a bishop, thus ignoring the protocolary Church hierarchy, and he may have influenced the votes of the other *compromissaris*. Finally, he was asked to read the proceedings which proclaimed the new king on 28 June 1412, and he later embarked upon a preaching campaign around Valencia, Catalonia and Mallorca to set forth the reasons behind the appointment and to weigh the new king's accomplishments in order to put a damper on the discontent.<sup>21</sup>

Apart from these anomalies, we cannot ignore the selection of the nine *compromissaris*, five of whom were

men of the Church from the territories under the obedience of Pope Luna, while the secular members were jurists who had also kept strong bonds of service with him, thus compromising their presumed impartiality. The governor and the justice of Aragon proposed the nine arbiters; they were the two officials closest to the pope who had been joined in a common cause against James of Urgell since mid-May 1410, before the king's death, when they had prevented him from taking possession of the general lieutenancy of the crown in Zaragoza. The delegates from the Catalan parliament, where men of the Church and those affiliated with the papal cause also predominated, ended up accepting the proposal of the three delegates per kingdom as irrevocable judges in the investigation of justice, including the nominal and mostly closed list of judges.

The following were appointed for Aragon: Domingo Ram, bishop of Huesca, cubicularius and agent of Benedict XIII; Francesc d'Aranda, former courtier of Peter IV the Ceremonious, John I and Martin the Humane, and one of the pope's trusted men, who was retired in the Portaceli (Porta Coeli) monastery; and Berenguer Bardaxí, a jurist in the pay of Ferdinand of Antequera and close friend of the governor of Aragon. For Catalonia, they were: Bernat de Gualbes, jurist and legate of Benedict XIII at the Council of Pisa and the Council of Basel; Guillem Vallseca, jurist; and Pere Sagarriga, archbishop of Tarragona appointed by the pope. For Valencia, they were: Saint Vincent Ferrer, papal legate; Bonifaci Ferrer, his brother, the prior of the Valldecris monastery and a member of Benedict XIII's circle; and Giner Rabassa, a jurist declared incompetent due to madness when he arrived in Casp, so he was replaced by Pere Bertran, another jurist, advisor of Benedict XIII and fervent defender of the pope's proposals.<sup>22</sup> Violant of Bar, the mother of Yolande of Aragon, grandmother of Louis III of Anjou and mastermind of Louis' candidacy, sent a letter to condemn the fact that the investigation into the succession of the throne was not a matter for the Church or the pope, and stating that there were many of Benedict XIII's family and household members among the *compromissaris* who would act in favour of one rival at the expense of the others. She concluded that the ruling of Casp was essentially in the hands of Benedict XIII.<sup>23</sup>

A brief perusal of this information may lead one to believe that there was a predetermined candidate and that the parliamentary or judiciary route, thus restricted, was supposed to have a predictable outcome given the lack of impartiality in the appointment of the judges, who as party men would primarily act in favour of Ferdinand because of both papal influence and the anti-Urgellism of the Aragonese and Barcelona parliaments.

However, we should note that what was at stake for Benedict XIII was not only the Crown of Aragon but also his support in resolving the Church Schism with the peninsular kingdoms' expected full adhesion to his cause. We should recall that Castile had deprived Benedict XIII of its



backing in 1398, imitating France, and gave it back in 1403. In parallel, Violant of Bar, her daughter and her granddaughter, as members of the House of Anjou, followed in the footsteps of the French monarchy and therefore would not support a pope from Avignon. Nonetheless, for a while during the early days of the interregnum, Pope Luna was able to weigh the possibility of supporting the Angevins in the competition for the throne, as this would have earned him the adhesion of the western Mediterranean, with the Crown of Aragon, Sicily and Sardinia, plus the countship of Provence and Naples, propelling him to secure the Chair of Saint Peter in Rome. But the prior withdrawal of French obedience and the consequent almost five-year siege of the papal palace in Avignon, coupled with the French monarchy's clear support of the Pisan pope since 1409, led him to mistrust them. Violant of Bar's proposals to the *compromissaris* in April 1412, in which she sought to send the young Louis III of Anjou to be raised in the Crown of Aragon under papal tutelage, as she had done in the past but addressing King Martin the Humane, was not heeded despite the offer of Charles VI of France's embassy to send troops to expel those of Ferdinand.<sup>24</sup>

## VIOLENCE UNLEASHED

The preordained competition among the aspirants rested upon the previous violence of their immediate supporters, which had been deeply rooted in the different territories of the crown for decades based on enmities among noble families and the more prominent citizens in each of the kingdoms. The great aristocratic families and knights took no time getting involved as champions and supporters of the most prominent families who dominated the municipal governments, taking advantage of private conflicts to unite them into clienteles and solidarities until an entire network was woven that was capable of articulating large factions established in the regions. The rights of detachment, vengeance and private war among the military group, based on foral laws, meant that the violence reached an extreme level when the dynastic dilemma penetrated the traditional leagues of factions.<sup>25</sup>

### In Aragon

The municipal proclamations of Zaragoza, endorsed by García Fernández de Heredia, the archbishop, captain and councillor deputy for the city council, along with the governor of the kingdom Gil Ruiz de Lihori, sought to maintain public order in July 1410 after the death of Martin the Humane in order to conserve the throne for whoever rightly deserved it. Not only did it ban armed people from entering the city, but it also asked the inhabitants to take up weapons and follow the officials when they were summoned by tolling bells. In reality, this ordinance was not new but instead the continuation of measures from years earlier stemming from the factional fighting and

proliferation of armed groups practising banditry on the outskirts of the city; however, it had also been announced with the purpose of preventing the residents from joining those factions and getting involved in the violent brawls which arose from them.<sup>26</sup>

At that time, there was an old rivalry throughout the entire kingdom between noble enemies, led by Pedro Ximénez d'Urrea and Anton de Luna. Benedict XIII mediated to get them to sign a peace and truce agreement during his visit to Zaragoza in December of that year, although it was largely unsuccessful because the authorities' institutional actions in these conflicts were partial to one of the rival groups. Back in 1397, the governor was admonished by King Martin for not having expelled Lope Ximénez d'Urrea, the son, from Montearagón castle, which he had occupied because Juan Martínez de Murillo, associated with the Luna line, was appointed abbot by the pope and was consequently expelled by the Urrea family in another expression of the endemic feudal war. Until then, all attempts by the monarchy had been unable to put an end to the old enmity between Lunas and Urreas in the villages of Aragon; between López de Lanuza Cerdán on the one hand and the Ximénez d'Ambel, Sunyer and Martínez d'Alfocea families on the other in Zaragoza; between the Marcillas and Muñozes families in Teruel; or between the Sayas and Liñanes families in Calatayud.<sup>27</sup> The successive lieutenants or viceroys that Martin the Humane sent between 1402 and 1410 came upon stiff resistance from the Aragonese political elites. Alphonse, Count of Dénia and Duke of Gandia, Arnau d'Erill and later James of Urgell were also met with the open rejection of the deputies of the kingdom, the governor, the archbishop and the justice of Aragon, who prevented them from undertaking the peaceful mission of justice assigned by the monarch due to their reluctance to accept anyone in the post who was not a royal primogenitor.<sup>28</sup>

The appointment of James of Urgell as the royal lieutenant in 1408 inspired the sympathies of Anton de Luna and his family members, the Alagó, Urriés, Sessé and Pérez d'Ayerbe lines and others, but it came upon the opposition of those who were entrenched in the institutions and showed some affinity with the Urrea family, staunch enemies of the Lunas. Archbishop García Fernández de Heredia and his brother-in-law, governor Gil Rois de Lihori, the latter related to the Ximénez d'Urrea family, associated themselves with Joan Ximénez Cerdán, justice of Aragon, and formed an action unit in which Berenguer de Bardaxí, a jurist from Zaragoza, served as the legal advisor against the interests of the Lunas and Urgells. Together they prevented the Count of Urgell from taking possession of the post of lieutenant when he entered Zaragoza accompanied by Anton de Luna and his supporters. The creation of this higher authority which sought to subordinate the other Aragonese officials sparked a clear reaction inspired by foral arguments, whereas the reality was a deep enmity against the Lunas and their champions. The governor and the deputies

from the four branches of the kingdom submitted a lawsuit to the justice of Aragon over the appointment, but he refused to hear the required oath which would have authorised the prince to perform the job. Juan Fernández d'Heredia, the archbishop's nephew and governor's son, entered Zaragoza with armed companies, while James' steadfast aim to take possession of the lieutenancy had led him to show up surrounded by supporters on 14 May 1410. Glimpsed in that effort, the bishop's acolytes and allies rang the bells to call the residents to arms, leading to a melee in the square which resulted in injuries and deaths. The Count of Urgell fled to Almunia de Doña Godina to find refuge, protected there by Pere Roís de Moros, chatelain of Amposta from the Order of Knights of the Hospital of Saint John. Shortly thereafter, Martin the Humane died and the violence boiled over as these private wars among the nobility to maintain or attain political influence adapted to the dynastic claims of the pretenders to the throne during the interregnum.<sup>29</sup>

### In Catalonia

In clear contrast, the city of Barcelona seemed to be experiencing a period of calm during the last years of the reign of Martin the Humane, although the memory remained since 1398 of the rivalries among the factions of the Marquet and Palou families, honourable citizens with a prominent presence in the political life via the city council, as well as the tumultuous deeds of the upper nobility, such as the Cardona family in 1396, until the council ordered the rival groups to fight outside the city in 1406.<sup>30</sup> This demobilisation has been related to the most prominent men's disassociation from local public life, either by failing to attend the meetings of the citizen assembly or by their reluctance to accept legations or commissions serving the community, perhaps because the constant residence of the royals, house and court in Barcelona diverted their political interests towards the higher centre of power.<sup>31</sup>

Nonetheless, the meetings of the Catalan courts in Perpignan-Barcelona between 1405 and 1410 revealed clear tensions within the political class because of both the deterioration in relations between the monarch and the branches and the clash of interests among the same estates via the coalescence of opinions among the nobility stemming in part from the futile attempts to create a fourth branch or estate in the courts just for the knights. In December 1408, one of the two groups was led by James, Count of Urgell, and another by Pere de Fenollet, Viscount of Illa and Canet, with the adherence of major and minor families on both sides, even though no open violence seemed to result. The situation was paradoxical if we compare the sheer length of the Catalan courts, which failed to find solutions in the midst of Barcelona's calm political seas, with the brevity of the Aragonese courts in Maella in 1404, held in the midst of constant violence, when one of the reasons for calling both assemblies was the social fraction created by the antagonistic groups.<sup>32</sup>

The villages and cities of Catalonia did suffer from the actions of the factions over the clash between seigneurial jurisdictions and villages, with the consequent mobilisation of a destructive militia that wrought havoc in Vic, Manresa and Moià and led the counts of Urgell, Pallars and Cardona to ask King Martin to suppress the urban militias as a precautionary measure in 1397, 1399 and 1406. Lleida, Cervera and Manresa even managed to coordinate their militias against the Count of Cardona in 1308.<sup>33</sup> Particular prior incidents, constantly fuelled by relatives, friends and minions through horizontal and vertical solidarities, pitted the Mallas and Mirs in Vic, the Togores and Recasens families in Sabadell, and the Sescomes and Navés families in Lleida against each other, where the political actions magnified the disrepute of the institutions of governance because they revealed their partiality to expelling the factions, resolving lawsuits and simultaneously applying ordinances to maintain the public order. On 7 January 1402, the bailiff and royal *veguer* of Vic, Robert de Malla, was killed while he was leading one of the local factions; in Lleida, the prestigious citizen Bernat Gralla was murdered that same year; and in Girona, the knights Pontons-Foixà and the citizens Avellaneda-Miquel battled in 1404. The only way to restore order was via the monarch, who sent lieutenants, viceroys or captains to Vic, Berga, Girona, Cervera and Tarragona, as well as to Valencia, Zaragoza, Tarassona, Teruel and Albarraçí, to restore order between 1400 and 1410. The results were minimal given the usual complaints about infringements; in the best of cases this led to commitments to sign peace and truce agreements among the rivals until a new incident reactivated the dynamic.<sup>34</sup>

In this explanatory line of parliamentary opposition, it has been argued that in the early days of the interregnum most of the Catalan nobility, both the aristocracy and the knights, were in favour of James of Urgell. The count was only rejected by two major baronial houses, those of the Count of Pallars and the viscount of Illa and Canet, as well as by some minor lineages, like the Cervelló, Mur, Peguera, Erill, Cruilles, Queralt and Orcau families, given that the entrenched presence of the royal court, the princes and queens had fostered the creation of pressure groups, sympathies and cabals. In these early days, the anti-Urgellists initially proved to be Francophiles, that is, Angevins in favour of Louis III of Anjou led by Guerau Alamany of Cervelló, governor of Catalonia, at least until the death of the archbishop of Zaragoza.

On the other side, Joan Ramon Folc, Count of Cardona, led the Catalan Urgellists in the parliament, backed by his brother Pere de Cardona, bishop of Lleida, although his sister was the mother of Anton de Luna, leader of the Aragonese Urgellists. Guillem Ramon and Pere de Montcada were on the same side, and their mother was the sister of Anton de Luna, although Roger de Montcada, governor of Mallorca, expressed his sympathy with the same cause.<sup>35</sup> This transnational nature of militancy was also found among their opponents: Francesc de



Vilanova was the brother of Galceran, bishop of Urgell and enemy of the count, who projected this affiliation to his relatives the Vilanova family living in the kingdom of Valencia. On the other side, Berenguer Arnau and Pere de Cervelló got involved in the Urgellist camp in Valencia by fighting the Centelles family. But these kinship networks did not always act as an unconditional factor binding people together and determining an inviolable political stance, because more than defending a cause *per se*, the nobility were exercising flexible postures of opposition to the rival lineages.

### In Valencia

The violence that prolonged the interregnum in Valencia was more pronounced in the capital of the kingdom. In March 1397, the juror Berenguer Duran was killed in an attempt to stop a street brawl. On the evening of 22 May 1398, near Temple church, Lluís Soler on one side and Pere Centelles on the other, both the heads of two clashing factions, were seriously injured. They ultimately both died, first Soler and then Centelles, ominous circumstances that would even further inflame the mood between the enemies and foster the disproportionate increase in bloody fights, in which even numerous groups of tradesmen participated.

Meantime, the officials who worked in the government on behalf of the king or the city were accused of partiality

due to their actions; indeed, almost half the people attending the courts in 1401-1407 were involved in the factions. The problems at this assembly were associated or concomitant with the crown's financial difficulties, even though the donations were earmarked for restoring the royal patrimony from years earlier, and the disentanglements of assets had benefited the king's councillors and the henchmen from his faction in the preceding reigns, on both sides. In consequence, the recovery of the assets that Martin promoted dovetailed with a fraught period of factionalism.

For example, the village and castle of Cullera had come to be owned by Lluís Carbonell and Pere Marrades, who bought it from the city of Valencia in May 1400 with the sole pretext of finding a refuge that would protect the Vilaragut faction from possible aggressions. It was a clear act of prevarication by a council favourable to this faction, which separated the village from the township of Valencia after it had belonged to it for many years, which was met with the response of Eximèn Péreç d'Arenós, former lord of Cullera and prominent member of the Centelles faction. On the other hand, in June 1400 Pere Solanes, the warden and procurator of Xelva, a seignury taken by force by the urban militias of Viscount Pere Lladró de Vilanova, was killed by Gilabert de Centelles supporters; in August 1401, Martí de Roda, a notary, councillor and master rational of Valencia, was killed by the Soler-Vilaragut faction; and in August 1403, Jaume Jofré, warden of the castle of Xèrica and procurator of the city in the so-called Partida Subirana, was taken down in by the Vilaragut clan in retaliation for the death of Jaume Soler. On 15 January 1398, some knights, like Fathers Joan Gascó and Martí Eximénez d'Orís, had appeared before the royal court to condemn the fact that the elections of justices at Christmas were not clean with the goal of disqualifying the citizen government. And, as was common, in May 1401 the two factions rivalled to get their followers to be chosen as jurors by excluding their rivals from the parish nominations of candidates.

The spread of the factions to Cullera and Xàtiva ended up giving rise to a major clash in 1404 called the battle of Llombai, a realm of the Centelles family, in which noblemen, knights, citizens and a large number of armed tradesmen affiliated with each of the two sides participated. By January 1406, the situation had deteriorated so much that the jurors themselves asked the queen for the monarch's presence, and the viceroy drafted 1,000 troops. Striking measures were taken with this force which undermined the *furs*, and they consequently earned the opposition of the juries and the council. The jurors' own partiality with the factions forced them to be suspended from their profession, expelled from City Hall and banned from entering it, and it was placed under the armed vigilance of the viceroy for almost one month. Finally, on 5 June 1406, King Martin took over the government and appointed the jurors with the pretext that this was the only way to pacify the citizens.



FIGURE 3. Ceramic altarpiece on the back façade of the cathedral of Valencia, unveiled in 1955: Saint Vincent Ferrer's Pacification of the Vilaragut – Centelles Factions.

But that new development just served to heighten the violence. Ramon Boil, the governor of the kingdom, was assassinated on the night of 21 March 1407. However, the societal impact of the crime and the consequent repression only had a fleeting effect, because in February 1408 the factions were once again inside the walls of Valencia, waging violence and spreading the war to the main towns in the kingdom. The militarisation of the people and the multiplication of guards and night rounds did not stop the conflicts from continuing. The repression led by Alphonse, Count of Dénia, governor and viceroy, came upon the opposition of the municipal jurors, who in November 1409 managed to get him replaced with Arnau Guillem de Bellera, who was soon acknowledged to be a Valencian standard-bearer of the Urgellists and close to the Vilaragut family. Their consequent disadvantage immediately led the Centelles family to leave Valencia and head for Xàtiva, where they promoted another artillery battle that extended over five days and razed the city's market. On 22 January 1410, during the absence of the governor and the viceroy, the annual pilgrimage to the grave of the patron saint of Valencia Saint Vincent of Zaragoza was attacked by a Centelles cavalry detachment, and the next month they organised violent night-time forays from the cathedral belfry. These circumstances gave way to the true start of the interregnum.<sup>36</sup>

### A WAR OVER SUCCESSION

While Aragon was divided among the bloody sides of the Lunas and Urreas, Valencia was split between the Centelles and Soler-Vilaragut families, and on Mallorca the supporters of the Regiment de Franquesa and those of the Pragmàtica d'Anglesola rivalled for control of the city with a bankrupt treasury. Meanwhile, Catalonia seemed to have less violent and more dialectical tensions, with more highly developed parliamentary features that may not have prevented battles but did stave off a widespread clash among factions.<sup>37</sup>

The initiative of Guerau Alamany de Cervelló, governor of Catalonia, who had immediately embarked on the route of justice via the parliament, was a strategy to undermine the arrogance of James of Urgell, the natural heir, while its immediate indirect effect was to paralyse the Catalan upper nobility, most of whom supported James at first.<sup>38</sup> The calling of parliament in Barcelona in August 1410 was broadly accepted by the royal villages, and even James of Urgell's procurators accepted this procedure in October, which led the governor to demand that as an aspirant to the crown he give up his post as the general lieutenant which he had taken in August 1409. In exchange, the count requested that Alamany reciprocally give up the post of governor of Catalonia, but he refused with the argument that he had been confirmed in the last hour of King Martin's life. The route of justice became somewhat more precise when the archbishop of Zaragoza

asked the kingdoms of Aragon and Valencia to participate in the parliamentary route begun in Catalonia.<sup>39</sup> However, the goal of creating a fourth branch for the knights in the Catalan parliament and the clash between the Urgellist bishop of Vic and the Angevin Count of Pallars, including the participation of French troops, rekindled the Count of Urgell's desire to regain his government post. In consequence, the parliamentary route lost momentum.

The brief truce in Aragon achieved through the intervention of Benedict XIII allowed the governor to call the parliament of Calatayud, backed by the archbishop and the justice of Aragon. However, it came upon the reactive struggles between Fernán López de Luna and Juan Fernández d'Heredia, between Pedro Galcerán de Castro and Lope Guerrea and between Pedro Ximénez d'Urrea and Anton de Luna. The archbishop took over the copresidency of the parliament of Aragon, even though he defended Louis as the heir to the crown, while he joined the governor and the justice in his loathing and enmity of the Count of Urgell after the latter's futile attempt to swear an oath to the Aragonese *furs*. With these arrangements, preparations got underway to call the general parliament of the Crown of Aragon, which immediately failed with the murder of the archbishop, which detonated a civil war between the two irreconcilable factions.

The archbishop had suspended the Aragonese parliament given the reluctance of Juan de Valtierra, bishop of Tarassona, as the president of the planned general parliament of the crown, to accept it where it was supposed to be held. The clashing interests and impossibility for the different factions gathered in Calatayud to reach an agreement forced both prelates to leave the gathering, and despite the peace and truce declared in the call for the parliament, on 1 Jun 1411 the archbishop was killed in Almunia de Doña Godina along with Tomás and Alfonso Liñán by the champions of Anton de Luna, while Jaime Cerdán, the son of the justice of Aragon, was taken prisoner. The attack sought to eliminate the promoter of one of the leading competitors for the throne at the time, leaving James of Urgell in a hegemonic position; however, the plot failed from the very start because it allowed Ferdinand to go from being a secondary aspirant to a top one, backed by the charisma of righteousness which he adopted in pursuit of the wrongdoers. The fear of the arrival of troops from Gascony and the Marquisate of Montferrat to reinforce the Count of Urgell's position forced the deceased man's relatives to request Ferdinand's assistance. His brother Blasco Fernández d'Heredia, the husband of Violant Boil from Valencia; Gil Ruiz de Lihori, governor of Aragon who was married to Teresa Fernández d'Heredia, the archbishop's cousin; Juan Fernández d'Heredia, the archbishop's maternal nephew; Pedro d'Urrea; and Berenguer Bardaxí, Urrea's father-in-law, all called on family solidarity to exercise the right of vengeance, bolstered themselves with the family's new champion, Ferdinand, and took the bishop of Tarassona prisoner.<sup>40</sup>

The arrival of the Castilian troops immediately helped Blasco Fernández d'Heredia, the governor and justice, to gain strength in Zaragoza and Calatayud, as the Urgellists fled in disarray. They started to exert heavy pressure on Teruel, Fraga, Albarrasí and Villeda to dissolve the group, standing alongside the Urrea family to fight the Lunas and their allies in Belchite, Jaca, Almudévar and Huesca in late 1411. They also seized the castle of Ejea and the chatelain of Amposta, Juan Ruiz de Moros. In Ejea in early 1412, the count's Gascon and English troops defeated the militia of Zaragoza, led by the governor, and took Pedro López de Gurrea captive.

The murder of the archbishop brought disrepute to James of Urgell's cause in the Catalan parliament because it also came in September with the censure of Anton de Luna and his henchmen with the goal of undermining the count's candidacy and excluding him from the new Aragonese parliament called in Alcanyís. Before that assembly, Anton de Luna had justified the archbishop's death by alleging that it was in self-defence, while also accusing the archbishop of being divisive and disloyal; at no point did the warring Heredia family contradict him in public.<sup>41</sup> In conclusion, the elimination of the leader of the Angevin cause did not lead to a general pronouncement in favour of the surviving candidate, and the parliamentary process continued, but via another route. In fact, the initial attempt to summon a general parliament of the crown gave way to calling the kingdoms' particular parliaments, while the military route of the factions with Castilian assistance and the hiring of Gascon troops among the mercenary companies that populated the continental domains of the English, then halted by the truces in the Hundred Years' War, was accentuated.

#### RECTIFICATION OF THE PARLIAMENTARY ROUTE

First, the resistance among the upper nobility of Aragon to the parliamentary route instated by the officials of the kingdom, and later the exclusion of those who had been censured from the parliament of Alcanyís, led the Urgellists to try to set up their own assembly in Mequinensa, a village owned by Guillem de Montcada, the nephew of Anton de Luna, where much of the Aragonese aristocracy and their associates were coordinated, while in Alcanyís the knights, jurists, citizens and men of the Church who dominated the institutions with the pope's blessing predominated.<sup>42</sup> In order to prevent the gathering in Alcanyís, the Urgellists obstructed the roads leading there, and Anton de Luna occupied the castles of Zaidín, in the seignury of Berenguer de Bardaxí, and Aitona, near Lleida, in 1411.

The governor of Valencia, Arnau Guillem de Bellera, defended the cause of James of Urgell from his post dominating the capital, after the pursuit and expulsion of the Centelles family. That is, the incomplete Valencian parliament called in September 1411 led the governor's ene-

mies to create an alternative assembly in Paterna. Finally, the two rival groups set up two exclusive parliaments: the Urgellist one, dominated by Bellera, the Vilaragut family and the city of Valencia, located in Vinaròs; and the Centelles family gathering with the villages rebelling against the authority of governor Bellera, all of which soon expressed their support for Ferdinand.

The irreconcilable enmity and the two parliaments gave way to open warfare in the north of the kingdom of Valencia as soon as the governor tried to impose his authority over the villages, which was met with heavy resistance in Morvedre, Xàtiva, Vilafamés, Castelló and Vall d'Uixó. Bartomeu Miralles, the governor's lieutenant in the Plana de Castelló, led the rebellion against Bellera, and the repression came immediately: when the governor entered Castelló he executed Bernat Hostalers, the town bailiff. The Centelles family took Vilafamés, but they were expelled with Bellera's artillery, where he executed the rebels in January 1411.<sup>43</sup> However, Morella resisted because the warden of the castle, Joan Ram, requested the assistance of his Aragonese relatives, overt enemies of James of Urgell; Domingo Ram, bishop of Huesca, and his siblings, including Isabel, the wife of Berenguer Bardaxí, reinforced Morella with Castilian troops and unleashed an offensive against the villages in the county of Els Ports and in the Plana de Castelló, where the authority of governor Bellera was respected. The areas around Forcall, Almassora and Nules were plundered and subjected to siege by either of the rivals. The arrival of fresh Castilian troops in August 1411 reinforced the Centelles family's position, while those who came from Murcia and Requena allowed the Valencian supporters of Ferdinand to rise up in Alzira, who with a spirited demonstration of hegemony ended up terrorising the city of Valencia, which launched defensive preparations in case it were subjected to a siege.<sup>44</sup>

At that time, given the overall climate of violence which prevented a general parliament of the kingdoms from assembling, the decision was taken to summon particular parliaments on their own turf. Despite the different interests within it, the Catalan parliament was the only one that remained active after the dissolution of the Aragonese one in Calatayud and the impossibility of constituting a single Valencian parliament. But the tensions remained alive in Catalonia with the murder of Samsó Navés, the Urgellist corporal of Lleida by the Trastamarist Ramon Sescomes in the summer of 1411. In Cervera, the bailiff and the *veguer* were still at odds with each other, while in Girona the factions of Ramon Sampsó and Dalmau Raset were opposed to the bishop and the *paers* (town councillors) At the same time, Fraga and Barbastro expressed their fear that Gascon troops serving the Count of Urgell would enter their cities from the other side of the Pyrenees. The plunder of Llimiana, Andorra and Vall d'Aran forced the Castilian troops to take positions at the border from Huesca, while the Catalan deputies drafted an army to pacify the villages and prevent the vigilante action that Ferdinand's troops were attempting to wage in Catalonia.



Arnau Santacoloma's seizure of the castle of Rosanes with the backing of the Viscount of Castellbó and Joan de Vilamarí's seizure of the castle of Saavedra forced the governor of Catalonia to participate in the military operations.<sup>45</sup>

Since the autumn of 1411, the contacts between the parliaments of Mequinensa and Alcanyís and of Vinarós and Traiguera, always separately and apart from the one in Tortosa, had been trying to achieve official recognition to participate in the institutional process of the succession in the midst of war.<sup>46</sup> The support of the anti-Urgellist officials from Aragon made this possible for Alcanyís, despite the exclusion of the Luna family and their champions, while the governor of Valencia's authority over the Urgellist parliament in Vinarós was disregarded with the pretext that it excluded the Centelles family.<sup>47</sup> The balance remained in favour of Ferdinand with his military interventions around Aragon and Valencia, with the blessing of Pope Luna, to almost completely dominate Aragon, along with at least half the Valencians and an indeterminate group in the Catalan parliament. Conversely, the Count of Urgell alone had the power of the governor of Valencia and the capital of the kingdom, while the supporters of Anton de Luna in Aragon had retreated to the northern domains, along with an indeterminate, touchy and inactive Catalan nobility and the troops he could muster with his own family wealth.

In late September 1411, the commission delegated by the parliament of Alcanyís welcomed the messengers sent by the parliament of Tortosa, where they agreed to replace the general parliament of the crown with a meeting of the commission of delegates in order to avoid the dangerous roads; this commission was supposed to have absolute power in the investigation into the succession.<sup>48</sup> The restricted gathering of those parliamentary delegates, inspired by the papal project, was the worst prognosis for the Count of Urgell, who tried to rally positions by bolstering his military force with small group of men-at-arms hired in Gascony, Genoa and the Marquisate of Montserrat to stand up to the Castilian army. He also contacted Henry IV of England to summon assistance, and even launched a strategy with Yusuf of Granada to open up a new southern front against Ferdinand with the intermediation of Roger de Montcada, governor of Mallorca, to take away from the forces sent to the Crown of Aragon. The secret letters intercepted by Diego Gómez de Fuenzalida, abbot of Valladolid, were submitted to the parliament of Alcanyís and only served to accentuate the ignominy of the Count of Urgell's cause in Tortosa as well. Conversely, the fact that the same abbot had been condemned before the parliament of Tortosa for trying to purchase perks and collect money for Ferdinand's cause from the Urgellist García López de Sesé and his relatives had virtually no effect.<sup>49</sup>

The tension among the parliaments over a possible halt in the convergence of Catalan-Aragonese interests meant that Berenguer Bardaxí, Ferdinand's strongman in Zaragoza and the person who was bearing the brunt of the

negotiations, publicly stated that if the parliaments did not work together on finding a solution to the success, Aragon would act on its own using its primacy stemming from its status as the head of the kingdoms and lands of the crown, even though to do so it would enlist the military support of Castile. In order to reach an agreement, the parliament of Tortosa appointed a commission with 24 delegates representing all the stances within it—Angevins, Urgellists and Trastamarists—to create a legation of six ambassadors to be sent to the Aragonese parliament in Alcanyís. Bardaxí once again notified them of the imperative to act swiftly in order to come to agreement on a small group of wise men to entrust with determining the succession after studying and clarifying the aspirants' claims. Then, in January 1412, Benedict XIII sent letters to the parliaments of Alcanyís and Tortosa asking them to appoint men who would find the deserving heir to the throne with divine assistance. The outcome was the crafting of the *Concòrdia d'Alcanyís*, which was signed on 15 February 1412 and was minutely broken down into 28 points, although it was only signed by the delegates from Alcanyís and Tortosa. In essence, the *Concòrdia* had decided to replace the general parliament with nine judges appointed by the particular parliaments who would come from all three kingdoms and meet in Casp within a given timeframe to receive, analyse and make an unappealable ruling on who deserved the succession, following a protocol that required at least six favourable votes with at least one from each kingdom.<sup>50</sup>

## THE GREAT DEFEAT

Adherence to the agreement meant the exclusion of James of Urgell's champions, so he redoubled his military efforts wherever his hegemonic status was in peril in the hardest front in the war, that is, in the kingdom of Valencia; after all, the Aragonese Urgellists had been driven into the corner of their Pyrenean domains by the Castilian forces, while in Catalonia nobody was mobilising in his favour. Thus, he sent a force of Gascons from the other side of the Pyrenees under the command of Ramon de Perellós to face off against the unconquerable Centelles family. The outcome was the battle of Morvedre on 27 February 1412. The governor did not expect the reinforcement and left from Valencia with the capital's militia but was intercepted in Morvedre by the Castilian forces commanded by Diego Gómez de Sandoval, *Adelantado mayor* of Castile, joined by those of Bernat de Centelles and the Aragonese soldiers led by Juan Fernández de Heredia. They defeated governor Bellerá's army and caused his death. The impact of this catastrophe in Valencia was horrific according to the testimony of the contemporary notary Andreu Polgar, who noted the death of 2,000 men on the flyleaves of his protocol.<sup>51</sup>

The defeat took place when the Trastamarist domination of Aragon was complete and when the Catalan sup-

port of the Count of Urgell was futile, such that once the Urgellist cause was defeated in the kingdom of Valencia, where the Count of Urgell had the most support, he gave full representation to the parliament of Traiguera at the expense of the parliament of Vinaròs. Neither Aragon nor Catalonia objected to this military divergence away from the route of justice and accepted the formation of a single Valencian parliament in Morella from a Valencia dominated by the Centelles family, where very few names of the participants of the Urgellist parliament in Vinaròs were included.<sup>52</sup> One month after the defeat, even the reluctant Urgellist city of Huesca sent delegates to the parliament of Alcanyís for the first time, and in Casp the three Valencians corresponding to the kingdom in accordance with the *Concòrdia d'Alcanyís* were accepted. Regardless of the outcome of the battle, the newfound fluidity of the legal procedure initiated by the Catalans and Aragonese required agreement on one of the candidates.<sup>53</sup>

One day before the battle of Morvedre, the parliament of Alcanyís had delegated the governor and the justice the joint power they needed to nominate the nine judges who would rule in Casp. Together they drew up the personal-

ised list of the names of those who would represent the three kingdoms, with another attached statement which added the threat that if they were not admitted Aragon would act on its own. The proposal of the nine names was submitted and discussed by the delegates from the Catalan parliament, including counterproposals and changes in each of the branches, given the divergent interests at play inside Catalonia regarding the aspirants to the throne. However, it was resolved with a majority in favour of the proposal made by Francesc Clemente Sapera, bishop of Barcelona, so the Aragonese list was accepted with the sole change of including Saint Vincent Ferrer and excluding Arnau de Conques among the three from Valencia.<sup>54</sup> On 13 March 1412, the judges' definitive list was sent to the respective parliaments for their approval, and the preparations for Casp got underway.

Two days later, Yolande of Aragon challenged the parliament of Tortosa regarding the partiality of the bishop of Huesca, Bonifaci Ferrer, Francesc d'Aranda and Berenguer Bardaxí, alleging arguments that were never denied, and she sent messages to try to get the cities and villages of Roussillon, Catalonia and Valencia to rebel, but to no avail.<sup>55</sup> She even asked Boucicaut, the marshal of France, to use the French troops of the Duke of Guyenne and the Duke of Burgundy to exert pressure to nullify the appointment of the judges. Boucicaut wrote to the Count of Illa, the governor of Roussillon and the counsels of Perpignan on behalf of Violant of Bar and Yolande of Aragon, defenders of their grandson and son Louis' candidacy, asking them to prepare food and lodging for forces that never arrived. In April 1412, desperate over the failure of the military strategy, they offered to put Louis under the protection of Benedict XIII if he were the designated heir, as they had done in 1409 with Martin the Humane.<sup>56</sup> Violant of Bar and the king of France, on behalf of Louis, questioned the investigation procedure via their procurators, as they had done earlier with the parliament of Tortosa, alleging that the venue chosen was not safe, the time assigned was too short and four judges were partial and favourable to one candidate. However, the accusation was once again rejected.

James of Urgell tried, in turn, to dispute the Alcanyís agreements so that the delegates and supporters gathered in Mequinensa would not attend, while the Vilaragut family tried to restore an Urgellist parliament in Alzira; however, neither option was heeded and they ended up dissolving. Despite the failure, they had not fully discarded the military route because on 24 April 1412 the Urgellist troops beat the Centelles faction in a battle that left 500 dead near Onda, leading to a request for more Castilian troops. Meanwhile, Anton de Luna continued to stir up havoc in Aragon to prevent the protocol agreed upon in Alcanyís from coming to fruition. He even threatened to attack Casp, an unattainable goal considering that after the battle of Morvedre the village was surrounded by Castilian troops to the north and south, and it was protected inside by a sizable guard of Aragonese and Catalan sol-



Sepulcre de Jaume el Dissortat dintre el recinte de la capella del Castell de Xàtiva, i signatura del comte

FIGURE 4. The commemorative tomb of James of Urgell in the castle of Xàtiva, taken from the book by Francesca Vendrell and Angels Masia, *Jaume el dissortat, darrer comte d'Urgell*, Barcelona, editorial Aedos, 1956.

diers led by their respective castle wardens and village captains, a double guard which was joined by the Valencians on 14 March. The military order of Saint John of Jerusalem served as the lord of the castle and village of Casp, but with the mediation of Benedict XIII the jurisdiction had been shifted to the bishop of Huesca, and he had transferred it to the nine *compromissaris*, such that the village, castle and guards were subject to the authority of those judges.

### EPILOGUE: THE CONCLAVE AT CASP

On 29 March 1412 most of the *compromissaris* were present in Casp even though the roads were intercepted by Castilian troops and the surviving Urgellist groups. Given the dangers, Alphonse of Aragon (Alphonse the Younger of Gandia) was forced to reach Tortosa by ship and from there to head to Casp overland in order to present his candidacy to the throne at the last minute. The last of the chosen judges arrived on 22 April, not without problems, and after that the required oaths were taken, documents received and masses held in which the Holy Spirit was asked to provide divine inspiration. Then, the *compromissaris* began to welcome the embassies to listen to the rights of the five pretenders to the throne.

When the sessions in which the statements were heard and the documents outlining their arguments were over, the *compromissaris* ordered a report to be written as a kind of log of their actions, which would conclude with the selection of the candidate that they justly believed had the most rights to the throne. Without either corrections or additions, a select set of information was compiled that, following the guidelines established in the *Concòrdia d'Alcanyís*, sought to create the image of cohesion among the judges in order to leave proof of the legality of the proceedings and create a future state of opinion favourable to their decision which would be capable of overcoming discord among the subjects. In fact, the text stresses the idea that the different factions had arisen in the absence of a king, thus ignoring the pre-war violence unleashed throughout his reign.<sup>57</sup> The decision issued in Casp met the expectations agreed upon in Alcanyís, which had stipulated at least six favourable votes for the preferred candidate, with at least one per kingdom. Ferdinand earned all three votes from Aragon, one from Catalonia (from Gualbes from Barcelona) and two from Valencia (the Ferrer brothers). James of Urgell only earned the vote of the Catalan jurist Guillem Vallseca, while the archbishop of Tarragona divided his vote between Alphonse and the Count of Urgell. Pere Bertran, who replaced Guillem Rabassa, did not vote, citing a lack of time to properly study the matter.

The first vote took place on 24 June, but it remained secret with the drafting of the report the following day. The announcement on the façade of the church of Casp on 28 June as Saint Vincent Ferrer read it was a ceremo-

nial act that deliberately sought to confer official status on a decision with enormous institutional, political and ecclesiastical importance.<sup>58</sup> The news reached Catalonia in seven hours, but it took two days to reach Valencia, and it was not accused of fraud despite the possible discontent. Valencian historiography has underscored the leading role that Saint Vincent Ferrer's moral stature played in achieving consensus and the final decision in the process, while Aragonese historiography stresses the juridical and political guidance created by Berenguer Bardaxí in his design of the roadmap to follow throughout the interregnum. The vast majority of authors acknowledge Pope Benedict XIII's inspiration in both figures' behaviour. Together, they managed to conclude the process with a guided strategy in an period of constant changes. Despite everything, some authors insist that the ruling was not conditioned by the winning faction that backed Ferdinand; that the *compromissaris* were not acting as the puppets of Benedict XIII; that military pressure was not decisive; and that there was not a vote but unanimity without disagreement among the judges when announcing their decision. The exegesis of the decision in the sermons of Saint Vincent Ferrer stresses that Ferdinand was the closest relative because while female succession was not preferable for ruling, it was for transmitting the rights to the throne.

The decision was accepted by the people because it was presented as a legal proceeding duly articulated in a notary report which created the image of lawfulness, legitimacy and unity of standards in the process, always based on the subjects' ability to intervene via their representation in the parliaments, in a striking demonstration of a new political culture in the early fifteenth century.<sup>59</sup> Only James of Urgell refused to swear loyalty to the new monarch until months later, in May 1413, he rose up in arms with the sole support of Anton de Luna, who seized the castles of Trasmoz and Montearagón after having wrought havoc in the previous months in Lleida and Tàrrrega. But he only managed to spark insurrection in Loarre, Bunyol, Agramunt and Balaguer, that is, in his own domains and those of the Count of Urgell, because the reinforcements he had arranged with Thomas of Lancaster, Duke of Clarence and the son of Henry IV of England, never materialised. Balaguer, the last bastion of the Count of Urgell's resistance, capitulated on 30 October 1413 after three months of siege. Defeated, James was tried for treason, had his titles and assets seized and was condemned to prison in perpetuity in the castle of Xàtiva, where he died 20 years later in 1433.

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## BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

Rafael Narbona Vizcaino is a full professor of mediaeval history at the Universitat de València. He has developed different lines of research centred on the city of Valencia and its archives, and by extension the Crown of Aragon and the western Mediterranean, primarily on their institutions, political culture and mediaeval urban society through successive research projects of the Ministry and the Generalitat Valenciana.