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QUEENSHIP, POLITICS, AND GOVERNMENT IN THE MEDIEVAL CROWN OF ARAGON: THE LIEUTENANCY OF MARIA OF CASTILE, 1420-23 AND 1432-53

BY

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April 30, 1997
For David
Queen Maria of Castile with members of the Consell de Cent of Barcelona receiving Jaume Marquilles's book of commentaries on the Usatges of Barcelona (1448). Painting by Bernat Martorell. Photo reproduced courtesy of the Arxiu Històric de la Ciutat de Barcelona.
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now knows and understands more about medieval Spain than she
could have ever predicted, has somehow, miraculously I believe,
been able to avoid asking me why it takes so long to finish. I owe
debts too numerous to count to my brothers and sisters. They are
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colleagues, and the providers of an abundance of much-needed
humor. I would not be who I am without them.

Finally, it almost but not quite goes without saying that the
greatest debt of all is the one I owe to David, to whom this work is
dedicated.
A NOTE ON THE TRANSLATION OF PROPER NAMES

The medieval Crown of Aragón constituted a federative empire encompassing various realms in the western Mediterranean, each with their own languages. Some of the rulers were Catalan by birth or preference, others Aragonese; Alfonso V, María, and Juan of Navarre were part of the Castilian Trastámara family. Regardless of language, since 1162, the kings bore the names and regnal numbers of an Aragonese dynasty. Catalan historians, however, consider the House of Barcelona to have originated earlier, so that a Catalan scholar will frequently refer to Alfonso V, "the Magnanimous," as Alfons IV. This is awkward and often misleading, and when addressing an English-speaking audience, most non-Catalan scholars devise a compromise.

I use the regnal numbers that correspond to the Aragonese kings after 1162—thus, I refer to the king who ruled from 1416 to 1458 as Alfonso V, not Alfons IV. I prefer to use the Catalan forms for proper names with two exceptions. First, proper names that indicate a non-Catalan identity are rendered accordingly, so I use the Castilian forms for all the Trastámara kings and princes: Fernando I "de Antequera," Alfonso V "the Magnanimous," Juan II (Juan of Navarre before 1458), and Enrique and Pedro, the "Infantes de Aragón," because they were Castilian and most writers refer to them as they would have called themselves. Second, many modern works written by Catalan historians were published before
the death of Francisco Franco in 1975, using the Castilian form of the author's name. Since then, most Catalan authors naturally prefer to use the Catalan form, which meant that librarians and bibliographers had to conform to one style or another. This is not a problem with younger scholars, but it forces me to make a decision on how to refer to an eminent scholars whose works first appeared under the Castilian spelling of their names, such Jaime Vicens Vives and Carmen Batlle y Gallart, who are now referred to as Jaume Vicens Vives and Carme Batlle i Gallart. There is no clear rule or preferred policy, and for the most part it is easy to follow who's who, but I point it out to avoid any potential misunderstanding.

All other place names and toponyms are given in the modern forms that prevail today in Catalan-speaking lands, Aragon, Castile, France, and Italy. This may cause some confusion among readers more familiar with the French Rousillon rather than the Catalan Rosselló, but this system has the advantage of underscoring the coherence of the realms of the Crown of Aragón. Because some official titles, Mestre Racional, for instance, do not translate well into English, I have chosen to use the Catalan terms throughout the text, and will note the translation in parenthesis the first time it is discussed in the text.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ACA Cancillería</td>
<td>Arxiu de la Corona d’Aragó, Cancillería section</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ACA Generalitat</td>
<td>Arxiu de la Corona d’Aragó, Generalitat section</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AHCB</td>
<td>Arxiu Historic de la Ciutat de Barcelona, Consell de Cent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CRO</td>
<td>Cartes Reials Originales</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LL. Cl.</td>
<td>Lletres Closes</td>
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<td>CCO</td>
<td>Cartes Comunes Originales</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ARV MR</td>
<td>Arxiu Reial de Valencia, Maestre Racional</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Title</td>
<td>Author</td>
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<td>--------------------------------------------</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Catalunya in the 15th Century
THE ARAGONÉS SUCCESSION

- BEATRICE
  - JUAN I of CASTILE
    - LEONOR
      - MANOLO of NAVARRE
        - BLANCA
          - PEDRO
  - LEONOR
    - ISABEL of CASTILE
      - FERNANDO II of ARAGON
        - CARLOS of NAVARRE
          - BLANCA
            - LEONOR
CHAPTER 1

ALTER NOS: THE PARADOX OF MARIA OF CASTILE

Queen María of Castile,¹ wife of Alfonso V "the Magnanimous," king of the Crown of Aragón (1416-58),² governed Catalunya from 1420 to 1423 and again from 1432 to 1453 while her husband was occupied with the conquest and governance of the kingdom of Naples.³ For twenty-six years she had control over the provincial governors, prelates and religious orders, the nobility, the

¹ María's designation, "of Castile," refers to the place of her birth, not the kingdom she ruled, and serves to distinguish her from her sister-in-law, also named Maria. María of Castile and her brother, Juan II of Castile (1406-54), children of Enrique III of Castile (1390-1406), married their Aragonese first-cousins Alfonso and María (Maria of Aragón), the children of Fernando I (1412-16). The two Marias were thus sisters-in-law twice over. Doña María de Castilla, 59-61.

² The medieval Crown of Aragón consisted of several distinct political entities gathered together under a single ruler. The crown originated in 1137 with the marriage of Petronila of Aragón and Ramón Berenguer IV, count of Barcelona. The rest of the crown realms were added by conquest: the kingdom of Mallorca and the Balearic islands between 1229 and 1235; Valencia, 1238; Sicily, 1282; and Sardinia, 1322. At various other times and with varying degrees of success, the Aragonese kings controlled Corsica and the duchy of Athens. To keep matters simple when referring to this federative polity, most scholars simply refer to the Crown of Aragón when discussing it as a whole and, when otherwise necessary, specify individual regional kingdoms or counties. Medieval Crown of Aragón, 27-31, 64-7, 87-9, 95-6, 93, 111.

³ Alfonso's reign is explored in detail in Kingdom of Naples and Alfonso the Magnanimous. For a concise survey of the reign, see Medieval Crown of Aragón, 140-47. The standard political survey of Catalan-Aragonese history by Ferran Soldevila is dated in its methods and approach, but still useful. Història de Catalunya, 3 volumes (Barcelona: Editorial Alpha, 1934); see pages 41-80 for Alfonso's reign.
army, the municipal government, and all other subjects regardless of legal status. She could grant constitutions and make laws in accordance with royal authority and could sign letters in her own hand according to her own conscience. She was empowered to carry out justice, both civil and criminal, and to name judges and delegates. Assisted by a royal council separate from the king's, she had full royal authority in Catalunya.

Such legitimately sanctioned political authority in the hands of a queen was remarkable in any age, but it is equally noteworthy that María governed Catalunya not as queen in her own right but rather as Lieutenant General (Lloctinent general). In the privilegios that named María as lieutenant, Alfonso clearly stated that her powers as lieutenant should be equivalent to his own as king, literally alter nos. She held the highest political office in the most important of Alfonso's Iberian realms and was second only to the king himself. For a medieval queen, this combination of exalted royal status plus official political appointment was not common and may not have existed outside the realms of the Crown of Aragón. It was not unusual for a queen to serve as lieutenant in the Crown of Aragón, where a unique contractual form of kingship and government had developed that relied heavily on delegated authority to rule the far-flung constituent territories. Over two centuries, seven queens

served as lieutenant, but the scope of María's authority and the
duration of her tenure were unprecedented. She was clearly more
than just a wife offering advice.

María was not the only queen, medieval or modern, to share
both in the royal dignity and in the royal duty to govern, but her
reign underscores the need to explore the variants and similarities of
queenship as office. Medieval queens had superb qualifications for
rulership—they were socially prominent, wealthy, often well-
educated, intimately connected by birth to the most powerful figures
in secular and ecclesiastical circles, exalted through coronation, and
endowed with royal regalia—yet they rarely ruled in their own
right. In the eyes of contemporary political theorists and jurists,
influenced by Aristotelian views on gender and the body and
scientific and medical writers who argued that God's likeness was
male and women were an imperfect likeness. Queens were expected
to be publicly pious and charitable, to bear many sons, and to excel

4 Jesús Lalinde Abadia, La institución virreinal en Cataluña
(1471-1716), (Barcelona: Instituto de Estudios Mediterráneos, 1964),
78-81.

6 See chapter three, following, for a discussion of Aragonese
queen-lieutenants.

7 There is no single study devoted to queenship comparable

8 Vern Bulllough, "Medieval Medical and Scientific Views on
Women," Viator 4 (1973): 485-501; Thomas Laqueur, Making Sex:
Body and Gender from the Greeks to Freud (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1990), chapters two and three; Londa
Schiebinger, The Mind Has No Sex? Women in the Origins of Modern
Science (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1989), chapters
six and seven.
at childrearing and education, but a good queen was not regarded as an active one. She could manage her personal affairs through intermediaries, administer her dower lands through crown officials, but all this was to be done without appearing to manage and administer. Her main public function was ceremonial participation in coronations, funerals, court festivities and celebrations. 9 There was tremendous resistance to the notion of direct rulership of a kingdom by a woman. The royal body was regarded in strictly masculine terms, medieval monarchy was the domain of men, at least in theory, and dynastic succession was limited to male sons. Ernst Kantorowicz argued that medieval monarchical theory closely associated the body of the king with Christ's body, and thus was an implicit male gendering of the royal body. He betrayed his own assumptions, and those of many historians, concerning the masculinity of rulership, however, when he relegated such an obviously powerful ruler as Elizabeth I of England to little more than a cameo performance in the

opening pages.10

Theory, however, often gave way to practical considerations. The reality, as María herself would agree, was that queenship as office had never been an either-or proposition. It spanned a wide spectrum of possibilities, even though many of these are not immediately apparent to the modern eye. Certain patterns may have predominated at certain times, but the lives of any two queens were more likely to be different than similar. A handful of queens ruled in their own right, many were actively involved in governance in some, albeit limited way, and all exerted considerable influence from a position within the domestic realm. At one extreme was the strict prohibition of a ruling queen in Valois France; at the other end was the less restrictive environment of the Christian kingdoms of Jerusalem, Denmark, and certain Spanish kingdoms that permitted a queen to rule in her own right.11 Between these extremes lay an indeterminate middle ground filled with options—regent, queen-dowager, queen-mother, unofficial co-ruler, and lieutenant.

The lieutenancy of María of Castile typifies the inherent contradictions of queenship, both as it was practiced and as we


perceive it. Nowhere is this paradox more vividly portrayed than in
the painting of María as queen, illustrated on page i. This painting
shows María presiding over the Consell de Cent, the town council of
Barcelona, while Catalan jurist and scholar Jaume Marquilles formally
presents to them his commentaries on the Usatges, the fundamental
law code of Barcelona.\footnote{Jaume Marquilles's commentaries were part of a juridical
tradition that viewed the Usatges as the fundamental law of Catalunya. The Usatges of
Barcelona: The Fundamental Law of Catalonia, translated, with an introduction and notes, by Donald J.
Kagay (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1994), 52.}

This portrait, executed by Bernat Martorell, a prominent
Catalan artist who worked in what is often termed the International
Style,\footnote{Martorell was active in Barcelona from roughly 1427 until
his death in 1452. In addition to his work in manuscript illumination,
he is well-known for his altar panels (retaules), including Sant Jordi
i la Princessa, commissioned in 1435 by the Diputació del General for
their headquarters at the Palau de la Generalitat (now in the
collection of the Chicago Art Institute); the Retaule de la
Transfiguració (ca. 1445) in the cathedral of Barcelona; and the
Retaule de Sant Pere (ca. 1437-44) in the cathedral of Girona. On
Martorell's work in general, see Mary Faith Mitchell Grizzard,
Bernardo Martorell, Fifteenth-century Catalan artist (New York:
Garland Press, 1985) and Juan Ainaud de Lasarte, La pintura
catalana: de l'esplendor del Gòtic al Barroc (Geneva: Skira;
Barcelona: Carrogio, 1990), 78-83. On Martorell's retaule paintings,
see Judith Berg Sobré, Behind the Altar Table: The Development of
the Painted Retaule in Spain, 1350-1500 (Columbia: University of
Missouri Press, 1989), 288-97; Augustí Durán i Sanpere, Barcelona i
la seva història, 3 volumes. (Barcelona: Editorial Curial, 1972-75),
3: 65-134.} is a frontispiece miniature contained in the very book
Marquilles is presenting to the consellers. The setting is most likely
the outdoor patio (llotja) of the Trentenari, a hall in Barcelona often
used for formal celebrations. Seated on a throne, wearing a crown
atop a turban, and holding the sword of justice, María is elevated
and set apart from the consellers and members of the clergy.
Directly on her right, dressed in their official red robes and seated on a gold bench, are the five principal consellers, Bernat Sapila, Pere Romeu, Pere Serra, Berenguer Llull, and Felip de Ferrera. Marquilles himself is shown presenting the book to Ferrera, while on María's left are two unidentified representatives of the remaining members of the council.

This is an extraordinary image, not in terms of style or artistic technique, both of which are conventional, but as a striking deviation from typical painted representations of medieval queens. There is not one traditional queenship attribute present: no portrayal of her as wife and mother; no member of the royal family—neither child nor heir nor father—is present; there is no Marian iconography; and there are no biblical references so commonly seen in portraits of queens.

Cultural historian Augustí Duran i Sanpere argued that this painting may be as accurate a representation of María of Castile as we are likely to have. The art historian Mary Mitchell Grizzard has described this image of María as "not idealized . . . her face bears an overall expression of gentleness and dignity. It is a possible

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14 This was not an isolated occurrence. A similar ceremonial event on 20 July 1451 was reported by the Consell de Cent. Llibre de les solemnitats de Barcelona. Volume 1: 1424-1546, edited by Agustí Duran i Sanpere and Josep Sanabre (Barcelona: Institució Patxot, 1930) 1: 189-90; Durán i Sanpere, Barcelona i la seva història, 1: 107.

15 For an art historical discussion of this image, see Grizzard, Bernardo Martorell, 215-220; Durán i Sanpere, Barcelona i la seva història, 3: 101-109.

16 "Reportage gràfic d'una ceremònia oficial . . . no sembla una representació arbitràri, sino real i històricament autèntica." Durán i Sanpere, Barcelona i la seva història, 3: 104, 107, 109.
portrait; if so, it is the only one of María in existence, in contrast to so many of her husband."¹⁷ This image is not just a portrait, it is a truthful depiction of her in possession of political authority.

The iconography resembles that found on women's seals. Brigitte Bedos Rezak has noted that French aristocratic women who used seals borrowed directly from traditional male iconography—enthroned, wearing crowns and holding a scepter, surrounded by the royal arms—as a way of reinforcing their relation to power.¹⁸ There is one important difference: Whereas images on seals are commissioned by the owner of the seal and are therefore self-referential, this painting was commissioned by the Consell de Cent, who presumably approved of the image and may well have dictated precisely what they wanted the painting to depict.¹⁹ The painting

¹⁷ Grizzard is mistaken in her belief that this image is the only one extant. There is one other image of the queen, a miniature from a book of privileges of a Catalan confraternity; the artist of this image probably borrowed heavily from Martorell. Grizzard, Bernardo Martorell, 216.


¹⁹ Like many other urban elites in the late Middle Ages and Renaissance, the members of the Consell de Cent were active patrons of the arts and used that art to glorify civic life and ennoble themselves at the same time. For instance, in 1443 the Consell de Cent commissioned Lluis Dalmau to paint a retaule for the chapel in the Casa de la Ciutat. In the contract for the commission, the consellers gave detailed instructions on how they wanted Dalmau to depict them. He followed their instructions, and his work, the Retaule de la Virgen dels Consellers, shows three prominent consellers—Johan Lull, Francesch Lobet, and Johan de Junyent—just as they wished, dressed in vermilion robes and cloaks with collars and robes bordered in fur, standing at the feet of the Virgin. See Sobrè, Behind the Altar Table, 288-97; Durán i Sanpere, Barcelona i la seva història, 1: 305-308.
reveals not how she perceived herself, but rather how the public saw her, or how Martorell thought María viewed herself. Whether Martorell was or was not aware of the use of such imagery on seals, his purpose here was to emphasize María as active participant in Catalan government. Furthermore, formal images of this type tend to focus on the importance of the patron's personal interest in the particular books. Queens often appear in the dedication portraits of books of hours, missals, or secular literature, but very rarely, if ever, in paintings that illustrate compilations of law codes.20

Martorell depicted María as a lawgiver and a ruler with attributes traditionally associated with kings not queens. She is alone on the throne, not associated in any way with the king. Her legitimate authority is clearly symbolized by her crown and, most importantly, the sword of justice, an attribute normally reserved exclusively to the king. This ceremonial painting is firmly in the tradition of hundreds of similar portraits of rulers—emperors, princes, kings, popes, and nobles—but not queens—as lawgivers.21

As Marvin Lunenfeld notes, "Majesty was best represented by popes, emperors and kings, especially when seated upon thrones. Queens are nowhere considered." Even though women were traditionally

20 See, for example, the discussion of portrait iconography of kings as lawgivers, see Kantorowicz, The King's Two Bodies, 76; Janet Blackhouse, The Illuminated Manuscript (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979), 70, 96, 109; Claire Richter Sherman, The Portraits of Charles V of France (1338-1380) (New York: New York University Press, 1969), especially chapter 2, "Dedication Portraits"; and James Snyder, Northern Renaissance Art: Painting, Sculpture, the Graphic Arts from 1350 to 1575 (New York: Abrams, 1985), 47.

depicted in the passive role of the muse of justice in allegorical portraits of good government, they are almost never portrayed as active agents of law and government. Here, however, Martorell has emphasized María as a lawgiver and a judge by placing Pere Serra, the conseller seated in the middle of the group of five, at the center of the composition and highlighting his extraordinary gesture: Serra is shown pushing aside the law codes—physically rejecting them—and pointing instead to María as the real source of law and the arbiter of justice.

In the painting as in real life, María has taken the place of her husband and has literally become his alter ego. The composition and iconography would be exactly the same if it were a painting of Alfonso instead of María. Rich with the images of governance and leadership and the administration of justice, not usually associated with medieval queens, the painting depicts the iconography of a king with the physical body of a queen. This is an extraordinary inversion of the culturally accepted version of the ruler as symbolic of the body politic. What is particularly striking is how undisturbed the consellers are: They take for granted that a queen has literally displaced a king. This seems to be, for everyone present, just another day at the office. From our perspective, however, this is an atypical event.

This painting raises issues and problems that touch on both the practical and theoretical aspects of queenship that are the subject of this study. In order to understand this image, it is

important to know just what constituted a day at the office for María, her advisers, and the barons, prelates, peasants, and townspeople who were subject to her authority. It is crucial to know not just what she did but to determine whether she was acting on her own initiative or simply carrying out Alfonso's orders.

To do this, I will examine queenship as office first, in general and then, in particular, by investigating the theoretical and practical options, as well as the limitations, of the lieutenancy of María of Castile. Her long reign as lieutenant during the mid-fifteenth century was a difficult and contentious—and especially well-documented—period in Catalan history. By concentrating on the reign of an individual queen, we can look carefully at the densely interconnected personal, cultural, social, economic, and political milieu that permitted rule by a woman. From such a case study we can gain a richer understanding of monarchical government as a whole which, in turn permits us a new way of looking at queenship as office.

I will demonstrate that María of Castile had, in many ways, an authority equivalent to that of her husband. She was exceptional but she was not the only medieval queen with a public political career. It is important, therefore, that a queen's ability to exercise public authority and political power not be dismissed as simply the context for her husband's reign, or an exception to the rule, or a separate issue altogether, peripheral to the study of monarchy as a whole. Kings and queens did not exist in isolation, nor should they be studied that way. Just as we study kingship side by side with, for example, an analysis of parliamentary assemblies, likewise
queenship as office should be considered an integral part of the interlocking institutional structure of monarchical government and, in some instances, a real political partnership.

The career of María of Castile, however, has implications that go beyond queenship, political theory, and monarchical government. A catastrophic civil war broke out in Catalunya four years after the deaths of both Alfonso and María in 1458. Ten years of violent strife tore apart the political, social, and economic fabric, leaving the once-powerful Mediterranean commercial and political power in a depressed state from which it would not recover until well into the modern era. Pierre Vilar opened the discussion of economic decline and saw its causes in the failure of key economic structures to maintain Catalunya's dominance in the Mediterranean.23 Vilar's thesis was affirmed by the extensive research into the economies of Christian Spain as a whole by Jaime Vicens Vives,24 and substantially reinforced and refined by the regional studies of Claude Carrère,25 and Carme Batlle i Gallart.26 These interpretations have recently been challenged by Mario del Treppo, who has observed a closer connection between political events and


26 Carme Batlle i Gallart, La crisis social y económica de Barcelona a mediados del siglo XV, 2 volumes (Barcelona: Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas, 1983).
economic trends, especially during Alfonso's reign. While the extent, duration, causes, and even the existence of this decline remain fiercely debated by economic and social historians, one factor universally noted by political historians is the problem of royal absenteeism, the fact that Alfonso spent over one-half of his reign in Italy.

Luis Suárez Fernández felt that Alfonso's lengthy personal absence from his Iberian realms was "truly fatal." To Thomas Bisson it was "disastrous." Both contend that the king's absence, coupled with his general neglect of peninsular affairs, led the independent-minded Catalans to take advantage of the situation by strengthening their own political power at the expense of the monarchy, which in turn led to the devastations of the civil war.

These same scholars admit, however, that Alfonso managed to keep a firm grip on Catalan government and that peace prevailed throughout his reign. Alan Ryder disagrees with both of them, noting that sufficient "administrative procedures were devised to cope with the problems . . . Spaniards demanded his presence from a sense of injured national pride and with an oligarchic hope of forcing concessions from him, not because all progress had ground to a halt


29 Medieval Crown of Aragon, 145.
These contradictory opinions raise several questions: Which was it? Anarchy or autocracy? Was it something else? Incipient civil war or orderly government? Long distance government was complicated by the fact that Alfonso's messages from Naples to Barcelona normally took from two to six weeks to arrive. If Alfonso was physically in Naples, who was minding the palace in Catalunya? Was it Juan of Navarre, Alfonso's notoriously difficult brother? A high-ranking cleric or noble?

Nominally the person in charge was María, which makes sense in light of the frontispiece miniature. But historians who study the medieval Crown of Aragón, steeped in kingship ideology that did not consider the possibility of rule by a woman, have presumed that María did little more than carry out Alfonso's direct orders. They have taken it for granted that Alfonso and his advisors continued to rule Catalunya from Naples. Ryder argues that Alfonso "closely supervised" María and wanted to approve the substance of her actions, which he felt were limited to approvals of staff appointments made by him and minor details at her court. Thomas Bisson credits María for her "political sagacity . . . patience and fidelity," but nonetheless he implies that Alfonso remained directly in charge of the government of Catalunya. Both Ryder and Bisson fail to

30 Kingdom of Naples, 431.
32 Kingdom of Naples, 229-35; Alfonso the Magnanimous, 358-92.
33 Medieval Crown of Aragon, 140.
recognize that someone had to be in Catalunya to make sure that the king's orders were being carried out, and their argument is based on the unfounded presupposition that María governed more in name than in fact. Not only is there no systematic study of Catalan government in the later Middle Ages, there is no study at all of how the office of lieutenant fitted into the existing bureaucracy. María may have been acting only on her husband's orders, and royal absenteeism may well have been an important factor in the onset of civil war and the decline of Catalunya, but to know these things for certain, we need much more information about the government in Catalunya during the 1440s and 1450s.

In order to address these issues, I had to contend with a number of historiographic hurdles. The first problem is one encountered by anyone studying queens: The chronicles, so useful when studying kings, are nearly worthless when trying to uncover the actions of a queen. Pere Tomich finished his rather brief narrative history of the Aragonese kings, *Histories e conquestes dels reys d'Aragó e comtes de Catalunya*, in 1438; in it he mentioned María only in passing reference as Alfonso's queen. 34 Gabriel Turell's *Recort* was published in 1476, and it, too, glosses over Alfonso's reign and María. 35 Geronimo Zurita, writing the *Anales de la Corona de Aragón* in the mid-sixteenth century, mentioned María


only five times: when she was married in 1415, convoked parliaments in 1435 and 1441, left for Castile in 1453, and when she died in 1458.\textsuperscript{36} Zurita's chronicle followed the king, and when Alfonso went to Italy, so did the narrative. He focussed on Alfonso's Italian government and discussed affairs in Aragón, Catalunya, Mallorca, and Valencia only when they touched on Italian politics or, as in the case of war with Castile, were too important to pass over. The best chronicles of Alfonso's reign were written by the Italian Renaissance humanists Antonio Beccadelli and Lorenzo Valla who naturally focussed on the king's exploits in Italy; María and government in the Iberian realms is seen only from afar.\textsuperscript{37}

The chronicler's neglect of both María as lieutenant and the peninsular realms was not corrected by later historians, so that at present there remains a distinct void in the historiography for the Crown of Aragón from roughly 1430 until 1458. This can be attributed in part to nationalist sympathies: Catalan historians have long considered Alfonso an Italian king with a Renaissance sensibility and have played down his role in Iberian politics while Italian

\textsuperscript{36} Geronimo Zurita, Anales de la Corona de Aragón, edited by Angel Canellas López, 8 volumes (Originally published, 1562-82; Zaragoza: 1967-77). On her marriage, see 5: 433-34; the parliament of 1435, 6: 102-105, 123-33 and 1441, 6: 246-50; her departure for Castile, 7: 63-68; and her death, 7: 206-207.

\textsuperscript{37} Lorenzo Valla accompanied Alfonso in Italy after 1435 as his unofficial secretary. His Gesta Ferdinandi regis Aragonum, edited by Ottavio Besomi (Padua: In aedibus Antenoreis, 1973; first published, 1445) was intended as an introduction to Alfonso's reign, but the storm of controversy that surrounded Valla and his quarrel with his master, the poet and orator Antonio Beccadelli, (Panormita), doomed the project. Beccadelli's De dictis et factis Alphonsi regis Aragonum et Neapolis (Pisa: Gregorius de Gentis, 1485) is the fullest account of Alfonso's military campaigns in Italy.
historians rarely concern themselves with his non-Italian activities. Ryder, in his biography of Alfonso, discusses Aragón, Catalunya, Valencia, and the Balearics in the 1440s in a single chapter entitled "Some Questions of Kingship." Bisson and Suárez Fernández have discussed the politics of the period in broad terms while Carrère and Batlle i Gallart are concerned principally with the social and economic conditions in Barcelona. There is, in fact, not a single monograph dedicated to political events or issues in Catalunya during María's lieutenancy. The decades before the outbreak of civil war—the lull before the storm—may seem less dramatic and compelling than the storm itself, but they are no less important.

Furthermore, lieutenancies and other related forms of delegated authority have received little or no scholarly treatment. The best, most detailed and analytical works discuss the lieutenancy but mainly see it as a precursor of the viceroy and in the context of Spanish imperial government in the Americas. The office was an important adjunct to the king's direct authority, yet it has aroused little scholarly attention. It was much like regencies and other temporary arrangements common to kingdoms with far-flung or diverse territorial holdings, for example, Angevin and Plantagenet England, and France during the reign of Philip Augustus (1180-1223)

38 Alfonso the Magnanimous, 306-57.
39 Alfonso the Magnanimous, 358-92.
and Charles V (1364–80). Like queenship, these alternatives to kingship have not been studied except as footnotes in a study of kingship.

Research on medieval queenship, by contrast, is more abundant but much of it suffers from assumptions that do not stand up to scrutiny. Until recently, few scholars have asked whether and to what extent queens could exercise legitimately sanctioned public authority in the political sphere, whether as queen in her own right or via other means. For example, were there official privileges or letters of appointment for queens-regent? Exactly what powers were stipulated? Was the queen a figurehead or could she govern in fact? Was there a specific time limit to the arrangement? In the case of María of Castile, these questions can be addressed because ample documentation from her lieutenancy has survived. Her career can serve as one example of how the political role a queen played in the public arena constituted a political partnership with her father, husband, or sons.

Furthermore, many scholars adhered to the conventional wisdom that, except for extremely rare and infamous cases, queens did not rule in their own right, were regents only under certain circumstances, or that as regent, the queen was dominated by a noble, cleric, or male relative. It was widely recognized that

41 The political authority of queens and the historiography of queenship as office are discussed at length in chapter two, following.

queens could wield considerable political influence as unofficial advisors to their fathers, husbands, or sons, but such queens were dismissed as irrelevant because they did not have an official place in the institutional structure of government.\footnote{For a summary, see Huneycutt, "Medieval Queenship," 16-22.} Despite several well-known instances of queens who could easily be considered political partners—for example, Isabelle of France, wife of Edward II of England (1307-27),\footnote{Sophia Menache, "Isabelle of France, Queen of England: A Reconsideration," \textit{Journal of Medieval History} \textbf{10} (1984): 107-24.} and Blanche of Castile, co-ruler with her husband Louis VIII (1223-26) and regent for her son, Louis IX (1226-70) of France\footnote{Miriam Shadis, "Motherhood, Lineage, and Royal Power in Medieval Castile and France: Berenguela de León and Blanche de Castille," Ph.D. dissertation, Duke University, 1994, 9-12.}—not enough attention has been paid to these partnerships.

The situation is changing, however. The field of social history provided an especially important vehicle for women's history. Since the late 1960s, social historians of the Annales school, reliant on sociological methods, have brought to the fore their interest in the governed rather than the governors, the lowly rather than the elite.\footnote{For an example of an Annaliste viewpoint on women's history, see two works by George Duby: Medieval Marriage: Two Models from Twelfth-Century France, translated by Elborg Froe (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1978) and \textit{The Knight, the Lady, and the Priest: The Making of Modern Marriage in Medieval France}, translated by Barbara Bray (New York: Pantheon, 1983; originally published, 1981).} This shift in perspective on the part of the historian combined with the rise of feminism and the women's movement in the...
West. Feminist scholarship, predicated on the assumptions that women experienced life differently from men and that this difference is worth studying, has brought women's history in general into the mainstream of historical investigation. This shift, in turn, led historians to an investigation of issues of women and sovereignty, and especially, the political authority of medieval queens. So, the historiography has come full circle. We have returned to studying the elites and the governors, but with a difference: Now the object of analysis is a woman, not a man. Queenship studies comprise a large and rapidly-growing subset of both political history and women's studies, and current interpretations owe a debt to their theoretical forebears. Although much of this work has focused on a queen's ceremonial, dynastic, familial, social, and cultural importance, more and more scholars are addressing the thornier aspects of queenship as office, which specifically addresses the political agency of queens. This body of newer work, which will be discussed at length in chapter two, demonstrates both the strengths and the weaknesses of using social history as a model to understand

queenship. In short, the problem with this approach is that although queens certainly shared a great number of experiences with women of other social and legal ranks, they were different in ways that make social history models unsatisfactory. Social history and historical anthropology are better suited to an analysis of groups and social contexts, but, as the case of María of Castile demonstrates, queens, as a group, defy such methods and interpretations.

A more fruitful approach, which I have adopted here, is to look at the political culture and political theory as determinants of the character and practice of queenship as office. Because the possession and exercise of legal authority to govern defines queenship as office, once a queen has been situated within the context of rulership that is specific in both time and place, her actions and influence are more easily understood. Such an approach does not neglect the importance of patriarchal institutions, gender bias, and the myriad of factors influencing female rulership; rather, it corrects an imbalance by adding the necessary political theory to the mix. Still, such an approach does not guarantee a simple resolution of the contradictions of queenship as office. Queenship as office constitutes a separate category, both in terms of traditional

interpretations of both women's history and political history. It resists simple definition, requires careful attention to context and actual practice, and is part of a constant dialectic with kingship, its natural counterpart. From the vantage point of this wider context, the subtleties and nuances of both kingship and queenship are more apparent. Facile assumptions are exposed: Just because kings ruled does not automatically mean that queens did not. Still, de jure authority does not necessarily mean that a queen was able to exercise de facto power, and it is worth remembering that not all kings were able to exercise full de facto power despite their legal right to do so. Personality and circumstance were powerful determinants of any reign and must always be taken into consideration. So, when assessing the political agency of queens, it is important to know not just what she did but to determine whether she was acting on her own initiative or carrying out the orders of her father, husband, or son. The distinction between the possession and the exercise of authority is central to my study, but these issues are simplified here. Because María's theoretical authority was clearly stipulated, I am able to focus on what she actually did do and what factors, if any, stood in her way.

Little is known of María's early life except for the bare outlines. She was born in Segovia in 1401, the daughter of Enrique III of Castile (1390-1406) and Catalina de Lancaster, thus making her a granddaughter of John of Gaunt, duke of Lancaster.49 When

49 It is tempting to consider the extent of any influence the Lancastrian legacy may have had in forming María's own sense of the role a queen could play in politics, but the dearth of studies on Catalina make this purely speculative.
Enrique died in 1406, Catalina and her brother, Fernando de Antequera, shared the regency for her son, Juan, until Fernando became king of the crown of Aragón in 1416. She was sole regent until Juan reached his majority in 1418 and played a role in efforts to depose Benedict XIII at the Council of Constance. María was able to observe firsthand a queen as regent whose actions in the political realm must have influenced the young princess's own notions of the duties, responsibilities, rights, and prerogatives of a queen.

On 15 June 1415, in Valencia, she married her first cousin, Alfonso, son of Fernando of Antequera, the first Trastámara king of the Crown of Aragón (1412-16). A papal dispensation for their marriage was granted by Pope Benedict XIII; her dowry was the marquisate of Villena, and the towns of Aranda and Portillo, which was converted to a cash payment of 200,000 dobles d'or. Their marriage created a political partnership but little else. What moments of personal happiness they may have had together occurred early in the marriage. María's health was fragile, perhaps due to epilepsy, while a bout of smallpox in 1423 left her permanently scarred. Most

50 History of Medieval Spain, 534, 541, 546, 550.
51 Doña María de Castilla, 30-42, 57-59.
52 ACA Cancillería, Pecuniae 2412, 120r-v; Soldevila, Històia de Catalunya, 49-50.
53 Doña María de Castilla, 61-72; Giménez-Soler, "Retrato histórico de la reina doña María," 221. The dowry was not finally paid until well after 1420.
54 Doña María de Castilla, 35; Soldevila, "La reyna María, muller del Magnánim," 235-61; Giménez-Soler, "Retrato histórico de la reina doña María," 71-81.
importantly, she bore Alfonso no children. Alfonso, on the other hand, was an active, athletic man who loved hunting and made no attempt to conceal his many extramarital adventures.\(^{55}\) Whatever the cause of their childlessness—María's ill health or even sterility, or Alfonso's lengthy absences—the fact that there was neither son nor daughter to inherit profoundly affected the course of their marriage and, above all, the reign.

The cracks in their personal relationship may explain María's occasional odd behavior. For example, in October 1424 she summoned the city councillors of Barcelona to tell them that she had news that Alfonso's mother, Leonor, had died, and instructed them to convey this information to Alfonso.\(^{56}\) The king, who was extremely close to his mother, ordered his household into mourning and began funeral preparations, only to learn that the information was false. It is unclear whether María made up the story, or spread a false rumor, either willingly or unwillingly. Ryder attributes María's actions to "exasperation, perhaps malice," and notes that the revelation that Alfonso had a new mistress may have prompted the queen to inflict pain on her husband. Indeed, in June 1425, Gueraldona Carlina Reverdit, the wife of a high-ranking Barcelona citizen, bore the king his only son, Ferran, who most probably was conceived around the time María spread the false story of her mother-in-law's death.\(^{57}\)

\(^{55}\) *Alfonso the Magnanimous*, 123–24, 184, 358–60.

\(^{56}\) *Llibre de les solemnitats de Barcelona*, edited by Agustí Duran i Sanpere and Josep Sanabre, 2 volumes. Volume 1: 1424–1546 (Barcelona: Institució Patxot, 1930), 1: 30.

\(^{57}\) *Alfonso the Magnanimous*, 123–24.
Other rumors surrounded their marriage. One particularly vivid story, often repeated but never substantiated, has María personally strangling one pregnant mistress, Margarita de Hijar, in her bed with her own embroidered belt. Some accounts say she was smothered, not strangled; some say Hijar was a high-ranking lady-in-waiting at María's court, others say she was a prostitute. 58 Soldevila does not believe that Alfonso ever had an affair with Hijar. On the basis of María's careful, prudent, and circumspect life in later decades, I am inclined to agree with Ryder, who says that "of neither Alfonso nor María does this tale ring true." 59 True or false, the existence of such rumors reflected the general opinion of the court and household that the royal marriage was not a happy one. This is borne out by the births, around 1430, of two more illegitimate children, his daughters María and Leonor on whom Alfonso lavished money, affection, and attention. All three children eventually lived with him in Italy. Ferran would later be granted the duchy of Calabria and both daughters married influential Italian princes. 60 As an indication of his feelings toward María, Alfonso left Spain shortly after Hijar's death in 1430 and never returned. For the next twenty-eight years their marriage was consumed with

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58 For a roughly contemporaneous report, see Geronimo Zurita, Anales de la Corona de Aragón [1578-85], edited by Angel Canellas López, 9 volumes (Zaragoza: Institución Fernando el Católico, 1967-85), 6: 133.

59 Alfonso the Magnanimous, 184. Soldevila, "La reyna María, muller del Magnánim," 243-44.

60 For Ferran (known to the Italians as Ferdinando), see Alfonso the Magnanimous, 221, 230-31, 239-40, 268, 350-57, 304-11, 400-30; for María and Leonor, Alfonso the Magnanimous, 184, 268, 274, 309, 421.
governance not sentiment.

It is not surprising, then, that María never joined Alfonso in Italy. His goals in 1420 were strictly military, he was confident that his Italian campaigns would be brief, and he planned to return shortly. By 1432, when it became apparent that he had to stay much longer to pacify and govern Naples, he recognized that his wife's sense of duty to the crown could be put to use in Spain while he was in Italy. Whatever his personal feelings may have been, he trusted María to take his place at the head of the government of the principality of Catalunya, the kingdom of Mallorca, and various at times, the kingdoms of Aragón and Valencia. Although Castilian was her native tongue, she was conversant in Latin and quickly acquired fluency in Catalan. All her later correspondence with her subjects was conducted in Catalan, the official language of government. She possessed, in the words of one of her contemporaries, "good sense and virtue, was very honest throughout her life, fearing God and loving justice and administering it." No matter how formulaic such official comments may sound to modern ears, the fact remains that few medieval queens were noted for their

61 Giménez-Soler, "Retrato histórico de la reina doña María," 71-81; Soldevila, "La reyna María, muller del Magnànim" 235-39; Los Trastámaras, 374-75.

62 See chapter three, following, for a more detailed discussion of her tenure as lieutenant.

63 "La qual dita reyna fonch dotada de perfeccio, de seny e de virtut, molt honesta tot lo temps de la sua vida, tement Deu e amat justicia e minister aquella," in Dietari del capella d'Alfons V el Magnanim, edited by Maria Desamparados Cabanes Pecourt (Zaragoza: Textos Medievales de la Universidad de Zaragoza, 1991), 57.
administration of justice or governmental skills. She supervised local and regional authorities, routinely presided over convocations of the parliamentary assemblies, and her court was the highest court of justice in Catalunya.

Although María's contemporaries recognized her abilities, she soon disappeared from historical accounts. The first modern research, by Andrés Giménez-Soler, was a brief, almost hagiographical study, typical of late nineteenth-century romantic Spanish impulse to find examples of "valores madres," or valiant women ancestors. Its greatest value is the use of unpublished material contained in the Aragonese royal archives (Arxiu de la Corona d'Aragó).64 Ferran Soldevila, who relied on chronicles and Giménez-Soler's research, looked in greater detail at María's role in contemporary politics than Giménez-Soler, but he was primarily interested in her intellectual and cultural contributions to medieval Catalan culture.65 Francisca Hernández-León de Sánchez relied heavily on previously untapped resources of the royal Valencian archives (Arxiu Reial de Valencia) but, regrettably, failed to include transcriptions or translations of documents.66 Hernández-León de Sánchez admitted that she was more interested in her character than her role in government and she was true to her word. She spent less than one-fifth of her monograph discussing María's twenty-six

64 Giménez-Soler, "Retrato histórico de la reina doña María," 71-81.

65 Soldevila, "La reyna María," 213-345.

66 On the Valencian archives, see Doña María de Castilla, 10-21.
years as lieutenant, while devoting the remainder to María's physical appearance, her personal possessions, and her patronage. Like that of her predecessors, Hernández-León de Sánchez's work is long on details of her court and pious donations to convents but short on a discussion of her official role in governance.67

The present study is the opposite: It is long on governance and short on culture and ceremony. My purpose is threefold: to determine what she theoretically could do, to describe what she actually did do, and to assess the extent to which she took action on her own initiative rather than on Alfonso's orders. Although I look at all twenty-six years of her reign, for a number of reasons I will concentrate primarily on a period late in her lieutenancy. First of all, conditions in Naples and Spain were chaotic until the early 1440s and government in Barcelona and Naples during the years between 1432 and 1447 can best be described as ad hoc.68 Alfonso was preoccupied with military campaigns both in Spain and in Italy and in trying to raise money to pay for them. The king, his brothers, and many of his nobles were captured by the Genoese in 1435 at the

67 María was, like most queens, an important patron of religious foundations. With Alfonso, she supported the construction of a hospital and chapel of Sant Antoni in Barcelona in 1430. She took a special personal interest in the Jeronimate order. Her confessor was the prior of the monastery of Sant Jeroni de la Vall d'Hebron, and she sponsored the construction of the cloister. The queen was a frequent guest at the monastery during the heat of summer. In Valencia, she supported the monastery of Santa Clara in Gandia, among others. Durán i Sanpere, Barcelona i la seva història, 1: 201, 700; Doña María de Castilla, 47-53. She was influential in obtaining Alfonso's support for the movement for stricter observance of the Franciscan rule. Alfonso the Magnanimous, 312.

68 Alfonso the Magnanimous, 360-69. Government in Catalunya is described in greater detail in chapter four, following.
battle of Ponza; and on several occasions he had to intervene to prevent open warfare between his brothers and his brother-in-law, the king of Castile.\footnote{Alfonso the Magnanimous, 116–74; Soldevila, Història de Catalunya, 2: 46–47, 50–56, 81–82.} It took Alfonso nearly a decade to organize his long-distance government and get it up to speed. By the mid-1440s, however, those crises had passed. Alfonso had established a royal court in Naples and it was soon apparent to him that he needed to systematize his long-distance government.\footnote{Kingdom of Naples, 32–53.} He instituted a wide-ranging series of reforms that facilitated governance from afar and strengthened the office of the lieutenant. By the late 1440s and early 1450s Alfonso and María had worked out most of the kinks in their working relationship, so that I could see the day-to-day rhythms and patterns of government and get a sense of their working relationship when it had reached its institutional maturity.

My research into the details of her lieutenancy and how it fit into existing Catalan government was both aided and complicated by the vast resources contained in the three archives I consulted. The Arxiu de la Corona d’Aragó (ACA) in Barcelona is the principal repository of the documentary collection for the both the Crown of Aragón and royal government in medieval Catalunya. The Arxiu Històric de la Ciutat de Barcelona (AHCB) houses the official records of municipal government in Barcelona. The Arxiu Reial de Valencia (ARV), like the ACA, contains the records of royal government that pertain specifically to the kingdom of Valencia. These collections consist of hundreds of registers that contain thousands of documents.
issued during María's lieutenancy. The bulk of the documentation consists of letters between María and Alfonso and their royal officials, legal briefs, petitions, judicial sentences, grants, and instructions to advisors, from which can be constructed an almost complete circle of correspondence. Most historians of medieval Europe must be content with fragmentary evidence, often in poor condition, so it seems ungrateful to complain (even though it was a formidable mountain of paper and parchment). Almost none of this material, which provides a vivid chronicle of the events, has been published.

In the Arxiu de la Corona d'Aragó, I consulted two sections, the Chancery (Cancillería) and Generalitat registers. Of the 332 chancery registers for her reign, the most important documents are found in the Secretorum registers, six in number, each concerned with a specific topic. They contain letters close, issued under María's secret seal, sent to the magnates, high-ranking prelates, leading townspeople, other members of royal houses, and Alfonso. Of particular significance are the numerous instrucciones or memorials, itemized lists of instructions to royal officials in Catalunya or to the queen's messengers to present personally to Alfonso in Naples. These permitted me to look closely at how decisions were made and who made them. The bulk of the letters sent by María to Alfonso, her royal advisers and officials, members of town councils, and prelates appear in fifty-five Curiae registers. Comune registers, the largest (165 registers) and most complete chronological series, contain the judicial records issued by the queen in her royal

71 This type of archival organization is typical of the ACA records from the later Middle Ages.
Audiència, or court of justice. An official listing of appointments, grants, sentences, safe-conduct letters, and other routine official business can be found in forty-seven Diversorum registers.

Alfonso's side of the correspondence is located in the ACA Cancilleria registers that include material from Alfonso's chancery in Naples. The king's registers that pertained to Catalunya were moved from Naples to the Arxiu de la Corona d'Aragó in Barcelona shortly after his death in 1458, and have been organized to conform to ACA practices. The principal sources used in this study were found in the Secretorum, Varia, and Curiae registers, which contained his official correspondence sent to María, their royal officials, nobles and prelates in Catalunya.\(^{72}\) Taken as a whole, the royal registers in the ACA alone that document the years 1416 to 1458 number nearly nine-hundred volumes.

A third perspective on contemporary events can be gathered from the Generalitat registers. These contain the letters sent by the Diputació del General, a powerful watchdog committee of the Corts whose primary duty was to guard traditional privileges against royal actions that posed a threat to the Corts, the Catalan parliamentary assembly. The three-member executive board of the Diputació del General met regularly when the Corts was not in session. Their letters fill seven registers from 1446 to 1452 and provide a valuable first-hand glimpse at the attitudes and intentions of the prominent nobles and prelates who worked with, and frequently against, María.

\(^{72}\) The remainder of Alfonso's records, largely pertinent to Italy, are kept in the Archivio di Stato in Naples, but the bulk of the collection was destroyed either during civil unrest in 1647 or by the German army in 1943.
in governing Catalunya.

And, for the sentiments of the fourth group of people involved in government, I turned to the Arxiu Històric de la Ciutat de Barcelona. In the AHCB I worked principally with three sections: the Cartes Reials Originals, Lletres Closes, and Cartes Comunes Originales. The Cartes Reials Originals are a collection of 407 original, mostly unpublished and unedited autograph letters sent to the executive committee of the Consell de Cent of Barcelona, from Alfonso, Maria, and members of other royal families. The Lletres Closes are registers of letters sent from the town council to various individuals—Alfonso, María, nobles, burgesses, crown officials, municipal and provincial administrative officials, prelates and members of religious orders—as well as to other town councils or representative bodies such as the Corts or the Diputació. Lastly, the Cartes Comunes Originales are original autograph letters sent from various persons and governmental bodies to the town council of Barcelona.

Of the three archives, the Arxiu Reial de Valencia, the main source for Hernández-León de Sánchez's work, has, naturally, the fewest sources concerning Catalunya. It contains the records from María's lieutenancy in Valencia, which she governed at various times during the 1430s. It does, however, contain the original royal grants that specified María's powers as Lieutenant General in the Mestre Racional (financial office) section.

Although printed primary sources for this period are few in number, two collections in particular were indispensable to this study. The official documentation of the proceedings of the
parliamentary assemblies, the Corts of Catalunya, was edited in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century in a twenty-three volume collection known as the Cortes de los antiguos reinos de Aragón y de Valencia y principado de Cataluña. This material, which includes not only the petitions, proceedings, and official acts of the Corts but also letters from Alfonso, María, and other participants, forms the core of chapter five, the discussion of María's dealings with the Corts.73 Because the bulk of my archival research focussed on the years 1447-53, I relied on José María Madurell Marimon's edition of 544 letters documenting relations between the Consell de Cent of Barcelona and Alfonso between 1435 and 1458.74 The collection is a bit of a mixed bag, with letters of credential, notices of official appointment of several notaries in Barcelona, news of battles in Italy, reports of diplomatic missions interspersed with petitions to Alfonso, reports of meetings with the king, descriptions of court festivities, and highly personal opinions of current events. Unlike the records of the Corts, it is by no means a comprehensive study of a particular theme or event. The collection focuses on the issues and concerns of the ruling elite of Barcelona, and therefore emphasizes urban government and commerce, but because what touched Barcelona often touched the realm as a whole, this collection provided valuable material for the period outside the scope of my


74 Mensajeros Barceloneses en la Corte de Napoles de Alfonso V de Aragón, 1435-1458 (Barcelona: Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas, 1963).
archival material.  

By integrating all of this material I have been able to construct a narrative outline for María's governance and look carefully at the debates and discussions among the king, the queen and the high-ranking nobles, clerics, and urban elites who had political authority in Catalunya. The letters, although often couched in dense official rhetoric, are vivid and sometimes personal statements that convey far more than just the bare facts—they are daily testaments to the seriousness of the growing crisis in the towns and the countryside. The letters between Alfonso and María are especially important because they expose their will and temperament in ways rarely seen in official correspondence and permit a careful analysis of their working relationship.

This documentation provides ample evidence for the wide scope and long duration of María's official authority. Her de jure authority was specified in several privilegios and later modifications issued by Alfonso between 1420 and 1445. These documents alone indicate that María was no ordinary Lieutenant General. Like most other queens, she had a close circle of secular and ecclesiastical advisors, but in addition to her ordinary powers, María had something her predecessors did not: She maintained a royal court and council separate from and roughly equivalent to Alfonso's court in Naples. Unlike prior lieutenants and queen-lieutenants, her

75 Another pertinent source collection is the compilation of laws known as the Constitucions e altres drets de Catalunya, 3 volumes (Barcelona: 1588, 1704; facsimile edition, Barcelona: Romargraf, 1973).

76 See chapter four, following, for a description her court.
royal council paralleled the structure of Alfonso's in Naples—minus the military—complete with chancery, secretaries, and seals; household officials; a judicial tribunal, and high-ranking financial officers. Her royal council reinforced her status and political authority and facilitated her dealings with the royal, regional, comital, episcopal, and municipal officials of Catalunya.

Her actual exercise of power is demonstrated in two ways—first, by her convocation of the Corts of Catalunya and second, by her handling of one of the most contentious and difficult issues—one of the root causes of the civil war—the debate over royal attempts to grant manumission to the remenca peasants.

She regularly convoked the Corts of Catalunya, the regional parliamentary assembly, despite Catalan law that dictated that the king himself must personally convocate and preside over the annual session to confirm the constitutions, privileges, and any legislation enacted by the Corts, and in the face of opposition by the Diputació del General.77 Alfonso's delegation of this authority over the Corts for so long to his wife had important ramifications not only for the office itself, which would later reappear in the form of the viceroys of the Americas, but also for María's ability to carry out her other duties as lieutenant under even the most difficult circumstances.

Her political skills were put to the test during the prolonged negotiations concerning the remenca peasants.78 The remences were tied to the land in an archaic quasi-feudal agrarian system and had

77 Soldevila, Història de Catalunya, 2: 54-55, 65, 69.
78 Alfonso the Magnanimous, 388-91; Soldevila, Història de Catalunya, 76-77.
been agitating for their freedom for decades, but their efforts were opposed by extremely strong nobles and the wealthy urban landlords who controlled the town council of Barcelona. The manumission of the remences was not an issue that the queen took lightly. She strongly supported the efforts of the remences and did not hesitate to say so. She met personally with the delegated representatives (sindichs) of the remences, forcefully implemented the royal decrees in favor of remença manumission, and punished any lord—secular or ecclesiastical—who impeded her work. Nobles and landlords strenuously resisted royal authority and were especially hostile to María's attempts to resolve the matter. The crisis polarized Catalan society, dominated political discourse, and nearly halted government at times as it dragged on from 1447 to 1453. Through it all, María recognized Alfonso's authority as superior to hers and carried out his orders until the summer of 1453 when, frustrated by his decision to revoke the remença decrees, she resigned her post and went to Castile to negotiate a peace treaty between her brother and her husband.

Her handling of this controversial question—indeed, the fact that she handled it at all—testifies to the existence of a strong governing partnership between Alfonso and María. Moreover, it reveals a great deal about women and the exercise of political power in the Middle Ages. One could argue that María was a special case, but when we place her within the tradition of queens-lieutenant in the Crown of Aragón, she was less an exception and more the rule.
CHAPTER 2

DAUGHTERS, WIVES, MOTHERS, RULERS: QUEENSHIP AND MONARCHY IN MEDIEVAL EUROPE

In that most public of places, the governance of the realm, María of Castile's influence was apparent to her contemporaries, but to the modern eye she is unfamiliar, an obscure figure. She is not alone in obscurity: Surprisingly little is known about the majority of European queens in the pre-modern era. This neglect is due largely to the way scholars traditionally have written history—our ideological viewpoints, the sources we have used, and our analytical methods.¹ In recent decades, however, the profession has been transformed by social, economic, and cultural studies. Political history in particular has benefited especially from its interaction with gender studies, which has forced scholars to dismantle long-held assumptions about women and the exercise of political power.² The result is a new awareness of the ways in which structures and ideologies both influence and mask realities of power. Queenship studies, once considered peripheral to a serious study of monarchical government, are now being integrated into the fabric of medieval politics.


The virtual absence of queens from the official historical record of annals and chronicles has long been a stumbling block for anyone wanting to study queens. Although the actions of many queens rarely appear in official chronicles, battle accounts, annals, or in legal, judicial, or parliamentary records, they are often mentioned in accounts of public ceremonies and festivals, as benefactors of religious houses, and their intercessory role is well-known. Wills, inventories of personal possessions, domestic financial accounts, charters, legal documents, and letters are invaluable sources that can be augmented by works of art, architecture, and other evidence from material culture.

The interpretation of these sources poses problems of its own, however. Just as we should not presume that because kings ruled, queens did not, neither should we assume that a paper trail and de jure authority automatically meant that a queen exercised de

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facto authority. Some of the current work on queenship suffers because it fails to look beyond the existence of a document. For example, in an attempt to find any and all Hungarian queens whose names appear on official documentation, János Bak has done little more than compile a list of names, dates, and documents. He did not analyze, he implied and suggested, leaving us with little more than a tantalizing hors d'oeuvre. It is important to look very carefully at the trail of paper to discern precisely what a particular queen did. How do we know this? Did she have a personal seal? Did she use it? What documents did she execute or witness? Did a queen's signature as witness on a charter signify real authority in the creation of the document, or was it merely chancery formula? Was the king's approval or consent necessary to validate the queen's actions? Could she appoint the members of her household and curia, or did the king reserve that power for himself? Who were her advisors and what were their functions? Did she have a role in parliamentary assemblies? Did she have wide powers to deal with other rulers on matters of importance or were her actions confined to a local sphere?

The historiography pertaining to María of Castile exemplifies the host of issues involved in queenship research. Her life and work have been neglected due to bias and assumptions despite an abundance of archival material and her prominence in her own time. Because the bulk of modern scholarship is devoted to the non-governmental aspects of her life, we know more about her bouts of smallpox than her role in the peace treaties of 1430 and 1454 between

7 János Bak, "Roles and Functions of Queens in Arpádian and Angevin Hungary (100-1386 A.D.)," in Medieval Queenship, 13-24.
Castile and the Crown of Aragón; we know who her personal attendants were, but little is known of her chancery; and we know more about her husband's illegitimate children than how María governed the principality of Catalunya during Alfonso's lengthy absence. Writing in Valencia in the 1950s, Francisca Hernández-León de Sánchez admired María for her public role in government, but chose not to explore it. By excluding María's political actions from her biography, she implied that they were less important than an assessment of the queen's clothing and jewels.\(^8\)

Yet even a cursory look at extant documentation is enough to demonstrate that modern scholars overlooked the most interesting and important aspects of María's life and career. The lack of any analytical work on the period in general and María's career in particular have left open important and intriguing questions: Was María a purely local phenomenon? Was there something unique about Catalan society and culture? Was this a special moment in time? What was it about Catalan politics that permitted such wide-ranging power in the hands of a queen? Was Alfonso an exceptionally enlightened proto-feminist?

This chapter begins to answer those questions by locating her career in the context of the theory and practice of medieval queenship. Later chapters take up the more specific issues of Catalan institutions and governance, with an eye to placing her tenure as lieutenant firmly within the structure and practice of monarchical government in the fifteenth century.

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\(^8\) Doña María de Castilla, 8, 83-95, 98-128.
Historiographic Trends in Queenship Research

Until recently, most historical monographs on queens were little more than romanticized biographies—the "great woman" variant of the "great man" theme—of queens such as Eleanor of Aquitaine and Isabel of Castile. The principal focus of these books was on ceremony, motherhood, education, and comportment with little or no discussion of any political role a queen may have had. More attention was paid to a queen's effective use of feminine wiles than to her political acumen. These were undeniably powerful women, yet their actions were considered peripheral to serious study of the monarchy. Works on English and French queens predominated while their counterparts in the Holy Roman Empire, eastern Europe, Scandinavia, the Iberian peninsula, the Christian kingdoms of Jerusalem, and the Byzantine Empire were largely overlooked.

The origins of modern research into medieval queenship can be traced to an influential essay by Eileen Power published in the 1920s. Subsequent works proceeded from an interest in the general condition of medieval women's lives and an analysis of the

9 The list is long, but a representative sampling includes Christopher Hare, A Queen of Queens and the Making of Spain (New York: Scribners, 1906); Martin A. S. Hume, Queens of Old Spain (London: E. Grant Richardson, 1906); Amy Kelly, Eleanor of Aquitaine and the Four Kings (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1950); and Antonio Rodríguez Villa, La Reina doña Juana la Loca (Madrid: Murillo, 1892).

10 For example, in Renaissance Diplomacy (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1955), Garrett Mattingly looked closely at Fernando II of Aragón while all but ignoring his ruling partner, Isabel I.

theological, literary, and philosophical attitudes and prejudices that affected them. Since the 1960s, many historians, influenced by feminist theory that uses gender as a category of analysis, have focussed their discussion on the constraints imposed by the related but distinct forces of misogyny and patriarchal institutions. They rightly assert that long-held attitudes toward, and prejudices against, women shaped their legal and social status and influenced political institutions which over time took on a distinctly patriarchal character. When the woman in question was a queen—an aristocratic woman elevated in status, exalted through coronation, and set apart from the rest of society—the effects of these attitudes were manifested in very specific ways. Because women were seen as frivolous and unsuited to military pursuits, they were excluded from knighthood and denied access to officeholding. The prince was regarded as the defender of the realm, a lord in God's image, and


13 Scott "Gender: A Useful Category of Analysis," 1053.

thus he was considered the natural successor to his father. Widely perceived as a dangerous sexual rival, a woman was rarely considered a contender for the crown, and even less often regarded as capable to rule in her own right.15

A queen's prominence and proximity to the center of power made her a lightning rod for contemporary juridical attitudes toward gender and power which affected all women, regardless of rank or wealth. But to interpret the plight of women strictly as the product of patriarchy and misogyny blinds us to the diversity of life in the past.16 Sarah Hanley has shown how changes in French kingship ideology, namely the Salic Law, curtailed a queen's right to rule in her own right and this, in turn, had far-reaching legal and political consequences for non-royal women in France.17 But, she points out,


it was not at all unusual for women of middling and upper social ranks to skirt prohibitive laws and fashion a "counterfeit" culture that was quite different from what the jurists had in mind. An underlying gender-related ideological bias and the prevalence of patriarchal institutions impeded a woman's ability to act on her own behalf, but they do not necessarily provide a priori evidence that women in general or queens in particular were powerless. Recognizing the permeability of the structures of government is the first step to an understanding of how and why some queens were able to exercise a certain measure of political authority despite the presence of an ideology and an institution that dictated otherwise.

Although only a few queens actually ruled in their own right, many more were able to sidestep the institutions and ideology designed to block them. Some of these queens served unofficially—as queens-dowager, perhaps—and officially—as regents, or, in the Crown of Aragón, as lieutenants. They governed various realms at

18 Merry Wiesner has argued that law was permeable, and she described various strategies used by women in the late Middle Ages to get around restrictions. See her article, "Women's Defense of Their Public Role," in Women in the Middle Ages and Renaissance, edited by Mary Beth Rose (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 1986), 1-27.

various times, thus challenging any notion of chronological or geographic boundaries. Most often, when women overcame custom and tradition and were able to exercise substantial political authority, it was because the need to perpetuate a dynasty superseded even the most entrenched attitudes and prejudices. When this happened, political theorists found themselves in the awkward position of having to defend a woman's right to rule. In the *Policraticus*, for example, John of Salisbury wrote scathingly about woman's weakness and her inability to rule. Yet in his *Historia Pontificalis* he actively supported the Empress Matilda, legitimate heir to the crown of her father, Henry I (1100-35), in her struggle against her nephew Stephen for the crown of England. William of Malmesbury, the chronicler and staunch Angevin supporter, shared John of Salisbury's views. They both strongly opposed Stephen's usurpation and saw the case strictly as a dynastic and feudal


dispute. They defended Matilda based on her marriage and noble birth and never once mentioned that she should not rule simply because of her gender. Bernard of Clairvaux advised Queen Melisende of Jerusalem, after the death of her husband, Fulk of Anjou, to rule in her own right as a man would, despite her female failings, so that she would be judged as a king rather than as a queen. Like John of Salisbury and William of Malmesbury, Bernard accepted the fact that in a feudal aristocracy women could not be excluded from public life.22 Even though he saw rulership essentially in masculine terms, he supported an individual queen as ruler when circumstances dictated.

Not all chroniclers and jurists shared these sentiments wholeheartedly. In Castile, the chronicler of the reigns of Fernando IV (1295-1312) and Alfonso XI (1312-50) was very positive toward María de Molina, regent for both her son and grandson, respectively.23 Rodrigo Jiménez de Rada, the archbishop of Toledo, had high praise for Queen Berenguela, mother of Fernando III (1217-
52) and regent during his minority. De Rada admired Berenguela's diligence and prudence as she maintained order in Castile while faced with the threat of invasion by her ex-husband and civil war.24

For all of María's highly visible actions in government and politics, not to mention her involvement in the debates concerning the remenca peasants, it is noteworthy that, to my knowledge, there were no polemical tracts written against her. There were protests against certain aspects of her authority as Lieutenant General, but I have found no evidence of any harsh treatises denouncing her, either personally, or as a symbol of women rulers in general.25 This is a powerfully eloquent silence, reinforced by the calm and placid expressions of the members of the Consell de Cent in the frontispiece painting (see page i). The Catalans in the fifteenth century did not consider a queen-lieutenant who exercised legitimately sanctioned political authority extraordinary enough for any of her contemporaries to raise the rhetorical hue and cry.

In order to understand these contradictions, we must look beyond conventional definitions and explanations of a queen's power and authority. For example, some historians have drawn on recent sociological and cultural studies and are examining in terms of network theory. They have shown that for some women, informal pathways, especially those that tapped an aristocratic woman's


25 These protests were largely confined to her convocation of the parliamentary assemblies. See chapter five.
extensive personal and familial connections, could bring considerable power. 26 This line of inquiry has led these historians to investigate the ways that women, particularly queens, could wield political authority through administration of property, 27 family connections, 28 the education or guardianship of children, 29 and control of money. 30 Many queens were powerful patrons or wealthy heiresses, whose intelligence and opinions on political matters were of consequence.


27 Leonor of Castile, wife of Alfonso VIII of Castile (1158-1214), had the rights to the lordship and revenues of one-twelfth of Castile plus Alfonso's conquests from the Muslims. Vann, "Medieval Castilian Queenship," 133.


30 Eleanor of Provence, wife of Henry III of England (1216-72), was noted for exercising effective control over substantial territorial resources. As a young queen she was entirely dependent on the generosity of her husband, but her later territorial acquisitions were formidable. With land came lordship and the clout to appoint her own secretary, clerks, and treasury and justice officials. Margaret Howell, "The Resources of Eleanor of Provence as Queen Consort," English Historical Review 12 (1987): 372-93.
and whose role in the creation of an act or a charter could easily be obscured by the king's signature on it. The career of Eleanor of Aquitaine (ca. 1122-1204), successively queen of France and England, illustrates the importance of inherited or dower lands and wealth. Eleanor inherited the lands of her grandfather, Guillaume IX, count of Poitou and duke of Aquitaine. Her territories stretched from the Loire to the Pyrenees and were more extensive than those held directly by her first husband, Louis VII (1137-80) and added substantially to those of her second husband, Henry II (1154-89).31

The personal influence of Eleanor of Castile, wife of Edward I of England (1274-1307), was feared, so much so that contemporaries noted that "what touched the queen touched the king himself." Through her landholdings, she controlled a number of wardships; her acts were officially enrolled; she regularly consulted with the king's chief ministers; and her clerks had access to the chancery, exchequer, and courts of law.32

Sociological theories on networks, as interesting and provocative as they are with regard to certain aspects of queenship, simply do not apply across the board. These works shed light on


32 Eleanor derived much of her authority from her control of extensive landholdings, notably the county of Ponthieu, which she inherited from her mother. Parsons, Eleanor of Castile, 33-71, 86-112.
those queens who used indirect paths to power, but fail to explain those who did possess some form of official authority, nor do they carefully distinguish between political power and political authority, and between official and unofficial channels.\footnote{This distinction between formal and informal power is discussed by Mary Erler and Maryanne Kowaleski in their introduction to Women and Power in the Middle Ages, 1-17. See also Fradenburg, "Rethinking Queenship," 9-10.} This is not just the splitting of a very fine hair: The distinction between informal power and legitimate authority is central to a definition of queenship as office. Authority is, simply stated, constituted power.\footnote{Leonard Krieger, "The Idea of Authority in the West," American Historical Review 82:2 (1977): 249-70; Rosaldo and Lamphere, Women, Culture, and Society, 21, 99-100.} It is any capacity to secure obedience or conformity that is derived from a title to do so and follows a hierarchical chain of command. Queens who ruled in their own right possessed this authority, as did regents, and, in the case of María of Castile, royal lieutenants. Unofficial rulers, such as queens-dowager or queens with no title to rule, may have possessed power but not necessarily official authority. No matter how real or potent a queen's social and political influence, this power did not necessarily constitute formal legitimate authority to govern.

Cultural anthropologists such as Jack Goody, Pierre Bourdieu, and Marshall Sahlins have written widely on issues of sovereignty and their work has been tremendously influential among historians who study queenship as office. Goody has looked at the many variations of official authority that fell under the general rubric of monarchy: co-rulership (when the incumbent and successor...
hold the office simultaneously; for instance, Louis the Pious and Charlemagne), dual paramountcy (a doubling up of the supreme office; Fernando of Aragón and Isabel of Castile), corporate dynasties (duplication of the supreme office; the Merovingians and Carolingians), and stand-ins and stake-holders (temporary deputies, lieutenants, regents, protectors, and queens-dowager). Goody's work laid the theoretical groundwork for a broader, more inclusive, definition of the monarchy that gathered a range of options within the institutional structure itself. His study was brief, however, and more concerned with theory than practice. He touched lightly on the issue of women as rulers and did not address the factors that gave rise to the variations.

Taking a different tack than Goody, Pierre Bourdieu looked more closely at actual practice, as opposed to how legal and political institutions tell us how people were supposed to act. By emphasizing events instead of a process, specifically at how some individuals were able to overcome institutional impediments, his work challenged structuralist interpretations and what he saw as an overemphasis on the institutions and apparatus of government. He argued that sovereignty, whatever its form, can be best explained by examining not the institution itself, but what he termed the "habitus" of a particular social group—the propensity of individuals to select from a particular social repertoire according to the demands of a particular situation. Bourdieu observed that a person thus was allowed a certain amount of freedom to act, but only within certain limits set

by the culture. Bourdieu's work has influenced, both directly and indirectly, scholars of queenship by forcing them to shed their preoccupation with institutional constraints and to look beyond the structure to the actual practice, to the recognition that it is much more pertinent and revealing to ask not what held a woman back, but rather what propelled her forward.

Marshall Sahlins's work is very much influenced by both Goody and Bourdieu, but he addresses queenship more directly than either of them. Sahlins describes certain "strategic sites of historical action," or political "hot zones," that "creatively and pragmatically construe ongoing values," in the case of his own research, kingship in the Hawaiian islands. Because kingship in all cultures is, by definition, gendered, queenship is therefore one such "hot zone," and the cultural meanings of both are altered by


37 Sarah Hanley owes a theoretical debt to both Bourdieu and Sahlins, especially when she argues for institutional permeability and distinguishes between the institutional apparatus that ostensibly controlled women's lives ("the structure of the practice") and the actions of women ("the practice of the structure"). "Engendering the State," 21.

38 Natalie Zemon Davis makes the same point in her introduction to Georges Duby's The Knight, the Priest, and the Lady: The Making of Modern Marriage in Medieval France, translated by Barbara Bray (New York: Pantheon, 1983), xiii.


the dynamics of their interaction. In order to understand ruler ideology and practice--be it kingship in Hawaii or queenship in the Crown of Aragón--we must closely examine the operative political culture and observe the interaction between kingship and queenship.

One particularly helpful approach to an understanding of this "habitus" of medieval queenship comes, again, from social and cultural anthropologists who study the family, kinship, and community. The best of the newer studies takes gender into account as part of an investigation into the ways in which family structures and kinship patterns produce sovereign institutions, which in turn affect the culture and the familial patterns. These works describe distinctive marriage and inheritance patterns that appeared in western Europe after the fall of Rome, an observation that has led scholars such as Stanley Chojnacki, David Herlihy, and Suzanne Wemple to investigate the power of women of various social

41 Louise Fradenburg, referring specifically to medieval and early modern queens, has called these moments of crisis that redefined the relationship "queenly time," in her essay "Rethinking Queenship," 7.


and legal tanks within the context of the family. 44

In terms of queenship, however, historians Marion Facinger and Pauline Stafford paved the way for a recognition of the royal family as the source of a queen's social, economic, and political power in the early Middle Ages and by moving the discussion away from the political arena and into the household, reoriented the entire question of queenship as office. 45 The connections they made between a queen's power and the family as its locus have prompted some scholars to investigate this as an informal route to power. 46

This deft combination of the sociological (network theory) with the anthropological (kinship theory) has shown that a queen's extended family made her a natural for arranging marriage alliances, 47 and her proximity to the king's ear gave her an opportunity to intercede


on behalf of aggrieved parties.48

In an influential article now nearly twenty-five years old, Jo Ann McNamara and Suzanne Wemple argued that during the feudal age powerful family alliances and the fluidity of feudal structures coupled with fragmented distribution of political power to create an atmosphere advantageous to women.49 They argued that because the distinctions between court (public) and household (private) were blurred, social and political functions fused, and the royal household formed the political arena.50 A queen's life was consumed with bearing children and with their upbringing, education, betrothal, and marriage, but these duties provided an opportunity for her to maneuver behind-the-scenes as an unofficial advisor. McNamara and Wemple hypothesized that because the public and private domains coalesced in this period or were never all that separate in the first place, the prominent roles women played in the private domain—for example in the management of household accounts, tutoring and guardianship of the heir, and court ceremonial—endowed them with real personal authority in the public domain.

These studies by Facinger, Stafford, and McNamara and Wemple have spawned a large body of work that has examined at a


50 On the public-private distinction, see Rosaldo and Lamphere, Women, Culture, and Society, 21, 36, 99-100.
queen's family as the site of political practice.\textsuperscript{51} The best of these are Sarah Hanley's studies on late medieval and early modern France that rightly focusing on family formation as the site of both domestic and monarchical government, but further expand the argument and place it in a broader temporal and political context.\textsuperscript{52} The royal family was the framework for the transmission and exercise of lordship, as well as a model and source for attitudes and structures and behavior toward women in general and queens in particular. It furnished principles of order, and simultaneously adapted and molded those attitudes, structures, and behavior into the institutions of medieval government. Political rights and legal status for both men and women were ordinarily determined by marriage and inheritance. Issues of government and politics revolved around family and descent, and cannot be separated from broader questions of dynastic succession.

One could argue that influence exercised through the family is indirect power, and therefore not true royal authority. But when the family in question was among the most powerful in Europe, this was indeed real political power.\textsuperscript{53} This is evident in the career of


\textsuperscript{52} She terms this the "marital regime government" to emphasize the patriarchal roots of both the family and the monarchy. "Monarchic State in Early Modern France," 107–108.

the Empress Matilda (1102-67), eloquently summed up in her epitaph:
"Great by birth, greater by marriage, greatest in her offspring." A
skillful diplomat, she was co-ruler in Germany with her first
husband, Emperor Henry V (d. 1125). In this, she was not
exceptional: early medieval German queens and empresses
traditionally participated in the actual work of government.54
Childless at Henry's death, Matilda acted as regent until a successor
was found. She returned to England and married Geoffrey, count of
Anjou, in 1127. In the absence of a son, her father designated
Matilda as heir but Stephen, her nephew, seized the crown before
she could act. Despite oaths made in favor of Matilda by the
magnates and prelates of the realm before Henry I's death, Matilda
was never proclaimed queen. Still, she was not without political
authority in England. She fought, militarily as well as legally, to
secure her rights to the throne until her son Henry Plantagenet was
old enough to assume the initiative in the fight. Marjorie Chibnall
has suggested that all along she considered herself regent for Henry
and that her fight was to guarantee his rights, not hers.55

The prodigiously energetic Eleanor of Aquitaine (ca. 1122-
1204), successively queen of France and England, was an infrequent
participant in government during the early years of her marriage to
the strong-willed Henry II of England (1154-89). She spent most of
her time tending to their eight children and governing her
Aquitainian inheritance, the two great sources of her power. She

burst on to the political scene in 1174 when she was involved in the rebellion of "their sons against Henry, for which she was arrested and imprisoned. It was not until after Henry's death that she again renewed her political activity. Once king, Richard reestablished her in her rights and privileges and from 1189 to 1199 she governed the vast Angevin realms almost singlehandedly while Richard was on Crusade.56

As important as it is to recognize the power of women through the family, it is only part of the picture. MacNamara and Wemple, like Facinger before them, have identified the genesis of power, but not its regional and temporal variants, and they do not really address the problem of queenship as office. Yes, María of Castile was empowered by her family connections, but so was Alfonso. She had no children to empower her further, yet she governed for twenty-six years. Even among the elected kings in Germany, candidates with the proper family connections had a better chance of succeeding to the throne than those without and, at times, the election was little more than a pro forma acclamation of the power of dynastic power.57 To say that a queen's political power stemmed largely from her family is insightful, but incomplete. The family alone did not define all the dimensions of queenship, especially queenship as office, and it is important to look elsewhere to locate a woman's ability to exercise political authority. The answer to the


paradox of queenship must take into account the larger political culture in which both queens and kings operated.

A second problem with the McNamara and Wemple thesis is that they did not follow through on the wider implications of their evidence. They noted, for example, that the late twelfth century represented a pivotal point in the organization of the family, but failed to look beyond, to see the consequences of this change, particularly the transformation of aristocratic families into lineages which traced descent and affiliation in the masculine line alone.\(^5^8\) Moreover, their study is too narrowly construed and too closely focussed on the activities of women as wives and mothers that extend to the political sphere to support their chronological model. While their hypothesis is applicable to the early Middle Ages, they go too far by concluding that the feudal era was queenship's zenith and the later Middle Ages was its nadir. The rise of administrative bureaucracies weakened both feudalism and queenship as office, and generally speaking, it is true that fewer queens ruled in their own right in the fifteenth century than in the twelfth, but what is less clear is whether there was a real decline in the nature and extent of all types of political authority for all medieval queens. Their chronological schema is based on a very limited selection of data from sources drawn mostly from England and France for the period prior to the thirteenth century. Very little comparative analytical work has been done on the later Middle Ages when feudal institutions had all

but disappeared in western Europe, but what has been done suggests a much more complicated picture in which queens were active in many facets of the public arena, and not necessarily as rulers in their own right.

The work of Facinger, McNamara, and Wemple remains important because they were among the first historians to investigate queenship through a strongly feminist lens. They have demonstrated that women, in this case queens, did indeed experience life in a monarchical society differently from men, and they have made the difference well worth studying. On the other hand, scholars such as John Parsons, János Bak, and Marjorie Chibnall write about queenship as though gender were not an issue. Their studies, rooted in traditional historical methods, are well-documented works that bring previously obscure queens back to center stage. They have uncovered rich archival resources but when they analyze this material, they fail to fully account for the importance of gender. Worse, they treat queenship in isolation, as though it existed without a wider political or cultural context. Thus, they do not ask pertinent questions such as, Why could this queen rule and others could not? What factors—cultural, social, theological, political—were strong enough to supersede potent social and cultural forces that prevented another queen from ruling? Why were those factors operative in one place or time and not another?

Their limitations notwithstanding, these studies have demonstrated some of the range of approaches and methods to the study of queenship and have broadened our understanding of the social and cultural forces that affected queens. They have clarified
our notions of the role and function of queens, opened up entirely new avenues for historical research, and forced us to reconsider commonly held assumptions and reexamine sources long thought to hold no more surprises.

Kingship, Queenship, and Political Theory

It is ironic, then, that much of the research on queenship falls short of explaining why some queens possessed and exercised political authority and others did not. The problem is that the approach that set the standard for research into women's history is, itself, part of the problem. Having exposed the historiographical biases of older works, a feminist approach often imposes restrictions of its own by defining women's past according to narrow modern conceptions of limitation or liberty that have obscured important changes that affected queens.

As a result, queenship is all too often examined in isolation. Treating queenship solely as an element of women's history fails to connect it with the wider importance of the family in monarchy. It detaches it from the broader political context, in the same way that examining kingship without also looking at queenship results in an inaccurate portrayal of monarchical government. The best works, such as Hanley's and Wood's, link queenship with kingship, its natural counterpart in medieval monarchy. These scholars recognize that the essential determinants of queenship were not just the family and societal attitudes and proscriptions, but also theories about kingship, dynastic-throne right, and inheritance which can vary widely from place to place.
Marion Facinger, one of the first scholars to explore the connection between kingship and queenship, argued in an important essay published in 1968 that the Capetians regarded queenship as an office with its roots in marriage but with a legitimate capacity to share in the royal duties of governance.59 Two recent studies that reinforce and expand Facinger's thesis show this approach to be a particularly fruitful one. Jane Martindale60 examines the ways in which inheritance practices and dynastic succession in Anglo-Norman England affected queenship as office, and Charles Wood61 analyzes the complementary nature of rulership in fifteenth-century France and England, paying particular attention to the cultural and political dimensions of both kingship and queenship.

As these studies have suggested, kingship and queenship ideologies shaped, and were in turn shaped by, not only ideas about gender but also institutions such as the royal council, parliamentary assemblies, and the administration of justice. They developed side by side, changing as society changed, responding to new demands, making it possible for historians to trace changes in queenship through such institutional transformations. Kings and queens were inextricably linked by legal and political theory as well as shared familial and dynastic concerns. Together they formed an integral part of the interlocking political, social, economic, and legal

institutional structure of each kingdom. As medieval political theorists tried to define what made a king, their conclusions profoundly affected a queen's role in the public arena. Whereas the writers of kingship treatises were primarily concerned with the establishment and justification of the right by which a man could ascend to the throne, when discussing queenship they were concerned with the converse: they sought to explain or justify a woman's exclusion from the right to rule in her own right.

Queenship was not ad hoc, with rules made here and broken there; rather, it was particularly sensitive to subtle shifts in kingship theory and practice. It is logical, therefore, to examine how kingship, in theory and in practice, affected the spectrum of possibilities open to a queen and how queenship, in turn, redefined kingship and affected each realm's institutions. This approach is valid even when the queen in question did not participate in governance, but it is especially pertinent when she did. Just as we would not dream of studying kingship without looking carefully at parliamentary assemblies, so we must not study queenship in isolation. To eliminate any one component from the analysis is to create an inaccurate and skewed picture, only a part of the whole.

Two forms of kingship prevalent in the early feudal age—warrior and sacral—depended more on inherent personal or physical qualities than qualifications for effective governance, but their influence on attitudes toward queenship was long-lasting. Warrior kingship was a masculine domain: Battlefield prowess was kingship's principal determinant—victory made a man a king. Among the Franks and other Germanic tribes, certain physical attributes, long hair, for
example, were considered kingly necessities. A warrior king's allies-at-arms and family members, mostly male relatives, formed the inner circle of power. Nevertheless, the early Middle Ages was an age of rough-and-ready political conditions that were advantageous to anyone seeking power, as much for scheming barons and illegitimate sons as for ambitious women. As Jack Goody has pointed out, "clear and simple rules" indicating a single prince as the true heir are rare throughout the world, and this was especially true in the early medieval period. Succession to the throne was not clearly defined; a man's son did not automatically succeed him and a queen's fate was just as uncertain. Women rarely mustered or led an army, and a king was just as likely to marry as not, and he may have kept concubines; Charlemagne is perhaps the most notorious example. Because warrior kingship flourished when political institutions were in their infancy, and public and private realms were indistinct, there remained many possibilities for women to carve out a niche in governance.


63 Goody, Succession to High Office, 25-6.

Later, the growing influence of the Church in secular politics extended to include issues of marriage and legitimacy, which had a profound influence on both kingship and queenship. Warrior kings were obliged to marry and recognize a queen as distinct from simply a wife or concubine. Legitimate children took precedence over illegitimate in matters of inheritance and lordship. The heavenly realm of God became a metaphor for earthly kingship. Victory in battle was interpreted as a sign of divine favor, the ruling family was seen as chosen by God, and the trappings of royalty, especially the use of sacramental oil in the coronation ceremony and the royal touch, took on a sacerdotal quality.65 A queen’s intimate association with the powerful mythical quality of royalty, particularly via her coronation and as mother of the heir, transmitted enormous power and elevated her status among women.66 There was a drawback, however: Because theocratic kingship privileged the priestly functions of kingship, a queen’s political power eroded.67 For the Capetian kings, influenced by the theocratic ideology of Abbot Suger, the royal body was closely connected to the body of Christ.


A queen's coronation ceremony emphasized that her connection to the king was by marriage, not direct descent through the royal family. The ceremony took place at the abbey church of St. Denis, not at Reims. It did not include anointing with the holy oil used for a king's coronation, and as elsewhere throughout the medieval West, there was no oath. The queen's coronation did not signify any claim to share the king's sovereign powers, and her regalia did not include any item associated with direct authority, such as the sword of justice, mantle, stole, and spurs. There is not a single report of a queen with thaumaturgic powers.

During the high and late Middle Ages kingship and government—both in theory and practice—changed in ways that also affected queenship as office. First, as government became more professional and bureaucratic, the person of the king was gradually separated from the office of the king. University-trained canon and civil lawyers, who owed allegiance to no other lord but the king, entered royal service and the royal bureaucracy was systematized, becoming a profession rather than a feudal obligation. Family members, queens included, often were shut out of the inner circle of


government. Younger sons had to content themselves with the administration of their own lands. A queen's role in the political realm changed correspondingly, as her gender and her lack of university training made it difficult for her to penetrate the barriers created by a multi-layered bureaucracy. Still, she was a special case. Her proximity to the king himself, her role as mother and legal guardian of the heir, and the myth of kingship still distinguished her from other family members. Laws that applied to most women, for example, those concerning inheritance and the administration of her dowry, may or may not have applied to queen.

Inheritance rights were central in the thinking of men concerned with their own property and its division within their own families. All families, royal and otherwise, were concerned to adapt their inheritance strategies to solve the problems of how to secure their patrimony despite increasing external pressures imposed by changed attitudes towards marriage and legitimacy. The shift to a professional bureaucracy was accompanied by the consolidation of dynastic resources—movable goods as well as land and lordship—and a reluctance to endow all children born into a single generation with family property. Adjusting theory to practical needs, jurists began


71 Goody, Succession to High Office, 26.
to refine the notion of what precisely constituted a legitimate heir. Throughout the European west, a pattern developed whereby one of the sons inherited the family's territorial holding, which later became indivisible. The concept of primogeniture was introduced to preserve intact both land and lordship and, over time, primogeniture attained the force of law by custom.  

The primacy of primogeniture is an important element in the changing fortunes of queens because entitlement to valuables is easily generalized to a similar entitlement to office. Inheritance is inextricably linked to the transmission of immovable goods such as land and lordship, and that, in turn, is linked to the question of succession to office. The son possessed the right to rule his father's realms through direct personal inheritance, and this led to the election, consecration, and coronation that set a king apart from other nobles. The customs and laws that clarified and refined what made a king, by extension, defined what made a queen.

Laws pertaining to a queen's right to inherit and succeed were related to ordinary laws concerning women and inheritance, but


the connection may not be entirely straightforward. Inheritance laws varied widely throughout medieval Europe and over time, and depended not only on gender but on such factors as marital status, legal status, number and sex of children, and residence as well as geography. For example, in both Castile and Aragón during the high Middle Ages, testamentary succession was common and customary law left property decisions to the option of the head of the family, which may have contributed to the ability of those queens to inherit and rule in their own right. Laws such as these were part of a wider social and cultural milieu which queens were both part of and separate from, and may provide valuable clues in

75 Goody, Succession to High Office, 26.


assessing the determinants of queenship as office. When women are
the object of the discussion, however, it is important to draw a clear
distinction between inheritance and dowry. Dowry and dower
properties often were encumbered with substantial entailments and
restrictions. Dower properties, for example, generally came to a
woman only on the death of her husband. The differences between
dowry and inheritance is an important one for medieval queens.
Eleanor of Aquitaine, for instance, derived much of her wealth and
political authority through inheritance. Her contemporaries would
certainly have described Aquitaine as her hereditas, not her dos,
and even though her lands were subsumed into the English crown,
Eleanor insisted on, and often succeeded in securing, her right to
administer them herself. 78

Inheritance of territory and lordship is directly linked to
written laws or accepted customs that determined dynastic
succession. 79 The concepts governing succeeding are straightforward
in theory—an eldest son inherited the kingdom while his younger
brothers were compensated with lesser territories from the royal
demesne—yet complicated in practice. To study the ordering
principles of dynastic succession is, in fact, a study of the
pragmatic resolution of one succession crisis after another.
Primogeniture, which was not a fully formed juridical theory until
the high Middle Ages, worked only when nature cooperated with an

78 Martindale, "Succession and Politics in the Romance­
speaking World," 27-8, 39 (note 81).

79 Goody, Succession to High Office, 1-66; Wolf, "The Family
of Dynasties in Medieval Europe," 193-268.
ample provision of healthy sons who survived to adulthood. The "ordinary" pattern of inheritance—firstborn sons succeeding fathers, generation after generation, in an orderly manner—was, in fact, "extraordinary" in most Christian kingdoms, and extraordinary conditions were the norm. 80

It is a familiar story and well-documented. Kings died without male heirs or with only an infant son to inherit, they went on crusade, or they sailed off to conquer distant lands. In the Crown of Aragón, a succession crisis loomed three times since 1164 and none were resolved in favor of a female claimant. 81 The succession did pass from brother to brother twice: first from Alfonso III (1285-91) to Jaume II (1291-1327), and then from Joan I (1387-95) to Martí (1395-1410). Aragón faced its first serious succession crisis when Martí died without a legitimate heir; five claimants vied for control, and the dispute was resolved only after a two-year interregnum and

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a political compromise that brought to the throne Fernando I (1412-16), a member of Castilian Trastámara family who was also a grandson of Pere IV of Aragón. In the Christian kingdoms in the Holy Land, successors scrambled to find a male family member to take the place of an ill, absent, or dead king.\textsuperscript{82} In England during the eleventh and twelfth centuries, the death of the first three Norman kings in England led to a disputed succession,\textsuperscript{83} and, in the fifteenth century, the kingdom suffered dynastic chaos during and after the reign of Henry VI (1422-71).\textsuperscript{84} Castile experienced serious upheaval in the thirteenth century with the minorities of Enrique I (1214-17) and Fernando III (1217-52) and again a century later when Pedro the Cruel (1350-69) was challenged by his illegitimate brother, Enrique of Trastámara (ruled as Enrique II, 1369-79).\textsuperscript{85}

Women's inheritance rights mattered greatly in decisions that determined allegiances and the outcome of disputed successions. When all other possibilities were ruled out—with brothers, uncles, nephews, or cousins, legitimate or not, were either unavailable or unacceptable—a daughter,\textsuperscript{86} a wife,\textsuperscript{87} a queen-dowager,\textsuperscript{88} or a


\textsuperscript{85} History of Medieval Spain, 334-37, 419-27; Clara Estow, \textit{Pedro the Cruel of Castile, 1350-1369} (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1995), 180-269.

queen-mother was called upon to take the place of the king.\textsuperscript{89} Still, it was one thing to inherit, but another to rule. In some cases, even a seemingly secure inheritance was not enough justification for a queen to rule. This is vividly portrayed in two cases: the protracted legal and military battle for the English throne between Stephen of Blois and the Empress Matilda at the death of her father; and the complicated succession following the death of Philip the Fair of France which effectively excluded women from the succession forever in France. Matilda lost, even though she was the designated heir with a superior claim, because Stephen's army moved more quickly than hers. Philip of Valois had a weak claim but he won because he had better lawyers. A fight for the right to rule was not, of course, limited to women, but their presumed disadvantage in military matters may have increased the likelihood of a battle for political control of the kingdom.

Theory may set the stage for rulership, but expediency is the key to understanding the practical application of inheritance laws. Immediate needs dictated strategy, but the need to perpetuate a dynasty often superseded all other concerns. A woman could rule, or transmit a right to rule, if she was the only means of continuing


\textsuperscript{88} Collins, "Queens-Dowager and Queens-Regent," 79-92; Stafford, "Sons and Mothers," 79-100.

a lineage. The French may have had a dislike for female rulership, but they could not deny the legitimacy of female inheritance without undermining the means by which Louis VII had benefited from his marriage to Eleanor of Aquitaine. Capetian dynastic mythology was so strong that if Charles of Valois had been a relative through the female line, and Edward III, the English contender, had been a relative through the male line, French public law would not have failed to proclaim the rights of women to succeed. Similarly, in fifteenth-century England, where no explicit public law governed the descent of the crown, the Lancastrians refuted Richard of York's attempt to inherit via the female line and thus assumed a sort of Salic Law in England which they themselves denied in France. Richard forced his claim and Parliament grudgingly recognized his rights. He died soon after at the battle of Wakefield, but his claim was upheld; his son succeeded him as Edward IV (1461-83).

Queens Who Ruled in Their Own Right

Whereas there were several ways for a king to acquire a kingdom--by inheritance, by force, by election--for a queen to rule in her own right she had to inherit the kingdom from her father, brother, or more rarely, from her sister. Within the body politic, a queen regnant could act as only men had acted before: She was

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91 Giesey, Dynastic Right to the French Throne, 11.

politically male but biologically female, and a queen who ruled in her own right has long been considered the exception that proved the rule of monarchy.93

The mythology of ruling queens as exceptions is just as pervasive and misleading as is traditional kingship ideology. By accepting the myth of the exception, we close the door to any possibility of a more nuanced analysis of rulership in general. Furthermore, the idea of an exception implies that there was a rule. More often than not, there was no rule, or a rule was written down ex post facto, closely following customary developments, to justify or defend an action against a woman's right to rule. Custom may very well have accepted the rights of women to rule, as was the case in Castile where the royal couple were considered one by law and Castilian princesses could be designated by their fathers as legitimate successors, such as when Alfonso VI of León named Urraca, Alfonso VIII of Castile named Berenguela, and Alfonso IX of León named Sancha and Dulce as his successors.94 The prohibition against women might have been stated later in the absence of a legitimate male heir, at which time the eldest daughter could potentially succeed.

This back-formation of theory from practice was clearly the case with the "invention" of the clause in Salic Law that prohibited

93 Jordan, "Woman's Rule," 428. On the political ideology of the body politic, see Kantorowicz, The King's Two Bodies, 496-506.

women from succeeding to the throne of France. The recognition that transmission of property could also entail succession to high office was at the heart of the redefinition of Salic Law and the exclusion of women from inheritance of certain types of property.95 In 1314 France faced a complicated succession crisis following the death of Philip the Fair.96 His three sons died in succession in 1316, 1322, and 1328, leaving no sons but only a daughter whose legitimacy was in dispute. In order to bolster his claim to the throne, Philip of Valois needed to exclude female claimants. He cited as precedent a provision in the will of Philip the Fair that limited the succession to a royal apanage to legitimate male offspring only. The legal contest that ensued culminated in the rise of the Valois dynasty and set important precedents for the prohibition of female rulership that provided the legal justification in 1337 for the French to deny the claims of Edward III of England. A century later in France a clause that specifically referred to the prohibition of women as successors to the throne was inserted into an ancient text, the Salic Law, which originally referred only to landholding and not to office.97 Thus, the infamous Salic Law prohibition of women as legitimate heirs was, in fact, a legal invention written after the fact, but it proved so useful

95 Goody, Succession to High Office, 1-66.


in limiting the pool of claimants, that it was widely accepted as
genuine. This precedent was in turn used in 1347 in the Crown of
Aragón—where there was no prior exclusion of women from
rulership—by nobles who opposed King Pere IV’s intention to
designate his daughter, Constança, as his heir.98

To consider as extraordinary the instances of female rulership
obscures how often queens have ruled.99 These queens do not fall
into a single geographic or temporal boundary, but rather they
encompass the twelfth through the fifteenth century, and range from
León–Castile to the Christian kingdoms of Jerusalem and from
Denmark to Naples. In Castile, the right of females to rule was
recognized, but generations of sturdy male heirs made it an
uncommon occurrence.100 Among all the ruling queens of the Middle
Ages, Urraca of León–Castile (1109–26) was a commanding
presence.101 She inherited her kingdoms from her father, Alfonso VI
(1065–1109), and ruled them in her own right from 1109 until her
death in 1126, even though she married twice, to two powerful men,
one of whom, Alfonso I of Aragón, was himself a king (1104–34).
Like Elizabeth I of England over four centuries later, Urraca defied
the commonly held presumption that a man who married a ruling

98 Medieval Crown of Aragón, 107; History of Medieval Spain, 416.

99 For a summary, see two essays by Armin Wolf: "Reigning
Queens in Medieval Europe: When, Where, Why?,” in Medieval
Queenship, 169–88; and "The Family of Dynasties in Medieval
Europe: Dynasties, Kingdoms, and Tochterstämme," Studies in

100 History of Medieval Spain, 432.

101 Reilly, Queen Urraca, 352–70.
queen should automatically share in the governance of his wife's realms. That she was guided by the archbishop of Toledo on one hand and her lover Pedro González, the Count of Lara on the other, does not alter the fact that all decisions made during her turbulent reign ultimately were hers. 102

Urraca was not the only ruling queen on the Iberian peninsula, but it would be a long time until another like her would appear in Castile. A gap of over 350 years separates her from Isabel I, "la Católica" (1474–1504), the next Castilian queen to rule in her own right. Between Urraca's death and Isabel's coronation, a long parade of Castilian princes, whether a legitimate heir or illegitimate contender, inherited and governed their father's realms. In 1474 Isabel broke the pattern and ruled Castile as an independent realm within the united crowns of Castile and Aragón. Her reign is a case study of a forceful woman taking full advantage of circumstances. Her husband, Fernando II (1479–1516), ruled Aragón in his own right but did not have sovereign power over Isabel; not even after her death could he rule as king of Castile. In many ways Isabel straddled two worlds—she ruled in the style of a Renaissance monarch but in education and upbringing she was clearly a product of the Middle Ages. The innovations of her reign, however, should not automatically lead to the presumption that Isabel was an anomaly

102 For example, one stumbling block (among many) in the marriage negotiations between Elizabeth I and the Archduke Charles was his insistence on ruling jointly with her. Ilona Bell, "Elizabeth I—Always Her Own Free Woman," in Political Rhetoric, Power, and Renaissance Women, edited by Carole Levin and Patricia A. Sullivan (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1995), 57–84, especially 76.
or that she arrived on the scene without any precedent.  

In the neighboring kingdom of Aragón, Petronila (1137–62), daughter of King Ramiro II (1134–37), was only one year of age when she inherited the kingdom in 1137 on the occasion of her betrothal to the older (by perhaps twenty-five years) and more politically experienced Ramon Berenguer IV, count of Barcelona. Their marriage was both a marital and a political union. Shortly after the marriage, Ramiro retired to a monastery and Ramon Berenguer acknowledged his status in Aragón not as king but as prince-consort. Due to her youth, however, Petronila ruled more in name than in fact (she and Ramon were not formally married until 1150). When Ramon Berenguer died in 1162, she ceded her throne-rights to the united realms of Aragón and Catalunya to their son, Ramón with the provision that if he died without a male heir, his younger brother would succeed. Petronila remained regent for her son, now called Alfonso (he ruled as Alfonso II, 1162–96), until 1164. Petronila was the last Aragonese queen, medieval or modern, to inherit and rule in her own right.  

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succession was reinforced by the will of Jaume I in 1272, but the right of women to transmit throne rights was upheld. In the end, such provisions were irrelevant. Dynastic longevity within the House of Barcelona—from 1137 to 1410, an unbroken string of male heirs inherited and ruled the Crown of Aragón—precluded any possibility that a queen could rule in her own right.

On the other side of the Mediterranean, in the Christian kingdoms of Jerusalem, where there was no explicit prohibition of female rulership, queenship also had a distinctly political face. As in Castile, there was no prohibition of female rulership. The earliest ruling queen was Melisende, daughter of Baldwin II (1118–31). Late in his reign Baldwin recognized her as his heir and she began to be associated with him in the official documents. She married Fulk V of Anjou in 1129 and he was king by virtue of his marriage to her. Early in the reign Fulk excluded her from power and only after the birth of their sons did she again become co-ruler with him. After Fulk's death in 1143 she acted as regent for their son, Baldwin III, and during these years she was fully queen regnant. Melisende and Baldwin III were crowned together on Christmas Day 1143, and only in 1150, after a threatened coup by Baldwin's supporters, did the queen relinquish any authority. Even then she remained associated with him in many of his public acts until her death in 1161.106

Melisende's reign set a precedent for later queens of Jerusalem in terms of both inheritance and rule by women. Her

granddaughter Sybille (ruled 1180-90), sister of Baldwin IV, was designated heir by his regents when Baldwin's leprosy made it doubtful that he would ever marry or father children. The early years of her reign and her first marriage to William of Montferrat were overshadowed by her indomitable mother, Agnes of Courtenay, who ruled as virtually uncrowned queen. In 1186, after the death of both Agnes and Sybille's son, Baldwin V, Sybille was crowned queen and she in turn crowned her husband, Guy of Lusignan. Their joint rule was brought to a quick end a year later, however, by the conquests of Saladin and the surrender of Jerusalem. 107

The kingdom passed to Sybille's step-sister, Isabelle (1190-1205) who, on orders from her strong-willed mother Maria Comnena, divorced her unpopular husband Humphrey of Toron and married Conrad of Montferrat. Eight years and two more marriages later, to Henry of Champagne and Aimery of Lusignan, Isabelle was officially crowned. Documentary evidence indicates that she and Aimery ruled together, but little is known of the reign. 108

Marie (1205-12), Isabelle's young daughter, inherited the kingdom, but it was ruled by a regent until her coronation in 1210 and marriage to John of Brienne. Her rule ended a brief two years later with her death. John served as regent for their infant daughter, Isabelle, until her coronation and marriage to the Emperor Frederick II in 1125. Her reign was nearly as short as her mother's,

ending with the queen's death in 1228.\textsuperscript{109}

In Christian Jerusalem it is especially noteworthy that a queen's inheritance, both land and lordship, could pass not only from father to daughter but also from sister to sister. Sororal transmission of land and moveable goods was not uncommon, but this is the only recorded instance that I am aware of in which the rights to lordship of a kingdom passed between sisters. Furthermore, there was never any doubt that the husband was king-consort through marriage only and that he ceased to be king when the queen died.\textsuperscript{110} A sister's rights do not seem to have been seriously challenged by male relatives. This arrangement is remarkable in a kingdom closely related in many respects—culturally, socially, and politically—to France, where not only was there no precedent for a queen to transmit rulership to her sister but even less one for her to rule in her own right. The situation in Jerusalem could perhaps be explained by chaotic conditions in the Holy Land which resembled those in the early feudal era which McNamara and Wemple argue were so advantageous to ruling queens. It was more important for the ruling families to preserve their dynastic rights and patrimony at all costs, and practical expediency outweighed all else.

In some instances what we know about the actual political

\textsuperscript{109} Riley-Smith, \textit{The Kingdom of Jerusalem}, 186-95.

\textsuperscript{110} This was also technically true of Ramón Berenguer and Petronila in Aragón in 1137, although Ramón ruled in fact. Stalls, "Petronila of Aragon," 49-61; \textit{History of Medieval Spain}, 224, 257-58; \textit{Medieval Crown of Aragón}, 27-31. And, in a more famous case, in the sixteenth century, the English Parliament attempted to limit the political authority of a king-consort when Mary Tudor married Philip II of Spain in 1554. Jordan, "Woman's Rule," 427.
authority of ruling queens is very sketchy and ill-defined. In Navarre, Blanca, daughter of Carlos III (1387-1425), inherited the kingdom from her father and, on paper at least, ruled it jointly with her husband Juan, son of Fernando I of Aragón and brother-in-law of María of Castile. Juan styled himself King of Navarre, but he had little interest in ruling the kingdom and Blanca ruled in her own right until her death in 1441, when it passed to a co-rulership arrangement between Juan and their son, Carlos of Viana. At present, though, little else can be said because there are no analytical studies of Blanca's reign.\textsuperscript{111} The same holds true for Naples\textsuperscript{112} and Denmark,\textsuperscript{113} where there were no laws explicitly prohibiting rule by women, but very little, except for the barest of outlines, is known about queens and queenship there.

Queens who ruled in their own right, although few in number, should not be dismissed as minor and largely irrelevant to the wider scope of both theory and practice. But by neglecting them we perpetuate the presumption that monarchy was exclusively the domain of men. While it is true that the relative rarity of a ruling queen in the Middle Ages proves the tenacity of resistance to female rulership, ruling queens must be studied and their actions must not

\textsuperscript{111} History of Medieval Spain, 551, 554; Medieval Crown of Aragón, 147.

\textsuperscript{112} The two queens who did rule, Giovanna I (1343-82) and Giovanna II (1414-35), were ruled by their corrupt, squabbling nobles rather than ruling them. Kingdom of Naples, 16.

\textsuperscript{113} One Danish queen stands out. Margaret I (1387-1412) personally guided her kingdom toward a joint rulership with Norway and Sweden in the Kalmar Union of 1397. Skovgaard-Petersen and Damsholt, "Queenship in Medieval Denmark," 25-42.
be obscured. When they are dismissed as isolated cases, disconnected data, or nothing more than deviations from the norm, we risk a serious distortion of historical reality.

The Regency

Unlike Urraca and Melisende, however, most royal women became queens through marriage, not direct inheritance. As foreign-born princesses or aristocratic, but not royal, heiresses, they were excluded from the inheritance of their husband's realm, but that did not necessarily exclude them from governance of it. A king was alone at the peak of medieval government, but he rarely governed alone, and many medieval queens governed in some capacity with their husbands, fathers, brothers, or other male family member.\textsuperscript{114} Typically, a king took counsel from his secular and ecclesiastical lords and relied especially on an inner circle composed of a few trusted intimates, who often were family members. During moments of crisis—a king's serious illness, his absence from the kingdom to wage war or make peace, an interregnum—others ruled in the king's stead, most often family, not only uncles or brothers, but also wives and mothers.

The regency provided the most obvious as well as the most common means by which a queen could take part in government. The political authority of the queen-regent was accepted, at least in

\textsuperscript{114} "The Crown itself had a corporational character—with the king as guardian, though again not with the king alone, but with the composite body of king and magnates who together were said to be, or to represent, the Crown." Kantorowicz, \textit{The King's Two Bodies}, 381.
theory, as an extension of her maternal rights as the guardian of her young children. Jurists recognized that the right to act as guardian and the right to exercise public authority pertained to a mother through the unique bond between mother and child. When the king was a minor, the queen thus was not only her son's guardian but by extension she was also guardian of the state and protector of both king and kingdom from usurpers. The institution of the regency was not fixed in form, although the appointment and duties of the rulers of the realm in lieu of the king were basic to political theory and practice and were closely related to legal traditions concerning the guardianship of minors in general. Regency law in general was concerned with three principal issues: to clearly specify the age of royal majority, to determine the extent of regental duties, and to decide who had the clearest legal right to be regent.115

Because a regency had an predetermined beginning and end, it was a palatable form of female rulership for those ambitious brothers, uncles, nobles, and others who felt threatened by a ruling queen or who sought to take advantage of the opportunity. Often, a regency council was established to quell fears of too powerful a woman or the threat of undue influence from a lover or new husband. It was a potent time for a queen, but because queens often assumed the regency during a period of civil unrest or foreign war, it was also a dangerous time for a vulnerable kingdom, queen-widow, and her son.

Regency law could supersede other legal traditions and prejudices. Regencies were, by tradition, supposed to be organized by the preceding king and thus had an official imprimatur. In England, because a woman could succeed to the throne, most decisions regarding regencies and other temporary arrangements were placed under the jurisdiction of Parliament. After 1328, French queens were often regents because the new interpretation of Salic Law prevented a woman from succeeding to the throne. Thus excluded from the order of succession, their public power was more easily channeled and controlled. Although Salic Law technically recognized only a queen's lack of juridical capacity to inherit, it left open to the regent an impressive array of powers and prerogatives. In fact, as Harriet Lightman has pointed out, in France "despite the myth of Salic Law, and the common belief that women were by nature incapable of exercising political authority, such appointments . . . had been common as far back as the Merovingians."117

By the fifteenth century, the French Estates General began to play an important role in determining who could be regent and limited the scope of those powers. This voice in the selection of

116 Parsons, Eleanor of Castile, 45.

117 Lightman, "Sons and Mothers," 55. And queens-regent continued well into the early modern period. Anne of Brittany, wife first of Charles VIII (1483-98) and then Louis XII (1498-1515), governed in a very limited capacity. But Louise of Savoy, Anne's successor, wielded considerable governmental and judicial powers as regent from 1515-16 for Francis I when he went on a military campaign to Italy. Her regency may have been brief, but she remained one of Francis's closest advisers throughout her life. McCartney, "Queenship in Late Medieval France," 178-219; idem, "The King's Mother and Royal Prerogative in Early-Sixteenth-Century France," in Medieval Queenship, 126-27, 139.
regent implies that the Estates had some control over the regent, which may have muted their fears, and underscores Lightman's observation that there was less opposition to a politically powerful woman when she replaced an absent king, not a minor one.\textsuperscript{118} The social order was not upset because the king still ruled in fact and he presumably could overrule any unpopular actions taken by the queen, thus lessening fears of rule by a queen alone. It is not a stretch of the imagination to apply this logic to explain the general acceptance in the Crown of Aragón for queen-lieutenants such as María of Castile.

The list of queens-regent is long and distinguished. In France, Anne of Kiev, was regent for her son Philip I (1060-1108)\textsuperscript{119}; Adela of Blois, for Louis VII (1137-80)\textsuperscript{120}; Jeanne of Navarre (Champagne), for Philip IV (1285-1314);\textsuperscript{121} and Isabeau of Bavaria, for Charles VI (1380-1422).\textsuperscript{122} In Navarre, Toda Asnárez, was regent for her son García I Sánchez (926-70); Urraca Fernández and Jimena González, grandmother and mother, respectively, were regents for Sancho III Garcés, el Mayor (1000-35)\textsuperscript{123}. María de

\textsuperscript{118} Lightman, "Sons and Mothers," 62-63.

\textsuperscript{119} Poulet, "Capetian Women and the Regency," 107.


\textsuperscript{121} Poulet, "Capetian Women and the Regency," 96-100, 110-11.

\textsuperscript{122} Colleen Lily Mooney, "Queenship in Fifteenth-Century France," Ph.D. Dissertation, The Ohio State University, 1977, 139-70.

\textsuperscript{123} Collins, "Queens-Dowager and Queens-Regent," 87-91.
Molina, wife of Sancho IV of Castile, was regent for both her son, Fernando IV (1295-1312), and grandson, Alfonso XI (1312-50) during a period of anarchy and warfare.\(^{124}\) In the Byzantine Empire, Empress Irene the Athenian bravely served as regent for her son Constantine VI (753-803).\(^{125}\)

Two queens-regent serve as examples to demonstrate the width of the regency spectrum. Blanche of Castile (1188-1252), one of the most well-known French queens-regent, is more important as regent for her son Louis IX (1226-79) than for her brief co-reign with her husband Louis VIII (1223-26).\(^{126}\) Named regent in her husband's will, she was granted unlimited authority in terms of trusteeship and tutelage of the prince. It is hard to assess her actual role, however, because her governmental authority was placed under the lawful authority of the young king, and most legal documents do not bear Blanche's name. Blanche used her extraordinary administrative skills to bring order to France during the minority from 1226 to 1244. She ruled the nobles with a strong hand and defeated the efforts of Henry III of England to foment uprisings in Normandy. Her opposition to Louis's crusading intentions led to her retreat from public life, but her fortunes were

\(^{124}\) Gaibrois de Ballesteros, \textit{María de Molina, tres veces reina}, 43-46; \textit{History of Medieval Spain}, 401, 403.

\(^{125}\) Runciman, "The Empress Irene the Athenian," 101-18.

reversed in 1248 when Louis went to the Holy Land, leaving Blanche as regent until 1252.

On the other hand, the regency of Isabelle of France, wife of Edward II (1307-27), was contentious and controversial and her regency demonstrates the dangers posed both by foreign birth and sexual behavior. From 1312 onward, after the death of Piers Gaveston, Isabelle fulfilled a central yet unofficial role in the king's diplomacy as his representative to the barons and her brother, King Charles IV of France (1322-28). Her influence stemmed from the instability of Edward's position and her own popularity in the realm. Her status was the inverse of Edward's, so much so that after his death, she was able to rule until 1330 as regent for her son, Edward III (1337-77), with her lover, Roger Mortimer. In her son's opinion there was not enough room for all three of them on the throne. He ordered his mother's lands confiscated and forced her to resign from all political activity. Like Margaret of Anjou in fifteenth-century England and Catherine de Médicis in sixteenth-century France, Isabelle was vilified for her foreignness and her open sexual liaison with Mortimer.

These very different regencies highlight the importance both


of regional distinctions and personality as factors in understanding queenship in general. In France, where kings were thought to be the embodiment of Christ, Blanche, the mother of a saint-king, became the symbol of the perfect queen. She took care to stay well within the limits of her authority and did nothing untoward in her personal life. Isabelle, on the other hand, lost her popular support when she seized power and was demonized by many later chroniclers. The rabid emotional response to Isabelle may have resulted not only from her foreignness but also perceived treason to her husband as well as her overt use of her sexuality.\footnote{And, of course, Anne Boleyn's sexuality was used as a weapon against her. Retha Warnicke has written widely about the rhetoric of sexuality in the life and historiography of Anne Boleyn. See, especially, two works: "Conflicting Rhetoric about Tudor Women: The Example of Queen Anne Boleyn," in Political Rhetoric, Power, and Renaissance Women, 39-56; and The Rise and Fall of Anne Boleyn: Family Politics at the Court of Henry VIII (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1989).}

In order to overcome entrenched opposition to rule by a woman, even in the limited form of a regency, and fears of her sexual powers, a queen had to live an exemplary life. She had to pay strict attention to the limits of her authority, and living the life of a saint did not hurt, either. Urraca of León-Castile occupies a mid-point between Blanche and Isabelle: Although she had a prominent lover, she was an effective queen ruling in her own right, so charges of treason could hardly be levelled against her. On the other hand, Isabelle of France was accepted, at least begrudgingly, until Edward's death, for which she was widely blamed. It was her treasonous actions that gave her enemies grounds for their fears, and led to her exile. Her successor, Edward III's wife, Philippa, was
far more careful than Isabelle, both in terms of her governance and her personal affairs. On this spectrum of queenly behavior, Maria of Castile was closer to Blanche than to either Isabelle or Urraca. She was dutiful, hard-working, attentive to the needs of her subjects, and, as far as I have been able to discern, had no extramarital sexual relations. She governed like a king and lived like a saint.

Unofficial Political Partnership

Unlike queens-regent, queens who ruled with their husbands, fathers, or sons occupied an indeterminate milieu that permitted them to operate within the interstices between the official and unofficial, the private and public. Whether meeting with heads of state, presiding over a royal council in lieu of an ailing or absent husband or father, or actively participating in the work of government, these queens were not working from a well-defined office and rarely, if ever, did they have specific orders outlining their powers. They took it for granted that marriage to a king entailed a role in governance, and they routinely took part in the duties of monarchy.

Political partnerships, involving either princes or queen, could be prompted by any number of needs. For example, a need to strengthen the notion of dynastic succession in Germany, England, and Capetian France prompted emperors and kings to designate the

130 She served as regent during Edward's many absences during the Hundred Years' War, but was always officially associated with one of their young sons, so it is not clear exactly how much political authority she was able to exercise. Lake, "Queenship in Fourteenth-Century England," 129-30.
eldest son as rex designatus, later the rex coronatus, and father and son often ruled together.\textsuperscript{131} To rule their dispersed territories, both the English and Aragonese kings appointed their sons to serve as lieutenants.\textsuperscript{132} It was at these moments, in certain times and under certain circumstances, that a queen could exercise considerable political authority in some form of partnership with the king.\textsuperscript{133}

Thinking of a queen as a ruling partner opens up new perspectives and prompts a reconsideration of both kingship and queenship. Because there was more than one way to exert political influence, a queen could govern in ways not immediately apparent, and not simply in her own right or as an intimate advisor to her husband. Many sat alongside their husbands in the curia regis, the parliamentary assemblies, and the courts of justice. A queen's extended family could well be the king and queen of a neighboring kingdom, or an archbishop or duke, so that it was natural for her to meet with prelates, papal legates, and high-ranking officials from neighboring realms. These prodigious connections opened doors,


\textsuperscript{132} For example, Henry II of England provided his sons with various domains to rule during his lifetime. Warren, \textit{Henry II}, 559-93; and Ralph V. Turner, "The Problem of Survival for the Angevin 'Empire': Henry II's Sons and His Son's Vision of Late Twelfth-Century Realities," \textit{American Historical Review} 100:1 (February 1995): 78-96. For the Crown of Aragón, see \textit{Medieval Crown of Aragón}, 134, 145-49, 156.

\textsuperscript{133} Fradenburg, "Rethinking Queenship," 7.
paved the way for alliances, and were instrumental not only in brokering peace treaties, an activity with which queens have long been associated, but also in negotiating economic and political agreements. A ruling partnership for a queen could take many forms, the most official of which was the regency, but also included unofficial co-ruler with her husband during his lifetime and queen-dowager when her son reached his majority. Often, a queen's career was a commingling of some or all of the possibilities, in sequence or all at once. By assuming that when queens governed they did so through, or were governed by, high-ranking non-royal men such as bishops and magnates, we see only part of the picture. A queen could rule with her husband, nobles, and prelates without being ruled by them.

A queen's ability to jointly rule in an unofficial capacity with her husband or father was closely related to the forms of kingship that had taken hold over time. Each Christian kingdom developed a distinctive form of government and kingship that reflected the social, cultural, and political milieu of each realm. Any or all forms of kingship—warrior, theocratic, constitutional—could exist in any kingdom, either in sequence or simultaneously. As a rule, those

134 Little work has been done on Germanic and Scandinavian kingdoms in the high and later Middle Ages, leaving open the question of how kingship and queenship interacted there. The German emperors theoretically were elected but certain dynasties dominated for generations and theocratic aspects, especially the desire for the legitimization brought by a papal coronation, were strong. Likewise, little is known of kingship in northern and eastern Europe, but unsettled political conditions there resembled feudal society in England and France and kingship in Scandinavia, Hungary, or Poland may have produced ideologies similar to those of feudal kingdoms. Leyser, "Twelfth-Century Kings and Kingship," 241-67; Myers, Medieval Kingship, 218-22, 234-44.
kingdoms where theocratic aspects were minimal and constitutional monarchy took hold early and prevailed provided queens with the most options other than direct rulership.

In England, for example, theocratic aspects of kingship were outweighed by constitutional ones and a strong Parliament balanced royal power. An English queen was more likely to work alongside the king as an unofficial partner than as regent, perhaps in response to the disastrous regency of Isabelle of France. English history is filled with strong queens who ruled alongside their husbands, such as Eleanor of Aquitaine, Eleanor of Provence, Eleanor of Castile, Elizabeth Woodville, and Elizabeth of York. Ruling with a forceful king shielded these queens from barons who tried to restrict a queen's access to official sovereignty, but a strong woman married to a weak king was trouble: Isabelle of France is a case in point.

Queen Matilda, wife of Henry I of England (1100-35), was regent while Henry was in Normandy, a common occurrence during


138 Parsons, Eleanor of Castile, 33-71.

his long reign. Matilda of Boulogne, wife of Stephen of Blois, was a worthy equal of Empress Matilda in the civil war and anarchy of mid-twelfth century England. Her own inheritance—the Honour of Boulogne, centered on Colchester and London—made her one of the richest landowners in England and the allegiance of her subjects there was pivotal in her husband’s struggle for the succession. Adept at foreign alliance-building, she helped negotiate the second treaty of Durham between Scotland and England in 1139. A strong queen and active supporter of Stephen, Matilda played an active part militarily during his captivity after the battle of Lincoln in 1141. She had a ready fleet at Boulogne that she summoned to Stephen's defense at Dover, and it was widely recognized that her courage and determination rescued Stephen from catastrophe.

In the Spanish kingdoms, where even into the high Middle Ages a king’s right to rule stemmed in large part from his military success in the reconquest, theocratic aspects were largely ceremonial and constitutional aspects firmly took hold. In Spain it was more


141 Davis, King Stephen, 35-57, 114; Parsons, Eleanor of Castile, 72.

likely for queens to move from an official role to an unofficial one, depending on circumstance and the immediate needs of the kingdom. Like Blanche of Castile, her sister Berenguela of León is an example of the blending of rulership options in a single reign. She was regent for her younger brother, Enrique III (1214-17), and succeeded him after his death. As the oldest surviving child of Alfonso VIII (1158-1214), Berenguela's claim to rule in her own right was established in the treaty of Seligenstadt signed in 1187 that formally betrothed her to Conrad of Rothenburg. That marriage never took place and Berenguela later married Alfonso IX of León (1188-1230), but her right to rule remained unchallenged. By the time of Enrique's death, she and Alfonso had divorced and she could have claimed the kingdom of Castile for herself. Instead, after a reign of less than a month, she relinquished her rights in favor of her son, Fernando III (1217-52) and ruled as regent during his minority. Such a deliberate abdication of power in order to achieve it is a particularly female strategy that restores the social equilibrium which is threatened by a woman's personal exercise of authority. Berenguela was a keenly pragmatic woman who, like Urraca of León-Castile and Melisende of Jerusalem, recognized that in order to fight off rivals it was essential to bring in either a husband or a son at the earliest possible moment as nominal ruling partner. She served her son ably, arranging his marriage to Beatrice of Swabia and negotiating his succession to a unified kingdom of León and Castile.143

In France, theocratic kingship evolved until it reached its conclusion in the early modern period as the divine rights of kings.\footnote{Jackson, *Vive le Roi!*, 203-20; Myers, *Medieval Kingship*, 299-344; Kantorowicz, *The King's Two Bodies*, 383-450; Wood, *Joan of Arc and Richard III*, 56-60.} This, combined with a preference for the regency, made unofficial public authority in the possession of a queen a rare occurrence in France between the ascent of the Valois dynasty in 1328 and the regency of Anne of Brittany in the late fifteenth century. When the Capetians were the ruling dynasty, however, it appears to have been fairly common. Adelaide, wife of Louis VI (1081-1137), stands out as a queen whose royal charters were dated by her regnal year as well as Louis's. She was associated with Louis's acts even after the designation of their son as rex junior. In some acts she took precedence over the anointed co-regent and in others she followed him. Andrew Lewis has argued that Louis may have done this to reinforce the legitimacy of his marriage and strengthen dynastic principles, so it is not completely clear how much real political power Adelaide had.\footnote{Facinger, "Queenship in Capetian France," 7-8; Lewis, *Royal Succession in Capetian France*, 55.}

The linkage of kingship with queenship was, of course, mitigated by the personal dynamics between the king, the queen, and the realm. Factors such as the king's military strength and luck in battle; his character and his personality; the high-ranking nobles and prelates; the nature of a king's marriage and his children; and the social and economic conditions of the realm determined kingship as much as any theory or institution. Finally, it is important to
consider the biography of the queen herself—factors such as her intelligence, temperament, experience, age, health, personal wealth, children, and extended family connections.

Such ad hoc official power made queens vulnerable to opposition, more so even than a regent, and a queen who managed to govern through extraofficial channels may have deflected criticism of her actions by operating through a close male relative or high-ranking advisor. Jeanne of Navarre, wife of Philip the Fair, was rarely separated from him and her name was associated with his on important acts because of her rank and status. He appointed her regent should he die before their son came of age. But, does her name on such documents mean that she was instrumental in their creation, or was it standard chancery practice? In some cases, most often for queens in the early Middle Ages, the documentation for unofficial authority is suggestive but ambiguous. The evidence suggests but does not always demonstrate the political activity of queens.

Queenship in the Crown of Aragón

As valid as these interpretations are for understanding other queens, and as useful as these theories are to clarify the nature of


147 In tenth-century Navarre, Teresa Ansúrez, wife of García I Sánchez (926-70), appears with the king on certain charters and donations, but there is insufficient evidence to determine whether she had wider powers. In León, Andregoto Galindez, may have ruled with her son Sancho II Gercés (970-94), but the documentation is unclear. Collins, "Queens-Dowager and Queens-Regent," 88-92.
their political authority, they do not fully explain the case of María of Castile. Even in the context of ruling queens, or regents and queens who exercised political authority through unofficial channels, María remains a paradox. The problem with so many of the feminist approaches to women and power is that, good as they are at explaining the power of non-royal women, they fail in María's case because her political authority was legitimate and official. Patriarchal institutions were only a partial impediment to her ability to govern; her networks were official channels; her intercessory was minimal, limited only to the highest appeals to the king in Naples, because she was the highest authority in Catalunya; and she had no children, and therefore was not a tutor or guardian of an heir. The importance of the family is only part of the key to understanding the source and nature of her authority.

Some would consider her an exception, except that as one of seven Aragonese queens in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries who governed in place of their husbands in the Crown of Aragón, she was the rule. These queens were, like the princes who served as lieutenants, ruling partners with the king. An understanding of the nature of Aragonese kingship is crucial to explaining the paradox of María of Castile.

Theocratic and feudal elements had never taken hold in the Crown of Aragón as strongly as elsewhere in Europe, and Aragonese kingship ideology closely resembled that of Castile.148 The early count-kings of Barcelona, who wrested control from the Muslims and

fought off French invasions, considered that they had won the crown by their own sword. It was the function of the higher clergy to uphold the status of the king, and not vice-versa. As in England, royal authority was effectively prevented from assuming any authoritarian tendencies by a strong nobility and a wealthy urban patriciate. By the mid-fourteenth century, Aragonese kingship had developed into a constitutional variant known as pactism in which the king ruled in conjunction with the parliamentary assemblies.\textsuperscript{149} The Aragonese kings, ever pragmatic, recognized that their conquests in the Mediterranean required some form of delegated authority and they used the lieutenancy as the mainstay of a government to enable them to extend their territorial reach beyond the Iberian peninsula.

Aragonese kings were free to appoint whomever they pleased from within the royal family, and they chose the person they trusted most. Even though queens were effectively excluded from the succession by generations of healthy princes, they were not legally prohibited from ruling, so when kings appointed a queen as lieutenant, they were not violating any law or custom.\textsuperscript{150} Once queens began to serve as lieutenants, they no longer served as regents per se, because the duties of the regent fell under the jurisdiction of the lieutenant. After the fourteenth century, Aragonese queens could play an unofficial role in government, but more often than not they would be appointed to the lieutenancy and

\textsuperscript{149} Myers, Medieval Kingship, 222–28; Medieval Crown of Aragon, 13, 72, 155.

granted clearly specified duties.

I believe that rather than being held back by a restrictive kingship ideology or social or cultural attitudes toward women and rulership, María was propelled forward by needs of state and the unique character of Aragonese kingship. She may seem exceptional when seen in context with other medieval queens, but in the political culture of the Crown of Aragón the only thing exceptional about her lieutenancy was the scope and duration of her tenure. This is not to suggest that society in the Crown of Aragón was less patriarchal than elsewhere in Europe. The king still stood at the center of government and a queen became lieutenant only if he wished it, and on his terms. He approved, and thus could invalidate, the official actions of the lieutenant. The theoretical boundaries of her office were circumscribed by law, but in practice, the limits of her authority were determined by custom and culture, and mitigated by personality and circumstance. Nevertheless, the office of the governmental lieutenant as it was used in the Crown of Aragón was an institutional innovation in medieval Europe, and the seven Aragonese queen-lieutenants were unique among their peers. All seven were ruling partners with the king, and some were able co-rulers in fact. The queens-lieutenant of the Crown of Aragón, in this study exemplified by María of Castile, demonstrate one important way in which a queen could be a legitimate and forceful component in the governance of the realm.
CHAPTER 3
QUEENSHIP AND THE LIEUTENANCY IN
THE MEDIEVAL CROWN OF ARAGON

The royal lieutenant, as the embodiment of the king's personal authority and a custodian of the realm, governed both in place of and with an adult king who was fully capable of ruling but, for any number of reasons, was unable to govern a particular territory or territories. Lieutenants governed for continuous periods of time and were actively involved in the routine business of government, including convocation of parliamentary assemblies and direction of military matters. The lieutenant was often but not always a member of the royal family, male or female, and over time the office became part of a prince's education.¹

Governmental lieutenancies were rare in France, but rather common in England and Castile, and I have found evidence of at least two queens who fit the description. Matilda, wife of Henry I of England, had viceregal authority during the king's frequent absences in Normandy, but little is known of her actions as viceroy. It is possible that she was not the only English queen to serve as viceroy or lieutenant.² In Castile, Violante, wife of Alfonso X of


Castile (1252-84), acted like a lieutenant for her husband when he was ill but she had no special title. She certainly was busy: She frequently advised her husband on political matters such as taxation; she interceded between her father, Jaume I of Aragón (1213-76), and her husband over the revolt of the Mudéjars in 1264; she participated in sessions of the Cortes and was appointed by her husband to a commission to the Cortes of Burgos in 1272 to negotiate with rebellious nobles. 3 There may be more instances like these, but not enough work has been done to know if queen-lieutenants existed elsewhere or if other queens governed through a similar institution.

It was in the Crown of Aragón, however, that a queen's official capacity to govern was the most explicit and official. There, the office of lieutenant, created in the thirteenth century as a practical means of ruling the Crown's extensive territorial possessions, was a common route to political power for queens. Originally conceived as both an ad hoc adjunct to the king and a training ground for princes to rule one or more of the constituent realms of the Aragonese crown, by the fifteenth century it was a well-established institution.

Seen in this context, it is not so remarkable that over the course of Alfonso's forty-two year reign, María served as Lieutenant General in various realms, mostly in the principality of Catalunya, for a total of twenty-five years. At issue in this study are her two separate tenures as Lieutenant General of Catalunya. Her first term, 3

from 1420 to 1423, was brief, but the second, from 1432 to 1453, was strikingly different. Not only was it the longest continuous span of time for any lieutenant to govern in any of the realms of the Crown of Aragón, but María possessed broader powers than her predecessors. She maintained a court separate from the king's at Naples, took council from her own sacrum consilium, convoked Corts regularly, and governed forcefully during a difficult period in Catalan history. 4 This chapter will discuss first the nature of the office and its institutional antecedents, and then will briefly outline the major events and themes of María's lieutenancy.


5 The only works devoted to medieval lieutenants anywhere in western Europe concern the Crown of Aragón. Jesús Lalinde Abadía, "Virreyes y lugartenientes medievales en la Corona de Aragón," Cuadernos de Historia de España (Buenos Aires) 31 (1960): 98-172; idem, La institución virreinal en Cataluña (1471-1716) (Barcelona: Instituto de Estudios Mediterráneos, 1964).
of Aragón, however, did the lieutenancy develop into a permanent institution.

Lieutenancies developed as a consequence of theories of representation that, in turn, were the product of canon law theories that date to the late twelfth and early thirteenth centuries. By this time, the Christian church had grown into an unwieldy earthly kingdom that was beyond human abilities to govern as the early church fathers had. Because the pope could not be in all places at once, both the "Liber Sextus" and the papal decretal of John XXII, "Super gentes," determined that just as Christ had left behind a vicar to serve in his place, the pope could designate someone to act in his place.6

In the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, as the boundaries of secular realms expanded as a result of conquest, annexation, inheritance, or dowry, secular rulers found themselves facing the same dilemma as the pope. Kings recognized from a purely practical point of view that certain tasks could be performed by another individual without any loss of regal authority or status. And, like

6 Rules 68 and 72 of the "Liber Sextus" state "potest quis per alium quod potest facere per se ipsum" and "qui facit per alium est perinde ac si faciat per se ipsum." The pertinent text of "Super gentes" reads: "Super gentes, et Regna Romanus Pontifex a Domino constitutus, cum personaliter singulas regiones circuire non possit, nec circa gregem sibi creditum curam pastoralis sollicitudinis exercere: necesse habet interum ex debiti impossitae servitutis, suos ad diversas mundi partes (prout necessitates emerserit) destinare legatos, qui vices ipsius supplendo, errata corrigit, aspera in plana convertant, et commisissi sibi populis salutis incrementa ministrent." Lalinde Abadía, "Virreyes y lugartenientes medievales en la Corona de Aragón," 99–100. On papal legates, see Mario Oliveri, The Representatives: The Real Nature and Function of Papal Legates (Gerrards Cross, UK: Van Duren, 1980); and Gino Paro, The Right of Papal Legation (Washington: Catholic University of America Press, 1948).
the pope, they delegated more and more authority to an official empowered to govern in the places where the king could not physically be present. Not surprisingly, the institution was especially important for those kings who governed territories abroad, notably England and the Crown of Aragón.

The governmental lieutenant was a unique form of delegated authority that differed substantially from other governmental or military royal officials. Whereas chancellors and governors performed very specific tasks, often for a specific length of time, at the king's command, they were subject to his will: They worked for the king. A lieutenant, on the other hand, acted in place of the king. When a king delegated certain tasks to his chancellor, he still retained superior authority. The chancellor could advise the king, he could prepare a writ on the king's order for the king's signature, but that was the extent of his authority. A lieutenant, on the other hand, acted in concert with the king as well as in place of the king and thus could order the writ and sign it. In theory lieutenants were empowered to act freely in all circumstances, but in practice all kings retained the power to withhold assent or revoke the title.

A lieutenant was, in the most literal sense of the definition of the Latin locum tenens, someone who occupied the place of another

7 The growth of the lieutenancy as an institution coincided with, and perhaps contributed to, the development of political theories that drew a distinction between the person of the king from the office of the king. Ernst Kantorowicz, The King's Two Bodies: A Study in Mediaeval Political Theology. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1967), 336-83.

8 Lalinde Abadia, La institución virreinal, 47-49; idem, "Virreyes y lugartenientes," 100-10.
person, in this case, the king. This is precisely what Bernat Martorell depicted when he painted the miniature of María with the consellers. She physically replaced the king in the seat of government in Catalunya. This meaning is clearly retained in all its Romance cognates: the French lieutenant, the Castilian lugarteniente, the Italian tenente, and the Catalan lloctinent.

This substitution of a lieutenant for a king was acceptable to his subjects perhaps because of its close association with members of the immediate royal family. It was not an equal substitution, of course, but one royal body was replacing another. Often it was the prerogative of the eldest son or, in the case of the Crown of Aragón, the queen. Although the king was free to name anyone he wanted, he rarely chose someone outside the family. Because of this association with the royal family, the lieutenant personified royal power more perfectly than any other office and thus had a higher dignity than all others. The increased acceptance of primogeniture as a means of determining the succession, anticipatory association of the heir, and coronation ceremonies for queens all combined to make the substitution more palatable to the local population subject


to the lieutenant's immediate jurisdiction.\textsuperscript{11}

Popular resistance to rule by a lieutenant was further muted because the office was not an innovation but simply an extension of the powers of an existing office, such as justiciar, seneschal, or bailiff. In England, for example, Henry I (1100-35) created the office of the justiciar to govern in his absence and granted him the power to issue writs and to preside over a central, sedentary court of Exchequer. Although not connected in any official way with the royal family, the justiciar, who exercised little short of supreme authority, and whose authority did not lapse with the death of the king, resembled a lieutenant.\textsuperscript{12} Henry II (1154-89) regarded all of his dominions as some sort of unity even though there were five separate provincial administrations united only in the person of the peripatetic king. Like Henry I, he left the justiciar in charge of the government of England during his frequent absences abroad and relied upon his seneschals (the Norman equivalent of a justiciar), to govern each French territory separately. Henry II, however, had plenty of sons to call on to govern his distant realms. In 1185 he sent his son John as quasi-viceroy to govern Ireland and this set a


\textsuperscript{12} The office of the justiciar lapsed in 1226, following the regency of William Marshall for Henry III, but was revived in 1258. Its viceregal functions, however, were assumed by regents and protectors. David Carpenter, The Minority of Henry III (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1990), 21-22.
precedent for associating the office with a member of the royal family. Henry intended Aquitaine, Normandy, Brittany, and Wales as duchies for his sons but these more closely resembled French apanage grants than lieutenancies. Not surprisingly, Henry retained a firm grip on policy, no matter to whom he delegated his powers.\textsuperscript{13}

In France, Philip II, "Augustus," (1180-1223) relied on bailiffs and seneschals in much the same way as the English relied on the justiciar.\textsuperscript{14} As in England, these men were not members of the royal family, but their jurisdiction was more limited than their English counterparts. When a province such as Languedoc or Normandy came under his direct control, he preserved intact its customs and institutions but all the higher offices were staffed by his own men from Paris. Fully-empowered governmental lieutenants may not have been used until the late fourteenth century, but the lack of studies devoted specifically to French and English lieutenants makes analyses and comparisons difficult.\textsuperscript{15}


\textsuperscript{15} There are only scattered references in studies on individual kings or government in general. P. S. Lewis, Later Medieval France: The Polity (London: Macmillan, 1968), 139, 159-63, 198, 228; Warren, Henry II, 204, 228-30, 560-64; Carpenter, Henry III, 21-22; Baldwin, The Government of Philip Augustus, 220-25.
Because vernacular nomenclature can be misleading and confusing, care must be taken to avoid confusing a governmental lieutenant with any other office, no matter how lofty the title and how similar the cognate word. There were times when a male lieutenant served as head of both the government and the army, but a governmental lieutenant must not be confused with a military rank. This is especially true in the Crown of Aragón where the lieutenancy was not essentially military in character but the direction of military affairs often fell under the jurisdiction of the lieutenant. Even though titles such as justiciar and seneschal and bailiff and military lieutenant persisted throughout the Middle Ages, there is a world of difference between a local bailiff with limited jurisdiction and a high-ranking official also called a bailiff who governed in the king's stead. This is especially true in the Christian kingdoms of Jerusalem, where the authority of a lieutenant was similar to that of a bailiff. These lieutenants, including Guy of Lusignan and Reynald of Châtillon, who were connected peripherally to the nascent royal family, served at most one-year terms. In Aragón titles changed as the office developed, so the only way to clearly distinguish one from the other is to focus on actual jurisdiction. A governmental lieutenant possessed wide powers and a broad territorial scope for an unspecified length of time. He or she was responsible for the exercise of justice, maintenance of public order, supervision of all subordinate royal officials, and, in some cases, command of military

In short, a lieutenant was the embodiment of the king's personal authority, a custodian of the realm, a co-ruler with an adult king, fully capable of ruling, who, for any number of reasons, was unable to govern a particular territory or territories. Proximity to the king through a connection to the royal family and the exercise of duties normally reserved to the king are the hallmarks of the office. This linkage of the lieutenancy to the royal family distinguishes it from related offices such as the English justiciar, the French seneschal, or the lieutenants in Jerusalem. As a form of delegated authority held by a person directly connected to the king by birth, the lieutenancy became fused with Aragonese kingship. And, because queens served as lieutenants, it fused with queenship as well. It was an official form of co-rulership unique, as far as I know, to the medieval Crown of Aragon.

Although a member of the royal family with broad jurisdiction sounds much like a regent or an apanaged (cadet) prince, these are in fact distinct entities. Whereas a lieutenant was appointed by a very much alive and well king to rule with him, in his place, in far-flung territories or newly-conquered realms, a regent (or regency council) ruled the kingdom because youth or illness or captivity impaired a king's ability to rule. This definition also applies to English Protectors who, for all practical purposes, functioned as regents without the formality or the strictures of a regency council but whose jurisdiction was quite limited. Regents and protectors shared certain similarities: They were both non-heritable custodial offices with an official scope usually, but not always, explicitly
stated. But a protector or regent was appointed to serve only until the king reached his majority or was otherwise capable of returning to work full-time. The governmental lieutenant was a more fixed, permanent office whose incumbent held the office at the discretion of the king, sometimes for life. The protectorate was a compromise intended to allay the English fear of regencies in the wake of several memorably ambitious regents, such as Isabelle of France and Roger Mortimer, regents for Edward III. For example, Richard, duke of York, was named "protector and defender of the realm" due to Henry VI's (1422-61) insanity and his son's minority, but York's ambition was widely feared. Thus, his title implied a personal duty for the defense of the land and the appointment was to continue only until the prince came of age.

This distinction between a regent, a protector, and a lieutenant holds true in most kingdoms of western Europe except France, where the regency functioned like the lieutenancy of


18 Lalinde Abadía, La institución virreinal en Cataluña (1471-1716) (Barcelona: Instituto de Estudios Mediterráneos, 1964), 47-49, 263.

England or Aragón. For example, when a very healthy and sane Philip Augustus left France in 1190 to go on crusade, he left the kingdom in the hands not of a lieutenant but of a regency council led by his mother, Adèle of Champagne. 20

On the other hand, an apanaged prince, like a lieutenant, protector, or regent, was a member of the royal family with a broad jurisdiction superseded only by the king himself, but with one important difference. The apanage itself was not an office, it was an inheritance. Although many kings used an apanage much like a lieutenancy and for many of the same reasons, it was not just a way to govern newly acquired lands, it was a grant of land. An apanage was not custodial, it was seigneurial. An apanage endowed the recipient with a title, such as duke or earl, whereas a lieutenancy did not. The officeholder could already be a duke or earl or queen in his (or her) own right, but he (or she) did not acquire the title by virtue of the lieutenancy. Although the king exercised an ambiguous sovereignty over apanaged domains—he often did not exercise immediate control or administration over apanage lands and they were not necessarily represented at royal assemblies—the pressures of the blood tie made an apanage a new kind of fief. The holder of an apanage could collect the revenues as his own and thus maintained a semi-autonomous financial position. Conversely, the

lieutenant collected revenues from the king's lands in the name of the king and did not have unlimited control over treasury disbursements. The lands, titles, incomes, and jurisdiction of an apanage reverted to the crown if there were no male heirs to succeed, making it as an effective way to retain those lands within the royal domain.\(^{21}\) French kings, who viewed as dangerous any concession of royal power, preferred the apanage as a way to placate younger sons while at the same time discouraging them from extending their reach. A lieutenancy could be granted to an apanaged prince as a reward for military service, but more often it went to royal commissioners who were members of the immediate royal entourage but not family members.\(^{22}\)

Over time, the lieutenancy, or some variant of it, became an integral part of a prince's education. The Valois kings used the office of the lieutenant as a training ground for the dauphin.\(^{23}\) Charles V of France (1364-80) served as lieutenant du roi after the capture of his father, Jean (1350-64), at the battle of Poitiers in 1356. Because his father was incapable of ruling, this seems more like a regency than a lieutenancy, but after Jean's release in 1360, Charles continued to play an active role in the government until his


\(^{22}\) Lewis, *Later Medieval France*, 139-59.

\(^{23}\) The Capetian kings accomplished much the same thing but in a less official way. Philip Augustus's son Louis (Louis VIII, 1223-1226) played a role in government, but only after 1220 (when he was 33 years old) and then in only a limited way. Baldwin, *The Government of Philip of Augustus*, 102-104, 220-25, 340; Strayer, "Normandy and Languedoc," 49.
father's death. He set a precedent for the later lieutenancies of Charles VI (1380-1422) and Charles VII (1422-61).24

The lieutenancy was far more important to the English than the French, however, because of extensive English territories on the continent. During the Hundred Years' War there were many English lieutenants—John of Gaunt, duke of Lancaster, from 1340 to 1399; John Beaufort, duke of Somerset, from 1372 to 1410; and John of Lancaster, duke of Bedford, from 1389-1435—but none more famous than Edward, Prince of Wales, known as the "Black Prince." Edward embodied the multifaceted office of the lieutenancy. As lieutenant in Gascony from 1355 to 1363 he had complete control over administration with the power to make ordinances; appoint or dismiss ministers; dispose of finances as he saw fit; he had the power of pardon and seizures and could make grants of land and negotiate truces and armistices. His military prowess is well known. From 1363 to 1370 he was lord of Aquitaine with terms similar to those of his earlier lieutenancy with one notable exception—he was to be lord for life. Sadly, his life ended before his father's did, and thus his education in royal government ended before he could succeed to the throne.25


25 Barber, Edward, Prince of Wales, 115, 175-77.
Aragonese Lieutenants in the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Centuries

Far more their than French and English counterparts, the Aragonese kings put the lieutenancy to continuous use. At no other time in history and in no other kingdom did it acquire anything like its institutional importance in the medieval Crown of Aragón. Necessity compelled the Aragonese to take the lieutenancy a step further than anyone else because their various dominions were not contiguous. Whereas Edward, the "Black Prince," could personally govern much of southern France, it was difficult if not impossible for one person to rule Aragón, Catalunya, Valencia, Majorca, Sicily, Corsica, and Sardinia. The Aragonese kings had to develop some form of co-rulership in order to govern realms that spread from one end of the Mediterranean to the other.

The office of the lieutenant, originally called the Procurador General, first appeared in the Crown of Aragón during the reign of Jaume I (1213-76), who intended it as an adjunct to royal rule. Jaume appointed his sons to rule the home territories of Aragón and Catalunya while he conquered, pacified, and then established a government in the realms of Valencia and Majorca. His son Pere (later Pere III, 1276-85) was Procurador General in the principality

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27 Valdeavellano, Curso de Historia de las instituciones Españolas, 447-49.

28 On Jaume's reign, see Ferran Soldevila, Historia de Catalunya, 3 volumes (Barcelona: Editorial Alpha, 1934), 1: 194-255; Medieval Crown of Aragon, 58-85.
of Catalunya in 1257 and later the kingdom of Aragón until his accession in 1276.29

The first procuradors handled routine matters of government in nearby realms while the king moved from one kingdom to another according to the demands of government, especially for the convocation of regional Cortes (Cortes in Aragón) which by law demanded the king's physical presence. In 1302, the procurador's duties were more clearly defined and encharged with a wider territorial jurisdiction. At this early stage, none of these officials acted as true proxies for the king, and even the Procurador General continued to carry out his functions in the presence of the king. The term lieutenant first designated anyone who was appointed to rule more distant realms such as Majorca and Valencia but the jurisdiction was local and the term of office was limited.30

Changes in nomenclature were not just cosmetic; they signalled the development of the office from an ad hoc post to a permanent fixture of government. When Sicily was annexed in 1282 and government became a truly long-distance affair, Pere III solved the problem by expanding the older lieutenancy and renaming it the Lieutenant General of Sicily. The designation "General" distinguished it from earlier lieutenants and indicates that the office had an even wider jurisdiction within a single territory, and may have had an increased military role. He gave the job to his eldest surviving son Jaume (later Jaume II, 1291-1327), who governed Sicily for eight

30 Lalinde Abadía, "Virreyes y lugartenientes," 100-11.
years until his accession to the Aragonese throne.31

A governmental lieutenant in the Crown of Aragón was, in the terminology of the documents, the king's alter ego or alter nos, occupying the place when the king was absent and relinquishing the office when the king died. It was thus distinct from an ordinary delegated office such as a chancellor, who could remain in office during the interregnum or from king to king. The lieutenancy, in theory, ended at the king's death, even if the lieutenant was not the heir but a younger brother, although in some cases the lieutenancy continued without interruption but at the new king's discretion. In the fourteenth century, when all of a king's sons were lieutenants in various realms, on the king's death, the eldest son would succeed him as king and the others remained lieutenants at the discretion of the new king.32

By expanding the office and widening its geographical scope, over time it attained the status of a permanent institution. No longer ad hoc, it had become the highest political office in the realm, superseded only by the king himself. The fact that the lands governed by a lieutenant were not held as apanage nor directly governed by an independent cadet king,33 may have contributed to the ease with which the Aragonese kings delegated substantial authority to sons, wives, or brothers. The system took advantage of

31 Soldevila, Història de Catalunya, 1: 296-332.

32 Lalinde Abadía, La institución virreinal, 78-81; Soldevila, Història de Catalunya, 1: 342-76.

33 Sicily is the exception to this statement. It was ruled as a cadet kingdom from 1291 until 1391. Medieval Crown of Aragon, 87-88, 90-94, 98, 123-27.
family loyalty and the symbolic importance of the ruling dynasty. It is especially remarkable that, given the often long distances that separated the various realms and the inherent risk of rebellion in such an arrangement, the king's trust was rarely abused.  

By the fourteenth century, the office was firmly established as part of the institutional structure of the Crown of Aragón. The old office of the Procurador General, which had a limited territorial jurisdiction and thus was ill-suited to the needs of such a dispersed kingdom, had disappeared altogether and its duties were assumed by lieutenants. In 1358 Joan (later Joan I, 1387–96) was the first lieutenant fully empowered to rule in the king's place as alter nos when his father, Pere IV (1336–87), named him Lieutenant General. For the first time, the designation "General" truly signified both wide governmental powers and wide territorial jurisdiction. In another significant development, the office became firmly connected with immediate members of the royal family. The Corts of Aragón, meeting in Tamarit in 1367, formalized the customary linkage of the lieutenancy with the first-born son and heir (primogénito) by decreeing that he could automatically serve as lieutenant once he

34 Only twice before 1492 were non-royal family members appointed lieutenants. Hug de Angelsola, brother of the count of Cardona and part of Martí's royal council, was lieutenant in Majorca from 1397 to 1403 and Galceran de Requesens, also a nobleman, was lieutenant in Catalunya from 1453–56. ACA registers 2356 to 2358 document Angelsola’s tenure, and 3319 to 2232 document Requesen's. Lalinde Abadía, "Virreyes y lugartenientes," 112, 129-31.

35 For a listing of princes who served as lieutenant or procurador in Catalunya, see table 1, page 133.

36 Lalinde Abadía, "Virreyes y lugartenientes," 108-12.
reached the age of fourteen. And, more importantly for Aragonese
queenship, as early as the reign of Jaume II (1291-1327), the office
also became associated with queens.

Jaume appointed his wife, Blanca of Naples, to serve as his
lieutenant in April 1310 while he was on crusade in Almería. Her
tenure was brief, no more than two months, and little is known of
her actions, but she set a precedent for six subsequent Aragonese
queens-lieutenant. Her brief lieutenancy was an important reminder
that although queens had not ruled in their own right since 1137,
they could exercise legitimate political authority. With two
exceptions, little is known of about the careers of most of these
queens, many of whom held the office intermittently, usually during
an emergency or until their eldest son reached his majority. Eleanor
of Sicily, third wife of Pere IV, has the distinction of being the
first queen to convoke Corts of Barcelona. She did so not in any
official capacity—she never held the office of lieutenant—but rather
she simply took over for her husband, at his expressed request, on
22 January 1364 because he was on the battlefield in Castile. The
state of emergency no doubt smoothed over any opposition to her

37 Luis González Antón, "Primeras resistencias contra el
lugarteniente general-virey en Aragón," Aragón en la Edad Media 8
(1984): 303-14, especially 307; Soldevila, Història de Catalunya, 1:
346-49.

38 For more on Blanca, see Roger Sablonier, "The Aragonese
Royal Family around 1300," in Interest and Emotion: Essays on the
Study of Family and Kinship, edited by Hans Medick and D. W.

39 For a complete listing of the queens who served as
lieutenant in Catalunya, see table 2, page 134.
actions. María de Luna, queen-lieutenant for Martí I from 1396 to 1397, was an even more forceful queen, who served first as regent for her husband and later as Lieutenant General. Bisson refers to her as a regent, but the documents clearly refer to her as Lieutenant. Moreover, Martí was not physically unable to rule, he simply was in Sicily, so that she fits perfectly the description of a lieutenant. When King Joan I died in May 1395, he left no adult sons and the crown devolved to his brother Martí, who was king of Sicily at the time. As regent, María de Luna secured official recognition for Martí, even though Joan's widow falsely claimed to be pregnant. She summoned and convoked two sessions of the Parliament of Barcelona, a local parliamentary assembly, to legitimize Martí's right to succeed, determine whether or not Yolande was pregnant, and establish a council to advise María until Martí returned. María pacified the kingdom and governed until Martí's

40 For the records of her convocation of the Cortes, see Cortes, 2: 135-332 (Barcelona, 1364), 2: 332-448 (Barcelona, 1365), and 15: 446-52. Their son, Joan (later ruled as Joan I), took over briefly for Eleanor when she joined Pere to celebrate Christmas in 1364; see Cortes 2: 222-55. Her official records are contained in cancilleria registers 1562-1585 in the Arxiu de la Corona d'Aragó. See also González Antón, "Primera resistencias contra el lugarteniente general-virey en Aragón," 304-306; Soldevila, Història de Catalunya, 1: 370-74.

41 Aurea Lucinda Javierre Mur, María de Luna, reina de Aragón (Madrid: Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas, 1942), 52-84; Lalinde Abadía, "Virreyes y lugartenientes," 114; Medieval Crown of Aragon, 125-31, 148.


43 These two sessions may have been considered Parlements rather than Cortes because María's official status was, at the time of Joan's death, not clearly established. Cortes 4: 248-400 (Barcelona, 1396) and 4: 301-67 (Barcelona, 1396-97).
return one year later and remained active throughout Marti's reign in ways that echo forty years later during the lieutenancy of María of Castile. She served a second term as lieutenant in 1401 while Marti was in Navarre and Valencia and remained one of her husband's ablest advisor. As advocate for the remença peasants, María de Luna tried unsuccessfully until her death in 1406 to secure a bull from anti-pope Benedict XIII that condemned peasant servitude.44

It is noteworthy that in the case of both Eleanor of Sicily and María de Luna there was little opposition to these queens assuming substantial public political roles that were normally exclusively reserved for the king or the eldest son. As in the instance of the regency, Harriet Lightman has correctly observed that the proximity of a healthy adult male king was crucial in calming fears of rule by a queen.45 The inherent instability of both instances, war with Castile in 1364 and the death of the ruling king without a designated heir, and the need to move quickly and decisively probably overrode the novelty of a queen convoking a parliamentary assembly. In both cases the convocation was ad hoc and brief. Had the crises persisted or had either queen remained at the head of regional government for longer than absolutely necessary, some formal protest might have been lodged. The records of 1364 do not state so explicitly, but it is

44 Javierre Mur, María de Luna, 52-84; and González Antón, "Primeras resistencias contra el lugarteniente general-virey en Aragón," 307-308. See ACA registers 2327 through 2351 for documents on her lieutenancy, and Cortes 4: 248 et passim for her convocation of the Cortes in 1396.

possible that Pere brought in Joan to preside during Christmas to preemptively quell any hints of opposition to his wife's actions.

By Martí's reign the lieutenancy, and a queen-lieutenant in particular, was a common occurrence. The breakdown of public order and warring noble factions during his reign resulted in a proliferation of multiple offices in diverse forms. He experimented with lieutenants, governors, viceroyls, and reformadors in a mostly successful attempt to impose order and govern new territorial acquisitions--Sardinia, Corsica, and the duchy of Athens. The office of the Lieutenant General had grown from a single entity in the hands of the eldest son to a multiplicity of offices held by a number of family members, most of whom remained lieutenants while some, notably in Sicily between 1291 and 1391, became cadet princes.

With the king absent and the distances long, the temptation must have been great to overstep the official boundaries. Part of the reason why the lieutenants governed effectively and stayed within prescribed limits has to do with Aragonese kingship and political theory. In each constituent realm of the Crown of Aragón, royal


47 The history of the Kingdom of Sicily is a complicated one: In 1291, the kingdom passed to Jaume II's brother Frederick, who governed first as viceroy and then as king in his own right. After a century as a cadet kingdom, in 1391 it passed once more into direct rule by the Aragonese kingdom when Martí I inherited the crown after the death of his brother, Joan I. *Medieval Crown of Aragon*, 90-94.

authority was counterbalanced by the equal strength of the Corts, composed of nobles, clerics, and, since the fourteenth century, the townspeople. The wealth and vigor of this group, particularly the nobles and the urban patriciate (known collectively as the ciutadans honrats) who dominated regional government in Barcelona, enabled them to resist any royal actions that they interpreted as an attempt to limit their political privileges and economic freedom. The relationship between the king and the governed, known as pactism, was a form of contractual government which specifically called for a monarchy limited by law and powerful only when united in purpose with the people. In theory, it was a working version of "primus inter pares" in which the status of the king was of a superior and directing, but by no means absolute, authority. In practice, however, the king's authority superseded all others, and this carefully balanced political equilibrium was based more on mutual wariness than on trust. Any lieutenant who attempted to seize power had to contend with this powerful bloc that did not hesitate to

49 On the political power of regional and urban nobles and patriciates, see José María Font i Rius, "Las instituciones de la corona de Aragón en la primera mitad del siglo XV," Ponencias del IV Congreso de la Historia de la Corona de Aragón (Barcelona: Comisión Permanente de los Congresos de la Corona de Aragón, 1976), 209-23, especially 216-19; and Carme Batlle i Gallart, La Crisis social y económica a mediados del siglo XV, 2 volumes (Barcelona: Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas, 1973), 1: 133-64.

50 On pactism and the office of the lieutenant, see Lalinde Abadía, La institución virreinal, 53-60. For Catalan political theory in general, see Francisco Elías de Tejada, Las Doctrinas políticas en la Cataluña medieval (Barcelona: Ayma, 1950), 180-209. For a discussion of pactism, see Jaume Sobriqués i Callicó, El pactisme a Catalunya: una praxi política en la història del país (Barcelona: Edicions 62, 1982); 7-34.
bypass the lieutenant and take their grievances directly to the king. So, in essence, there were two sets of controls on a lieutenant's ambitions—the king's own authority and the equally potent Cortes.

In the principality of Catalunya there was an additional safeguard against an overly ambitious lieutenant, the Diputació del General. Catalan law was concerned as much with the rights and privileges of the estates of the realm as with royal authority, so the Cortes established the Diputació in the fourteenth century to guard against any royal action that threatened those privileges. The members of Diputació, a standing committee of the Cortes that remained in session when the Cortes was not, thus kept a watchful eye not only on the king, but on the lieutenant as well. The dynamics of this political relationship between the king, his lieutenant, and the Cortes-Diputació created a rough and tumble quality characteristic of Catalan politics.51

For the Aragonese kings the lieutenancy was the mainstay of their governmental system and a means to expand their territorial horizons without losing effective political control. It was a superbly flexible office. Each king could customize the terms and conditions, to allow an individual lieutenant a certain amount of leeway while still under the king's supervision. The resultant federative state took into account geographical separation and widely divergent cultures yet preserved intact much of each constituent realm's administrative and political autonomy.52

51 José María Font y Rius, "Las instituciones de la corona de Aragón en la primera mitad del siglo XV," 209-23.
### TABLE 1

**PRINCES AS LIEUTENANTS IN CATALUNYA**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Regnal Years</th>
<th>Term</th>
<th>ACA Registers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pere III</td>
<td>1276-85</td>
<td>1258-76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alfonso III</td>
<td>1285-91</td>
<td>1282-85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pere (a)</td>
<td>1289-95</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jaume (b)</td>
<td>1309-19</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alfonso IV</td>
<td>1327-36</td>
<td>1317-27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pere IV</td>
<td>1336-87</td>
<td>1329-36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pere (c)</td>
<td>1354-55</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joan I</td>
<td>1387-95</td>
<td>1361-87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Martí I</td>
<td>1396-1410</td>
<td>1372-92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alfonso V</td>
<td>1416-58</td>
<td>1413-16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carlos of Viana (d)</td>
<td>1458-61</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Juan II</td>
<td>1458-79</td>
<td>1454-58*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This table lists the princes and kings who served as Procurador, Lieutenant, or Lieutenant General, their regnal years (if applicable), the term of their lieutenancy, and the pertinent registers for each (when was an overlap of lieutenancy and royal rule, registers may contain material from both the lieutenancy and the reign as king).

**Notes:**

a. Brother of Alfonso III; did not rule as king.
b. Son of King Jaume II; did not rule as king.
c. Brother of King Pere IV; did not rule as king
d. Son of Juan II (Juan of Navarre); died in 1461 and did not rule as king.
e. Registers 3319-3323 contain documents for the lieutenancies of both Juan and Maria of Castile.

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52 Lalinde Abadía, *La institución virreinal*, 47-49.
TABLE 2
QUEENS AS LIEUTENANTS IN CATALUNYA

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Term</th>
<th>ACA Registers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Blanca of Naples</td>
<td>1310</td>
<td>59–62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Jaume II)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teresa d'Entença (a)</td>
<td>1324–27</td>
<td>426–27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Alfonso IV)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yolande of Bar</td>
<td>1388–1430 (b)</td>
<td>2029–36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(3rd wife of Joan I)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>María de Luna</td>
<td>1396–1406 (c)</td>
<td>2327–54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(1st wife of Martí)</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Margarida of Prades</td>
<td>1412–21</td>
<td>2355</td>
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<tr>
<td>(2nd wife of Martí)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>María of Castile</td>
<td>1420–1453</td>
<td>2948–3280</td>
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<tr>
<td>(Alfonso V)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Juana Enríquez</td>
<td>1461–1477</td>
<td>3495–3502</td>
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<tr>
<td>(2nd wife of Juan II)</td>
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This table lists the queens who served as Lieutenant or Lieutenant General in Catalunya, the term of their lieutenancy, and the pertinent registers for each.

Notes:

a. Teresa d'Entença ruled briefly during Alfonso's last illness in 1327; it is not clear whether she was a lieutenant earlier. There is no official privilegio or other document naming her lieutenant, and because Alfonso was incapable of ruling, she acted more as a regent than a lieutenant.

b. These dates correspond to the material contained in the registers, not the actual dates of her lieutenancy. She was queen until 1395, and the registers of documents that pertain strictly to her lieutenancy are commingled with personal household and private documents.

c. María de Luna served two separate terms as lieutenant, 1396–97 and 1401. Because she was active in Martí's government, the registers run continuously and are misleading—she was not lieutenant for the entire span covered by the registers.
The Lieutenancy of María of Castile

By the fifteenth century this devolution of substantial authority on a hierarchy of lieutenants had become a permanent fixture of Aragonese government, with the political equilibrium maintained as the king periodically travelled to each of the constituent realms to convocate the Corts and swear to uphold his subject's privileges and constitutions.53

The tentative political balance created during Martí's reign was upset in the early fifteenth century during, and especially after, the succession crisis following the king's death in 1410.54 Martí was the last Aragonese king descended from the dynasty created in 1137 through the marriage of Petronila and Ramón Berenguer IV, and his death forced the Crown of Aragón to look elsewhere for a king. A number of candidates put forward claims to throne, but not one was a woman.55 There literally were no royal

53 This is especially evident in the Italian possessions where Alfonso had numerous lieutenants and viceroys. Most of them possessed both limited jurisdiction and territorial authority and, because the king was close at hand, were under his strict supervision. The exception is Ferran, duke of Calabria (after 1443, and King of Naples after Alfonso's death), Alfonso's illegitimate son and his lieutenant in various realms. Viceroys were more military than administrative in character. Alan Ryder, "Evolution of Imperial Government in Naples under Alfonso V of Aragon," in Europe in the Late Middle Ages, edited by John Rigby Hale, J. R. L. Highfield, and Beryl Smalley (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1965), 332-57, especially 332-37.

54 For details on the interregnum, see Soldevila, Història de Catalunya, 1: 422-70, 2: 1-20.

55 The contestants were Fadrique de Aragón, the count of Luna and Martí's illegitimate grandson; Jaume, count of Urgell, great-grandson of Alfonso IV, and married to a daughter of Pere IV; Louis of Anjou, duke of Calabria and grandson of Joan I; and Fernando de Antequera, grandson of Pere IV. Los Trasamáras, ix-cxxix.
women, no daughters nor granddaughters, who had survived to adulthood in 1410.

The nobles played a key role in the constitutional settlement known as the Compromise of Caspe which brought the Castilian Trastámara family in the person of Fernando I de Antequera (1412-16), brother of Enrique III of Castile (1390-1406) and grandson of Pere IV, to rule the Crown of Aragón.56 Because the succession was settled in the Corts, Fernando owed his crown to his nobles and they never let him forget it.57 Alfonso inherited the realms of the Crown of Aragón in 1416 on the death of his father but, despite his tenure as lieutenant in various Aragonese realms, he was considered by many Catalans to be a foreign prince. He remained close to his Castilian heritage and language, often preferring Castilians as his closest advisors. His choice of a Castilian bride, even one who quickly became fluent in Catalan, reinforced this sentiment.58

From the outset of his reign, Alfonso's dealings with the Catalans were stormy. Early in his reign he tried to mute the

56 This unique political act of the Corts of Catalunya, Aragón, and Valencia resolved a contentious struggle that involved five claimants during the two-year interregnum following the death of Martí. The implications of the Compromise of Caspe still reverberate. Many Catalans, then and now, consider it to be the end of Catalan sovereignty and the beginning of Castilian hegemony. On the events surrounding the interregnum and the Compromise, see Santiago Sobrequés i Vidal, Els barons de Catalunya i el Compromís de Casp (Barcelona: Rafael Damau, 1966). For the political and social context, see Los Trasámaras, 345-50. On Fernando I, see Jaime Vicens Vives, Els Trastamàres, el segle XV (Barcelona: Editorial Teide, 1956), 69-102. For more on the constitutional consequences, see chapter five, following.

57 On Fernando's reign, see Soldevila, Història de Catalunya, 2: 20-40.

58 Alfonso the Magnanimous, 358-70.
influence of the Catalans in royal administration by appointing Aragonese officials to Catalan posts and vice-versa. He played urban mercantile interests against powerful Catalan noble families who had long formed the inner circle of the king's court and soon found themselves outside the center of power.\textsuperscript{59} He created new noble families and brought others from Aragon and Valencia into his council.\textsuperscript{60} The Catalans' ingrained wariness of royal power hardened into belligerence, and was matched in turn by Alfonso's increasing tendency toward absolutism.\textsuperscript{61}

When, in May 1420, Alfonso boarded the royal galley docked at Alfachs in the bay at the mouth of the Ebro River near Tortosa and set sail for Sardinía, that was not his only destination nor was the need to subdue incipient civil war his only goal. In spite of his stated goal to save Sardinia from the "perfidious Sards," he was drawn to Italy by the allure of a dynastic vacancy in the kingdom of Naples which tempted him with the prospect of adding another Mediterranean realm to the Crown of Aragón.\textsuperscript{62} Queen Giovanna II

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{59} \textit{Alfonso the Magnanimous}, 362-70.
\item \textsuperscript{60} Santiago Sobrequés i Vidal, \textit{Els barons de Catalunya} (Barcelona: Editorial Teide, 1957), 139-42, 174-79, 176-89, 196-201, 203-205.
\item \textsuperscript{61} \textit{Los Trasámaras}, 373-77.
\item \textsuperscript{62} He justified his departure by stating, "Quod Nos cuius incumbit humeris tam pro recuperacione et reductione ad Coronam nostram regiam nonnullarum civitatum, villarum et castrorum nostrorum regni Sardinie que a perfidis sardis domus Nostre regie rebellibus tam diu occupata tirranice detinentur, quam pro domando regaliter cornua superborum ipsorum cervices ad sauve fidelitatis nostrre jugum viriliter reducendo, allisque justis et rationalibus causis Nobis recurrentibus, versus dictum regnum Sardinie velut partem hereditatis Nostre precioso paratam classem et signa nostra victricia ad presens . . ." \textit{Cortes} 13: 83.
\end{itemize}
(1414–35), elderly and childless and a puppet of the Neapolitan barons, was willing to name Alfonso as her heir in return for Aragonese military support. His claim was contested by Louis III of Anjou and his allies the Sforza family; as a result, Alfonso's initial attempt to gain Naples was unsuccessful and he became engaged in sporadic warfare until 1423.63

For Alfonso, the lure of Italy was more than just dynastic ambition, it was a respite from seemingly endless confrontations with the Catalans, an opportunity for military action instead of debate and legislation.64 He persuaded the Catalan merchants and bankers that Naples would be a lucrative mercantile entrepôt in Italy that would give them an edge in the long-standing commercial rivalry between Barcelona and Genoa, Pisa, and Florence.65 Convinced, the Corts granted him a generous subsidy to pay for the military campaigns, leaving Alfonso with only the problem of the governance of Catalunya to resolve.66

To govern his peninsular realms, Alfonso turned naturally to the lieutenancy, but he faced a problem that his predecessors did not have. He had no legitimate sons to enlist as lieutenant. He had three brothers, referred to collectively as the Infantes de Aragón--

63 On the Italian campaigns, see Alfonso the Magnanimous, 45–115.

64 This was not an impulsive gesture. He had made plans to build a royal navy in 1417, and construction of the fleet began in February 1419. Alfonso the Magnanimous, 65.

65 A three-year truce with the Genoese had expired in January 1420, and neither side had made any attempts to negotiate a renewal. Alfonso the Magnanimous, 74.

66 Alfonso the Magnanimous, 24–44, 382.
Enrique, Pedro, and Juan, king of Navarre—an ambitious and not altogether trustworthy group of siblings. Pedro would later prove to be one of Alfonso's most trusted military advisors, but he was only eleven years old in 1420. Juan and Enrique, in particular, were frequent co-conspirators who interfered in Castilian politics, especially against Alvaro de Luna. On more than one occasion they brought Castile and Aragón to the brink of open warfare. Alfonso was reluctant to give the job to any of his brothers, even though Juan of Navarre was Alfonso's designated heir. But in 1420 Juan was in Castile and Alfonso was unwilling to leave his peninsular realms in the hands of Pedro or Enrique, so he followed the precedent set by Jaume II and left María, then eighteen years old, in charge.

Given the tension between the king and the Catalan ruling elites, it is remarkable that he left the kingdom at all, much less leave its governance in the hands of someone so young and inexperienced in government. Ryder believes that Alfonso's impatience with the pace of politics in Catalunya made him long for military action and led him to take risks that other kings might have considered imprudent. It was, however, a period of relative calm,

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67 A fourth brother, Sancho, died in 1417. Los Trasámaras, 699.
68 Alfonso the Magnanimous, 147-48.
69 This order of succession was stipulated in Ferdando I's will. Alfonso the Magnanimous, 69, 220.
70 Los Trasámaras, 373-83.
71 Alfonso the Magnanimous, 73.
and hindsight proves that he read the situation correctly. He made certain that the people most likely to take advantage of his absence accompanied him to Italy by promising them a piece of the mercantile riches there; he trusted that those subjects who remained would not seize power in his absence; and, after five years of marriage, he had tremendous confidence in María. Their marriage was still steady; the problems they encountered were still five years away. And, he no doubt took comfort in knowing that his mother, Leonor, whom he trusted completely, could be called on to assist if the need arose. I doubt that Alfonso left without also making provisions for a council to advise her, although I have yet to determine who those people were and what their duties included, and it is possible that Alfonso made no explicit provision for a council because they would have exercised such an advisory function ex officio. It would be reasonable to assume that they included high-ranking clerics, barons, and prominent members of the royal administration.

It was to María, however, that he granted the official powers of government.\textsuperscript{72} Prior to his departure, on 2 May 1420 at Castellón de la Plana (Valencia), Alfonso issued a \textit{privilegio} that named María as Lieutenant General and delegated to her full governmental powers over the kingdoms of Aragón and Valencia, the principality of Catalunya, and the island of Majorca. This \textit{privilegio} stipulated that her powers as Lieutenant General should be equivalent to his own as king and that she had the authority to rule independently. María

\textsuperscript{72} Hernández-León de Sánchez argued that Alfonso withdrew completely from the governance of his peninsular realms, but I find that very hard to believe, given the exchange of letters among all parties involved in governing the realms. \textit{Doña María de Castilla}, 87.
had full sovereign power over all civil and criminal jurisdictions in all four realms, including the army and the military orders. Her authority superseded all the royal, seigneurial, regional, and local officials; provincial governors; prelates and religious orders; the nobility, townspeople, peasants, and all other subjects regardless of status. She could grant constitutions and make laws in accordance with royal authority and could sign letters with her own hand according to her own conscience. She was empowered to carry out justice, both civil and criminal, and to name judges and delegates. She had the authority to summon, convene, and preside over the Corts, the regional parliamentary assemblies.73

The privilegio of 2 May 1420 was entirely consistent with Aragonese chancery practice and is similar in content and organization to other grants of lieutenancy.74 Written in Latin, it

73 "Dirigere Nos opportet et a regnis nostris Aragonum, Valencie et Maioricarum ac Principatu Cathalonie per consequens absentare, dignumque esse personam talem dimittere in eisdem que maiestatem Nostram in omnibus representet: Tenore presentis, de certa scienza et consulte Vos, illustrem Reginam Mariam consortem nostram carissimam, regimini dictorum regnorum Principatus ac insularum adjunctium regno Maioricarum predicto et omnium subditorum nostrorum in eis presencium preficimus et in eisdem nostram generalem locumtenentem creamus, constituimus et eciam ordinamus, concedentes Vobis expresse et potestatem plenariam tribuentes quod regatis et gubernetis ac regere et gubernare possitis dicta regna, Principatum et insulas, quamdui Nos abesse contigerit ab eisdem; et utamini et possitis uti mero et mixto imperio cum plenissima gladii potestate, omnique jurisdiccione civili et criminali eaque exercere libere valeatis et facere exercerit tam in terra quam in mari quam eciam aqua dulci." Cortes, 13: 83. For a brief discussion of this privilegio, see Doña Maria de Castilla, 87.

74 For example, Alfonso's privilegio granting the lieutenancy of Catalunya to Juan of Navarre on 20 January 1436 is nearly identical in all respects except the specific details concerning jurisdiction and geographical scope. ARV, Maestre Racional, 9050, fol. 5r–7v.
was signed by the king and witnessed by his secretary Francesch Davinyó; a magnate, Federico de Luna; and two knights, Joan Vilaragut and Ramón Xatmar, who was also Alfonso’s mayordomo. It is, in fact, so formulaic that it seems that Alfonso was using chancery boilerplate: The privilegio gave María military authority ("gladii potestate") but it is unlikely that he seriously intended that she would take charge of an army.

The issuance of a privilegio is the defining characteristic of a lieutenancy that distinguishes it from a regency or any unofficial exercise of power. By explicitly stating the scope and duration of the governmental authority, it clearly marks María's authority as legitimately sanctioned. It also makes it clear that she was not ruling in her own right and that her authority was held at the king's discretion. Just as the king could give her political power, so too could he take it away. Her authority was equivalent to the king's in the realms stipulated by the privilegio, but he nevertheless retained the ultimate authority. She governed, but he held dominion.

It is noteworthy that there were no protests concerning Alfonso's appointment of María as lieutenant from the king's brothers, indicating the strength of precedent and custom of queens as lieutenants in the Crown of Aragón. As surprising as it may seem to modern scholars, accustomed as we are to expecting a loud outcry against women in positions of authority, a queen-lieutenant was taken for granted by the fifteenth century. Still, the absence of

75 Cortes, 13: 83-88.
76 Doña María de Castilla, 87.
protests concerning her appointment does not mean that María did not face serious challenges to her authority, because she did. But these protests were confined to one very specific action—the convocation of the Cortes—and not to the many other duties and functions of the king that she performed, such as judicial and financial administration. This issue—whether a queen, or anyone, could take the king's place in the Cortes and whether the king had, in fact, the right to delegate that authority—touched the heart of Aragonese kingship and dominated her tenure as lieutenant. As I will demonstrate in chapters five and six, which discuss María's dealings with the Cortes, the protests were very specific. They were not rooted in gender-biased ideology, and should not be interpreted as an attack on the overall legitimacy of her lieutenancy.

Over the course of the next twenty-five years, Alfonso modified the privilegio of 1420, both in terms of who held the office and the scope of the powers. On the face of it, these numerous modifications give the appearance of hesitation or uncertainty. But in each case, Alfonso responded more to immediate needs than any political or juridical theory. His decisions concerning the governance of his Iberian realms indicate a pragmatic king, one not unduly swayed by external pressure, but not a hesitant king. His reasons were sound and he was unwavering in his decision. Although he was a staunch supporter of his lieutenants when they faced opposition from high-ranking nobles, prelates, or townspeople, neither did he hesitate to revoke a privilegio if the situation called for it.

The first privilegio expired in 1423 when Alfonso returned home. He had a tentative foothold in Italy but his military campaigns
in Sardinia and Naples, while not a failure, were not a success either.\textsuperscript{77} Events in Catalunya called for his personal attention, and when he arrived in December 1423, he faced two long-standing but hardly pressing disputes—a border dispute in the Pyrenees with the Count of Foix and warring noble families in Girona. The more serious issues concerned newly formed factions in the Corts that had brought government to a near standstill and, most problematic of all, the Catalan economy, which was near collapse in 1427 due to the combination of a decline in all types of economic activity and a resultant sharp drop in the collection of taxes.\textsuperscript{78}

The most urgent matter facing him was the escalation of hostilities that resulted from Alfonso's brothers' meddling in Castilian affairs. Full-scale war between Juan II of Castile, Juan of Navarre, and Alfonso was narrowly averted in 1429 only by direct and dramatic intervention of María of Castile: She pitched her tent between the opposing armies and refused to budge until her brother, her brother-in-law, and her husband agreed to a peaceful settlement.\textsuperscript{79}

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\textsuperscript{77} Alfonso the Magnanimous, 72, 114-15.
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\textsuperscript{79} Alfonso the Magnanimous, 158-60; Los Trasámaras, 385-92; Medieval Crown of Aragon, 143; Soldevila, Història de Catalunya, 2: 81-82.
\end{flushright}
vividly portrayed than in this incident. It is unclear, however, if she was included in the later negotiations that resulted in a truce, and if she was, what her contribution was to that truce.

After nearly ten years in Spain, Alfonso had grown weary of intrigues and infighting. In 1432 he seized the chance to try once again to conquer the kingdom of Naples for the Crown of Aragón. This time he intended to grant the lieutenancy not to María but to Juan of Navarre, who remained heir to the Aragonese throne and thus was constitutionally qualified to act for the king. Relations with Castile were calm but still tense, and Alfonso wanted to have a strong soldier fully empowered to act should Juan II take advantage of Alfonso's absence. On 13 May 1432, the day that he was about to turn over the lieutenancy to Juan, the Catalan Corts asked that María be placed in charge. An abiding personal animosity had developed between Juan and the Catalans that threatened to impede government at all levels. They feared, and rightly so, that Juan would drag them into further conflict with Castile. Alan Ryder suggests that they thought, but did not state outright, that María would not be nearly as difficult to deal with as Juan and that they could more easily get their way. So, Alfonso relented, and nine days later named María Lieutenant General. Five days later, on 29 May 1432, the king set sail from Alfachs for Sicily with ten galleys.

80 Alfonso the Magnanimous, 175-95; Los Trasámaras, 697-706, 719-24; Medieval Crown of Aragon, 143-44.

81 Alfonso the Magnanimous, 183-84; Doña María de Castilla, 87.

82 ARV, MR 9050, fol. 3v-4v; Cortes, 20: 432-35.
Maria's governmental authority was essentially the same in 1432 as in 1420, and included all of Alfonso's Iberian realms.\(^{83}\) Ryder suggests that Alfonso intended to place Juan in charge of Aragón and Valencia where he would encounter less resistance to his rule while remaining close enough to Castile to fend off any military maneuvers. It is unclear, however, whether Alfonso did so and, if he did, whether Juan actually governed in Aragón and Valencia. I have found no privilegio that granted Juan such authority, but Ryder implies that Juan was governing in Aragón and Valencia.\(^{84}\) If this is true, he may have done so by virtue of his status as heir and not through any official appointment. The Crown archives do not include any registers for Juan during this period, and Jaime Vicens Vives, Juan's biographer, does not mention any governmental actions taken by Juan until 1454.\(^{85}\) After Juan joined Alfonso in Italy in

\(^{83}\) "Ex certa nostra scientia et consulte, ampliantes vobis illustri Regine Marie, consorti nostre carrissime, potestatem quam vos cum alia carta nostra data Barchinone externa die, locumtenentem generalem nostram in Principatu Cathalonie et regno Maioracarum constituimus, vt in ipsa carta plenius continetur ac dicionem regnorum quibus presidere, nobis absente vos volumus, Tenore presentis vos eandem Reginam Mariam nedum in dictis Principatu et regno, ymo etiam in regnis nostris Aragonum et Valentie et omnium subditorum nostrorum in eis presentium et forum sortiendum preficimus, et in omnibus et singulis regnis et Principatu predictis generalem locumtenentem nostram constituimus, facimus, creamus ac etiam ordinamus cum latissima potestate ea omnia regendi et gubernandi quamdiu nos abesse contigerit ab eisdem meroque et mixto imperio, alta et bassa jurisdictione et plenissima gladii potestate vtendi." ARV, MR 9050, fol. 3v–4v; Cortes, 20: 432–35.

\(^{84}\) Alfonso the Magnanimous, 194.

\(^{85}\) The chancery registers for Juan's lieutenancy range from 1454–58 (registers 3281 through 3318 are for Juan alone, while 3319 through 3323 include material from the lieutenancies of Mari, Juan, and Galceran de Requesens). Jaime Vicens Vives, Juan II de Aragón (1398–1479): Monarquía y revolución en la España del siglo XV (Barcelona: Editorial Teide, 1953).
July 1434, however, María probably governed all of Alfonso's Iberian realms on her own as the privilegio clearly stated.

María faced her first serious crisis as Lieutenant in 1435. Juan of Navarre, still officially Lieutenant General of Aragón and Valencia, joined Alfonso in Italy just in time to take part in the disastrous defeat of the Aragonese navy near Ponza on 5 August 1435. Alfonso, his brothers Juan and Enrique, and a host of his nobles were captured. Juan's capture meant that his powers as Lieutenant General of Aragón and Valencia automatically devolved to María, who was suddenly thrust into a precarious and dangerous situation. Slow mail delivery and the need to act quickly to quell any thoughts by contentious subjects impelled him toward quick and decisive action. The first item on her agenda was to convoke a Cortes Generales of the three realms in Monzón to request a subsidy of 100,000 gold florins to pay for his ransom, to organize a fleet of 22 galleys and eight sailing ships to come to his rescue, and to negotiate with the Genoese. The Aragonese agreed to contribute 220,000 florins, and the Valencians 50,000. As it turned out,

86 Jaume Safont was present at the scene and wrote a first-hand description of the battle. The original copy of his letter, dated 5 August 1435 at Ponza, is contained in the Generalitat register of the ACA (register 4, folio 23), and published in Mensajeros Barceloneses, document 29, pages 101-103. See also Solevila, Història de Catalunya, 2: 54-56.

87 On the Catalan and Valencian sessions, see Doña María de Castilla, 115, 123-28; Alfonso the Magnanimous, 213. For details on the Aragonese meetings, see Luisa María Sánchez Aragones, Cortes, monarquía y ciudades en Aragón durante el reinado de Alfonso el Magnánimo: 1416-1458 (Zaragoza: Institución "Fernando el Católico," 1994), 421-22. See also Los Trasámaras, 393-98; Soldevila, Història de Catalunya, 2: 54-55. For a detailed discussion of the Corts of Monzón, see chapter five.
Alfonso needed the money more than the fleet. By Christmas, in a move that took everyone by surprise, he was free and his former captor, Filippo Maria Visconti, the duke of Milan, was now his closest ally. Shared love of hunting aside, the duke and the king recognized mutual diplomatic interests in keeping the Genoese at bay. Alfonso convinced Visconti that an Aragonese Naples was less a threat than a Genoese one with Angevin French military support.88

Alfonso remained determined to stay in Italy to complete the conquest of Naples. Alfonso sent Juan of Navarre, released from captivity in January 1436, to Spain and the king once again modified the terms of María's lieutenancy.89 Recognizing the problems inherent in ruling from a distance, and probably wanting to cover himself in the event that something should happen to either Juan or María, and fearful that his war with Milan and Genoa would spill over into Catalunya, Alfonso named his brother co-lieutenant in Catalunya with María. Juan made it clear that his interests lay elsewhere, but Alfonso blocked any hostile moves his brothers might make toward Castile by making peace with Juan II. To further strengthen Juan of Navarre's ties to the Crown of Aragón, and realizing that he probably would not have a legitimate son to succeed him, Alfonso formally designated Juan as his heir.90

These moves were only temporarily successful. When the threat from Genoa and Pisa subsided, Juan wanted to devote more

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88 Alfonso the Magnanimous, 200-209.
89 ARV, MR 9050, fol. 5r-7v, 20 January 1436. Doña María de Castilla, 98.
90 Alfonso the Magnanimous, 220-21.
attention to his own kingdom of Navarre, necessitating yet another modification in the lieutenancy. On 24 November 1438 Alfonso, asserting María's ability to govern alone, revoked the co-lieutenancy arrangement of 1436 and granted her full powers as lieutenant in Aragón, Valencia, and Majorca as well as Catalunya.91 This privilegio is identical in nearly all respects to the one of 1432 but in practice she spent most of her time in Catalunya because her own ill health and an outbreak of the plague in Valencia prevented her from travelling much. She retained full powers in Catalunya and Majorca, and once the threat of plague subsided, she resumed her work in Valencia while Juan acted in her place in Aragón. Two years later, as an indication of his increased trust in his wife and his preoccupation with the war in Italy, Alfonso further refined and amplified her powers as lieutenant, giving her greater control over finances. He stipulated that she could receive any and all money of whatever quantity that pertained to the king and control expenditures from the treasury.92

A decade later circumstances once again forced Alfonso to modify the lieutenancy. Juan and Enrique could not resist meddling in Castile; hostilities became war, which led to defeat at the battle of Olmedo (19 May 1445) and Enrique's death due to wounds inflicted during the battle. The dual catastrophe may have quelled Juan's appetite for intrigue, at least temporarily, but it created an unstable situation along the Aragonese and Valencian border with Castile.

91 ARV, MR 9050, fol. 9v-12r; Doña María de Castilla, 90-3.
92 ARV, MR 9050, fol. 14v-15r, 3 October 1440; Doña María de Castilla, 94.
Relations between Alfonso and Juan grew worse, and the king relied on María to provide not only good government but also accurate accounts of Juan's behavior. Thus, in October 1445, Alfonso reinstated Juan as Lieutenant General in Aragón and Valencia but sternly warned him that if he relinquished the office to intervene in Castile it would be given to María permanently, and that he would not treat his wife "as a child does a toy on a string." Alfonso made clear his awareness that the frequent switching of one lieutenant for another would take its toll on the status and prestige of the office. He implied that if Juan did not take his duties seriously, how could he expect to be seen as other than a "toy on a string?" Implicit, too, was the suggestion that María was not a child and that he would not have her seen as such. This incident helps to explain why María never faced attacks on her character or her ability to govern. Unlike Juan of Navarre, she respected the office she held and took her responsibilities seriously. Not once in twenty-six years did Alfonso have to resort to scolding her. Alfonso's threat was clear, and Juan paid attention to it. This configuration--María as Lieutenant General of Catalunya and Majorca, and Juan of Aragón and Valencia--would last until 1453.

The multiplicity of offices and frequent overlap of lieutenants was characteristic of Alfonso in all his realms but it was more

93 ACA Cancillería, Curiae 2652, 89r–v, 11 June 1444, cited in Alfonso the Magnanimous, 267.

94 ACA Cancillería, Curiae Sigilli Secreti 2690, fol. 178v, 14 October 1445; and fol. 183v, 22 October 1445, cited in Ryder, "Evolution of Imperial Government," 336. See also Alfonso the Magnanimous, 269; Doña María de Castilla, 93-4.
pronounced in Spain than Italy or elsewhere. He always covered all his bases and was constantly fine-tuning his government. He defined each lieutenant's powers and duties according to need, not theory. There was essentially no difference between María's or Juan's authority in terms of jurisdiction or authority, except that presumably Juan was expected to take seriously the phrase "plenissima gladii potestate." The co-lieutenancy arrangement was not a perfect solution, and may have been intended all along as a temporary solution. I doubt that Alfonso ever intended to repudiate María, and even though his options were limited and he initially chose María by default, I have found no evidence that he questioned her abilities to govern or that he did not trust her.

What is most clear from the documents and the disposition of powers is that Alfonso valued Juan's military expertise more than his administrative skills or diplomacy. In 1426, when Alfonso planned to transfer the prisoner Jaume of Urgell, a dangerous noble who was one of the contestants for the throne in 1410, to another location, he told the official in charge of the transfer not to divulge so secret a matter to Juan of Navarre. He knew that the bellicose temperament of his brother clashed with the Catalans' sensitivity to any royal heavy-handedness, so he made certain that Juan was never lieutenant of Catalunya unless María was co-lieutenant. Alfonso relied

95 Ryder notes that Alfonso was especially diligent in supervising his Italian lieutenants and viceroys. "The Evolution of Imperial Government," 338.
96 Lalinde Abadía, La institución virreinal, 60.
97 Alfonso the Magnanimous, 130-31.
on María to keep the administration running smoothly and used her as a buffer between Juan and the Catalans. Even the joint lieutenancy of Juan and María in Catalunya lasted only two years, from November 1438 to October 1440, and they never governed together at the same time: María was in charge when Juan was away, and vice-versa. On only a handful of occasions in 1453 do their documents appear simultaneously, and there is no other direct evidence of joint governance. 98 Alfonso's preference for María could not have been lost on the Catalans themselves, who were instructed to report on the proceedings of the Barcelona town council and parliamentary assemblies to both Alfonso and María. 99 As a rule, Alfonso brought Juan in when a military crisis threatened and he needed a soldier-lieutenant not a queen-lieutenant, and let him go as soon as the military threat subsided. None of this is surprising, given Juan's preoccupation with events in Navarre and Castile, 100 and his own responsibilities in Aragon and Valencia. 101

Even when the military situation was calm, Juan could not be

98 ACA, Cancillería, Promiscuum Curie et Comune, 3319, 2v-13v, 28 April 1453 to 20 October 1453. See also Lalinde Abadia, La institución virreinal, 85-86.

99 ACA Cancillería, Curiae 2651, 30v-31r, 14 March 1438, document 128 in Mensajeros Barceloneses, 190.

100 For instance, he wrote the Barcelona town council concerning a dispute with Genoa (AHCB CRO, Serie A, number 638, 15 May 1451); he requested that the town council permit a Florentine ship working on his behalf to dock and unload its contents (AHCB CRO, Serie A, number 669, 15 July 1451); he wrote often concerning Castile (AHCB CRO, Serie A, number 625, 4 December 1450; number 640, 15 June 1451; Serie A, number 641, 7 September 1451).

101 See Mensajeros Barceloneses, document 283 (AHCB Ll. Cl., VI-15, 135r-v, 28 September 1450), for Valencia; document 372 (AHCB CCO, X-21, 202r-203v, 19 and 23 October 1451) for Aragón.
trusted to focus on his duties as lieutenant. In 1438 Alfonso wanted to force the Justicia of Aragón from office but he doubted that Juan would carry out his orders ("because he [Juan] does not wish to face the unpleasantness"), so he arranged for María to take over the task, and he had a notary keep a complete record of all Juan's council proceedings.\(^{102}\) Despite his clear warning in 1445, Alfonso still did not trust his brother to stay out of Castilian affairs. He wrote privately to the commissioners of the Aragonese Cortes in 1453 that they should ignore Juan if he tried to block an extension of the truce with Castile.\(^{103}\) Lacking a legitimate heir, Alfonso had no choice but to rely on Juan, in spite of his faults, or risk losing control of Naples.\(^{104}\)

Alfonso had another good reason to switch lieutenants from time to time—the fragile state of María's health.\(^{105}\) She suffered from

\(^{102}\) ACA Cancillería, Secretorum 2695, 131r–v, 16 December 1438, transcribed and translated by Ryder in Alfonso the Magnanimous, 367.

\(^{103}\) ACA Cancillería, Curiae 2660, 117r–v, 10 December 1453, transcribed and translated by Ryder in Alfonso the Magnanimous, 367.

\(^{104}\) Alfonso's illegitimate son, Ferran, governed as one of his lieutenants in Italy before he was endowed the duchy of Calabria. Alfonso the Magnanimous, 221, 230–31, 239–40, 268, 350–57, 304–11, 400–30

\(^{105}\) María's medical history, like that of many of her contemporaries, is difficult to interpret because of the vague descriptions of symptoms and diagnoses. Her poor health may have been the cause of her infertility, but Alfonso's long absences certainly clouds the issue. On the incident in 1440, see ACA, reg. 3162, fols. 66v and 80. Doña María de Castilla, 29–39; Andrés Giménez-Soler, "Retrato historico de la reina doña María." Boletín de la Real Academia de Buenas Letras de Barcelona 1 (1901–2): 71–81; and Ferran Soldevila, "La reyna María, muller del Magnànim," Memorias de Real Academia de Buenas Letras de Barcelona 10 (1923): 213–345, especially 285–89.
a chronic ailment, perhaps epilepsy, and she was prone to fevers and other debilitating viral or bacterial illness. In general, he was reluctant to appoint a substitute for María when she fell ill and typically preferred to assume a "wait and see" approach. The king counted on the well-organized, highly efficient Catalan bureaucrats to handle routine matters of tax collection and processing of judicial petitions until she recovered. But at times she seemed near death, and waiting and seeing was not an option. In May 1440, for instance, she had called a Corts to meet in Lleida to request money for Alfonso's war against Genoa. While there she became so ill, "more dead than alive," that her opening speech to the Corts was read for her. She urged Alfonso to appoint someone to take over for her, but he wrote back saying that he preferred her and no other. He suggested that she prorogue the Corts and go to Valencia to recuperate. Nevertheless, Alfonso was not about to take chances. At the time, Juan and the Infante Enrique were completely absorbed in Castilian affairs, so he had documents drawn up that named Carlos of Viana, the nineteen-year-old son of Juan of Navarre, as Lieutenant General. By October María was back at work, no doubt faced with a backlog of paperwork, and Carlos of Viana was not needed.

Alfonso's serious consideration of Carlos of Viana as an interim lieutenant illustrates the precarious nature of trans-

106 Cortes, 20: 349-443; Doña María de Castilla, 121. On María's convocations of the Corts, see chapter five, following.

107 Doña María de Castilla, 94; Alfonso the Magnanimous, 240.
Mediterranean government. By his prolonged absence he had already tested the limits of the Catalans' willingness to accept extended rule by lieutenants and he may have felt it best to maintain some stability in the office. Carlos, a royal prince who was the son of Alfonso's formally designated heir, technically fit the definition of a Lieutenant General, but in 1440 he was young and inexperienced in government. To complicate matters, Carlos and his father were not on good terms and Alfonso may have been concerned about how the two would get along. His government was a balancing act and he was extraordinarily fortunate that he was spared the internal chaos that plagued his contemporaries in both England and France.

Still, there was no civil war, no coup d'etat, no serious threat of foreign invasion. The relative calmness testified to the general acceptance of lieutenants in general and a woman in particular, as well as to the stability of the kingdom as a whole. The fact that the kingdom as a whole remained on an even keel throughout Alfonso's reign leads me to disagree with Bisson and Suárez Fernández, who considered Alfonso's long absences catastrophic. I agree with Alan Ryder, who noted that Alfonso relied on tried-and-true institutions and devised administrative procedures to handle long-distance government. Government by lieutenants was never easy and rarely smooth, not even when kings were close at hand. But throughout her two terms as Lieutenant General, as subsequent events will show, María proved herself to be a prudent,

108 Los Trastámaras, 373-5, 726-28; Medieval Crown of Aragon, 145.
109 Kingdom of Naples, 431.
fair, and effective proxy for her husband.

Over time, Alfonso began to make minor adjustments to improve long-distance government and he tried to impose a control over his Iberian realms as strict as time and distance permitted, but long-distance government was problematic and the source of tension among all parties. 110 In 1441, Alfonso wrote to María that he would not approve new fueros in the kingdom of Aragón that would reform justice and prohibit all officials from selling royal offices. After the letter was sent to María, Alfonso changed his mind, but the second letter indicating this did not reach María before she had worked out a deal with the Cortes to stall for time. She was forced to go back to the committee of the Cortes and tell them that, after all, Alfonso would approve their request. These fits and starts were not uncommon, but they no doubt caused considerable tension and distrust on all sides. 111

By the mid-1440s, the framework of María's administration in Catalunya was in place. She had become Alfonso's indispensable partner in government: She met weekly with her royal council, convoked Cortes and consulted with the Diputació when the Cortes was not in session, and routinely sat in on sessions of the Consell de Cent, the town council of Barcelona. Regular mail deliveries carried the official documents and private letters between Alfonso and María.

110 Alfonso permitted both Juan and María a greater leeway than his lieutenants and viceroys in Italy, in part because the political situation in Italy was not yet stable but also because Juan and María were more trusted family members. Alfonso the Magnanimous, 366.

111 Sánchez Aragones, Cortes, monarquía y ciudades en Aragón, 145.
She handled the routine business of government--administration of ordinary civil and criminal justice; supervision of the financial offices; governance of all subordinate comital, regional, and municipal officials; and maintenance of public order. She passed on to Alfonso all matters dealing with military affairs, diplomacy, the higher nobility and the church; she wrote detailed letters describing the issues and outlining her proposed plans; she suggested candidates for vacant offices; she referred judicial cases that fell outside her jurisdiction; and she reported to him the deliberations of her own council and court. 112

Perfunctory salutations such as "Amada muller" "Carissima reyna" aside, the correspondence between Alfonso and María was strictly business. Long before the 1440s, she must have resigned herself to her marriage to an absentee husband, and only after 1450 did she give up on the thought of his return to Spain. 113 She devoted herself to the task at hand, to govern Catalunya in his stead. Most of the time they were in accord, but one disagreement stands out from the rest, perhaps because it is such a personal statement in a sea of businesslike instructions and reports. In 1448 Alfonso needed money to pay for the weddings of his illegitimate son, Ferran, and two daughters, María and Leonor. 114 He asked

112 Doña María de Castilla, 98-104. See also chapter four, below.

113 Her last request for his return was dated 2 May 1450. ACA Cancillería, Secretorum 3227, 120r-v.

114 Ferran married Isabel of Clermont; María, the eldest daughter, married Leonello d'Este, marques of Ferrara; and her younger sister Leonor married Mariano Marzano, son of the duke of Sesa and prince of Rossano. Doña María de Castilla, 80.
Maria to petition the **Corts** for a maridatge tax.\(^{115}\) She objected to his request, dragged her feet for over a year, and delayed the transfer of the money for "nostre filles illustres."\(^{116}\) Her own reluctance to collect the subsidy no doubt had a negative effect on Valencians and Aragonese, and especially the Catalan nobles and townspeople, who were reluctant to part with money even when it directly affected them. Pleading poverty ("penuriament" and "gran pobresa"), the Catalan towns of Lleida and Tortosa allied with Barcelona to try to convince Alfonso to change his mind.\(^{117}\) She complained to her treasurer, Galceran Oliver, that they were doing a great disservice ("gran des瑟uey") to the Crown by their failure to pay up promptly.\(^{118}\) She finally gave in to her "molt alt e molt
illustre senyor," but not without snapping at him about raising for money for his "bastardes filles." In the end, Alfonso had to be content with only one-third of the customary rate. Her promptness and diligence in collecting other subsidies of all sorts leads me to conclude that she was able to tolerate his mistresses and their children, but she would not endure willingly or without complaint the humiliation of having to publicly request money for their wedding festivities. 119

Alfonso continued to tinker with his long-distance government. He began to reform royal government in Naples and in Barcelona including the chancery, treasury, and royal council. Prior lieutenants had maintained an extensive administrative court that resembled the king's, notably Joan I (lieutenant from 1361-87), but no queen-lieutenant did. María's lieutenancy was the first time, however, that a lieutenant maintained a Consell and Audiència separate from the king's that possessed both advisory and judicial functions. 120 His reform measures, which will be discussed at length in chapter three along with a discussion of María's government in Catalunya, was an important bit of fine tuning that not only increased her efficiency as lieutenant, but also greatly enhanced her status.

This arrangement—the king in Naples working through lieutenants in the Iberian realms—worked well up to a point. During

119 The Aragonese Cortes did not happily part with the money, either. In the Cortes of Zaragoza (1446-50), the estates lodged a formal protest against the maridatges as excessive taxation. Sánchez Aragones, Cortes, monarquía y ciudades en Aragón, 205.

the mid-1440s, two separate but intertwined issues—the convocation of Cortes in the absence of the king and Alfonso's decision to grant manumission to the remença peasants—galvanized Catalan society. María's convocation of the Cortes of Catalunya was, above all, a constitutional question, while the discussions about the peasants touched on a range of social, economic, and legal concerns. The point of connection was that the issue of peasant manumission was played out in the Cortes, with María presiding. Her convocation of the Cortes was, in itself, problematic enough for the Catalan ruling elites, but her open support of the peasants made it difficult for them to work with her for a resolution. Both of these were matters of such gravity that they consumed the attentions of all parties involved, from the king and queen to the peasants' representatives. The events of the late 1440s and early 1450s demonstrated both the theoretical and practical limits of María's political authority and the extent to which she took action on her own initiative rather than on Alfonso's orders. Both matters will be discussed at length later; chapter five looks at María and the Cortes, and chapter six analyzes her role in the remença dispute.

From a modern perspective, the lieutenancy of María of Castile in fifteenth century was the apogee for the office of the lieutenant. Alfonso's reliance on lieutenants for extended periods to rule his constituent realms, coupled with María's degree of involvement on all levels in government, transformed both the institution and the political landscape. In all other lieutenancies, whether a prince's or a queen's, the king stayed reasonably close at hand and worked directly with his subjects as he took council with
his magnates and clerics, met with town councils, and convoked sessions of the **Corts**. María's lieutenancy was strikingly different, and the events of the late 1440s and early 1450s clearly demonstrate the practical limitations of María's authority. As the first queen-lieutenant to rule for an extended period with a wide jurisdiction, it would have been surprising had there been no challenges at all. Alfonso took to heart the literal meaning of *alter nos* like no other king before or after. By doing so, he redefined Aragonese kingship as a political partnership and made it clear that, for him, this partnership included his queen.
CHAPTER 4

THE GOVERNMENT OF CATALUNYA UNDER MARÍA OF CASTILE

When María assumed control of Catalunya as Lieutenant General, she inherited a set of governmental institutions that were highly developed with a precision unmatched anywhere else in Europe at the time.¹ With them came a well-educated and professional staff, overwhelmingly composed of lawyers of modest origin, who owed their primary loyalty to the king himself.² By the late Middle Ages, when it was common for kings to reside more or less permanently in or near important cities such as London or Paris, the widely dispersed geography of the Crown of Aragón forced the Aragonese kings to travel frequently. As the Aragonese kings acquired territory in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, they equipped each new addition with institutions modelled on, but not quite identical to, those of Aragón and Catalunya which were blended with local practice. As a result, the king and his personal staff formed an administrative bond

¹ Alan Ryder, "The Evolution of Imperial Government in Naples under Alfonso V of Aragon," in Europe in the Late Middle Ages, edited by John Rigby Hale, John Roger Loxdale Highfield, and Beryl Smalley (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1965), 332-57. Although Ryder is primarily interested in Italian government, his work is pertinent to Catalunya because Alfonso patterned his institutions in Naples after the Catalan-Aragonese model, and Ryder makes frequent comparisons to government in both places.

linking the diverse and distant realms. Executive office was
generally reserved for natives of the particular realm where the
authority was to be exercised. Even the chancery, which in theory
was the most centralized institution and technically followed the king
on his travels, was in fact locally administered by vice-chancellors
(vicecancellers). Nevertheless, the outlines of institutional
consistency made it possible for the king to easily pack up the
household and move to Valencia or Zaragoza whenever called there
for some act of state—to convokve a regional assembly, to settle a
dispute, or simply to make his presence felt.

Over time, a quasi-provincial government thus emerged in
Aragón and, to some extent, in Valencia, but with substantial
regional variations. Catalunya, however, remained the preferred
home base for the Aragonese kings and its government was the model
for that of all the other realms. Their dynasty was referred to as
the House of Barcelona and they spoke Catalan; they derived nearly
half the taxable wealth of the Crown from Catalunya; their imperial
policy dovetailed with Catalan mercantile interests; and the Catalans

3 Jesús Lalinde Abadía, "Las instituciones de la Corona de
Aragón en el siglo XIV," VIII Congreso de Historia de la Corona de

4 José Trenchs and Antonio María Aragó, "Cancillerías de la
Corona de Aragón y Mallorca desde Jaime I a la muerte de Juan II,"
Folia Parisiensia I (Zaragoza: Institución "Fernando el Católica," 1962), 51-52; Francisco Sevillano Colom, "Apuntes para el estudio de
la cancillería de Pedro IV el Ceremonioso," Anuario de la Historia del
Derecho Español 20 (1950): 137-241; idem, "De la Cancillería de la
Corona de Aragón," in Martínez Ferrando, archivero: miscelánea de
estudios dedicados a su memoria (Barcelona: Atenas, 1968), 451-81;
and idem, "Las cancillerías de Fernando I de Antequera y de Alfonso
el Magnánimo," Anuario de la Història del Derecho Español 35 (1965):
169-216.
were acutely conscious of their favored status among the other realms. Although the kings had palaces in Zaragoza and Valencia, they most often resided in Barcelona.5

Alfonso's prolonged absence in Italy and his military campaigns shifted the political center of gravity to Naples. Most of Alfonso's government—especially the chancellor, the keeper of his seals, and his chief financial officer—accompanied him to Italy. Alfonso set up a government in Naples based on the Aragonese model, but it was not until 1448—six years after he had completed the conquest of the kingdom—that he established a settled court in Naples. In 1437 he tried to institute a regular monthly mail service between Naples and Barcelona, a trip that by boat took an average of four weeks.6 Regular embassies between the two courts were instituted as early as February 1435 when Antoni Vinyes, a royal notary, was sent to Naples to discuss the office of the Mestre Racional (the Catalan equivalent of exchequer). Such embassies, eleven in all from 1435 to 1454, shuttled across the western Mediterranean, their bearers entrusted with letters and documents too important to be trusted to ship captains. In addition to these official embassies, the members of the Barcelona town council frequently sent their own emissaries of their own choosing and at their own expense, and barons and prelates travelled back and forth

5 José María Font i Rius, "Las instituciones de la corona de Aragón en la primera mitad del siglo XV," Ponencias del IV Congreso de la Història de la Corona de Aragón (Barcelona: Comisión Permanente de los Congresos de la Corona de Aragón, 1976), 209-11.

6 It was modestly successful, but weather and travel conditions ruined many good intentions. ACA, Cancilleria, 2695, fol. 61r-v.
when need dictated. Letters were posted from all parts of the western Mediterranean, including Genoa, Palma de Mallorca, Nice, Gaeta, and Castillo de Archi, near Naples. Even after decades away, he still gave serious consideration to rejoining María in Barcelona or having her join him in Naples. True to character, he did not want to close out any option, but once he relocated to Italy, his government had become a balancing act. He had one foot firmly planted in Italy and one somewhere in Spain.

The move to Naples placed severe stress on the foundations of royal government elsewhere, especially Catalunya. Economic, social, and political conditions were changing rapidly, but it could take from four to six weeks to receive a response from Alfonso. By establishing his court in Naples, Alfonso left María in a curious predicament. As queen, she had personal attendants who took care

7 Mensajeros Barceloneses, 7-72.
8 Francesch Castelló to the Barcelona town council, 12 September 1435, AHCB CCO, X-7, 144r-v, document 52 in Mensajeros Barceloneses, 124-25.
9 Francesch Despla and Guillem Deztorrent to the Barcelona town council, 9 March 1444, AHCB Ll. Cl., VI-10, 15r-16v, document 184 in Mensajeros Barceloneses, 240-42.
10 Antoni Vinyes to the Barcelona town council, 18 August 1442, AHCB CCO, X-12, 88r-v, document 159 in Mensajeros Barceloneses, 213-14.
11 Mateu Pujades to the town council of Barcelona, 4 June 1442, AHCB CCO, X-12, 61r-v, document 154 in Mensajeros Barceloneses, 211.
12 Bernat Fivaller and Pere Joan de Santcliment to the town council of Barcelona, AHCB CCO, X-23, 97r-v, document 436 in Mensajeros Barceloneses, 475-76.
of her personal needs; as Lieutenant General, she had a staff of officials who handled routine administration, but she shared with Alfonso the chief officials of the justice, chancery, and finance departments. Ordinary civil and criminal cases could be tried in her court; ordinary documents could be executed and signed by her; and she could handle most routine financial matters but anything out of the ordinary or pertinent to the higher nobility or clergy was sent to Alfonso for advice, review, or approval.

The problems were more than just purely administrative. The Catalan nobles and urban patricians (known as the ciutadans honrats, or honored citizens) were fully aware that they were no longer at the center of political life and did not have ready access to the king. Even though the administration functioned smoothly while the king was in Italy, they repeatedly petitioned María to persuade Alfonso to return to Catalunya. The longer Alfonso was away, the more these groups declared that their particular problem was something that only the king could resolve. They began to go over María's head, and those who could afford the expense of the journey took their case directly to the king. Not only did this undermine her effectiveness, it clogged the Neapolitan court. Alfonso, never fond of administrative detail, could no longer escape the fact that

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14 María's personal attendants were not part of royal administration and will not be discussed here. For details, see Doña María de Castilla, Esposa de Alfonso el Magnánimo, 129-44.


16 See, for example, ACA Curiae 3200, 80v-81r, 12 July 1453, María to Alfonso: "E la dita Cort ha respost que ells hoien ab dolor e tristor aquesta demanda car tota hur consolacio esperen per la presencia de vostra Real persona."
tinkering with embassies and regular mail service was no substitute for real reform. 17

As early as 1440 Alfonso was aware that what had worked well for three contiguous realms was less effective when stretched to include Naples. He discovered that it was easier to govern the outlying realms from Barcelona, which possessed an efficient bureaucracy, than from Naples, which was an administrative nightmare after decades of chaotic rulership. He was determined to try to rule entirely from Naples, and as he began to organize Neapolitan government to conform to the Aragonese style, he included the rest of his realms in the process. 18 Alfonso's reforms were ongoing and gradual—more fine-tuning than an overhaul; like his modifications in the lieutenancy, they were less a result of theory than bureaucratic logic fueled by immediate necessity. Some of his work was simply a formalization of existing practice, but some involved substantive change.

By the 1440s, Aragonese government was composed of a complex set of interlocking offices that seem more modern than medieval. Even so, we know more about the institutional structure than about the actual functioning of government in Aragón, Catalunya, and Valencia during Alfonso's reign. Moreover, the most

17 The extensive documentation of the official embassies has been transcribed and edited by José María Madurell Marimon, Mensajeros Barceloneses en la Corte de Nápoles de Alfonso V de Aragón, 1435-1458 (Barcelona: Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas, 1963). See also Alfonso the Magnanimous, 364-65.

18 For a discussion of his government and reforms in Naples see The Kingdom of Naples, chapters 3 through 7; and Ryder, "The Evolution of Imperial Government," 339-57.
in-depth studies of the governmental institutions of the Crown of Aragón, written by Spanish historians José María Font i Rius and Jesús Lalinde Abadía, do not specifically address the issue of how the Lieutenant General functioned in the fifteenth century and pay very little attention to queens as lieutenants. Alan Ryder's studies on Alfonso are excellent works devoted primarily to the kingdom of Naples but he gives Spain only cursory attention. The scarcity of secondary material makes it difficult to delve deeply into government and to compare María's government in Catalunya to the king's in Naples, or to any other prior or subsequent lieutenancy or reign.

This chapter is not intended to served as a comprehensive investigation into local and municipal government of Catalunya between 1420 and 1453 or Alfonso's reforms outside of Catalunya. Such a study is beyond the scope of this project. Rather, it is an overview of the government of the lieutenancy which, although it includes material from the reign as a whole, is focused mostly on the 1440s and early 1450s. It raises more questions than it could possibly answer about the administration of justice and finance, but it is an attempt to fill a gap in modern historiography. Incredible as  


20 Kingdom of Naples, chapters 3-7 on government in both Naples and the peninsular realms during Alfonso's reign.
it seems, there has been no systematic study devoted to Alfonso's reign in Spain. The three principal surveys of Catalan history—by Soldevila, Suárez Fernández, and Bisson—have covered Catalunya in general terms, but none of them goes into any great detail. Soldevila's three volume history of Catalunya concentrates on military, diplomatic, and political history, and, in a telling omission, never refers to María as a lieutenant or even as a regent. He reported on the events, but passed over the nuts and bolts of government in the fifteenth century.21 Suárez Fernández's volume is part of a multi-volume encyclopedia of Spanish history, not a monograph devoted specifically to Catalunya or even the Crown of Aragón. Given the problems of writing such a work, it is remarkably detailed and it cites an abundance of documentary material, but it can in no way be considered a fair or full treatment of the reign.22 Bisson intended his book as a "short history," and that it is: concise, clear, but not detailed.23 The only two works devoted to Alfonso's reign, those by Alan Ryder, are more interested in Italy.24 Part of the problem is the sheer number of documents—well into the tens of thousands—that would have to be examined for such a project. Thanks to the proliferation of papermills in Valencia and

21 Ferran Soldevila, Història de Catalunya, 3 volumes (Barcelona: Editorial Alpha, 1934), 41-80.

22 Los Trastamara, 373-92, 405-12, 425-34.

23 The subtitle of Bisson's book is "A Short History." On Alfonso's reign and María's lieutenancy, see Medieval Crown of Aragon, 140-47.

24 For a fuller discussion of the modern historiography, see chapter one, page 15.
along the Ebro river, Aragonese government generated tremendous piles of paper and saved them in their newly organized archives. So, like Alan Ryder, I too will have to provide an overview, but in this case the focus is fixed directly on the queen-lieutenant and the workings of Catalan government in the reign of Alfonso V.

In general, Alfonso's reforms were a paradoxical blend of both centralization and decentralization. His most important reforms centered on financial administration, mainly the office of the Mestre Racional, a chief auditor theoretically autonomous, with jurisdiction over one or various realms, and the chief treasurer (tresorer general), who managed all royal revenues from Naples. In 1419 he instituted a separate Mestre Racional for Valencia and did the same for Aragón and Catalunya later.25 Having a separate Mestre Racional who controlled the accounts of both the treasury and the royal patrimony, coupled with a chamberlain (camarlench) who managed the household finances, gave each lieutenant much greater flexibility and control over expenditures than before. Although both the Mestre Racional and the treasurer of Catalunya theoretically were subordinate to the Treasurer General in Naples, they were armed with a formidable array of judicial and executive powers and substantial discretionary authority.26

On the other hand, Alfonso maintained and reinforced his control over the composition and function of María's curia. He knew


26 Ryder, "The Evolution of Imperial Government," 351-54; Medieval Crown of Aragón, 156.
full well the power possessed by members of the royal council and the temptations posed by an absentee king. Alfonso may have been out of sight, but he was never out of mind. Even though her court was a mirror image of his in Naples, he insisted that only he could control who served on her advisory council, what they were to do, and for how long. He retained the right to appoint high-ranking clergy but ceded to her the control over lesser appointments. He introduced modest changes in the chancery to make the office more efficient to accommodate the increase in the workload, but notably he preferred to centralize all authority in the hands of a single chancellor (canceller) who resided in Naples. He did, however, delegate substantial authority to the vicechancellor of each realm. He left largely untouched the institutional structure of the household offices but he was careful to stipulate the professional qualifications for each officeholder and the term limit for each office.

The Queen's Court and Household

Barcelona, the historic site of Aragonese royal government, was the primary royal residence for most of María's tenure as lieutenant, second only to Valencia, the site of the royal summer palace. She also maintained a palace at Perpinyà, but it was never intended as a permanent residence. Like the king, she moved from palace to palace to convolve the Corts: From 1449 to 1453, she stayed

27 For a discussion of María's council, see page 157, following.

28 María's official appointments to office are collected in the ACA Oficialum registers, 3114 and 3115, that cover the years 1442 through 1456.
first in Perpinyà, then Barcelona, and finally Vilafranca de Penedès.  

María's royal court and household in Catalunya continued to be managed much as it had been since the reforms of Pere IV in 1344. Pere's reforms, enacted in a document known as the Ordinances, regulated and stabilized all aspects of the royal household and the offices of judicial and financial administration. He had two goals: The first was to reduce the number and influence of nobles in government. Catalan nobles were contentious, prone to bitter political-familial factions, and not always diligent servants of the Crown. Pere turned to a cadre of professionally trained lawyers and familiars—clerics, some lay officials, and non-nobles who were loyal only to him. His second goal was to strengthen central administration as a means of holding together his disparate realms which, with their distinct languages, local institutions, and cultures, tended toward fragmentation. Until then, the constituent states of the Crown of Aragón were united principally in the person of the king himself, and Pere's reforms created an institutional umbrella which covered all the realms.

To these ends, Pere organized royal government into four

29 By contrast, she spent the least amount of time in Aragón. Doña María de Castilla, 130.

30 This system of household organization would last until the reign of Fernando II (1479-1516). Valdeavellano, Curso de historia de las instituciones Españolas, 490-91, 495-96.

main departments under a single office. Two were household officials, the majordomo (*mayordomen*) and the chamberlain, and two were governmental, the Chancellor and the *Mestre Racional*. In each realm, a local branch of each department was established which was supervised by an official with delegated authority. Thus, the household departments were the principal administrative bond among the constituent states, a sort of headquarters with branch offices in the provinces. As these four officials travelled with the king on his tours of the realm, they kept a close eye on the branch offices. For the officials themselves, physical proximity likewise meant access to the king's ear through their ex officio membership in the royal council and, often, a personal friendship.

In all, there were three majordomos, one each for Aragón, Catalunya, and Valencia-Mallorca. The office was similar to the older *seneschal*, which was the hereditary domain of the Montcada family until it was abolished in 1344. As the principal household official, each majordomo was responsible for feeding and provisioning the household, maintaining the royal stables and the hunting dogs and birds. Majordomos had to be noble knights (*nobles cavallers*), and because they were responsible for the both the body and the residence of the royal family, they were among the king's and queen's closest advisers. The precedence among them was determined by the realm in which the king was residing, which meant that for

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most of Alfonso's reign the majordomos who followed him to Naples were officially higher in status than María's in Barcelona.\textsuperscript{34}

The two chamberlains, who had to be knights, were in charge of the care of the royal chamber, its contents, and the physical well-being of the king and the royal family. The chamberlain later was granted a limited jurisdiction over the administration of Crown revenues such as those derived from the king's lordship in the royal demesne, from those lands he held as tenant-in-chief, and from his sovereign rights, including mints, saltworks, monopolies, shipwrecks, and customs dues.\textsuperscript{35}

Authority in the royal household naturally implied jurisdiction over the courtiers and their staff. So, for instance, the chamberlain supervised the royal secretaries and the \textit{algutzirs} (constables), two knights whose criminal and civil jurisdiction extended to include the royal household, and the mint had its own court. \textit{Algutzirs} were royal appointees whose jurisdiction could, and often did, extend beyond the household, a fact which prompted legislation designed to curb their powers.\textsuperscript{36} María worked very closely with two, Berenguer de Montpalau (who served until 1452) and Hug de Puigpardines (1450-53). Both men provided valuable service to her in the collection of \textit{maridatge} subsidies and were royal emissaries to the representatives (\textit{sindichs}) of the \textit{remences}, and their influence was

\textsuperscript{34} \textit{Kingdom of Naples}, 19-20, 57-61, 65-68, 73-75, 87; \textit{Doña María de Castilla}, 130-31.

\textsuperscript{35} \textit{Kingdom of Naples}, 57-58; \textit{Doña María de Castilla}, 130-31.

\textsuperscript{36} The number and powers of the royal \textit{algutzirs} were outlined in capitols 8 and 24 of the \textit{Corts} of Barcelona, convoked by María in 1422. \textit{Constitucions}, 112.
substantial and feared by the ruling elites.³⁷

María tended to rely on a small group of household officers who moved from job to job in her court. For example, among her majordomos were Berenguer de Hostalrich, Joan de Próxima, and Guillem de Vic, who also served at other times as chamberlains. Because they served at her pleasure and they literally shared the same roof, bonds of loyalty and perhaps even friendship formed. It is worth noting that María worked almost exclusively with Catalans or Valencians. This practice differed from that of her husband, who preferred a Castilian household retinue and liked to appoint Catalans to Aragonese offices, and vice versa.³⁸ María's practice may have been a purely practical tactic, since the men she worked with were seasoned professionals with extensive experience with Catalan law and customs. It may also have been a political tactic, a recognition that she was building bridges by working with locals. Her personal retinue and friends included many Castilians, but in matters of government she took care to work with Catalans, and this no doubt contributed to the smoothness with which her court functioned.

María had an additional household official, Berenguer de Montpalau, with whom she worked very closely, especially during the late 1440s and early 1450s. María referred to Montpalau as the "governador de nostra cambra," a sort of cabinet member without a portfolio, theoretically in charge of her personal court but distinct from her chamberlain. His title does not tell the whole story of his

³⁷ María personally appointed Puigpardines. ACA Cancillería, Curiae 3203, 172r, 25 June 1450.

³⁸ Alfonso the Magnanimous, 367-69.
importance to her, however. Montpalau went where she could not go and did what she could not do, either because she was a woman or because she was often ill. She placed him in charge of collecting the unpopular maridatge subsidy; and he handled her personal finances, often travelling to Naples to justify certain expenses or requests for additional funds for the queen's court. He functioned as her eyes and ears in the court, the Corts, and in her dealings with local officials, and was invaluable to her during the remença dispute.

Consell and Audiència: The Royal Council

The heart of government in Catalunya was the queen's council, known in Catalan as Consell e Audiència and Latin as a Sacrum Consilium, which supervised the workings of regional administration, royal finances, and the royal household. It is unfortunate that, at present, there are no detailed studies of royal government like those for the English curia regis. This is true not only for María's lieutenancy but for the entirety of the Crown of Aragón in the Middle Ages. As a result, this section will provide an

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39 ACA Cancillería, Secretorum 3227, 53r-55v, 9 June 1449; 57r-58v, 30 June 1449; 75r-76r, 24 July 1449.

40 ACA Cancillería, Secretorum 3227, 43v-44v, 22 April 1449; 75r-76r, 24 July 1449; 93r-v, 21 October 1449; 99v-100v, 6 December 1449; 104r-105r, 24 January 1450; 121r-123v, 6 May 1450; 134v-136v, 3 September 1450.

41 ACA Cancillería, Secretorum 3227, 42r-43v, 22 April 1449.

42 ACA Cancillería, Secretorum 3227, 29v-31v, 14 October 1448; 42r-43v, 22 April 1449; 44v-48v, 30 April 1449; 53r-55v, 9 June 1449; 55v-56r, 25 June 1449; 57r-58v, 30 June 1449; 64r-65v, 12 July 1449; 70r-v and 73v-74v, 8 July 1449; 75r-76r, 24 July.
overview of María's court based on what is known of Alfonso's routines in Italy. Because Alfonso worked hard to bring the ordinary judicial, financial, and chancery practices of all his realms up to a common standard, it is not pure speculation to compare Alfonso's court in Naples and María's in Barcelona. Until we have a systematic study of the Aragonese royal court, this brief look at María's court will have to suffice. Even just this overview, however, is enough to demonstrate the range and scope of María's authority in Catalunya.

In the privilegios granting María the powers of the lieutenancy, Alfonso stipulated clearly that her powers included jurisdiction over the royal council and other high-ranking royal officials.43 The Consell's authority, by virtue of the power wielded ex officio by its members, was extensive.44 In addition, it served as both an advisory body and the supreme tribunal in Catalunya. The nomenclature of the Consell i Audiència is not entirely consistent. Before 1439 it may not have been called specifically an Audiència, but after that it can be identified as such in most Aragonese realms, thus it is not clear whether the functions remained the same over

43 "Preficiamini insuper et sitis in locum nostrum tanquam maiestatem Nostram regiam representans super Gubernatorem generalem omnium regnorum et terrarum Nostrarum et super omnes gubernatores quorumlibet regnorum et Principatus ac insularum superius expressorum et super omnes Consiliarios Nostros in eis ad Nostra peragenda negocia assignatos et assignandos Cancellarium et Vicecancellarium, Consiliarios Thesaurarium Nostros et racionales Magistros Curie nostre, justicias, merinos, vicarios, Baiulos, suprajunctarios, protarios, procuratores et collectares reddituum et jurium nostrorum et alios quoslibet Officiales Nostros . . ." Cortes, 13, 83-84.

44 On royal councils in the Spanish kingdoms in general, see Valdeavellano, Curso de historia de las instituciones Españolas, 450-59.
time. The advisory functions are better understood than the judicial ones, largely because the terms Sacrum Consilium, Consell, and Audiència are used rather loosely, but also because of the poverty of studies on royal justice in Catalunya. In the absence of such a study, the judicial functions can only be seen indirectly, as in a letter from the Consell de Cent to the Catalan ambassadors in Naples concerning a sentence María made in favor of Felip de Ferrera in his dispute with the town government of Perpinyà. The representatives of the town, unhappy with the judgement, were seeking advice from the Consell de Cent on whether to take the case to Alfonso's court or to abide by María's decision. This letter suggests that María's Audiència was perceived by the Catalans as the highest judicial body in the realm, but that the judgements rendered there could be appealed to the king's Audiència, provided that the plaintiff was wealthy and powerful enough to travel to Naples and the pay the more costly expenses of that court.

Alfonso reserved to himself alone the power to determine the composition and authority of the queen's royal council. To make it clear that he would not tolerate nobles and clerics who used their office or rank as a sinecure, he emphasized that they were members

45 References to the judicial functions of the Audiència are scattered through the documents. For example, royal jurisdiction on widows and orphans can be found in capitol 6 of the Corts of Barcelona in 1422, Constitucions, 508-9. There is, however, no systematic collection of pertinent documents. Font y Rius, "Las instituciones de la corona de Aragón en la primera mitad del siglo XV," 209; Ryder, "The Evolution of Imperial Government," 345-51; Kingdom of Naples, 104.

46 AHCB Ll. Cl., VI-15, 78r-v, 15 June 1450, document 227 in Mensajeros Barceloneses, 293.
of the Consell not by virtue of office, but solely at his pleasure. The composition of the Consell e Audiència can be separated generally into three categories that describe the outlines of royal government in Catalunya during Maria's lieutenancy: justice and chancery, financial administration, and regional government, as stipulated in a cedula issued by Alfonso in 1452 which specified the members of the queen's Consell e Audiència.\footnote{ACA, Secretorum 2679, 137r-v, 4 May 1452. (see appendix, document 7). This is the only document of its kind that I could find in the Crown archives, but others may exist in the Archivio di Stato di Napoli, Diversi della Sommaria, which Ryder says contains many letters of appointment and schedules of duties for officials in Naples. Most of the records pertinent to the Spanish realms were transferred to Barcelona in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries; still, it would be useful to verify that no records concerning the Iberian realms remain in Naples. The Arxiu Reial de Valencia, Mestre Racional section, contains letters of appointment, but none for Maria or any other lieutenants. Kingdom of Naples, 57.}

The grant officially lists the members of the council but it is apparent that most were members ex officio, which indicates that this array may have been common in other such grants issued by Alfonso. Pre-eminent among Maria's advisors in her council of 1452 were the Chancellor, the vicechancellor Ramón de Palomar, the regent-chancellor Jaume Pau, the Governors of Catalunya and Rosselló, and Pere de Santcliment, Mestre Racional, who were ordered to attend "if and when they are present." Officials of slightly lesser rank included the chamberlain, Andreu de Biure; Perot Mercader, the treasurer (or his regent); Jaume Giner, the regent of the chief bailiff (bailie general) of Catalunya; and the royal procurador from Rosselló (not named). A jurist (Ramón Dezpapiol, advocat fiscal, a lawyer-accountant), a cleric (Guillem
Ponç de Fonollet, canon from the cathedral of Barcelona), a knight (Ramón Gilabert), and one or two unnamed procuradors fiscals (financial officers attached to the office of the Mestre Racional) round out the list of Crown officials. Finally, Alfonso included nine representatives to be "elected later from the three branches or estates of the Principality of Catalunya as three per each branch or estate." It would be especially interesting to know who these nine people were, but there is no indication of their identity, and the documents originating from her curia do not mention them by name.

Except for the three nobles from the Corts, the Consell members were all non-noble and, with two exceptions (the chancellor and the canon from the cathedral of Barcelona), not clerics. This clearly indicates that the power of the nobility, once so intimately connected with the royal council, had dramatically declined since the fourteenth century and, by 1452, they were listed as merely one of the three estates. The inner circle of political power in Catalunya was firmly in the hands of lawyers and loyal bureaucrats.

Judicial and chancery officials formed the nucleus of her Consell and Audiència—the chancellor, vicechancellor, a regent canceller who stood in for the chancellor when he was elsewhere, or protonothary (protonotari), in that order of precedence. The Chancellor, chief of general administration and justice with a jurisdiction that encompassed all the realms of the Crown of Aragón. He had to be a native Catalan, and either an archbishop or bishop who held the degree of doctor of laws. Because there were certain

48 This was legally confirmed by the Corts of Barcelona in 1422, capitol 5, Constitucions, 77.
criminal cases from which the chancellor was barred due to his holy orders, his principal legal authority was civil, not criminal. He supervised the drafting of royal correspondence and the drawing up of privileges and administrative acts, and the compilation of law codes, and had to approve all appointments of judges and notaries throughout Catalunya. As president of the royal council and its preeminent member, he was the king's closest advisor. Three chancellors dominated Alfonso's reign: Dalmau de Mur, Archbishop of Tarragona and later, Archbishop of Zaragoza (1422-39); Arnau Roger de Pallars, the Bishop of Urgell (c. 1436-54); and Pere de Urrea, Archbishop of Tarragona (c. 1454-79). 49

The long career of Arnau Roger de Pallars, bishop of Urgell, as royal adviser and chancellor reveals a great deal about the office and the trans-Mediterranean workings of Aragonese government. Ambitious, worldly, and rich, he acquired jurisdiction over the money and lands of many Catalan abbeys and monasteries in addition to the bishopric of Urgell, which he held from 1443 until his death in 1461, despite his almost permanent absence from all of them after 1437. As both chancellor and bishop of Urgell, he remained by Alfonso's side and worked principally through procuradors, notably Berenguer de Muntravà and Ramon Grau. Muntravà represented him at all sessions of the Corts except the meeting in Tortosa in 1442,

49 Sevillano Colom, "De la cancillería de la Corona de Aragón," 451-80; idem, "Las cancillerías de Fernando I de Antequera y de Alfonso V el Magnánimo," 169-216; María Desamparados Cabanes Pecourt, "Particularidades diplomáticas de la cancillería de Alfonso el Magnánimo," in La Corona de Aragón y el Mediterraneo. 4 volumes (Zaragoza: Institución "Fernando el Católica," 1973), 4: 89-99. These qualifications are also contained in capitol 1 of the Corts of Barcelona of 1422, Constitucions, 97.
and Grau was his emissary to María's court. Urgell de Pallars was generally a strong supporter of royalist measures, but he was not the king's shill. He bitterly opposed Alfonso's attempt to collect the maridatge subsidy for his illegitimate daughters and sided with the urban patriciates in the 1450s.50

Because the chancellor was more often in Naples than anywhere else, each realm had a vice-chancellor, the principal legal officer in the realm, to conduct the routine business of that realm. The vice-chancellor, directly accountable to the chancellor, had to be a jurist or hold a doctor of laws degree, but could not be a cleric so that his office could handle the criminal cases, which often involved the imposition of corporal punishment, that the chancellor himself could not. To prevent any overlap of judicial functions between realms, Aragón and Catalunya, for example, Alfonso stipulated that vicechancellors had to be natives currently residing in the territory under their authority and could not exercise any jurisdiction elsewhere.51 After Alfonso established his court in Naples and took his chancellor with him, the vice-chancellor thus became the highest chancery official in Catalunya with a permanent seat on the royal Consell. During her lieutenancy, María worked

50 A member of one of the prominent noble families in Catalunya with holdings in the north, he was perpetually embroiled in quarrels with his neighbor, the Count of Foix, and his nephew, the Count of Pallars. In return for his years of royal service, Urgell was named Alfonso's representative in Rome when Alfonso Borja became Pope Calixtus III in 1455. Carme Batlle i Gallart, "El bisbe Arnau Roger de Pallars i la seu d'Urgell (1437–61)," Estudios Históricos y Documentos de los Archivos de Protologos VI (1978): 216–35.

51 Likewise for offices in other constituent realms including Naples. Kingdom of Naples, 142.
closely several vice-chancellors, notably Ferrer Ram (primarily in Aragón), Rodrigo Falco, Ramón Palmar, and Joan Pages.52

The vice-chancellor was assisted by a staff of regent chancellors. In theory the regent chancellor, who had to have the same qualifications as the vice-chancellor, was the official who accompanied the king when he was on the move, but this was reversed when Alfonso took the chancellor with him to Naples. In Catalunya, the regent chancellors were the additional chancery staff assigned to handle ordinary criminal and civil cases. Because the chancellor was most often in Naples, his name appears only sporadically in the rubrics of María's documents; instead, vicechancellors, regent chancellors, or protonotharies prepared and verified the documents.53

The Catalan protonothary was his own boss, independent of the supervision of the chancellor or vice-chancellor. He was a jurist, "learned in grammatical science," who kept the seals (except the secret seal, which was under the care of the chamberlain), supervised the writing of legal documents, and was responsible for the registration and despatch of letters.54 María's protonotharies

52 Trenchs and Aragó, "Cancillerías de la Corona de Aragón y Mallorca desde Jaime I a la muerte de Juan II," 54-6; Sevillano Colom, "Cancillerías de Fernando I de Antequera y de Alfonso el Magnánimo," 180-86.

53 Sevillano Colom, "Cancillerías de Fernando I de Antequera y de Alfonso el Magnánimo," 186-8.

54 The protonothary's duties were spelled out in capitols 6 and 9 of the Corts of Barcelona in 1422, Constitucions, 73, 98. For a general discussion, see Valdeavellano, Curso de historía de las instituciones Españolas, 603-4; Hillgarth, The Spanish Kingdoms, 2: 282; The Kingdom of Naples, 18-20.
included Pere Ram (until his death in 1442), Ferrer Ram (1416-48),
and Joan Peyró (after 1450). 55

María's Audiència had wide jurisdiction over criminal and civil
suits and the right to collect fines and exact punishment, but it also
served an advisory role government. 56 Given what is known of
Aragonese judicial practice in earlier reigns and Alfonso's court in
Naples, it can be safely assumed that the queen presided over the
Consell when it acted in its advisory capacity, but rarely intervened
when it acted as a judicial tribunal. For instance, Alfonso attended
the Audiència occasionally, but held a weekly public audience, which
Ryder suggests was more ceremony than substance and that the real
judicial work was done in conference with his legal advisers. 57
María's Audiència was scheduled to meet every Friday as a tribunal,

55 Trenchs and Aragó, "Cancillerías de la Corona de Aragón
y Mallorca desde Jaime I a la muerte de Juan II," 57-8; Sevillano
Colom, "Cancillerías de Fernando I de Antequera y de Alfonso el
Magnánimo," 188-93, 198-200.

56 This authority was stipulated in the 1420 privilegio: "Sitis
eciam super omnes prelatos et religiosas personas in hiis in quibus
Nos eis preficimur et super Duces, Comites, Vicecomites, nobiles,
barones et militiaes, infancones [sic], generosos, cives, burgenses,
hominesque civitatum, villarum et locorum dictorum regnorum et
Principatus quos Vos vocare et citare possitis ac eciam capere seu
capi facere prout volueritis, eosque et unumquemque ipsorum civiliter
et criminaliter pro eorum delictis, deffectibus et excessibus in
personis et bonis punire . . . positis eciam ferre sentencias a
quibus appellari non possit immo sint durature perpetuo ac si essent
ab ore regio nostro prolate: possitis eciam in omnibus et singulis
causis tam civilibus quam criminalibus eciam si fuerint meri imperii
vel majores cause et tam in causis pricipalibus quam appellacionum et
supplicacionum tam a Nostris quam Vestris sentenciis oblatarum et
offendarum quorumcumque judices delegare et assignare et alios
removere, aliosque ponere seu ordinare de novo prout ad
superioritatem Nostram pertinet et spectat et eciam ipsas causas
appellacionum et supplicacionum terminare." Cortes, 13: 84.

57 Alfonso the Magnanimous, 360-61.
with the chancellor (or vicechancellor or regent chancellor, whichever happened to be at court) presiding. Any number of counsellors might attend the judicial court, but, as in Naples, the real business was left to the vicechancellor and the jurists.

A suit was brought before the Audiència in the form of petition addressed to the king or queen. One of the jurists took evidence from the two parties and prepared a report, which was presented to the council for deliberation. The involved parties were then called to appear before the council, and more deliberations among the lawyers and members of the Audiència followed. The royal lawyers made their decision in a private session, and the judgment was sent on to the queen for her approval. After the queen's sentence was formally written and registered, there was only one avenue of appeal, directly to the king himself. Appeals to the king were rare, but a plaintiff with enough money or influence could do so, or bypass the queen's Audiència altogether and take his or her case directly to Alfonso as a court of first instance. In practice, as elsewhere in Europe in the Middle Ages, the multiplicity of judicial jurisdictions--royal, ecclesiastical, seigneurial, municipal--overlapped. Considerable confusion ensued and the quality of justice varied widely, depending, as always, on the wealth and status of both plaintiff and defendant. For example, the case involving the

58 Weekly meetings of the Audiència were stipulated in the Corts of Barcelona in 1290. Constitucions, 94.
59 Kingdom of Naples, 107.
60 Valdeavellano, Curso de història de las instituciones Españolas, 556-58, 576.
murder of Bernat Senesterra, lord of Monells y Ullastret in northeastern Catalunya, was handled in María's Audiència, but because Senesterra was such a prominent noble, María consulted with Alfonso at every step of the way. It took nearly a year for a final judgment to be rendered against his murderer, and even longer for the settlement of Senesterra's estate among his widow and sons.61

**The Chancery and the Administration of Justice**

The Chancellor not only presided over the royal council and its judicial administration, he also supervised the clerical work of the chancery and the maintenance of royal archives.62 Because the Chancellor was absent from Catalunya more often than he was present, the vicechancellor had substantial local authority. Together with the prothonothary, the vicechancellor directed the preparation, drafting, registration and verification of judicial records and royal correspondence.63 In their administrative tasks they were assisted by a chancery staff that consisted of five oydors who heard the petitions; eight scrivans de registre who kept the registers and

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61 The case took several years to resolve and consumed dozens of folios during 1448 and 1449, starting with ACA Cancillería, Secretorium 3227, 4r-5r, 13 May 1448 et passim.

62 The first royal archivist was appointed in 1346 by Pere IV. Hillgarth, *The Spanish Kingdoms*, 1: 354.

63 Royal registers were large octavo volumes consisting of between 150 and 200 folios, written in a variety of hands in a humanist-style script. Alfonso brought order to the chancery (and facilitated modern scholarly research) by ordering that documents be classified and registered primarily according to the nature of their contents. Sevillano Colom, "Cancillerías de Fernando I de Antequera y de Alfonso el Magnánimo," 210-12. Trenchs and Aragó, "Cancillerías de la Corona de Aragón y Mallorca desde Jaime I a la muerte de Juan II," 52-54, 61-65; Kingdom of Naples, 255.
assisted other clerks; and twelve scrivans de manament, ordinary clerks who handled the secretarial duties. In 1448 Alfonso issued a pragmatica adding six scrivans de manament and four scrivans de registre, noting that María was free to choose whomever she pleased.64

It was typical of Alfonso's approach to government in Catalunya to hold the reins both tightly and loosely at the same time, by selecting carefully which tasks and appointments to keep to himself. It not only freed him to govern more effectively in Naples, it reinforced his own status. He recognized that it was impractical to try to supervise all official appointments, and he also seemed to be sensitive to the fact that such appointments were a measure of the status of the grantor. Thus, he reserved to himself the highest-ranking appointments as a way of demonstrating both his supreme authority and also of personally dispensing favors and rewards for service. This reinforced María's status as both highest in Catalunya but subordinate to that of the king, and through such gestures, I doubt that the Catalans ever confused their queen-lieutenant for the king.

Several languages appear side by side in chancery documents, depending either on the vernacular language of the

64 ACA Cancillería, Curiae 2657, fols. 50r-v, 8 May 1448. See also Sevillano Colom, "Cancillerías de Fernando I de Antequera y de Alfonso el Magnánimo," 193-98, 200-205, 209-10; Trenchs and María Aragó, "Cancillerías de la Corona de Aragón y Mallorca desde Jaime I a la muerte de Juan II," 54-61; Kingdom of Naples, 18-20. The duties and qualifications of the scribal staff was specified by capitol 10 of the Corts of Barcelona in 1422, Constitucions, 128, 160; Valdeavellano, Curso de historia de las instituciones Españolas, 490, 496-97.
recipient or the importance of the document. Many of Alfonso's autograph letters were written in Castilian, but some are in Catalan; he and María corresponded with one another in either Catalan or Castilian. Most chancery documents for the Crown of Aragón were issued in the language of the specific realm, or, in the case of letters close, in the language of the recipient. Thus, letters patent and other documents addressed to the town council of Barcelona were written in Catalan, while important charters, correspondence to foreign kingdoms or the pope were written in Latin, as were royal charters, appointments, privilegios, and other high-level correspondence. Documents for the kingdoms of Valencia and Aragón were issued in Castilian, Latin, the Catalan variant spoken in Valencia, or, rarely, the Romance language spoken in Aragón.65

Documents emanating from both the Consell and the Audiència were written in the queen's name (and, occasionally, as in her personal letters to Alfonso or prominent members of the nobility or other royalty, in her hand), drafted by a royal secretary, and verified by her seal. María had two royal secretaries, who were technically part of the royal household but directly supervised by the chancellor or, in his absence, the vicechancellor. They wrote anything that was to be sealed with the secret seal, recorded council proceedings, and wrote letters on the instructions of the queen's council.

Early in María's lieutenancy royal secretaries appear to have worked at one time or another for both her and Alfonso. For

65 Cabanes Pecourt, "Particularidades diplomáticas de la cancillería de Alfonso el Magnánimo," 89-90.
example, Lorenzo de Casanova, an Italian, was royal secretary first to Alfonso and later to María. By the late 1440s, however, María's principal secretary was Jaume Vila, a Catalan, who worked for her exclusively. His signature "Domina Regina mando mihi Jacobo de Villa deliberata in consilio" appears at the foot of most of her correspondence from the 1440s and early 1450s contained in the Curiae and Curiae Sigilli Secreti registers. He also handled all her high-level correspondence to Alfonso contained in the Secretorum registers, which he signed simply "Domina Regina mando mihi Jacobo de Villa."  

Maria possessed and used a number of seals for both her personal or private correspondence as well as for official state documents. An inventory of María's seals included four silver seals—a great seal of state, a common seal, a secret seal, and a small seal. The great seal of state was used to validate important state documents and letters patent. The common seal authenticated a great variety of documents that carried the status of royal documents but did not have the permanent character which called for the state seal. Documents that bore the common seal included minor

66 Sevillano Colom, "Cancillerías de Fernando I de Antequera y de Alfonso el Magnánimo," 193-97; Cabanes Pecourt, "Particularidades diplomáticas de la cancillería de Alfonso el Magnánimo," 90-95; Kingdom of Naples, 218-20.

67 Illustrative documents include María's letter to Joan de Montbuy, the regent-governor in Catalunya, concerning the remença peasants in Girona (ACA, Cancillería, Curiae 3203, 38v-39r, 14 February 1449) and her letter to Pere Miguel on 13 March 1449, also concerning the remences (ACA, Cancillería, Secretorum 3227, 38v).

68 Hernández-León de Sánchez noted only that her official seals bore the Aragonese coat of arms. Doña María de Castilla, 97.
letters of justice, instructions to royal commissioners, grants of limited duration, provisions concerning salaries of officials, and promissory notes. The secret seal, kept by the protonothary, could only be applied to letters that bore a mark indicating the queen's approval. The small seal was used to validate letters close and may have been similar to Alfonso's signet seal, which he used as a personal mark of approval for documents to be sealed with the secret seal. These official seals of the Lieutenant General of Catalunya, used by María in her capacity as Lieutenant General of Catalunya, bear the eight vertical bands that represent the coat of arms of the principality in a lozenge surrounded by a foliate design. Her personal seals included a gold seal emblazoned with her arms and a circular seal also used by the king which bore the shield of Crown of Aragón.

It is an impressive collection of seals, but what is missing is almost as noteworthy as what she possessed. María did not have the authority to use the two most important seals of the Crown, the golden bull and the small lead seal. The golden bull, used to validate grants of great distinction, and the lead seal used for laws, constitutions, grants of baronies, and major grants to towns, were reserved exclusively for the king's use and documents of that nature

69 The great seal measured 84 mm in diameter, the common seal was 48 mm, and the small seal 30 mm. All surviving impressions in red wax are preserved in the Arxiu de la Corona d’Aragó and illustrated in Santiago Sobrequés i Vidal and Jaume Sobrequés i Callicó, La guerra civil Catalana del segle XV, 2 volumes (Barcelona, Edicions 62, 1973), 48.

70 Her personal seals were destroyed at her death. Doña María de Castilla, 96-98; Kingdom of Naples, 243-49.
were sent to him for final approval. Although a woman in possession of seals was by no means an uncommon occurrence in the fifteenth century, it is nevertheless emblematic of the extent and limitations of her practical authority. In other words, her governmental authority could be clearly delineated simply by knowing what seals she could and did use. Her powers, although wide, were limited. The king's seals indicate the possession of absolute dominion; María's indicated the possession of governmental authority.

The fact that María did not use the golden bull or the small lead seal could account for the decline in revenue from sealing fees from Aragón, Catalunya, and Valencia during Alfonso's absence noted by Alan Ryder. He detected an overall drop in total income from seals, which would, at first glance, seem to indicate that fewer documents were processed by María and Juan from 1432 on, and thus challenges my observation that the Audiència handled a large volume of cases. But the sealing fees were calculated on a progressive basis, the most expensive naturally being those that required the golden bull or the small lead seal, and those official symbols of dominion the king kept with him. Those particular revenues were collected in Naples; therefore, the aggregate totals would be skewed in favor of Naples. At present, Ryder's observation of a drop in the aggregate total is more suggestive than substantive. Until an analysis of the number of cases brought before the queen's


72 Kingdom of Naples, 243-49.
Audiência, a comparison of that data with prior reigns, and a breakdown of the fees collected from sealing documents is performed, all that can really be said is that María's Audiência rendered more judgments than any prior reign.

The sheer number of registers and cases in the records of final judgments rendered in the Audiência, which consume 165 Comune and Comune Sigilli Secreti registers, attests to the importance of María's court as a judicial tribunal. It was an unprecedented volume for a Lieutenant General. No other lieutenant comes close to this number, not even the long tenure of Joan I in the fourteenth century. The volume of business handled by the chancery office grew so much while Alfonso was in Naples that in 1448 he granted María the authority to add to her secretarial and scribal staff at her discretion. This edict provided her with greater flexibility and control over one of the busiest areas of royal government.

There are two plausible explanations for the large numbers of Comune registers: first, much of the judicial business during Joan's lieutenancy was picked up by the king's court. This did not happen

73 ACA, Cancillería, Comune registers, 2948-3107; Comune Sigilli Secreti, 2962 and 3108-3113, cover all periods of María's lieutenancy. There is, naturally, a gap from 1423 to 1432, when Alfonso was in Spain. Each register contains approximately 200 folios. Because each case varies considerably in length, it is impossible to estimate the total number of cases handled by the Audiencia without actually counting each one.

74 There are 68 registers for Joan's lieutenancy. See ACA, Cancillería, Comune, registers 1607-1648, and Comune Sigilli Secreti, registers 1646, 1649-1675.

75 ACA, Cancillería, Curiae 2657, fol. 50r, 8 April 1448.
in Catalunya because the king was residing in Naples and the cost of traveling to his court in Naples was too costly for those seeking ordinary justice. Only those with money and influence—nobles, high-ranking clergy, and urban patriciates—could afford to travel to Naples to seek the king's judgment. What once would have been referred to the king, or deferred until the king returned to Catalunya, was routinely handled by María's court. This seems to have been the pattern during her first tenure, which fills only nineteen registers. Second, there could have been a rise in the number of cases overall, in all realms of the Crown of Aragón, not just Catalunya. The 1440s in Catalunya, for example, were filled with feuding noble and patrician families, especially in Girona northeastern Catalunya, and it is likely that many of these cases of factional unrest (bandosidat) litter the registers. Whatever the cause, the result is clear: The administration of justice was an important part of government. Fees collected for such services as sealing and registering to be paid by the recipients of royal documents constituted an important source of revenue that paid the salaries of the secretaries and chancery staff, half of which went directly to Alfonso in Naples.76

Financial Administration

When Alfonso first arrived in Naples, he tried to keep a strict personal control of the finances in all his realms. In the privilegio of 1420 and all its subsequent emendations, Alfonso

76 Kingdom of Naples, 243-49.
endowed María with a certain amount of leeway in financial administration and created separate Mestre Racionals in each realm, but he still preferred to supervise his finances from a central treasury. This worked well up to a point. Transfers of money, goods, and letters of credit were handled efficiently enough when the realm was relatively small and compact, but the addition of Naples strained the system to the limit. So, in 1439 he created the office of the treasurer general (tresorer general) in Naples to whom he granted authority over all other treasurers. His duty was to conduct inquiries concerning revenues and supervise operations involving large sums of money such as castle and harbor building, shipbuilding, and the provisioning of fleets.77

Even the most efficient treasurer could not be everywhere at once, and financial administration in Catalunya, the wealthiest of the realms of the Crown of Aragón and home of most of the royal demesne lands, was problematic. Compared to both Valencia and Aragón, it was more populous and its commercial activities were more extensive, and thus it took more time and effort to collect subsidies, taxes, tolls, and rents. As the seat of María's court, it also required a larger staff than in Valencia, and the management of the royal patrimony was more complicated than in Aragón.78 In 1440, admitting that it was a difficult decision for him to make (it was "arduorem negociorum"), he bowed to reality and extended María's

78 Kingdom of Naples, 191.
local control over financial matters, including expenditures.\textsuperscript{79} He continued, noting that because María was part of his body ("de altera a parte nostri corporis")—a striking use of the royal body metaphor discussed at length by Kantorowicz—and was his lieutenant ("vices gerentis"), he would entrust her with money collected in Catalunya that pertained to the royal fisc.\textsuperscript{80} She could receive, recover, and hold ("recepere recuperare et habere") all receipts, fines and redections ("apochas fines quitancias"); make and sign orders for subsidies, including death taxes and criminal fines ("remissiones mortis et altius cuiuscumque criminis"); and she could collect any moneys collected by the administration of justice ("tribunus omnimodem et comiteribus plenarie"). Above all, she was free to spend any money not earmarked for Naples ("cum libera et generali administratio").

María worked closely with the Mestre Racional—the financial equivalent of the Chancellor—a chief auditor who supervised the accounts of officials of both the royal patrimony and the treasury.\textsuperscript{81} The Mestre Racional of each constituent realm was responsible for the local collection and disbursal of all royal funds; he controlled allowances in money and in kind given to members of the royal household; and he directed judicial inquiries into allegations of misconduct by officials employed in any financial office. Her staff

\textsuperscript{79} ARV MR 9050, 14v-15r, 3 October 1440.


\textsuperscript{81} Masia de Ros, "El maestre racional en la Corona de Aragón," 25-60.
included a treasurer, who also had a seat on Maria's Consell and Audiència, clerical accountants (scrivas de racio), and a receptor who handled the receipt of all royal revenues. Pere de Santcliment, Mestre Racional from 1435 until his death in 1455, had jurisdiction over Mallorca and Sardinia as well as Catalunya.82

Assisting the treasurer and Mestre Racional were local financial officials known as bailiffs (batlles), supervised by a chief bailiff (battle general) who sat on the queen's council. Together, the bailiffs had financial responsibility for the royal patrimony in a city, town, or rural locality. Each bailiwick roughly followed that of a royal vicar's, and there was some overlap and conflict, especially because bailiffs were also the local representatives of crown justice, handling civil and criminal cases of lesser gravity than those seen by the royal vicars. A bailiff's primary interest lay in such matters as guilds and confraternities, collection of accounts for the Mestre Racional, maritime and customs duties, and slaves and their manumission; he was paid from the revenue of his bailiwick. He was not part of municipal government, but he was closely associated with it whenever a town's interests touched royal ones. Like his counterpart in the governor's office the royal bailiff could not attend meetings of the Consell de Cent of Barcelona without an invitation.83

The relationship between the treasurer general and each Mestre Racional is not well understood, in part because of the

82 Kingdom of Naples, 18-20.

83 Lalinde Abadia, Gobernacion general, 18, 69, 89, 152-3, 179-81. Their jurisdiction was spelled out in capitols 2 and 23 of the Corts of Barcelona in 1422, Constitucions, 107, 187.
complicated and antiquated methods of keeping accounts and conducting the audit, but also because of overlapping duties. The distinctions between central and regional authority, particularly with respect to tax collection, were not clearly delineated in the first place. Such an arrangement left plenty of room for ingenuity. An audit conducted in 1448 after the death of the treasurer general Mateu Pujades revealed not only that he had never rendered any proper account, but also that he owed very large sums of money to the Crown. Pujades's estate was seized and his family ordered to pay the debt. To Alfonso, the lesson was clear. He stipulated that all officials who handled royal funds would be subject to a periodic audit by the Mestre Racional and personally held accountable for all sums. 84

The Pujades scandal evidently increased Alfonso's discomfort with granting María rather wide discretionary powers in the financial department. In 1449, María pleaded poverty and complained to him that she needed more control over her finances because her officials were not getting paid regularly. She sent Berenguer de Montpalau to argue her case directly to Alfonso, and still it took almost a year of pleading with "paraules molt dolses e gracioces" for her to once again receive funds from Alfonso and retain local control over expenditures in Catalunya. 85

84 Kingdom of Naples, 170-77; idem, "Evolution of Imperial Government," 350-51.

85 Alfonso claimed to need more money to pay the costs of war in Italy. ACA Cancilleria, Secretorum 3227: 43v-44v, 22 April 1449; 75r-76r, 24 July 1449; 93r-v, 21 October 1449; 95r, 29 October 1449; 99v-100v, 6 December 1449; 104r-105r, 24 January 1450; 121r-123v, 6 February 1450; and 134v-136v, 3 September 1450.
This dispute between Alfonso and María was more than just a struggle for control of money. It was indicative of a wider problem that afflicted the Crown of Aragón during Alfonso's reign. Improved accounting practices and centralized control could not solve the persistent problem of insufficient income. The economy of all the Crown realms prospered in general during Alfonso's reign, but the prosperity was by no means uniform. The Catalán economy had been in a slump since the mid-1420s, and was showing only feeble signs of recovery. This sluggishness limited its competitive strength, resulted in a decrease in the volume of trade, which in turn led to a decline the taxable wealth. Extending the mercantile basis of the realm to include Naples may have been beneficial to the king, but it was disadvantageous to Catalan merchants. Claude Carrère attributes the downturn to structural defects such as the inflexibility of maritime enterprise and the high cost of money relative to that of the Catalán merchants' trading partners, but Mario del Treppo argues otherwise.86 He has, I believe correctly, asserted that there was a political component because the Catalan economy was closely connected to Alfonso's military and political maneuvers in Italy. In particular, he has observed that the flow of "monetary current" was always directed toward the capital city, so that when Naples

displaced Barcelona, a negative cash flow in Barcelona resulted. As the costs of business rose and currency was devalued, ordinary revenues did not yield a substantial surplus over the sums necessary for ordinary government. Alan Ryder's assertion that Alfonso was trying to use economic links among the various realms as a way of creating an artificial bond to hold together his "empire" jibes with del Treppo's argument for the role of politics in economics. As Alfonso's political fortunes surged, so did the economy, and vice versa. Business with the Crown, especially in the traffic of the products of war, could be especially lucrative but it depended on continued skirmishing, which was unpredictable, unstable, and, in the end, counterproductive. Alfonso's scheme to support local commerce by buying Catalan cloth and Sicilian grain to support his army worked for a few years, but quickly fell apart when his opponents signed the Peace of Lodi. The bottom fell out of the artificially high cloth and grain markets, and the economy as a whole suffered. 87

The Aragonese treasury was unable to support the cost of routine trans-Mediterranean government plus the burden of protracted warfare in Italy, the Mediterranean, and Castile with routine subsidies from the Iberian realms. A six-month campaign in Ancona cost Alfonso 80,000 ducats; entertaining the Emperor Frederick III for ten days cost more than 100,000 ducats. Alfonso fought ceaseless skirmishes with Castile and piracy along the

Catalan, Valencian, and Mallorcan coastlines. Alan Ryder has estimated that in a state of war, which was common throughout the 1440s and early 1450s, Alfonso's revenues fell short of his needs by between 200,000 and 300,000 ducats a year. This sum had to be raised in Spain and Italy by customary aids, grants from the Cortes (Cortes in Aragón), clerical subsidies, indirect taxation, sale of offices and privileges, fines, and loans.88

Alfonso's initial response was to appeal to his subjects for more money, more often. He had little difficulty with the parliamentary assemblies of Aragón and Valencia, but the Catalans felt they had borne the brunt of taxation and military expenditures and they made demands that he was unwilling to grant. In return for their money, they insisted that the king's council be chosen with the consent of the Cortes, that the Audiència should render judgments independently of the king, and that royal orders that violated the Constitutions or Usatges of Catalunya were to be nullified.89 He then turned to other sources: he raised forced loans; he borrowed from courtiers, nobles, and merchants; he pawned his jewels.

In an attempt to improve his cash flow, Alfonso decided to tap the resources of the royal demesne. His stated goal was to improve management of the estates pertaining to the royal patrimony, and to stop the erosion of Crown rights and revenues, but what he

88 Kingdom of Naples, 174.

89 This issue was a persistent sore spot for the Catalans, and will be discussed at length in chapter five. For a brief summary, see Medieval Crown of Aragon, 141, 143, 145.
was really after were the lands and lordships that had been alienated from the Crown since the reign of Martí in the late fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries. Although the ultimate responsibility for the conservation of the royal demesne lay in the office of the chamberlain, it had in practice devolved upon the overburdened Mestre Racional. So, in 1445 he expanded and refined the office of conservator general, the official guardian of royal patrimony, responsible for the administration of all accounts connected with the royal demesne and the rights and revenues of the Crown. During Alfonso's reign, the conservator general had an interest in a wide variety of public and private matters, and his office generated a colossal amount of paperwork.

The official in charge of royal interests in the peninsular realms and the Balearics was the procurador reial de patrimonio reial, Pere de Besalú, a former chancery secretary. He arrived in Valencia in 1446, assisted by local financial officers (procuradors fiscal) and crown administrators (procuradors reial) whose jurisdiction was restricted to various locales such as the county of Pallars and Empúries. Although Besalú owed his appointment to Alfonso, while in Catalunya he was directly responsible to Maria. Besalú himself possessed wide-ranging authority that, in effect,

90 Similar attempts date to the end of the fourteenth century. For a careful analysis of the nature and extent of the problem, see Maria Teresa Ferrer i Mallol, "El patrimoni reial i la recuperació dels senyorius jurisdiccionals en les estats catalano-aragoneses a la fi del segle XIV," Anuario de Estudios Medievales 7 (1970-71): 351-491.

91 The Corts of Barcelona in 1422, in capitol 26, clearly stipulated that the jurisdiction of the procurador fiscal was strictly limited to the royal desmesne. Constitucions, 109.
extended to include a supervisory role over the operations of the treasurer and Mestre Racional. Any document involving the financial interest of the Crown had to be approved, registered, and counter-signed by him; the Mestre Racional was to submit to him regular summaries of accounts; the treasurer general was to register with him all records of accounts received and expenditures; all receipts for money, bullion, or goods was to be sent to his office before being forwarded to the treasurer's office; and payments made were to be compiled in a detailed schedule on the day of or the day after they were made.

In 1446 the king took a more controversial step: He began a systematic recuperation of lands and lordships that once pertained to the Crown. Alfonso had taken steps in this direction earlier in his reign, in 1416, but his actions were limited in scope compared to those of 1446. He ordered that anyone who alienated royal property without receiving royal assent had to obtain official approval through the office of the conservator general. This order applied to anyone currently holding land without relevant documents, regardless of when the original alienation was made. Landholders had to present Besalú with the relevant documents, obtain from him the king's assent, take a new oath of fealty, and, of course, pay a fee for the privilege of holding these lands. If relevant documents could not be produced, the landholder risked forfeiture to the Crown; anyone

92 "Possitis eciam procuratorem vel procuratores constituere et substituire cum illa potestate quam eis concedere volueritis sive dare tam super jurisdiccionis exercicio quam alid quovis modo." Cortes, 13: 85.

93 Kingdom of Naples, 169-70.
caught forging documents in order to circumvent the process was threatened with the same fate.\(^94\) Besalú began in Valencia, where he encountered some opposition but nothing serious. By the spring of 1447, he had finished his work there and was ready to move to Catalunya.\(^95\)

The Catalan lords had been paying close attention to what Besalú was doing in Valencia, and feared that royal actions would truncate their lands, curtail their jurisdiction, diminish their wealth, compromise their status, and place many of their peasants, free or servile, under royal jurisdiction.\(^96\) Besalú's actions stirred up hostilities ("grans vexacions"), and the outcry was loud, articulate, and widespread.\(^97\) The landlords considered Besalú a trespasser who violated their jurisdiction, and they argued that these actions contravened the privileges and constitutions of Catalunya. In June 1447 the Catalan lords took their case before the Corts, then meeting in Barcelona, to condemn Besalú's actions.\(^98\) They claimed that the

\(^94\) *Alfonso the Magnanimous*, 43, 49-51, 65.

\(^95\) Santiago Sobrequés i Vidal, "Política remensa de Alfonso el Magnánimo en los últimos años de su reinado (1447-1458)," *Anales del instituto de estudios gerundenses* (1960): 177-54, especially 123-25; *Alfonso the Magnanimous*, 389-90.

\(^96\) Royal agents were never popular figures on any seigneurial or ecclesiastical lands. For an example from thirteenth-century France, see Elizabeth A. R. Brown, "Royal Commissioners and Grants of Privilege in Philip the Fair's France: Pierre de Latilli, Raoul de Breuilli, and the Ordonnance for the Seneschalsy of Toulouse and Albi of 1299," *Francia* 13 (1985): 151-90.

\(^97\) And, they were not the only ones to complain. Besalú faced similar opposition in Mallorca in 1450. ACA Cancillería, Secretorum 3227, 107r-108r, 4 February 1450.

\(^98\) *Cortes* 21: 322, 394, 425.
very presence of Besalú was a violation of the constitutions of Catalunya, particularly "Dels commissaris," which prohibited royal officials from interfering with the privileges and laws of Catalunya.99

The lords flooded María's Audiència with litigation concerning disputed property titles (pro lúcione).100

The simmer came to a boil when Jaume Ferrer, prominent jurist and royal procurador, arrived in the county of Pallars to assist Besalú. Ferrer was a strong advocate of royal authority and it was widely known that he was no friend of the nobles.101 Pallars, situated northwest of Barcelona in the Pyrenees, close to both the Aragonese and French borders, had large tracts of property alienated from the royal demesne during the reign of Martí. The Count of Pallars, Arnau Roger IV, a nephew of the bishop of Urgel and a member of one of the oldest noble Catalan families, was


100 These suits were especially numerous in the Ampurdà, in the locales of Verges, La Tallada, Bellcaire, Albons, Monells, Ullastret, La Pera, Palau Sator, Sant Pere Pescador, Les Olives, and Pelacals. The documents are numerous and contained in several registers. Among the most important are ACA Cancillería, Secretorum 2699, 155r-157v, 25 January 1449; Curiae 2656, 165r–v, 26 February 1449; Curiae 2655, 54r-55v, 1 March 1449. See also María's orders to her royal officials: ACA Cancillería, Curiae 3203, 11v–12v, 14 October 1448); 18v, 26 October 1448; 30r, 23 December 1448; and 60r, 5 April 1449. Sobrequés i Vidal, "Política remensa de Alfonso el Magnánimo," 122; Sobrequés i Vidal and Sobrequés i Callicó, La guerra civil catalana del segle XV, 1: 15-16.

101 There were three Jaume Ferrer's in fifteenth-century Catalunya, all of whom worked in the service of the Crown and with the remenca peasants. The eldest was a lawyer who worked for Martí; his son, also a lawyer, worked for Alfonso and María; and his son was an escrivà reial who played an important part in the preparation of the Sentencia Arbitral in 1486. Sobrequés i Vidal and Sobrequés i Callicó, La guerra civil catalana del segle XV, 1: 17.
generally, but not universally, a strong supporter of the crown. His strong pactist views and leadership in the **Corts** brought him into conflict with the crown on several occasions. In 1432, for example, Queen María ordered the confiscation of his goods and lands after he was brought before the royal court in violation of the peace.\(^{102}\)

Pallars had no intention of surrendering one inch of his territory. He invited French troops under the banner of his kinsman, the count of Foix,\(^{103}\) to cross the border and protect his landholdings against what his ally, the **Consell de Cent** of Barcelona, termed the "armed soldiers" of the king.\(^{104}\) On 26 October 1448 María ordered Pallars to appear at her court in Perpinyá to explain his actions.\(^{105}\) In his defense, the count reminded her and Alfonso that he, the count, was only defending his lordly jurisdiction and the privileges granted by the **Corts**. He ordered his men to harass Ferrer and impede his work while he mobilized the support of his fellow barons.\(^{106}\) The **Consell de Cent** of Barcelona complained in a letter to Alfonso that actions against Pallars contradicted the laws and customs of Catalunya and asked the king to revoke the act and

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102 Sobrequés i Vidal and Sobrequés i Callicó, *La guerra civil Catalana del segle XV*, 1: 16-19.


104 In the letter to María, they call them "gent darmes de Catalunya." AHCB ll. Cl., VI-13, 169v-170r, 17 October 1448.

105 ACA Cancillería, Curiae 3203, 18v, 26 October 1448.

106 Sobrequés i Vidal, "Política remensa de Alfonso el Magnánimo," 123; Alfonso the Magnanimous, 389-90.
return all property to its former state.\textsuperscript{107} The effects of Pallars's actions rippled out, eventually involving the bishop of Perpinyà, ambassadors of the queen of France who happened to be in Pallars en route to Barcelona, and finally, Arnau Roger, bishop of Urgell and the count's kinsman.\textsuperscript{108}

Alfonso recalled Besalú in 1448 but the situation remained tense. The nobles, in defense of Pallars but also knowing their own lands were at risk, disputed the legal status of Besalú and Ferrer. They asserted that a letter of justice not signed by the king without being executed personally by the queen as well had no value. Moreover, they argued that the constitutions of Catalunya prohibited any official without title of viceroy, lieutenant, or protector, whether called procurador, or delegate, or any other name or title, from being sent to Catalunya, and asserted that they would have considered such a person to be a private person who could have been resisted without incurring any fine.\textsuperscript{109} Implicit in this torturous legal argument challenging the authority of the royal agents is a formal recognition of María's. Their demand for the signatures of both king and queen on a document to attest to its

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{107} "E com les dites coses fets por lo dit Procurador Reyal . . . sian contra usatges de Barchinona constitucions e capitols de Corts de Cathalunya . . . vulls la dita prouisio e tots los actes fets un virtut de aquella reuocar ab tot effecte e manar al dit Procurador Reyal que ho torn al primer e degut stament." AHCB Ll. Cl., VI-13, 110r-111r and 111v-112r, 24 May 1448.
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\textsuperscript{108} On the French ambassadors, see AHCB Ll. Cl., VI-13, 174r-175r, 31 October 1448.
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\textsuperscript{109} ACA Generalitat, N-657 fols. 185v-186r, 19 November 1448, from the Archbishop of Tarragona on behalf of the Diputació del General to Jofre d'Ortíges, regent canceller for Alfonso.
\end{flushright}
legality signified that they acknowledged the importance and status of Maria as Lieutenant General in Catalunya.

Maria took another tack, telling the Consell de Cent of Barcelona that the count was guilty to poor administration of his county and mistreatment of the peasants there ("mala e pessima administracio" and "maltractant"). She claimed that returning his lands to Crown control, they would bring the land back to safety, security, and better government ("es util e necessary sien constuits e posats en seguretat e stament e repos tranquille e los homens e vassals de aquell en bo e saludable regiment e gouernacio"). This letter, a lengthy rhetorical diatribe intended to defame the count, presents the count in the worst possible light with continued references to scandals and perils, destruction and shame.110

Pallars was not the only lord who objected to Alfonso's and Maria's attempts to repatriate Crown lands, but Pallars was the only one to toy with treason. The García Aznar de Añón, the bishop of Lleida, and Joan Ramón Folc II, count of Cardona, both called on the legal expertise of the Diputació del General to defend them, but they never resorted to threats or violence.111

The count proved a formidable adversary, forcing Maria to apply pressure from all sides. She called to the bishop of Urgell to persuade Pallars, his nephew, to cooperate with her and ordered the Diputació del General to give up its support of the count or risk

110 And the usual references to fines and penalties (5000 florins in this case) for anyone allying with the count. ACA Cancilleria, Secretorum 3227, 10v-11v, 29 August 1448.

111 ACA Generalitat, N-657, 56v-57v, 27 April 1448; 67v-68r, 22 April 1448; 68v-69v, 24 May 1448.
reprisals. She sent the governor of Catalunya, Galceran de Requesens, and the vicar of Lleía, to Pallars seize the Count's lands and property. In November 1448, violence among the knights and the queen's officers erupted in the regions in and around the county of Pallars.

While trying to prevent further unrest, she forcefully defended both Ferrer and Joan de Montbuy, the regent governor of Catalunya whom she sent to Pallars to replace Besalú, and argued that Montbuy held his office on the orders of the king and herself ("per manament per ordinacio del Senyor Rey e nostre") and that actions against him by the lords in Girona were prejudicial and an insult to the king's honor ("preiudicial e carregos al dit Senyor e sa jurisdicció, preheminencia, e superioritat"). In this action, she was well within her jurisdiction as Lieutenant. The privegios

112 ACA Cancilleria, 3203, 37r, 4 February 1448; 39r-v, 17 February; 41r-v, 18 February; 42v-43r, 20 February.

113 ACA Cancilleria, Curiae 3203, 30r, 23 December 1448; 175v, 11 July 1450; 176v-177r, 13 July 1450.

114 The Diputació del General reported related violence in Tremp as early as October 1448. ACA Generalitat, N-657, 165v-167v, 7 October 1448. The Consell sent reports of the violence ("bandosidad") in Valles to María. AHCB Ll. Cl., VI-6, 179r-179v, 8 November 1448; 190r-v, 7 December 1448; 195v-196r, 17 December 1448. Violence continued in the Berguedà, near the French border, well into 1449. ACA Cancilleria, Curiae 3203, 60v, 7 April 1449.

115 ACA Cancilleria, Curiae 3203, 42r, 19 February 1449.

specified not only that she should be accorded the same dignity as the king and but also that she had similar authority over subjects who owed homage and service to the king.

No doubt recognizing that Pallars was near treason and not wanting the situation to spiral out of control, the Consell de Cent sent Pere Dusay and Jacme Ros to María to deliver a letter and personally plead for her clemency and that of the king's as well. The letter carried by Dusay and Ros, the Consell de Cent took a humble tone, but even more striking was the last line of the letter, signed by "your humble servants and vassals who humbly kiss your hands." 117 This last statement, unique among all the documents that I examined, is strikingly obsequious for the normally arrogant Consell de Cent. Deferential behavior on the part of the patrician oligarchy of Barcelona was rare, and it seems too much, as though they have taken their humility too far. It must have been clear to them that although Alfonso was hundreds of miles away, forceful royal authority remained close at hand in the person of María. They were well aware that Alfonso and María corresponded regularly and frequently, and this letter makes it clear that they understood that he fully supported her. Alfonso sent his chancellor, Arnau Roger, bishop of Urgell and kinsman of the count, to mediate the dispute. Having lost the support of both his kinsman and the Consell de

117 The body of the letter reads: "Confiant de vostra clemencia . . . tant humilment com poden supplicar a vostra gran Senyoria sia de sa merce vulle desempatxar lo dit Comte en tal forma que sia a seruen del molt Alt lo Senyor Rey e de vos Senyora mol excellent," and closes with "Vostres humils servidors e vassalles qui besants vostres mans humilment se recomanem en vostra gracia e merce los Consellers de Barchinona." AHCB Ll. Cl., VI-13, 195v, 16 December 1448.
Cent, Pallars backed down. On 19 May 1449 the count finally gave in to the pressure. 118

It is not entirely clear how much revenue was eventually generated by Alfonso's attempts to recover and reorganize the royal patrimony, but the incident reveals as much about royal government in Catalunya as it does about royal finances. It is clear that María worked closely with Alfonso—there are over fifty letters between them concerning Pallars—and tried to prevent the crisis from turning to war. 119 By analyzing these letters alongside one another I was able to get a sense of the dynamics of their working relationship. Although I have found no single document states explicitly that the idea to recuperate the royal patrimony was Alfonso's and that María implemented his orders, it could not have been otherwise. Besalú was sent to Valencia from Naples, where he had been working in Alfonso's court, and he certainly carried with him appropriate credentials and a set of instructions from Alfonso, as was customary throughout the Crown realms. 120 Even more telling, though, are the letters themselves, not so much for what they say, but for what they do not.

118 ACA Cancillería, Curiae 3203, fols. 87r–v, María to all concerned in the dispute with Pallars.

119 Most of the correspondence from Alfonso to María is contained the following registers: ACA Cancillería, Curiae 2653 (1447-48), 2654 (1447), and 2655 (1447-52). For the majority of María's letters to Alfonso, see ACA Cancillería, Curiae 3203 and Secretorum 3227.

120 The registers are littered with credentials and instructions, but those pertinent to the 1440s can be found in ACA Cancillería Secretorum 3227 and Curiae 3203 (for María), and Curiae 2653–61 (for Alfonso).
On 1 January 1448, Alfonso sent Joan de Gallach, regent-chancellor in Naples, to María to discuss with her in person the host of problems related to the royal patrimony, both in Valencia and Catalunya. He made it clear that he wanted Ferrer and Montbuy to continue, and he wanted her to continue supervision of their work, but the letter did not specify, even in the most general of terms, how she was to do this. His vagueness indicates that he did not care if she used diplomacy, threats, fines, imprisonment, confiscation, or personal charm—his only concern was that the work should proceed unimpeded. The reports of Ferrer and Montbuy's findings were to be turned over to her and she was to verify these documents, but beyond that he seemed uninterested in them. He wanted to recuperate patrimonial lands, but he left the methods, timing, and almost all other details to María.

María was left to determine the best course of action, and the first thing she was to issue letters, both patent and close, to the royal officials in and near the county of Pallars—the vicars of Girona, Vic, Osona, and Lleída—as well as the bishop of Urgell, the count of Cardona, the municipal authorities of

121 ACA Cancillería, Curiae 2653, 187r-195v.

122 He later promised that this information would be made public, but it is not clear that it ever was. Cortes, 21: 497. Sobrequés i Vidal, "Política remensa de Alfonso el Magnánimo," 125-26; Sobrequés i Vidal and Sobrequés i Calicó, La guerra civil catalana del segle XV, 1: 17.

123 ACA Cancillería, Curiae 3204, 67v, 27 July 1448.

124 ACA Cancillería, Secretorum 3227, 13r, 5 August 1448; 13r-v, 28 August 1448; 14v-15r, 29 August 1448 (addressed to both the bishop of Urgell and the count of Pallars); 16v-17r and 18r-v, 12 September 1448.
towns in Pallars, Consell de Cent, and the Diputació del General. These letters spelled out the credentials of the royal agents, stipulated fines of up to 1000 florins for anyone engaging in violence against her officials, and informed them of the action she was planning to take against the count. Her principal concern throughout was to prevent the unrest in Pallars from spreading, especially in light of the French soldiers allied with the count. She wrote frequently to Besalú, Ferrer, and Montbuy in Pallars to keep them informed of any news from Alfonso. As events unfolded, she informed Alfonso when she issued the order to confiscate the count's land and moveable goods, and her plans for the disposition of the property. Although María may not have initiated the policy or contributed much to its genesis, she had considerable leeway in how and when to implement it, what punitive measures to employ, and how far to push Pallars. She built alliances with the Consell de Cent and the Diputació del General by weakening their ties with Pallars with charges of treason. The Consell's fawning letter of 16 December

125 ACA Cancillería, Curiae 3204, 28 May 1448.
126 ACA Cancillería, Secretorum 3227, 24v-25r, 3 October 1448.
127 ACA Cancillería, Secretorum 3227, 8r, 16 August 1448 (with a copy to the Deputació del General); 10v-12v, 29 August 1448.
128 ACA Cancillería, Secretorum 3227, 7v, 16 August 1448.
129 ACA Cancillería, Secretorum 3227, 29v-31v, 14 October 1448.
130 ACA Cancillería, Secretorum 3227, 24r, 3 October 1448.
131 ACA Cancillería, Secretorum 3227, 33r, 3 November 1448.
1448 signalled a begrudging acceptance of the limits of their power with María as lieutenant. The intervention of the bishop of Urgell was crucial in bringing the dispute to a close, but he brought to the table a strong suit: he was a kinsman, a high-ranking prelate, and the Chancellor of the Crown of Aragón. His status and prestige combined with María's royal lieutenancy to break the will of the count of Pallars.

This incident raises an important and difficult issue—jurisdiction, especially the question of where a lieutenant fit within royal, comital, episcopal, municipal bailiwicks—that was very difficult to resolve. Governed and governors alike had to cope with complications caused by the overlapping and conflicting jurisdiction of a lieutenant. The resultant confusion over who was in charge of whom and what impeded government, slowed collection of subsidies, and hindered the administration of justice. Such problems are familiar to any student of medieval institutions, but in the Crown of Aragón the lieutenancy posed a new set of jurisdictional conflicts. The Catalans were careful guardians of their privileges who sought the advice of jurists and lawyers to resolve their disputes and did not hesitate to challenge the lieutenant or the king when they felt aggrieved. The issue of jurisdiction—whether seigneurial, ecclesiastical, regional, or municipal—was one which the Catalans considered with absolute seriousness. It became the centerpiece of the conflict over the remença peasants and the issue that clearly delineated the boundaries of María's authority as lieutenant.
Regional and Municipal Government

Seigneurial and ecclesiastical government in the Crown of Aragón did not differ greatly from elsewhere in medieval Europe, but both municipal and regional government had distinctive features in Catalunya. Most large towns and cities were under royal jurisdiction but, since the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, had developed some degree of autonomy. All towns owed their existence to the Crown and possessed a carta de población that defined their boundaries, rights, and privileges.\(^{132}\) Townspeople were free but could owe allegiance to nobles and clergy, and they owed a debt of military service to the king. The towns' payment of taxes, tolls, and extraordinary subsidies formed a substantial revenue source for the Crown, and from an early date the towns sent fully empowered representatives to the parliamentary assemblies.\(^{133}\)

The relative clarity of municipal government became complicated in the later Middle Ages. In the economic restructuring of Catalunya after the ravages of the bubonic plague, large numbers of townspeople purchased substantial tracts of land in the countryside and became lords in their own right. These conflicting lordships complicated jurisdictional issues and divided traditional loyalties. Much of the confused and contradictory political situation

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\(^{132}\) The famous municipal fueros of Castile were similar to these cartas de población. Cartas de población y franquicia de Cataluña, edited by José María Font i Ruis, 3 volumes in two parts (Madrid-Barcelona: 1969), 1: 82-86, 123-26, 129-32.

\(^{133}\) For more on the representation of townspeople in the parliamentary assemblies, see chapter five. José María Font i Ruis, "Origines del regimen municipal de Cataluña," 558, 562-65; Carme Batlle i Gallart, "El municipio de Barcelona en el siglo XIV," Cuadernos de Historia 8 (1977): 203-12.
in fifteenth-century Catalunya can be attributed to newly formed factions that split old allegiances of family, town, countryside, and parish or bishopric.\textsuperscript{134}

In theory, however, the relationship between regional, municipal, and royal government was straightforward. The king was, of course, the supreme authority, followed immediately by one or several Lieutenants General who were responsible for an individual territory or group of territories. Regional administration, a governmental umbrella for the principality as a whole, was under the jurisdiction of the Lieutenant General who supervised the Governor General, the highest-ranking regional official.\textsuperscript{135} A governor had jurisdiction over a specific locale such as Catalunya, Rousillon, and Mallorca; in the fifteenth century, he exercised ordinary and permanent civil and criminal jurisdiction only within a specified territory. As that region's chief magistrate, he was the head of the entire territory when the king or the Lieutenant General was not present, and often worked alongside both king and lieutenant.\textsuperscript{136}

\textsuperscript{134} Batlle i Gallart, \textit{La Crisis social y económica de Barcelona a mediados del siglo XV}, 2 volumes (Barcelona: Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas, 1973), 133-194.

\textsuperscript{135} María's authority was specified in the \textit{privilegio} of 1420 and others. \textit{Cortes}, 13: 84. In the thirteenth century, governors were superior to lieutenants, but as the lieutenancy became associated with the heir and the royal family, the functions and prestige of the two offices were reversed. Catalunya and Barcelona serve here as examples for the other realms, but there were some differences from town to town and among the regions. For an overview of municipal government in the Crown of Aragón, see Valdeavellano, \textit{Curso de historia de las instituciones Españolas}, 547, 550-52.

\textsuperscript{136} The strictly local character of the jurisdiction of the Governor General was specified in the \textit{Corts} of Barcelona in 1422, in capitol 19, \textit{Constituciones}, 156.
His main functions included administration of justice, supervision of all other public officials, and maintenance of public order. He had some limited role in military affairs but no authority whatsoever in municipal government. He could be present at meetings of the Consell de Cent, the town council, of Barcelona by invitation only.

The governor's staff included a regent (portant veus), a small corps of itinerant lieutenants who travelled throughout the territory, several civil lawyers (advocats) who handled legal affairs, and approximately eighteen vicars (vequers), the ordinary magistrates who handled the routine business such as inheritances and wills, wardships, and fiscal obligations (donations and collection of debts and services owed to the king). By law a governor had to be a native of the territory but not a current resident in the locality he served, and he could not be a cleric or notary. A three-year term was generally specified; it could be extended, but in fact he served at the king's discretion. The portant veus and all subordinate officials were appointed by María. As in other areas of government, Alfonso preferred to retain to himself the appointment of high-ranking offices as a way to dispense favors.

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137 The jurisdiction of the royal veguer with respect to local officials was outlined in capitol 2 of the Corts of Barcelona in 1422, Constitucions, 187. See also Valdeavellano, Curso de historia de las instituciones Españolas, 514-17.

138 The records of María's official appointments can be found in ACA Cancillería Officialium registers 3114 (1442-58) and 3115 (1446-56). For the laws and customs that outlined this authority, see Lalinde Abadía, La gobernación general en la Corona de Aragón, 234, 301-363; idem, La jurisdicción real inferior en Cataluña ("Corts, vequers, batlles") (Barcelona: Ayuntamiento de Barcelona, 1966), 123, 179-209; Font i Rius, "Las instituciones de la corona de Aragón en la primera mitad del siglo XV," 216-19.
Two governors served María: Joan de Corbera and Galceran de Requesens. Corbera held the post until his death in 1443, and was succeeded by Requesens, governor until 1453 when he became the first person not connected in any way to royal family to serve as Lieutenant General in Catalunya (1453-54) after María’s resignation. Requesens and his regent-governor, Joan de Montbuy, were among María's most valued and trusted officials. Requesens was a close advisor of the king and travelled frequently to Naples and elsewhere as royal emissary. Both Requesens and Montbuy, knights and wealthy landowners but not high-ranking nobles, had loyally served the Crown in the remença dispute and the Crown's attempt to recover alienated patrimonial lands.

The governors and their regents worked closely with royal vicars and bailiffs in the supervision of town government. Municipal institutions were first formally constituted in the thirteenth century during the reign of Jaume I (1213-76), who ordered the election of representatives of different classes of the city to collect taxes. Within roughly fifty years, the organization of municipal government was fully developed. In Barcelona, this consisted of four aldermen (jurats; also known as consuls and pahers, depending on local usage) and eight elected city counsellors (prohoms, from Latin, probi homines) and their own successors; this group of twelve formed the executive committee (consellers de cap) of the town that worked with a municipal bailiff, who was, in this case, an executive magistrate. The executive committee was under the nominal jurisdiction of the bailiff, who represented either the crown or the local count or viscount, depending on the town's charter; they chose
the members of the assembly known of as the *Consell de Cent*, the town council. The *consellers de cap* met twice a week, often with the royal vicar or bailiff.\(^{139}\)

This governmental system was also the reflection of a social order. Although three distinct socioeconomic groups had long existed in Barcelona, royal privileges widened the gap between the *ciutadans honrats* (honored citizens) and the remainder of the townspeople.\(^{140}\) The *Corts* of Barcelona in 1283–84 decreed that a special urban government existed in the royal cities and towns, such as Barcelona, which distinguished them from other Catalan towns. These directives confirmed the monopoly of the executive committee and its members, the *ciutadans honrats*, became not just a political and economic elite but a social one as well. This group, collectively known as the *ma major* (literally, "upper hand," but what we would term the upper rank), claimed special privileges over the *ma menor* (lower rank), the majority of the townspeople—poor day-laborers and servants—as

\(^{139}\) The size and composition of each group—*consuls*, *pahers*, or *jurats*—varied somewhat from town to town depending on population, but the proportions found in the Barcelona arrangement are typical. Barcelona's town government was the model for councils formed later, not only in Catalunya but also in Aragón, Valencia, and Mallorca. Augustí Durán i Sanpere, *Barcelona i la seva història*, 3 volumes (Barcelona: Editorial Curiel, 1972–75), 1: 141–43, 282–95; José María Font i Rius, "Origines del regimen municipal de Cataluña," 1945: 418–48; Francisco Carreras Candi, "Barcelona," volumes 3 and 4 of *Geografia general de Catalunya*, 11 volumes (Reprint of original, undated [19th century] edition, Barcelona: Edicions Catalanes, 1980); idem,"Hegemonia de Barcelona en Cataluña durante el siglo XV," *Discurso leído ante la Real Academia de Buenas Letras de Barcelona (14 mayo 1898).* Barcelona: Jesús Roviralta, 1898.

well as the ma mitjana (middle rank), the financially successful artisans and merchants, all of whom were left in a subordinate position.141

Tension between royal control and municipal self-governance persisted throughout the Middle Ages. Even though Barcelona's political and economic privileges were confirmed and the city's royal vicar and bailiff were restricted from interference in town government, Barcelona never became an independent city-state like Genoa or Venice, free from royal control and able to determine its international policy. As the capital city of the Aragonese kings until Alfonso V moved to Naples, its internal affairs were constantly subject to royal intervention.

The city was not, however, powerless. Catalunya was the economic backbone of the Crown of Aragón and Barcelona was more than just the seat of government, it was the financial capital of the western Mediterranean. Catalan merchants and financiers had grown wealthy through overseas commerce and by the early part of the fifteenth century its textile industry was in a position to challenge the markets of England, the Low Countries, and Italy.142 The Consell de Cent of Barcelona was not simply a consultative body. Its members, especially the consellers de cap, formed an influential patrician oligarchy with formidable financial resources that rivaled the political power of the nobility. They invested their wealth in

141 Durán i Sanpere, Barcelona i la seva història, 1: 141-43; Batlle i Gallart, La crisis social y económica, 1: 144-55, 168-71.

rural estates on a par with those of the local nobility. They commissioned the major artists of the day to decorate the ceilings and walls and design stained-glass windows of their lavish administrative offices. Their power grew even more with the ascendancy of the Trastámara kings who systematically weakened the political power of the old Catalan nobility by excluding them from participation in the royal council.

The power of the Barcelona patriciate was never more evident than in the dispute in the 1440s and 1450s between the patricians and an alliance of artisans and guild masters over control of municipal elections. The dispute arose in part because structural weaknesses in the Catalan economy had a profound effect on society and politics in the fifteenth century. Catalan commerce, especially the cloth trade, faced external challenges from coastal piracy, increased competition from Italy and Germany, and a contraction of international markets as the Turkish empire expanded and threatened Mediterranean shipping in the east.

In this volatile environment two rival groups formed. The Biga ("roof beam"), an association of ciutadans honrats, merchant financiers, lesser urban nobles, and wealthy guild merchants,


144 Judith Berg Sobré, Behind the Altar Table: The Development of the Painted Retable in Spain, 1350-1500 (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1989), 288-97; Durán i Sanpere, Barcelona i la seva història, 1: 282-95.

145 Carrère, Barcelone, 656-63, 691-718.
possessed vast wealth and political clout. They wielded authority through the executive council of the Consell de Cent, a group of seven to nine men who often ignored the theoretically supreme and more broadly representative Consell, which, despite its name had a membership of nearly two-hundred townpeople. The Biga was opposed by the Busca ("fragment"), composed of lesser guild masters and artisans who had both numerical superiority and the economic potential to augment greatly the wealth and prestige of Catalunya, not to mention the crown's taxes and customs duties. They were politically disadvantaged by their disproportionate representation in the town council. The Busca was stymied by the protectionist measures of the patrician oligarchy that controlled the Consell de Cent, and they demanded reforms in municipal government that would permit more equitable representation. Behind the Busca stood Galceran de Requesens, governor of Catalunya, who worked tirelessly on their behalf to undermine the Biga. For him, reform in Barcelona went beyond loyalty to the crown; it took on the character of a personal mission, and his enemies worked with equal

146 Batlle i Gallart, La crisis social y económica, 1: 17-20.

147 Batlle i Gallart, La crisis social y económica, 1: 135-44, 155-64, 190-94; idem, Retorn a la 'Busca' i la 'Biga': els dos partits de la Barcelona medieval (Barcelona: Institut d'Història Medieval, Universitat de Barcelona, 1982); idem, "El sindicato del pueblo de Barcelona en 1454," VI Congreso de Historia de la Corona de Aragón (Madrid: 1959), 291-304.

148 Requesens was lord of Molins de Rei and Santa Creu d'Olorda (since 1430). He became batlle general of Catalunya in 1435, and served as governor from 1442 to 1453. He replaced Maria as Lieutenant General of Catalunya in 1453; and was appointed governor of Mallorca in 1454. Santiago Sobrequés i Vidal, "Entorn del linatge dels Requesens," in Societat i estructura política de la Girona medieval (Barcelona: Editorial Curial, 1975), 303-13
zeal to destroy him.149

There was, however, considerable fluidity among the membership of each group that depended as much on wealth and rural landholdings as on social rank. Alfonso disliked the strength of the Catalan oligarchy and saw this as an opportunity to weaken them and both Alfonso and María recognized the political advantages of breaking their political dominance, but Alfonso was reluctant to alienate the patriciate altogether. They mandated a modest increase in political representation of the social groups from the middling ranks of merchants and artisans and played newly formed factions against one another to weaken the traditional oligarchical affiliations.150 Neither party was happy with this compromise, but the situation was sensitive and Alfonso was slow in coming to a decision.

While he pondered, embassies from both sides were sent to Naples to present their cases to the king.151 Alfonso told Antoni Vinyes, the Biga envoy and prominent ciutadan honrat, not to worry about the situation because he loved the city and would treat it

149 Carme Batlle i Gallart, who has studied the Biga/Busca conflict in detail, believes that Requesens masterminded the confrontation and that Alfonso played no direct role. Ryder disagrees, noting that Alfonso's correspondence shows him to be actively involved every step of the way. Batlle i Gallart, Crisis social y económica, 1: 37; Alfonso the Magnanimous, 383.


151 AHCB Li. Cl., VI-14, 173r-v, 10 December 1449; VI-15, 26v-27r, 23 March 1450; documents 217 and 218 in Mensajeros Barcelonenses, 286-87.
Meanwhile, Alfonso made similarly appeasing remarks to the Busca delegate. Members of both royal courts found themselves in the uncomfortable position of taking sides against their friends; even Arnau Fonolleda, Alfonso's most trusted secretary, was shut out of confidences he would normally have been part of because Alfonso entrusted all Barcelona business to another secretary who was allied with the Busca. María's position was especially difficult. She had just emerged from the bruising battles with the count of Pallars with her office and her dignity intact, but now she found herself poised between two more or less balanced powers whose animosity threatened to tear apart the principality. Although not entirely excluded from an active role in the dispute, when both sides took their case directly to Naples she was left with the exquisitely delicate task of sorting through the compromises. In a familiar line of appeal, the Busca first took their case for reforms in municipal representation to the Consell de Cent for approval; when their proposals were rejected they put the pressure on María. When she hesitated, waiting for news from Naples, they grew impatient and took their case directly to Alfonso, who grew exasperated at the tactics used to gain his approval and decided that henceforth he would receive all his information only from María.

The problem was that the mood in Naples changed often, and

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152 "A diu dit senyor [Alfonso], me replicà, que no curàs de res, que vertaderament ell amava e volia amar aquaixa ciutat, e la tractarie bé." AHCB CCO, X-21, 182r-185r, 19 September 1451, document 366 in Mensajeros Barceloneses, 376-87.

153 Alfonso the Magnanimous, 384.

154 Batlle i Gallart, Crisis social y económica, 1: 208-17.
Alfonso was careful and shrewd and, at times, he could be very slippery. He may not have transmitted sensitive information in a letter of instruction but relied on a trusted official to convey the message in person, verbally. Many letters sent to María via royal officials told her to "listen well" to the messenger, thus implying that some important items on the agenda may not have been written down. To mask his intentions, he commonly sent bogus letters or instructions to Spain, and then sent couriers flying off with a countermand drafted in such a way that those in his confidence would understand that the second letter was not to be obeyed.

The vagaries of the mail service ("correu volant") made this an extremely risky practice, and may well have led María to hesitate, even when a letter looked authentic rather than risk a misstep. Indeed, perhaps the most difficult part of her job during this period was determining when to act and when to stall, as her thirty four prorogations of the Cortes demonstrates. She formed the buffer between Biga and Busca, and she waited for Alfonso to decide.

The situation worsened in January 1449 when María summoned the Cortes to request a financial subsidy to support Alfonso's continued military campaigns in Italy, a source of persistent

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155 "E oyt plenament aquell en tot ço e quant nos ha volgut dir de part de aquells," ACA Cancillería, Curiae 2657, 70r-v, 7 August 1448, from Alfonso to María.

156 Officials would be instructed in advance to act only on those letters that contained some innocuous phrase. Alfonso the Magnanimous, 385.

157 Alfonso the Magnanimous, 384-85.

158 Batlle i Gallart, Crisis social y económica, 1: 182-89.
irritation for both the king and the Catalans. A standoff ensued, in which the delegates from Barcelona to the Corts demanded that Alfonso return and personally preside while María insisted on her rights as lieutenant to convoke and preside over the Corts. The business of government was delayed, the Corts was prorogued thirty-four times, and in the end it required Alfonso's personal intervention—but not his presence—to break the stalemate. He ordered the Corts to meet in his absence with María presiding and promised that he would return to confirm the privileges, constitutions, and laws of Catalunya.

The showdown between the Biga and Busca was temporarily resolved, but negotiations among the two parties, María, and Alfonso dragged on with each side gaining and losing a little until María's resignation in 1453. Galceran de Requesens fared no better than her as lieutenant. His support of the Busca party guaranteed that his tenure would be short and he was brought down by the still-powerful Biga party and the ciutadans honrats of Barcelona. The ten-year civil war eventually settled the question of representation.

159 Cortes, 22: 1–2. AHCB, Cartes reials originals, A–574, 30 January 1449, from María to the Consell de Cent of Barcelona; ACA Cancillería, Curiae 3201, 132v–133r, 30 January 1449, María to the towns.

160 Cortes 22: 1–23, 82–4. For Alfonso's letter supporting her authority to preside, see ACA Cancillería, Secretorum 2699, 154r–155r, 22 January 1449.


163 Alfonso to the Corts and prelates: ACA, Curiae 2661, 31r–32r, 31 August 1453.
From this overview of María's court, household, and government it is clear that María of Castile possessed ample authority to govern Catalunya. As Lieutenant General, she was Alfonso's legal representative, occupying the highest-ranking office in the principality; she presided over a royal council and court of justice roughly equivalent to Alfonso's own court in Naples; and she worked with a large staff of financial and administrative officials in Barcelona. Yet, despite the authority to rule independently, in practice María shared power with Alfonso. They worked together as closely as time and distance permitted, but Alfonso neither would nor could completely abandon all aspects of the direct administration of his peninsular realms. She could assume most of the governing tasks normally reserved for the king--administration of justice and finance, official appointments, supervision of royal and regional government.

In periods of relative calm, their unique brand of long-distance government served the kingdom well. The system was often slow and cumbersome, but there were certain benefits to delays. Hot tempers could cool off, prickly situations could resolve themselves without intervention, and nothing was done in haste. It was clear as early as the 1440s, however, that these benefits had become liabilities, and the distance between Naples and Barcelona seemed to widen as Alfonso literally lost sight of the needs of his Spanish realms.
CHAPTER 5
MARÍA OF CASTILE, THE CORTS OF CATALUNYA, AND THE DIPUTACIO DEL GENERAL, 1420-1448

As Thomas Bisson has observed, the history of the Crown of Aragón in the fifteenth century is primarily a parliamentary one.¹

The most important issues of the day were played out in the Corts—the election of a king in 1412, the debate over manumission for the remençà peasants in the late 1440s, the reform of urban government in Barcelona in 1454.² Throughout the peninsular realms, the Corts of Catalunya were almost continuously in session from 1435 to 1458,³


³ Likewise, the Cortes of Aragón met almost continuously. For Aragón see Luisa María Sánchez Aragonés, Cortes, monarquía y ciudades en Aragón durante el reinado de Alfonso el Magnánimo (1416-1458) (Zaragoza: Institución Fernando el Católico, 1994), 156.
forcing María and Alfonso to work through either the Corts itself or various committees and deputations. The inaugural session of the Corts became highly charged events, consumed with protestations of royal abuse and confrontations over traditional privileges. By the time of María's resignation in the fall of 1453, an institution that once was the site of reasonably amicable disputation, had been transformed into a warren of partisan demands, animosity, and wariness.

It should not be surprising, then, that the most contentious and serious conflicts during María's lieutenancy took place in the Corts of Catalunya. The issues themselves were controversial—the limits of royal power, the ransom of the king, and the remences—but the very fact that María frequently convoked the Corts was just as problematic. In the Crown of Aragón, the authority to convene the Corts was an act normally reserved for the king alone. The king theoretically had the right to delegate that power to the Lieutenant General, and by 1421 such an act was no longer an innovation.

Two separate issues were at the heart of the dispute: first, the legality in general of such a delegation of authority to a lieutenant, and second, the specific question of what it meant to the Catalans to have a woman stand in for the person of the king in such a weighty matter. During the 1440s and 1450s, the Catalan ruling elites had to come to terms with the fact that the Corts of Catalunya, an institution that they perceived as inextricably linked to the person of the king and kingship ideology, were in the hands of a queen. The convocation of Corts by a lieutenant who was also a queen was thus was a double inversion of the political order, and,
as the events discussed in this chapter illustrate, the significance was not lost on the Catalans.

The parliamentary assemblies of the Crown of Aragón formed the core of the pactist political and constitutional equilibrium in which the king was recognized as ruler on condition that he respect the laws, liberties, and customs of his subjects. This mutual recognition, "an oath for an oath," in Angus MacKay's apt phrase, was the basis of politics throughout the Crown of Aragón, not just in Catalunya. This contractual agreement was epitomized by the pledge purportedly taken by the Aragonese nobles, "We who are as good as you . . . elect you king on condition that you guard our liberties, and if not, not." The mainstay of representative government in the Aragonese realms was the king's recitation of this oath at the opening of each session of the Cortes, indicating the king's willingness to keep his part of the bargain in the negotiations to come. The oaths were vestiges of a feudal mentality that


5 Angus MacKay, Spain in the Middle Ages: From Frontier to Empire, 1000-1500 (London: Macmillan, 1977), 105.

supported a form of personal kingship quickly disappearing elsewhere in Europe.

The Corts's capable governance of the realm during the interregnum of 1410-12 made Catalunya alone among the states of the Crown of Aragon to avoid civil strife and gave the Corts tremendous prestige.\textsuperscript{7} Throughout the remainder of the fifteenth century, the Corts of Catalunya demonstrated an ability to provide convincing political leadership in a way that was a reasonably realistic representation of the political forces in the realm. The Corts had the machinery to remedy Catalunya's vulnerable economic position in the fifteenth century, and their debates in this regard show a society in which real policies were being decided in a parliamentary manner.\textsuperscript{8}

Finally, the Diputacio del General, once an ad hoc committee of the Corts, had developed into a powerful permanent commission, what Peter Rycraft calls a "parallel executive." The three elected deputies (diputats) at its head looked to the Corts for their orders, they had revenue from a tax (generalidades) that they levied, collected, and spent independent of the king, and they could muster allies on short notice to support them. While the Corts itself were weakened by factional disputes, this powerful group posed a formidable threat to royal government.\textsuperscript{9}

\textsuperscript{7} Rycraft, "The Catalan 'Corts' in the Late Middle Ages," 242.


\textsuperscript{9} Rycraft, "The Catalan 'Corts' in the Late Middle Ages," 242.
This immense power to legislate and to govern naturally came into conflict with the king, but with the king absent, how did it affect the lieutenant who acted in his place? Alfonso granted María wide governmental powers, but what were the practical limits of her theoretical authority to act in the Corts? Did they arise from the nobles? Prelates? Townspeople? From the king himself? Did María limit herself, through personal strengths or shortcomings or a respect for the office of the king? What was the justification for these limits? And finally, because the lieutenant in question was a woman, what role did gender play?

Although the institutions of the Crown of Aragón have been fairly well studied, no one has discussed in any detail the questions posed above. Jesús Lalinde Abadía, in his article on the parliamentary assemblies of the Crown of Aragón, noted that the Lieutenant General had the power to convocate the Corts, but did not mention specific instances. Peter Rycraft's otherwise careful and detailed essay mentions María only in passing. Both Lalinde Abadía and Rycraft are typical of most historians who work on the Corts during the reign of Alfonso V: Because they accept the presumption that the king ruled alone, they assume that María was a passive stand-in, and that in sum, her lieutenancy had no wider impact.

I disagree with all of these presumptions. Alfonso was the


11 Rycraft, "The Catalan 'Corts' in the Late Middle Ages," 253.

12 Kingdom of Naples, 229-35; Alfonso the Magnanimous, 358-92; Medieval Crown of Aragon, 140.
directing authority, but he could not and did not govern alone.

Maria may not have initiated policy, but she was never passive. Her lieutenancy influenced political theories of representation and set the stage for later reforms of the office that formalized the lieutenant's right to convocate the Corts and paved the way for the modern viceroyalty.

I will address these issues first by considering the theory and practice of the Corts in times of relative peace, and then I will look at it during a political crisis.\textsuperscript{13} In the first sections of this chapter, I will analyze how constitutional theory and practice affected kingship and how pactist theories affected the office of the lieutenancy and queenship. I will then look at María's convocations from 1420 to 1448, and the challenges to her authority in Aragón and Catalunya. My primary interest is in Catalunya, because she devoted more time and attention to Catalan affairs than Valencian and Aragonese combined. I will, however, compare the assemblies of each realm whenever possible, whether presided over by Alfonso, María, or Juan. Such comparisons are not only instructive, they are essential to a full understanding of the challenges María faced.\textsuperscript{14}

\textsuperscript{13} For an overview, see Valdeavellano, \textit{Curso de historia de las instituciones Españolas}, 478-81

\textsuperscript{14} For Aragón, see Esteban Sarasa Sánchez, "Las Cortes de Aragón en la edad media (estado de la cuestión y planteamiento general)," in \textit{Les Corts a Catalunya}, 296-303. The records of the Corts of Valencia have not been edited or published, and there are only a handful of studies. See, for example, María Rosa Muñoz Pomer and María José Carbonell Borja, "Las Cortes Valencianas medievales: aproximación a la historiografía y fuentes para su estudio," in \textit{Les Corts a Catalunya}, 270-81; and José Trenchs Odena and Vicente Pons Alós, "La nobleza valenciana a través de las convocatorias a Cortes (siglos XV-XVI)," in \textit{Les Corts a Catalunya}, 368-83.
These issues serve as the point of departure for chapter six, which discusses her role in the remençà crisis of 1447-53, the most difficult period of her tenure, one which was played out in the Corts itself.

The Corts of Catalunya and Contractual Kingship

The parliamentary assemblies of the Crown of Aragón, both the individual and the general sessions, differed in several important respects from their counterparts elsewhere in western Europe, whether Castile, France or England. First, each realm--Catalunya, Aragón, and Valencia--had separate assemblies which could meet separately or together as a Cort General. Each assembly differed slightly from the others, with the most notable difference among them being Aragón's unique quadripartite hierarchy. When they met separately, the king had to travel from place to place, opening a session in Valencia, say, then turning it over to a lieutenant or his vicechancellor in that realm so that he could move


18 The Aragonese nobility was split into an upper (ricoshombres) and lower (caballeros) estate. González Anton, Las Cortes de Aragón, 86-88.
on to the next stop, open the session there and turn it over, and so on. It was expensive, cumbersome, and exhausting, as attested to by the number of prorogations noted in the records of these sessions, called procesos.\textsuperscript{19} The procesos are a rich resource, containing not only lists of attenders and the records of legislation, but also speeches given before the assembly by the king, queen, infante, or anyone speaking on behalf of an estate.

María of Castile was not the first Aragonese lieutenant nor the first queen-lieutenant to represent the king in the parliamentary assemblies. The first lieutenant to preside over the Cortes in Aragón was Joan (later Joan I, 1387-95), son of Pere IV, in 1365. Joan took over because, after a series of lengthy delays, Pere was unavailable by the time the Cortes actually met. Joan was instructed by Pere to "prorrogar, continuar, e encara celebrar la dita Cort."\textsuperscript{20} Joan's convocation did not raise any eyebrows, probably because it was customary for the heir to do so in the absence of the king. The law

\textsuperscript{19} The procesos have survived in manuscript form, and many have now been edited and published. The most complete edited records are for Catalunya, collected in the Cortes. Missing from that edition are the procesos from the Corts General held in Monzón in 1435-36. For an analysis of the sources, see Rafael Conde, Ana Hernández, Sebastià Riera, and Manuel Rovira, "Fonts per a l'estudi de les Corts i els Parlaments de Catalunya. Catáleg dels processos de Corts i Parlaments," in Les Corts a Catalunya, 25-61. Some of the speeches made by the kings, queens, and other dignitaries before the assemblies are collected in Parlaments a les Corts Catalans, edited by Ricard Albert and Joan Gassiot (volumes 19-20 in the Els Nostre Classics series, Barcelona: Imprenta Varia, 1928). For Aragón, see the Cortes del Reino de Aragón, 1357-1451. Extractos y fragmentos de procesos desaparecidos, edited by Angel Sesma Muñoz and Esteban Sarasa Sanchez (Valencia: Anubar, 1976). There is as yet no edited collection of the Corts of Valencia. The legislation of the Corts is collected in Constitucions.

\textsuperscript{20} Cortes del Reino de Aragón, 1357-1451, 155.
specified that such a convocation needed the formal consent of the king and the three estates in the Corts, and both of these conditions were met in 1365. More potentially controversial was the convocation of Corts of Catalunya by Queen Eleonor of Sicily: the third wife of Pere IV (1336-87), she was the first queen-lieutenant to do so. She opened the session in Barcelona on 22 January 1364 in Pere's name while he was occupied with the war in Castile, but stepped aside when he returned to preside personally. The brevity of her convocation and the proximity of the king may have calmed any fears of institutional innovation. Castilian queens, too, participated in the business of parliamentary assemblies, for many of the same reasons that Aragonese queens did, although in a more limited way and not in the official capacity as lieutenant. Violante, wife of Alfonso X of Castile (1252-84), supported the Extremaduran towns at the Corts of 1264 in Seville, and at the Corts of Burgos in 1272 was part of a committee appointed by the king to investigate the grievances of the prelates and townspeople. María de Molina, wife of Sancho IV (1284-95), was an especially forceful presence in the Corts of Castile and often worked side-by-side with Sancho. A skillful negotiator, she worked actively to muster the support of the towns, which she rightly judged to be crucial to Sancho's authority,

21 Doña María de Castilla, 112.


23 O'Callaghan, The Cortes of Castile-León, 45, 73-75, 84, 103-104.
in the Cortes of Valladolid in 1293 and 1307 and in Medina del Campo in 1305. María de Molina and Violante were exceptional, however, and many queens did little more than attend the opening and closing ceremonies.

Even though her predecessors, both princes and queens, had temporarily stood in for the king before the Cortes, none had ever taken the king’s place as long as María. She was, at various times from 1421 to 1453, lieutenant of Aragón, Catalunya, and Valencia, and in that capacity she convoked the parliamentary assemblies of all three realms twelve times, either singly or as a Cort general of the three combined. Her legal authority with respect to the Cortes was explicitly stipulated in the privilegio of 1420. Thus armed, María represented Alfonso in Catalunya eight separate times. First, in 1421-23 (Tortosa and Barcelona), followed by meetings in 1429-30 (Tortosa), 1435-36 (a general Cort at Monzón and regional meetings in Zaragoza, Barcelona, and Valencia), 1439 (Tortosa), 1439-40


26 For a summary of the meetings and a detailed list of the archival sources, see Conde et al., "Fonts per a l'estudi de les Corts i els Parlaments de Catalunya. Catal·leg dels processos de CortS i Parlaments," in Les Corts a Catalunya, 25-61. For individual sessions, see Cortes: 1421-23, 13: 1-616; 1429-30, 14: 1-355; 1436, 19: 1-453; 1439, 20: 312-37; 1440, 20: 349-443; 1442-43, 21: 1-133; 1446-48, 21: 191-380; and 1449-53, 22: 1-304. Because the records of the Corts of Montzón have not been published, the source noted above contains only the regional Cort of Barcelona, not the Cort general.
(Lleida), 1442-43 (Tortosa), 1446-48 (Barcelona), and 1449-53 (Perpinyà-Barcelona-Vilafranca del Penedès). In Aragón, she presided twice, at Maella in 1423 and Alcañiz-Zaragoza in 1441;\(^{27}\) and in Valencia twice, in 1437 and 1438, although the latter date is disputed because at the time María and Juan were co-lieutenants. The archival records for Aragón and some of the Corts generals, notably the session at Monzón in 1436, have not yet been examined in any systematic way and remain unpublished.\(^{28}\) The frequency of her meetings with the Corts should not be taken to mean that Alfonso objected to working with the Corts per se. He presided over the Corts eight times in the three peninsular realms—twice in Aragón, four times in Cataluña, and probably twice in Valencia—and called eight parliaments in Naples in fourteen years, but he came to rely on both María and Juan to handle peninsular affairs during his absence.\(^{29}\)

Despite Alfonso's clearly stated intentions, and despite the precedent for queen-lieutenants convoking Corts set by Leonor of Sicily in 1364 and continued by María de Luna in 1396,\(^{30}\) María faced repeated challenges to her authority to do so. What had changed since 1396? Why did the Catalans resist accepting in 1421 what their

\(^{27}\) Sánchez Aragonés, Cortes, monarquía y ciudades en Aragón, 222-23, 420-23.


\(^{29}\) Kingdom of Naples, 125; Lalinde Abadía, "Los Parlamentos y demás instituciones representativas," 153-59.

\(^{30}\) Aurea Lucinda Javierre Mur, María de Luna, reina de Aragón (Madrid: Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas, 1942), 52-84.
Ancestors had accepted?

The answer is that a profound transformation in the political landscape took place during the interregnum of 1410-12 and after the Compromise of Caspe that brought the Trastámara family to the throne of the Crown of Aragón. Pactist theories which had been in the air during the fourteenth century came together during the settlement, solidified in the next decade, and showed real muscle while Alfonso was in Italy. It was a short-lived phenomenon—pactist supporters were quashed during the civil war—but one that influenced political life in Catalunya until well into the modern period.

The events of this period and the theory of pactism have occupied the attention of some of the finest scholars of Catalan history, notably Jaume Sobrequés i Callicó and Santiago Sobrequés i Vidal, who see the Compromise as the event that triggered the political decline of Catalunya. In their opinion, the introduction of a Castilian dynasty, accompanied by distinctly different attitudes toward rulership, was the first step in the loss of Catalan independence that is only now, in the late twentieth century, being


32 Santiago Sobrequés i Vidal, La alta nobleza del norte en la Guerra Civil Catalana de 1462-1472 (Zaragoza: Institución "Fernando el Católico", 1966), 11-43.
rectified. 33 In truth, as Sobrequés i Callicó recently noted, pactism is not a single ideology but many, and very much open to interpretation. 34 It was, above all, the system of political relations between the constitutional institutions in Catalunya and the monarchy whereby each side agreed to work with the other for the greater good of the realm. It was also, in a neo-Marxist view, a means of subjugating the lower classes to the authority of a ruling class composed of a king and political elites. And finally, it was a mentality, a way of defining Catalunya as a separate political "personality," a convenient shorthand that persisted throughout centuries of rule from Madrid.

It is not my purpose to dissect Catalan nationalism, but to look at the immediate impact of these ideologies and events on María of Castile as Lieutenant General of Catalunya. If today Catalans of all stripes still argue vehemently about the Compromise and its political fallout, the importance must have been felt at least as much by contemporaries. For the Catalan elites, accustomed to having the lion's share of power in the realm, the presence of Fernando with his Castilian entourage occupying the throne of the House of Barcelona was a blow to their self-esteem. It must have been bitter indeed to then be faced with the prospect of working not with the king but with a lieutenant, regardless of gender. As the evidence from the records of the Corts will show, the prolonged absence of

33 Sobrequés i Callicó, El pactisme a Catalunya, 12-23.

34 Pactist theories also influenced constitutional ideology in Castile and the other realms of the Crown of Aragón, but were most influential in Catalunya. Sobrequés i Callicó, El pactisme a Catalunya, 8-10.
the king and the implications of this on Catalan constitutional law were constant complaints, and the petitions to the king to fulfill his contractual obligations in the Corts indicate that the Catalans took Alfonso's refusal to return as a personal affront. This tone of aggrievment was evident as early as 1421, when María convoked the Corts for the first time. But what precisely were the origins of that sentiment? How did pactist theories and the strictures of contractual government affect kingship and queenship? What factors in Catalan history brought the principality to such an unprecedented event as the Compromise?

Catalunya was not the only medieval realm to engage in high-pitched parliamentary conflict. The English kings' pitched battles with Parliament in the late fourteenth and early fifteenth century are well-known, but few other kings in late medieval Europe had their monarchical power circumscribed to such an extent by parliamentary assemblies. Like England and Castile, the assemblies of the Crown of Aragón had substantial power to control events in the realm because by the fifteenth century the composition of the Corts was a fair approximation of the community of the realm. From at least the twelfth century clerics, nobles, and townspeople had been active participants in the Corts alongside the nobles and prelates. In order to maintain his authority and direction over politics and


36 The prelates and nobles were present first, of course, as members of the royal council. Townspeople first appeared in 1192, when Alfonso I summoned an assembly that included the towns: "ceteris tam civitatam quam villarum probis hominis et populo." Cortes, I: 68.
government, it was essential that the king collaborate with all of them.

It is not, however, always clear exactly who the Corts in fact represented. The procesos indicate who was present at the public sessions of convocation and closure, but this is not very helpful in determining who controlled the Corts. The most consistent attenders were a small group of knights who were conspicuous in various branches of public service, many of whom had legal training and were relying on public service to supplement their inadequate personal property. They were not especially vocal, however, and cannot be automatically considered managers.

Moreover, the estates can hardly be considered evenly balanced political forces, whether among themselves or in relation to the king. High-ranking clergy and barons carried a political weight disproportionate to their numbers. The braç eclesiástic, represented by Archbishop of Tarragona, was not a homogenous group. Although as a whole, the church was the largest landholder in Catalunya, individually its members were neither very rich nor very united. The abbots of Montserrat, the holiest religious place in Catalunya, and of Poblet, the royal burial site, generally spoke on behalf of the prelates. Nine bishops represented the sees of Barcelona, Elna (Perpinyà), Girona, Lleida, Mallorca, Vic, Tarazona, Tortosa, 

37 Sobreques i Vidal, La alta nobleza, 30-40, discusses the braç militar throughout the whole of northern Catalunya.


39 Rycraft, "The Catalan 'Corts' in the Late Middle Ages," 257-59.
Urgell; and abbots from the monasteries of Montserrat, Poblet, Santes Creus, Scala Dei, and Sant Jeroni, sat in their own right, joined by senior officers of the military orders. Others sat as proctors for cathedral chapters or absent prelates, most often, for example, for the ever-absent chancellor, Arnau Roger de Pallars, the Bishop of Urgell. As a whole, the ecclesiastical estates owed the majority of its power in the Corts to the personal reputation of certain eminent members. Pere de Urrea, the Archbishop of Tarragona, served during the 1440s as one of the three diputats in the Diputació del General and was principal advisor to María in her council. The powerful Valencian Alfonso Borja, later Pope Calixtus III (1455-58), was a canon of Lleída, then bishop of Valencia, then cardinal as well as one of Alfonso's closest advisors.

The nobles, or brac militar, numbered roughly three percent of the population, and possessed over ninety percent of the land, but even the most powerful nobles among them lacked the great territorial estates which made their counterparts in Castile or southern Italy the masters of the state. Their main area of political manipulation was in the Corts, and their main objective was to obstruct royal initiatives, but they were rarely a unified group.


41 The coronation of the Aragonese kings, if there was one, also fell to the Archbishop of Tarragona. Rycraft, "The Catalan 'Corts' in the Late Middle Ages," 258.


43 Kingdom of Naples, 18-19.
Certain individuals sat in their own right rather than as delegates of corporations (noble clerics, for example) or absent individuals, and not all these people attended regularly. Proxy votes were strongly discouraged, suggesting a strong aversion to any type of personal substitution, not just that of a lieutenant for the king. The noble estate did not, however, present a unified front. Factors such as the size of the family fortune, intermarriage among the noble families of France and Castile, and the strength of familial connections to the royal dynasty splintered whatever solidarity the nobility may have had.

The barons were the most powerful group of nobles who consistently appeared in the records of the Corts convoked by María. They were a relatively closed caste whose prominent families in the fifteenth century included the Cabreras, led by the count of Módiça; the viscounts of Rocaberti; the viscounts of Illa-Canet; and the counts of Cardona, Montcada, Pallars. Presided over by the Count of Cardona, the braç militar numbered about 360 in 1449. This number was, however, more than the 92 men who had been summoned in 1359, and may reflect,

44 Catalunya differed from Aragon, which had 2 distinct noble estates, ricoshombres (upper) and caballeros (lower). Luis González Antón, Las Cortes de Aragón (Zaragoza: Librería General, 1978), 86-88.


46 For a complete roll of nobles and knights who attended the Corts of 1449, see Cortes, 22: 5-16.
in part, the "new" nobles created by the Trastámara dynasty in the
fifteenth century. A large proportion of these noble families
descended from families who a century before were high-ranking
urban citizens (ciutadans honrats), many of whom were made nobles
in return for their support of the Crown. This fusion of urban
concerns with knightly status made them the most unpredictable
members, prone to factional disputes and likely to swing in any
direction.47

The braç reial represented the principal cities and royal
towns, led by Barcelona, the most important city in the Crown of
Aragón.48 The towns owed their existence to the Crown, and even
though townspeople were free, they often owed allegiance to any one
of a number of lords: the Crown or secular or ecclesiastical lords.
As early as the late twelfth or early thirteenth century, town
representatives (sindichs) were granted full powers to act in the
name of the communities (universitats). Barcelona often acted

47 To distinguish among the various noble ranks, the Catalan
language developed specific terms of address that referred to one's
legal status. Mosen signified knights (milites); En, a nobleman,
young squire, a doncel or descendent of a homen de paratge;
Homens de paratge, also called gentilshomens, were unarmed knights
also referred to as En; and Micer, a prominent townsman, or
ciutadans honrats. Sobreques i Vidal, La alta nobleza, 14-15, 24, 39-
40; Lalinde Abadía, "Los Parlamentos y demás instituciones
representativas," 128.

48 Towns had taken part in Catalan assemblies since 1214 and
the number of towns represented varied widely. It gradually became
fixed at eighteen in Catalunya and thirteen in Valencia. Lalinde
Abadía, "Los Parlamentos y demás instituciones representativas,"
124-29; Rycraft, "The Catalan 'Corts' in the Late Middle Ages," 254-55;
Kagay, "The Development of the Corts in the Crown of Aragón,"
67-71; Medieval Crown of Aragon, 80-81; José Maria Font i Rius,
"Orígenes del regimen municipal de Cataluña," Anuario de Historia
del Derecho Español 16 (1945): 388-529; 17 (1946): 229-585,
especially 558, 562-65.
independently of other municipalities, as in 1442, when it broke with both the other estates as well as other towns in the brac reial and decided not to recognize the sessions of the Corts or to accept responsibility for the king's Italian campaigns. 49 Thus, like the English lords, the city was too important to be really effective in the Corts. In general, however, although the influence of Barcelona's ruling elites was felt far beyond the city itself, the views of its rulers did not have any wider impact on Corts as a whole. The oligarchy's opinions were well-known and unlikely to be changed by any parliamentary bargain. Furthermore, certain individuals and groups had authority beyond that of the town they represented. This is certainly evident in the Biga and Busca disputes in the Corts of Barcelona of 1445 to 1458 when other towns challenged Barcelona's pretensions to speak for the brac as a whole, thus fracturing any hope for unity the estate may have had. 50 Rural villages in the northeast, in particular, were sympathetic to the new government in Barcelona and to the remenca peasants. 51

Of all three estates, it was the Crown alliance with the towns that provided the king with the leverage he needed to obtain the legislation and necessary subsidies to keep his government afloat. From the fruitful interaction between the Crown and merchant patriciates who had benefitted from the Crown's Mediterranean


50 Carme Batlle y Gallart, La Crisis social y económica de Barcelona a mediados del siglo XV, 2 volumes (Barcelona: Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas, 1973), 1: 137-64.

51 Rycraft, "The Catalan 'Corts' in the Late Middle Ages," 254-57.
expansion there evolved a relationship which enshrined the notion of contract between ruler and ruled, a balance of effective government and the liberties of the subjects. The towns counterbalanced the power of the nobles, who felt no strong allegiance to the Crown. Because the terms of pactism and constitutional notions were dictated by lesser nobles and the urban elites, it is natural that the townspeople and later, the remenca peasants, looked to the king for support. He happily used them to drive a wedge into the strength of the nobles and patriciates. Alfonso was a master of divide and rule, and he subtly took advantage of the natural splits and factions that resulted from the changeable allegiances of the lower ranks of the nobles. He actively intervened in urban government to solve problems of unrest and public order, he instituted judicial and economic reforms, and he manipulated elections in order to substitute officials sympathetic to his programs.52

The problems that Maria faced in the Corts during the fifteenth century have their roots in the earliest sessions of the Corts and subsequent constitutional developments, which in turn affected kingship, the office of the lieutenancy, and queenship. Although in many ways, the growth of the Catalan Corts resembled that of other similar parliamentary institutions, notably that of Castile, several distinctive characteristics need to be discussed in

52 Jaime Vicens Vives, "Alfonso el Magnánimo y Barcelona," in Obra Dispersa de Jaume Vicens Vives, 2 volumes (Barcelona: Editorial Vicens-Vives, 1967), 1: 251-60; Kingdom of Naples, 18-19. Catalunya was not the only realm where Alfonso used the towns to his advantage. Sánchez Aragonés's main argument is that Alfonso got what he wanted by an alliance with the the Aragonese towns. Cortes, monarquía y ciudades en Aragón, 155, 393-95.
order to better understand the nature of the challenges María faced. Just as the membership of the Corts was similar to that of assemblies elsewhere in medieval Europe, so too the institution itself had similar origins in a royal advisory council, in this case the Cort comtal (curia regis) of the count-kings of Barcelona. These were further refined by special assemblies of peace and truce (assemblees de pau i treva) that set forth the legal guidelines for Catalunya's constitutional order and were the first step toward pactism.

The Catalan Corts matured during reign of Jaume I (1213-76) and became a Corts general that included townspeople and extended its scope to include political and administrative matters. The king held separate meetings of Corts of Catalunya and Aragon, which soon developed into two completely separate institutions that met

53 History of Medieval Spain, 263-67, 435-45; O'Callaghan, Cortes of Castile-León, 1-40; and Procter, Curia and Cortes in León and Castile, 1-93.

54 The first cort comtal, held circa 1000 in the reign of Ramon Borell, was attended by the great lords, ecclesiastical and secular. Medieval Crown of Aragon, 80-81; and Hillgarth, The Spanish Kingdoms, 1250-1516, I: 278-79.

55 The peace and truce assemblies, meetings of the barons and high-ranking lords, nobles, prelates, and sometimes townspeople, were established in the twelfth century to control the widespread civil unrest. Originally held under patronage of the church, these assemblies, which could levy taxes, were later adopted by Cort comtal. Gener Gonzalvo i Bou's monograph, La Pau i Treva a Catalunya. Origen de les Corts Catalans (Barcelona: 1986). See also Thomas Bisson, "The Organized Peace in Southern France and Catalonia, ca. 1140-ca. 1230," American Historical Review 82 (1977): 290-311; Gonzalvo i Bou, "Les assemblees de Pau i Treva i l'origen de la Cort General de Catalunya," in Les Corts a Catalunya, 71-78; Karen Kennelly, "Catalan peace and truce assemblies," Studies in Medieval Culture 5 (41-51); idem, "Medieval towns and the peace of God," Medievalia Humanistica 15 (1963): 35-53; idem, "Sobre la paz de Dios y la sagrera en el condado de Barcelona (1030-1130)," Anuario de Estudios Medievales 5 (1968) 107-36.
jointly only if matters touched all realms. In practice, these joint sessions were meetings of the three separate parliaments met in adjacent towns near the point where the three states met, usually Monzón in Aragón, and the king then attempted to negotiate simultaneously with each of them. There was usually some overlap of membership, for example, when Valencian nobles of Aragonese descent insisted on their right to attend the Aragonese Cortes. All in all, the system was incredibly inconvenient for everyone and therefore easy to stall the proceedings. By the time Jaume died in 1276, the Corts had become one of the fundamental political institutions of Catalunya.

The first truly important session of the Corts, however, took place during the reign of Jaume's son, Pere III (1276-83). Pere

56 At first simply an advisory and judicial body, during the reigns of Alfonso I (1162-96) and Pere I (1196-1213), the Cort comtal split into a consell, with advisory and political functions, and a curia, responsible for the administration of justice; the latter became the curia generalis, or Corts. Kagay, "The Development of the Corts in the Crown of Aragón," 13-66.

57 The first legislation, if it can be called such, concerning the convening of a royal assembly is contained in the Usatges of Barcelona. Constituccions, 37; Kagay, Usatges of Barcelona, 84, 97, 103-108. The first Cort General of Catalunya was in Montsó in 1217, then Tortosa (1225), Barcelona (1228, to organize conquest of Mallorca), Monzón (1236). During Jaume's reign there was some overlap of Corts with assemblies of peace and truce (for example, Lleida in 1214 and Vilafranca del Penedès in 1218), but over time the two bodies were fused into one body. Medieval Crown of Aragon, 80-81; Kagay, "The Development of the Corts in the Crown of Aragón," 67-153.

58 Evelyn Procter, "The development of the Catalan 'Corts' in the thirteenth century," in Homenatge a Antoni Rubió i Lluch. Miscellània d'estudis literaris, històrics i llingüístics. (Barcelona: 1936), 528-36; Rycraft, "The Catalan 'Corts' in the Late Middle Ages," 244; Federico Udina i Martorell, "Importància i influència de la Cort General i la Diputació del General a Catalunya," in Les Corts a Catalunya, 129-41, esp. 134-35.
summoned the Corts only once, at Barcelona in 1283, but it was a milestone in Catalan history. Excommunicated by Pope Martin IV over Pere's annexation of Sicily and threatened with invasion by Philip IV of France, Pere faced an angry group of nobles and prelates who protested that he seized Sicily without their consent and taxed them unlawfully. Short of money and allies, Pere had no choice but to make concessions to the estates, and his actions had long-term ramifications. The most important acts of the Corts of 1283 are those that pertain to limits on royal authority. The three estates succeeded in forcing the king to accept a series of laws aimed at reducing the king's power in Catalunya by strengthening the legislative powers of the Corts. The king could not pass a law or demand money without the consent of each estate, or brac—the "maior et sanior pars" of the prelates, nobles, and townspeople—together in the Corts. In effect, this gave a veto to a majority in any one brac, not only on legislation, but also on any type of bargain between the Corts and the king. Each brac theoretically may have been equal to the others, but practically, the differences between them were great. This was especially true of the brac reial, the towns, which consisted entirely of representatives appointed by municipal governments which were different in terms of demographic makeup, economic strength, geographic location, and municipal

59 For the procesos of the Corts of 1283, see Cortes, 1: 140-53. See also Medieval Crown of Aragon, 88-89; Kagay, "The Development of the Corts in the Crown of Aragón," 167-77; History of Medieval Spain, 441-42; Udina i Martorell, "Importància i influència de la Cort General i la Diputació del General a Catalunya," 135-36.

60 Constitucions, 39.
government. Furthermore, royal officials could not be members of the Cortes, refusal to attend was punishable, and the liberty of the members was inviolable. The Cortes could not be closed until all business had been attended to, nor could it be postponed or moved from place to place without the consent of the members. By far the most important of these acts, however, was the constitution known in Catalan as "Volem, estatuín" (Our wish, our law), determined that legislative authority was seen to originate in the Cortes not the king.

At this same session, the Cortes enacted another statute referred to as "Una vegada lo any" (Once a year), which made it obligatory for the king to summon Cortes once a year. Although the prerogative to summon a Cortes remained the king's, by setting a timetable for all future convocations, and enforcing it, a considerable amount of authority had shifted from the royal sphere into that of the Cortes. This statute was refined and modified in 1290 at Barcelona and 1301 at Lleída to require convocations every three years, but irregular summons were to be the rule not the


exception.63 These statutes, taken as a whole, constitute what Donald Kagay calls the "birth certificate" of the Catalan Corts.64 They regulated the membership, recognized its role in legislation, and limited the power of the king to enact coercive measures that violated the rights and privileges of the principality.65 By laying down the basis of pactism and the notion of shared sovereignty, the Corts of 1283 marked a vital stage in Catalan constitutional history.

From 1299, each king had to swear to uphold the laws of Catalunya before homage was sworn to him. No legislation was valid until approved by the king and subsidies were granted only after grievances were redressed.66

The king would henceforth be seen as representing the community of the realm, but he had to share this privilege with the representatives of the ruling elites that dominated the Corts. It was

63 "Quod semel in anno, eo tempore quo magis nobis visum fuerit expedire, nos et successores nostri celebremus infra Cataloniam generalem Curiam Catalanis, in qua cum nostris prelatis religiosis baronibus militibus civibus et hominibus villarum tractemus de bono statu et reformacione terre, quam celebrare seu facere minime teneamur si aliquia justa de causa fuerimus impediti." Cortes, 1: 147; Constitucions, 37.


66 José Luis Martín, "La actividad de las Cortes Catalanas en el siglo XIV," in Les Corts a Catalunya, 146-51; Kagay, "The Development of the Corts in the Crown of Aragón," 183-92, 279; Valdeavellano, Curso de historia de las instituciones Españolas, 477-81; Font i Rius, "Las instituciones de la corona de Aragón en la primera mitad del siglo XV," 173.
a retreat into a political system more feudal in spirit than theories of kingship and governance prevalent elsewhere in Europe at the time. Ironically, it differed in many respects from the ideology of the compilers of the Usatges of Barcelona, the very laws the kings now swore to uphold and protect.67

The acts of the Corts in 1283 may have been born of immediate circumstance, but the theoretical precursors to them are part of a strong doctrinal tradition that can be traced to writers such as the Franciscan Ramón Llull (d. 1315). Llull's main works were religious treatises devoted to converting the Muslims to Christianity, but his comments on secular rulers influenced political theory as well. He made no distinction between king and emperor and believed that an emperor was simply a prince on a par with a king, which found a ready analogy to the federative nature of the Crown of Aragón where the king was "primus inter pares." It was only a small conceptual leap from this theory to situating the Corts on an equivalent rung with the king himself.68 Less clear, and eventually more problematic for the Aragonese kings, was the question faced by María in the fifteenth century: Where in this hierarchy did a lieutenant fit? Such a question was not really an issue until events of the fourteenth century forced a reorientation of the role of both the Corts and lieutenancy.

In the mid-fourteenth century, after decades of convocations and a growing institutional self-confidence, the Corts reached

67 Sobrequés i Callicó, El pactisme a Catalunya, 18-20.

68 Francisco Elías de Tejada, Las doctrinas políticas en la Cataluña medieval (Barcelona: Aymà, 1950), 95-98.
maturity, and the members began to flex their political muscles during the long reign of Pere IV (1336-87). The mood of the realm was manifest from the start of Pere's reign. Within days of his coronation, various towns refused to accept the royal officials sent by the new king because, the townspeople alleged, Pere had not sworn the traditional oath to protect their privileges. They argued that if he could refuse to swear the oath, they could refuse to obey his officials and his orders. Although Pere quickly imposed his authority and the fuss subsided, it was a serious warning to him that he could not govern without the consent of the governed and that they would use even the slightest pretext as a means of limiting royal power.

It was Pere IV's military involvements that in the end cost him both financially and politically when, on numerous occasions, he was forced to petition the Corts for subsidies. In the fifty years of his reign, he convoked the Corts of Catalunya eighteen times, the Cortes of Aragón fifteen times, and the general Corts of all three realms three times. Sessions often lasted years, and Pere tried to play one estate off the other to maintain some sort of political balance. Forced to grant concessions to the Corts in return for money, however, the king lost the upper hand. In the opinion of Ramón d'Abadal i Vinyals, Pere sold off some of his most important

69 Antoni Udina i Abello, "Pere el Ceremonios e les ciutats a través dels Parlaments," in Les Corts a Catalunya, 217-21. For a brief overview of the development of pactist theories at that time, see Sobrequés i Callicó, El pactisme a Catalunya, 21-23.

70 Manuel Sánchez Martínez and Silvia Gassiot Pintori, "La Cort General (1340) y la contribución catalana a la guerra del Estrecho," in Les Corts a Catalunya, 222-40.
regnal rights in return for money when the demands from the Cortes were unreasonable.71 By the end of his reign, rather than concede more power to the Cortes, he had sold off large tracts of the royal patrimony to keep his government solvent. In 1358 he yielded judicial supremacy of the monarchy to the Cortes. Most important in constitutional terms, however, was the creation of Diputació del General, an executive committee that assumed administrative tasks normally reserved for royal offices. This institution, discussed more fully below, became a formidable adversary of royal power.72

Despite his difficulties with the Cortes, Pere was not an ineffectual ruler nor was his long reign simply one constitutional crisis after another. In various ways, he bolstered royal power. He introduced aspects of the Castilian Siete Partidas into Catalan law, especially those sections that defined monarchical power in broader terms than did Catalan law codes.73 He effectively counterbalanced the increasing influence of the Cortes with a newly expanded and reformed royal administration created by the Ordinacions. His balancing act worked. For over seventy years, from his accession in 1336 to the death of Martí in 1410, the political equilibrium was, more or less, maintained.

71 The most thorough treatment of the financial problems associated with Pere's reign is Ramón d'Abadal i Vinyals's Pere el Ceremoniós i els inicis de la decadència política de Catalunya (Barcelona: Edicions 62, 1972). For a study of later royal attempts to recover the alienated patrimony, see Maria Teresa Ferrer i Mallol, "El patrimoni reial i la recuperació dels senyorius jurisdiccionals en les estats catalano-aragoneses a la fi del segle XIV," Anuario de Estudios Medievales 7 (1970-71): 351-491.

72 Sobrequés i Callicó, El pactisme a Catalunya, 20.

73 Kagay, The Usatges of Barcelona, 49.
Moreover, in Pere's reign the lieutenants—his son Joan and wife Eleanor of Sicily—convoked the Corts for the first time. The differences between Joan and Leonor's convocations and Maria's were striking: In the fourteenth century this act was ad hoc, but Alfonso's absences made it standard practice. Despite the gradual assumption of this key aspect of Aragonese kingship by a lieutenant, the issue was not directly addressed by jurists or political theorists until the 1420s and later. For example, Francesch Eiximenis (d. 1409), a prolific Franciscan writer from Girona, strongly supported contractual government but never once mentions the issue of the authority of a lieutenant. In the Regiment del Princeps (also known as El Dotzé) and Regiment de la Cosa Pública he advocated a limited monarchy that depended on the active participation of all ranks of society to ensure the well-being of all, regardless of rank. But Eiximenis was not a proto-socialist. While he asserted that all men are born free but choose to organize themselves in communities and to elect someone to rule over them, he also firmly believed that the nobles (grans senyors) should rule over the lesser ranks (the mitjana and pobres). He urged kings to keep their promises, noting that not telling the truth is one of the most prideful and dangerous things for a prince ("Una de les pus vergonyoses e perilloses coses que aparen en princèp és no servar fe veritat a aquells qui la promet"). His notion of a freely elected ruler permeates pactist

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ideologies, as does its obverse, the idea that just as kings are made, so too can they be unmade. In the *Regiment de la Cosa Pública*, Eiximenis stressed the importance of mutual fidelity and loyalty, and considered anyone, king or subject, who broke the political bonds to be a traitor ("E deien que així és traïdor príncep a son vassall com li trenca la fe, com lo vassall al senyor . . .").

He does not specify what he thought should be done to such a tyrant, however, nor does he address the implications of such power in the hands of the community of the realm. Eiximenis's fingerprints are evident throughout Catalan politics, both in theory and practice, in the fifteenth century, from the interregnum in 1410 to the civil war in 1462. The qualities he outlines for good government—good faith, mutual respect, and the promise to abide by the agreed-upon terms—are the very things the Catalans accused Alfonso of violating by his prolonged absence and widespread use of lieutenants.

By the turn of the century the *Corts* had become an integral part of Catalan government with mechanisms for redress of grievances and the mutual swearing of oaths that defined contractual government built in. The estates were summoned by the king, in writing, a privilege the estates were never able to suppress. He would attend in person or send a delegate, usually his wife or son, to represent him. Attendance at *Corts* was obligatory and those summoned could delegate only with good and just cause. The summons contained a proposition by the king, usually a request for money, which was read aloud at the opening session, followed by a

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75 *Regiment de la Cosa Pública*, cap. 15, in Webster, Francesc Eixemenis: la societat catalana al segle XIV, 14-15.
response by the Archbishop of Tarragona. Plenary sessions were held only to open the assembly, hear the king's petition, and vote on agreements. The estates deliberated separately before presenting the king with a list of grievances (greuges), complaints of abuse of power by the king or royal officials. The king then responded to the grievances; if he accepted them without dispute and agreed to their immediate redress, he got his money and everyone could go home. Sessions of the Corts were rarely as expeditious as that, and all too often considerable haggling went on before king accepted the grievances; if he refused them, he risked not getting the money he needed.

Both plenary sessions and individual committees (parlaments) composed of one or various estates could meet. The king could arrange delegations to act on his behalf, even when his lieutenant was present. For example, in 1436 Alfonso accredited two members of his staff, Bernat de Corbera and Andreu de Biure, specifically to meet with the Catalans at the Corts to discuss ways of ransoming him.

Each chamber consisted of committees, a secretary, a promovedor, a person who moved among the various estates to report

76 Oriol Oleart i Piquet, "Organització i atribucions de la Cort General," in Les Corts a Catalunya, 15-24; Josep María Gay Escoda, "La creació del dret a Corts i el control institicional de la seva observança," In Les Corts a Catalunya, 86-96.

77 Gay Escoda, "La creació del dret a Corts," 93; Coral Cuadrada, "El greuges del Sagramental en les Corts catalanes (segles XIV-XV)," in Les Corts a Catalunya, 208-16. For similar procedures in the Aragonese Cortes, see Sánchez Aragonés, Cortes, monarquía y ciudades en Aragón, 191.

78 Mensajeros Barcelones, 155-56.
to each group what was being said and done in another, and two tractadors per estate, who took part in meetings with others. Tractadors were appointed by the king to form a joint committee whose function was to help find solutions to the differences of opinion between the different estates, and between the estates and the king. A majority vote carried the proposal. If the king disapproved, his prothonotary would read aloud his points of disagreement and then it would go back to the estates for discussion.\(^{79}\)

Laws passed were called constitutions if the king proposed them, and capítols de Cort if proposed by the estates. The king's assent was indicated by the phrase "Plau al senyor rei" (it pleases the king); legislation enacted between sessions of the Corts (actes de Cort, privilegis, praqmàtiques, and altres drets) needed approval of the Corts to be considered valid. The king's signature on the capítols and constitucions, regardless of who presided over the session, made them legally binding.\(^{80}\) This was one point on which all parties were in complete agreement. The problem, and this was the crux of all later protests by the estates, was whether the king had the authority to delegate to María, or any lieutenant, the power to convoke and preside over the Corts. Even though the royal privilegios explicitly stipulated that she (and Juan of Navarre when

\(^{79}\) Hillgarth, The Spanish Kingdoms, 2: 192; History of Medieval Spain, 584-85; Valdeavellano, Curso de història de las instituciones Españolas, 478-81.

\(^{80}\) For a discussion of these various acts, see Ana Hernández Calleja, "Tipologia de los procesos de Cortes," in Les Corts a Catalunya, 62-70. On procedural matters, see Gay Escoda, "La creació del dret a Corts," 93.
he was lieutenant) could do so, and despite that fact that Alfonso later officially validated all acts of the Corts over which María and Juan presided, the estates contested the king's right to act through lieutenant's in this matter of paramount importance. Throughout the many Corts over which María presided, negotiated, persuaded, proposed legislation and requested a subsidy, haggled, stalled, compromised, and prorogued, the estates never accepted without protest her right to do so.

This issue is closely linked to another important point in the rules of order of the Corts in terms of contractual government--the swearing of oaths at the opening of the Corts. As the records of the Corts convoked by María will show, these issues were, for the Catalans, the heart and soul of their agreement with the kings and their biggest complaint with Alfonso's absence and his use of lieutenants. In their eyes, only the king would do, and the Catalans were prepared to challenge his legal authority to let his lieutenants stand in for him in the Corts. Whereas Aragón and Valencia had developed a certain amount of political independence, Catalunya was seen, and saw itself, as the natural partner of the king and did not like any substitutes. Until 1410, the royal family was descended from the Counts of Barcelona, they resided in Barcelona, the kings spoke Catalan, roughly half of the taxable wealth of the kingdom derived from Catalunya, and imperial policy in the Mediterranean could easily be seen as an extension of Catalan interests. The bond between the king and the ruling elites was close, and during the reign of Pere IV, Joan, and Martí, the Catalan nobles, prelates, and burgesses were not prominent among the opposition. The Catalan elites,
especially the members of the oligarchy of Barcelona, considered themselves the king's ruling partners. This fact, more so than gender, was the critical factor that limited the authority of a lieutenant.\textsuperscript{81}

\textbf{A Parallel Executive: The Diputació del General}

The members of the \textit{Corts} were active and vocal, even when not in session, through its commission, the \textit{Diputació del General}. The \textit{Diputació}, led by a three-member executive committee (\textit{diputats del general}), had its own headquarters in Barcelona which was outside royal jurisdiction, although Maria would go there to negotiate with them.\textsuperscript{82} As a committee that met when the \textit{Corts} was not officially in session, the \textit{Diputació} did not depend on royal summons, and it became more important as the meetings of the \textit{Corts} became increasingly irregular.\textsuperscript{83} The considerable wealth and political power controlled by the \textit{diputats del general} throughout the principality

\textsuperscript{81} Joan I's French wife, Yolande, even spoke Catalan in public. Rycraft, "The Catalan 'Corts' in the Late Middle Ages," 243-44.

\textsuperscript{82} Antonio de la Torre y del Cerro, "Orígenes de la Deputació del General de Catalunya," \textit{Discursos Leídos en la Real Academia de Buenas Letras de Barcelona, November 18, 1923} (Barcelona: Atlas Geográfico, 1923), 1-52, esp. 25-28. On the \textit{Diputación del Reino}, a similar institution in Aragón, see González Anton, \textit{Las Cortes de Aragón}, 129-33.

rivalled that of the Crown.\textsuperscript{84}

The Diputació's power developed, naturally, slightly later but for the same reasons as did the power of the Corts. The original function of the Diputació was to supervise the implementation of acts voted on in the Corts, especially those concerned with fiscal policy. It was placed in charge of appointing local and regional delegates (diputats) with power to collect levies approved by Corts and ensure that the money was used for the specific purposes for which it had been granted.\textsuperscript{85}

The initial mandate of the Diputació's authority was limited to the interim between meetings of the Corts.\textsuperscript{86} But Pere IV, due to a combination of the threat of Castilian invasion and a domestic political crisis, was forced to concede authority in return for subsidies. At the Corts of Barcelona-Vilafranca del Penedès-Cervera in 1359 he granted the Diputació permanent status, fixed its composition at twelve people, four from each estate, to be elected by

\textsuperscript{84} Augustí Durán i Sanpere, Barcelona i la seva història, 3 vols. (Barcelona: Editorial Curial, 1972-75), 1: 232-34; Medieval Crown of Aragon, 174, 180.

\textsuperscript{85} Ignacio Rubio y Cambronero, La Deputació del General de Catalunya en los siglos XV y XVI, 2 volumes (Barcelona: Diputació Provincial, 1950), 1: 135-42; Ferrer i Mallol, "Origen i evolución de la Diputació del General de Catalunya," 152-53; Torre y del Cerro, "Orígenes de la Deputación del General de Cataluña," 21-27.

\textsuperscript{86} The Diputació kept a journal of events in Barcelona which has become an invaluable historical source. The diputats del general began to keep this journal in 1411, which ends in 1714, with the accession of the Bourbons in Spain. An authoritative two-volume edition, Dietari de la Deputació del General de Catalunya, edited by Arxiu de la Corona d’Aragó (Barcelona: Diputación Provincial de Barcelona, 1974), supersedes the the journalistic account, Los Dietarios de la Generalidad de Cataluña, published by José Coroleu in 1889 (Barcelona: Tipografía de la La Vanguardia).
the members of the Corts itself. The diputats were not equal in
status, however. 87 Only the clergy and nobles were referred to as
diputats, while the representatives from the towns were simply called
administradors. In the Corts of Monzón (1362–63), Pere approved
changes in the composition of the commission to eleven deputies—
three prelates, three nobles, and five townsmen—all presided over
by the representative from the ecclesiastical estate. 88 The increase
in the representation of towns reflects the recognition of their
growing influence in political life. The main towns represented were,
of course, not remote hillside villages but the dominant cities of
Barcelona, Lleída, Girona, and Perpinyà. 89 This number proved
unwieldy, or perhaps the clergy and barons felt that the towns were
too powerful, because by 1400, the number of diputats del general,
the main executive body, was fixed at three, one from each estate. 90

The most sweeping and important reform of 1362, however,
concerned the Diputació's finances. The Corts of Monzón took a giant

87 Rubio y Cambronero, La Deputació del General de
Catalunya, I: 133; Rycraft, "The Catalan 'Corts' in the Late Middle
Ages," 248; Torre y del Cerro, "Orígenes de la Deputació del

88 The number of diputats varied until it was fixed at three
in 1413. For example, in 1364, there were fifteen diputats, three
from Barcelona alone. Ferrer i Mallol, "Origen i evolució de la

89 The commission now included Mallorca and the county of
Rosselló under its jurisdiction. Ferrer i Mallol, "Origen i evolució de
la Diputació del General de Catalunya," 152–53.

90 Ferrer i Mallol, "Origen i evolució de la Diputació del
General de Catalunya," 153. The Diputació in the fifteenth century
was a complex bureaucracy, the structure and composition of which
is not a concern here. For details on the official, their duties and
salaries, see Rubio y Cambronero, La Deputació del General de
step toward institutional autonomy with the creation of taxes known as *generalidades* and made the diputats responsible for financial administration. Local diputats, whose number varied considerably, were responsible directly to the diputats del general, so that the Diputació did not have to rely on royal officials turning over the proceeds of established taxes to them. The Diputació then paid the king and kept the remainder. This system was based on the assumption that each braç of the Corts was a corporation able to tax its own members independently of the others. Once a subsidy to the king was approved by the Corts, a quota was set and then the three houses set about determining how this was to be raised by their respective estates. The method had a serious drawback: It often split the Corts into warring factions, with one estate pitted against the others, and left individual estates open to criticism from their own estates.91

Despite any shortcomings, this income permitted the Diputació to function as a permanent institution which occupied a central position in the governance of the realm. So great were their financial resources that Pere IV borrowed extensively from the Diputació. Forced loans of this sort were common, especially in Italy, but what made the Diputació unique was that not only did they collect the taxes and control the loans granted to the crown, but also they

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91 These taxes included a flat-rate hearth tax, *duanas* (entry and exit customs taxes), the *dret de bolla dels draps* (the right to seal textiles that have passed inspection) and other taxes concerning the textile trade, and *censals* (a type of loan payable over a period of years with property held as a guaranty). For the statues that established this tax, see *Cortes*, 2: 148-66, 353, 379; Vicens Vives, "La transformació de la generalitat medieval," 31; Rycraft, "The Catalan 'Corts' in the Late Middle Ages," 248.
exercised an executive authority that was unmatched even by the Florentine Monte di Pietat or the Genoese Casa di San Giorgio. The Diputació combined the supervision of the expenditures of their counterparts in northern Europe with the Italians' ability to collect taxes. The diputats, with their constitutional authority and superb financial administration, controlled a network of local collectors who could keep them informed about politics both at home and abroad, and also maintained a squadron of ships to keep them apprised of the military situation.\footnote{Rycraft, "The Catalan 'Corts' in the Late Middle Ages," 249.}

In 1413 Fernando I, who in large measure owed his throne to the Corts and the Diputació, enacted legislation intended to both strengthen and limit its authority but, paradoxically, this resulted in a sharply focused institution with the power to rival his own. In an effort to tighten fiscal controls, he created three additional diputats, the öldors de comptes, auditors who were directly responsible for finances. Then, he limited all diputats, both local and those del general, to a three-year term and held them accountable to the Corts.\footnote{Rubio y Cambronero, La Deputació del General de Catalunya, I: 149-55, 165-69; Udina i Martorell, "Importància i influència de la Cort General i la Diputació del General a Catalunya," 138-39.} But, because their successors were appointed by incumbents, Fernando's reforms merely perpetuated and legitimized an influential, closely-held oligarchy that would become an effective tool of the political elites of Barcelona. For fifteen elections held between 1413 and 1458, there are only three triennial periods (1419-
22, 1428-31, and 1446-49) in which a prelate, citizen, or noble from Barcelona failed to be elected as one of the diputats del general or oidors de comptes. In twelve elections, Barcelona was represented by two or three members, and it was likely that at least two of six had a vested interest in the affairs of Barcelona. This numerical advantage, coupled with the fact that the headquarters in Barcelona, which was exempt from the ordinary police, was the most frequent venue for meetings of the diputats, and the right to initiate petitions in the Corts gave the leading citizens of Barcelona considerable leverage in Crown politics.

It was, however, Fernando's decision to endow the Diputación with the authority to preserve and protect the privileges and constitutions of Catalunya that gave the body its greatest power and prestige in the fifteenth century. Their role as watchdog became essential to the self-perception of the diputats del general as the guardians of culture and tradition, and became a rallying cry whenever the king did something they opposed. In a letter from the representatives of the Corts of Tortosa in 1419 to the diputats del general concerning royal officials, the authors argued that such a

94 Barcelona was represented by only one member in 1413, 1431, 1437, 1443, and 1452; two members in 1416, 1422, 1434, 1440, 1449, 1455; and three members in 1425. Ferrer i Mallol, "Origen i evolució de la Diputació del General de Catalunya," 153-55 and 157-59; and from 1413 to 1458, see Rubio y Cambronero, La Deputació del General de Catalunya, 2: 209-214; and Josep Maria Sans i Travé and Consepció Ballart i Marsol, "El catàleg de Diputats i Oidors de Comptes de la Generalitat de Catalunya (1359-1710 de Pere Serra i Postius," Estudis Històrics i Documents dels Arxius de Protocols 8 (1980): 63-118.

95 Udina i Martorell, "Importància i influència de la Cort General i la Diputació del General a Catalunya," 138-39; Medieval Crown of Aragon, 137.
task fell under the diputats' purview as defenders of the privileges of Catalunya.96 The Catalans, who now believed themselves under the rule of a "foreign" king, commissioned two jurists, Jaume Callis and Narcís de Sant Dionís, to compile all the laws, rights, privileges, constitutions, and capitols of the Corts and translate them into Catalan.97 Thus, by the time María assumed control as Lieutenant General, the Diputació had become more than just a financial and administrative powerhouse. It was also the repository of the legal traditions and customs of Catalunya. To counter the Diputació's legal assault, Alfonso sent two jurists, Luis de Castell and Francesch Torres to provide juridical opinions to María's Consell and Audiència on the legality of all sorts of actions.98 The complaint that Alfonso violated the laws and customs was a legalistic litany that appears in all the procesos of the Corts held in the fifteenth

96 "Entes hauem que denant vosaltres hauets carrech en virtut de Constitucio de Cathalunya de mantenir e defendre los Usatges, Constitucions e capitols de Cort comuns a tots los tres Braces . . ." Cortes, 14: 200, 23 December 1419.

97 This compilation, known as the Constitucions e altres drets de Catalunya, was completed in 1422 and presented to Alfonso V. Later editions in 1495, 1588-89, and 1704 incorporated parliamentary laws and royal decrees. Juan Beneyto-Perez, "Jaime Callis u su 'Tratado de las Cortes,'" Recueil de travaux d'histoire et de philologie 3:34 (1952): 55-65.

98 11 April 1440: "Los senyors deputats provehiren misser Francesch Torres, doctor, de esser advocat de General en la cort de la senyora reyna axi en defensar les constitucions de Catalunya com en altra manera, sens empero preiudici de qualsevol provisio sobre aço feta a misser Anthoni Amat," Dietari, 129; 1 February 1441,: "Los senyors deputats provehiren a lur beneplacit misser Luis de Castell de esser advocat a defendre constitucions e usatges en la cort de la senyora reyna, stant la dita cort fora Barchinona, e sens preiudici de altres provisions sobre aço fetes e sens salari del General, ans les parts instants haien aquell acontentar," Dietari, 137.
century, many of the letters to Maria or Alfonso and among the representatives of the Corts.99

These many roles of the Diputació—sophisticated administration, the control of finances, juridical compilations, and the protection of rights and privileges—explain why the Diputació was so wary of royal agents in general, and was especially touchy when Pere de Besalú began to investigate landholding and the royal patrimony in 1446. The Diputació considered royal officials trespassers, wrongfully stepping into their jurisdiction over financial matters as well as overstepping their bounds and violating the traditional Catalan rights and privileges.100

Yet for all their power and the potential to dominate Catalan politics, the Diputació never actually took the political initiative. It took sides, as in the fracas over the Count of Pallars and Pere de Besalú, but it never acted on its own, without prior authorization. The diputats del general used the Corts to cover themselves by requiring the authority of the Corts to make any but routine payments. By getting explicit approval before they would disperse forced loans to the king, they resisted being bullied by the king. Rycraft attributes this seeming contradiction to the fact that the

99 The occurrences are too numerous to list. See, for example, ACA Generalitat, N-660, 74v-76r, 26 November 1449, from the diputats del general to Galceran de Requesens. The diputats argue that the royal agents collecting the remença redemption payment are acting "contra les constitucions del Rey en Jacme primer en la cort de Leyda."

100 On 5 February 1450, the Consell de Cent of Barcelona wrote to Bernat Capila and Ferrer Nickolau de Gualbes (the Consell's emissaries to María's court in Perpinyá) telling them to use the argument that the remença decrees violated the ustages, capitols, and constiticions of Catlalunya. AHCB LL. Cl., VI-15, 6r-7v.
only way the diputats could consult with their constituency was to persuade the king to summon the Corts. I would add, however, that during María's lieutenancy the Catalans took the law very seriously, and no doubt this respect accounts, at least in part, for their restraint. They may have disagreed with Alfonso, but they never considered him a tyrant. Alfonso's willingness to listen and to treat seriously every request were not the hallmarks of a tyrant. Only when faced with Juan of Navarre as king, someone of a very different temperament, did they lose their reluctance to act on their own. During Alfonso's reign and Maria's lieutenancy, however, the Diputació, despite its tremendous power and prestige, remained subordinate to the Corts, which in turn were dependent on the king for its summons, and thus the political initiative never really left the king himself.101

Its dependence on the Corts does not diminish, however, the real power the Diputació possessed. One important test of this political clout of the Diputació was that recognition by it was a test of the legitimacy of a government. This function grew out of its role as protector and defender of the rights and privileges of Catalunya. Always on the lookout for usurpers and tyrants, the Diputació would sound the first alert and thus provided the legal support for anyone who challenged their laws and constitutions. By the same token, their silence could rightly be understood as approval. Therefore, in 1396, when the Diputació did not challenge María de Luna and her

101 In modern parlance, this would be termed passive-aggressive behavior. Rycraft, "The Catalan 'Corts' in the Late Middle Ages," 250.
provisional assembly gathered in Barcelona to govern while Martí was en route from Sicily, her sister-in-laws claims were rejected and Martí's coronation proceeded along smoothly. Likewise in 1410, the Diputació accepted the nomination of twelve representatives of the Corts to sit with them and provide a provisional government analogous to that of 1396; so too, in 1421, they did not lodge a formal complaint when Maria first convoked the Corts. The Diputació challenged only her rights with respect to the Corts, not the myriad of other rights and responsibilities that she possessed as Lieutenant General of Catalunya.

Thus, the Diputació del General reached its institutional maturity during the early fifteenth century and, with the Corts, was Maria's formidable adversary. As later events demonstrated, because the Corts and Diputació regarded themselves as an executive body, they tried to by-pass María and her council and applied pressure directly on Alfonso in Naples. This happened not only on trivial matters, but especially in major policy decisions such as the manumission of the remences and the decision to reform municipal government in Barcelona in favor of artisans and lesser merchants and at the expense of the ruling patriciates.

102 Javierre Mur, María de Luna, reina de Aragón, 52-84; Rycraft, "The Catalan 'Corts' in the Late Middle Ages," 251-52; Udina i Martorell, "Importància i influència de la Cort General i la Diputació del General a Catalunya," 138-39.

103 Font i Rius, "Las instituciones de la corona de Aragón en la primera mitad del siglo XV," 212-14.

104 Rycraft, "The Catalan 'Corts' in the Late Middle Ages," 247.
Pactism and Catalan Political Theory

To sum up, the constitutional balance between the king, the Corts, and the Diputació del General defined Aragonese kingship by stipulating that the key to the constitutional bargain was the personal convocation of the Corts by the king. The fact that María and others did convoke the Corts begs the question: If the prerogative to convoke belonged strictly to the king, how could María or anyone else legally do so? Did the king have the right to transfer that right? Was this an implied or explicitly stated right? Or, was it simply the king exercising what he considered his royal authority?

It follows logically that if the Corts, as the mainstay of Aragonese kingship and government, could limit the power of the king, it could also limit the power of his legally appointed lieutenants. The limits of the office and authority of the Lieutenant General were, therefore, subject to the laws that delineated the power of the king.105 And, because Aragonese queens often served as lieutenants, the limits on kingship also affected queenship.

An integral component of the constitutional ideology of pactism was the belief that the presence of the king—a natural king, not a substitute—was essential to the life of the state and the functioning of its primary function, the administration of justice. This explains the significance attached to the myth of the king’s return and the reluctance to accept María as a permanent

105 Rycraft, "The Catalan 'Corts' in the Late Middle Ages," 241-69; Valdeavellano, Curso de historia de las instituciones Españolas, 423-39, 477-78.
replacement, regardless of precedent and the legitimacy of her authority. By setting up his court in Naples and breaking all of his promises to return, the Catalans felt that Alfonso had violated his part of the bargain. This sentiment is clearly evident in a group of letters from Antoni Vinyes, Barcelona’s representative to the Corts held in Perpinyá in 1449, reporting the events to the members of the Consell de Cent. Vinyes complains about delays and claims that the convocation itself was a violation of the Usatges and other Catalan laws.106

Furthermore, it was not simply an abstract legal concept without practical effects. During her long tenure as lieutenant, María was involved in nearly every aspect of the Corts, from the convocation to the closing. The only thing she did not do was initiate the summons to a Corts—that remained the power of the king alone. She could issue a summons in Alfonso’s name, but never on her own authority without his prior written orders. In the Corts she did not violate Alfonso’s intentions nor did she initiate policy, but neither did she simply relay messages between the king and the estates. The Catalans, skilled parliamentarians and keen strategists, were formidable adversaries. And their relationship was adversarial indeed: María deliberated, cajoled, compromised, and threatened members to push through Alfonso’s policies and get him the money he needed to govern. She acted in his place and on his behalf, often under considerable pressure and the dual constraints of time and

106 He does not, however, cite any provision specifically. AHCB CCO, X-19: 41r-v, 16 March 1449; 42r-v, 18 March 1449; AHCB LL. Cl., VI-14, 34v-35r, 20 March 1449.
geography. In the process, she became a lightning rod for juridical thinking, and the issues raised then had a wide impact on Spanish representation law and institutions both in Europe and the Americas. And, until 1447 when the remenca issue polarized the Corts and threatened to tear Catalunya apart, she was able to govern effectively. The change in balance of relations took place after 1410, when Martí's death left the Crown without a male heir. During the interregnum, the Corts took sole care of the government from Barcelona and then Tortosa, and their effective administration reinforced their self-conscious identification with the king, and brought the ruling elites to the realization that an expanded role for the Corts was not only necessary but possible.

The settlement of the succession crisis, the Compromise of Caspe, was itself born out of a compromise when all parties involved agreed to submit their claims to Pope Benedict XIII for adjudication. He turned the decision over to electors representative of each realm, who ultimately worked with the three individual parliamentary assemblies. Steeped in the milieu of conciliar theory and mindful of the schism in the Church, the Compromise is emblematic of the ideological transformation of the later Middle Ages. Nevertheless, because all the contestants had more or less valid claims, the final decision was more pragmatic than theoretical.

It is surprising that the Catalan estates took a passive attitude toward the succession and did not prevent the accession of

107 For the reaction in Cortes of Aragón, see González Anton, Las Cortes de Aragón, 106-10.
108 Kagay, The Usatges of Barcelona, 49.
Fernando de Antequera. But there was no denying that Castile was ascendent in the early fifteenth century and the estates in each realm were bitterly divided in their preferences. Fernando emerged as the man most likely to create a lasting peace and an effective government, and his selection made sense in all respects.\textsuperscript{109} Perhaps Bisson is correct when he says that they had no viable candidate and so "in the genuine interest of peace they agreed to negotiate without one. . . represented faithfully the spirit of the federative constitution, [and] they settled for a just compromise."\textsuperscript{110}

When Fernando I actively tried to reduce the Catalan's influence by making it clear that he did not intend to rule from Barcelona and began to assimilate their interests with that of the Valencians and the Aragonese, the Catalans may have regretted their decision. They recognized that they needed to devise an executive institution but wanted to secure some control over it. They looked to the office of the governor, which was not linked to the royal family and thus could be persuaded to work on their behalf. The incumbent governor, Guerau Alemany de Cervelló, had extensive executive authority by virtue of his lifetime tenure granted by Martí on his deathbed. Cervelló claimed that holding the office for life meant that he could stand in the king's place and convocate Corts, which was not within the powers of the governor to do so under ordinary circumstances. In an act that foreshadowed the challenges Maria later faced, the Corts repudiated him on all counts. Cervelló soon found

\begin{footnotes}
\item 109 Sobrequés i Callicó, El pactisme a Catalunya, 12-46.
\item 110 Medieval Crown of Aragon, 136.
\end{footnotes}
that he did not replace the king in the Cortes, but rather the Cortes and its appointed executive committees, especially the Diputació del General, had taken the place of the king. He was treated as the servant of the Cortes, who reminded him that they might be his inferiors, but they were not his subordinates.111

The Catalan nobles, prelates, and burgesses took some consolation, though, in their new-found prominence as veritable king-makers.112 After the interregnum, the Cortes relied more on committees to draft proposals, to negotiate with the Crown, and to carry an increasingly executive responsibility. The Cortes itself, through a committee, actually summoned the first meeting of Fernando's reign, the Parlament of 1413, with Alfonso presiding in his father's absence.113 Fernando's first true Cortes were held later that same year, in Barcelona.114 Participants at this meeting witnessed the flexing of both royal and parliamentary muscles over the recurrent problems of repatriation of royal patrimony, the conditions of the peasantry, and, of course, the king's need for money. In the end, the king had a slight advantage, but he lost

111 Rycraft, "The Catalan 'Corts' in the Late Middle Ages," 245-47.

112 Rycraft, "The Catalan 'Corts' in the Late Middle Ages," 260-61.

113 Conde et al., "Fonts per e l'estudi de les Corts i els Parlaments de Catalunya. Catàleg dels processos de Corts i Parlaments," 37; Rycraft, "The Catalan 'Corts' in the Late Middle Ages," 262-67.

114 Medieval Crown of Aragon, 137; Sobrequés i Callicó, "El pactisme en l'origen de la crisi política catalana: les Corts de Barcelona de 1413," 80-84; Udina i Martorell, "Importància i influència de la Cort General i la Diputació del General a Catalunya," 138-39.
ground to the Diputación. It is not without reason that Fernando was
said to remark that compared to Castile, Catalunya was not a
monarchy but a "managerial post" (procuracio). 115

In constitutional terms, the Compromise and the aftermath of
the Corts of 1413 clearly marked a milestone in Aragonese history,
the moment when the political center of gravity shifted toward the
Corts and away from the king during Alfonso's absences, only to
snap quickly back to a centralized, authoritarian rule when Juan of
Navarre succeeded him in 1458. 116 In a larger sense, however, the
constitutional tensions in Catalunya and Aragon in the decades
immediately preceding the Catalan civil war of 1462 were the result
of a conflict between two political ideologies, constitutionalism and
authoritarianism. 117 These ideologies, while not polar opposites, were
vastly different and difficult to reconcile in practice. In most
kingdoms, both coexisted to some extent and the relative proportions
of one or the other varied considerably from time to time and place
to place. For example, Castile in the fifteenth century tended toward
absolutism.

More than most other political arrangements, the key to the

115 Hillgarth, Spanish Kingdoms, II: 240. Hillgarth's
translation is taken from Lorenzo Valla's Historiae Ferdinandi regis
Aragoniae (1521; facsimile edition, 1970), 120.

116 Font i Rius, "Las instituciones de la corona de Aragón en
la primera mitad del siglo XV," 209; González Antón, Las Cortes de
Aragón, 106-10.

117 Elias de Tejada, Las doctrinas políticas, 176-209; Tomàs
de Montagut i Estragüés, "Pactisme o absolutisme a Catalunya: Les
grans institucions de govern (s. XV-XVI)," Anuario de Estudios
Medievales 19 (1989): 669-79; Sánchez Aragonés, Cortes, monarquía
y ciudades en Aragón, 153.
The effectiveness of pactism was compromise and mutual respect which, like all human variables, was subject to failure when either party violated the tacit agreement to rule together. There is no denying that Juan's reactionary political style was rooted in personality as much as an ideology or the necessity to restore order. It says a great deal about mutual respect that, while Alfonso was alive, the Catlans fought not with conventional weapons but with an army of jurists. There seems to have been a shared determination to find a way to make long-distance government succeed. No doubt, each side was convinced that the other would eventually relent. When Alfonso would not come to Catalunya, the Catalans sent embassies to him. Alfonso, for his part, never wavered in his belief that his lieutenants had plena potestas to act in his place.

Some scholars, notably Bisson and Suarez Fernández, argue with good reason that one reason Alfonso stayed in Italy was to flee his contentious Catalan subjects and their demands for participation in government. During his years in Italy, where he had far more room to maneuver without the legalistic obstacles the Catalans placed in his way, Alfonso had formed an opinion of kingship that differed dramatically from that of his predecessors. He carefully guarded royal prerogatives and preferred as much as possible a solitary exercise of power. His streak of absolutism went against the grain of Catalan politics. In a letter to the Corts in 1450, he blamed obstruction of justice not on his unwillingness to work with the Corts but to the "impertinent so-called Customs of Barcelona,

118 Medieval Crown of Aragon, 146-47; Alfonso the Magnanimous, 360-71; Los Trastámaras, 725-28.
Constitutions of the Corts of Catalunya, privileges, alleged Usatges, and liberties.\textsuperscript{119} The issues raised during this protracted dispute redefined Aragonese kingship and this, in turn, affected both the office of the lieutenant and the political nature of queenship.

\textbf{The Corts of Catalunya: Barcelona, 1419-20 and 1421-23}

Because the convocation of the Corts by the king, in person, was a central feature of Aragonese kingship, it is not surprising that from the outset María's authority was challenged. The pertinent question that faced the representatives at the meetings of the Corts during Alfonso's reign was not whether the king had the right to convoke the Corts but whether that right was transferrable to his lieutenants.\textsuperscript{120} In Alfonso's opinion, there was no doubt that it was. The terms of the privilegios are unambiguous, and in a purely theoretical sense, the lieutenant was the king's \textit{alter ego}. The problem was that the members of the estates did not want an equivalent to the king, they wanted the king himself. Although it was generally accepted that the king could appoint someone to act

\textsuperscript{119} "Indecents, impertinents e inhonestissimes mes encara son molt insoportables ala magestate e dignitat real . . ." AHCB, Cartes Comunes Originales, vol. 20, fol. 48-54, not dated but likely before March 1450. Ryder discusses this letter in \textit{Alfonso the Magnanimous}, 363.

\textsuperscript{120} A number of scholars have noted the problem in passing, but did not go into detail. See Jesús Lalinde Abadía, \textit{La gobernación general en la Corona de Aragón} (Madrid and Zaragoza: Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas), 1963; 162-63; Federico Udina i Martorell, "La organización político-administrativa de la Corona de Aragón (1416-1516)," in \textit{La Corona d'Aragona e il Mediterraneo: aspetti e problemi comuni, da Alfonso il Magnanimo a Ferdinando il Cattolico (1416-1516)}, 2 volumes (Naples: Società Napoletana di Storia Patria, 1978), 2: 74.
for him in an emergency, there was some disagreement among Alfonso's subjects as to whether or not his absence constituted an emergency.121

The first time María worked with the Cortes was on 11 September 1419, when Alfonso went in Valencia to prepare for war against Sicily, Sardinia, and Corsica. He had prorogued the Cortes earlier, on 11 August, but could not return to Barcelona and ordered María to take over for him.122 Alfonso chose María because Juan was still in Castile, working out the negotiations for his marriage. There was no serious protest, perhaps because Alfonso was close by and it was clear that she was simply stepping in temporarily. Apparently satisfied with her ability to manage for him, he issued the privilegio that granted her full powers as Lieutenant General the following spring, in April 1420.123

In the winter of 1421, while fighting the Angevins in Italy, Alfonso asked María to summon the Cortes of all three realms to request a subsidy to pay for his military expenses.124 On 26 May

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121 Lalinde Abadía, "Los Parlamentos y demás instituciones representativas," 160-64; idem, La institución virreinal en Cataluña, 305-306.

122 Cortes, 12: 55-351, and 16: 50-115; Conde et al., "Fonts per a l'estudi de les Corts i els Parlaments de Catalunya. Catàleg dels processos de Corts i Parlaments," 38.

123 Alfonso the Magnanimous, 67-72.

124 The letters of convocation from Alfonso are collected in Cortes, 13: 1-11. The summons' were issued on 18 March, 1421 for 21 April. The first session actually took place on 26 May in Tortosa, the Cortes moved to Barcelona on 23 June 1421, and concluded on 20 July 1423. Conde, et al., "Fonts per a l'estudi de les Corts i els Parlaments de Catalunya," 39. See also Doña María de Castilla, 113-14; Alfonso the Magnanimous, 103.
1421, Marc de Vilalba, abbot of Montserrat, declared that the Corts felt that the king had no right to turn over to anyone his right to convoke the Corts because it was a violation of the laws of Catalunya to do so. Vilalba's argument was strictly juridical and rested on his doubts that Alfonso could transfer his rights concerning convocation of the Corts to Maria. He did not call into question whether María or any other woman was capable, he simply argued that he doubted whether a king could transfer this particular regalian right to a lieutenant. Gender was not the issue; rather, it was the authority of the king to act in a way that affected the Corts without first consulting them. The members of the Corts relented when María presented the privilegio of 1420 appointing her Lieutenant General which specifically granted her the power to convoke Corts, and, in a phrase repeated at every subsequent session over which María presided, Vilalba asserted that they would relent for this one time only ("aquesta vegada tantsolament"). María responded that she had full powers ("bاسته plen poder de convocar e celebrar Corts") and promised not to violate any rights or privileges of Catalunya. Her oath echoed the king's oath, itself an echo of feudal oaths of homage and fealty, which no doubt was rich with allusions to kingship and was only a temporary reassurance to the wary Catalans. It is hard to believe that María's powers as stipulated in

125 "Jatsia dupten que lo cas de conuocacio de Cort puxa esser comunicat per lo dit Senyor Rey a nenguna persona de qualseuol dignitat o condicio situ." Cortes, 13: 40.

126 Cortes, 13: 40; Parlaments a les Corts Catalans, edited by Ricard Albert and Joan Gassiot, volume 19-20 of Els Nostre Classics (Barcelona: Imprenta Varia, 1928), 140-50.
the privilegio could have come as a surprise to the assembly. It is more likely that the representatives knew of the provision and that their protest was pro forma, designed to make absolutely certain that the session conformed to all the legal niceties. So, with that assurance, the Corts were then officially in session. 127

In 1422, in a bit of fortuitous timing, Jaume de Callís, noted canon and civil lawyer, published his treatise known as the Curiarum Extravagantiorum, rerum summis illustratum (also known as the Curiale or de Curiis). 128 Callís, who spent most of his career in the service of the Aragonese kings, wrote widely on constitutional and parliamentary law. He was an ardent supporter of monarchical privilege who nevertheless advocated certain limits on it to prevent tyranny and promote social harmony. Callís defended the acts of the

127 Vilalba's speech reads as follows: "Protesten e retenen empero ab deguda e humil reverencia los dits convocats que, per aquest consentiment, aquesta vegada tantsolament fet e donat per los squarts dessus dits, no sia fet prejudici algu en esdevenidor tacitament ne expressa, directament ni indirecta al dit Principat ni als Usatges de Barchinona, constitucions, actes o capítols de Cort de Cathalunya libertats, franqueses, usos de costumes en general o en particular a aquelles en universal als prelats ecclesiastiques persones, magnats, barons, militars e homens de ciutats e viles Reyals . . . Encara protesten es retenen, que la present Cort convocacio, celebracio e finament daquella no sien ne puxen esser tretes a consequencia en algun temps en semblant cars maior o menor ne puscha esser engendrat prejudici algu en proprietat o possessio vel quasi al dit Principat or Braços daquell de les protestacions e retencions nos entenen a departir per algun acte contrari subsequent." Cortes, 13: 40-42.

128 His works were collected in a volume entitled Antiquiories Barchinomensium Leges, quas vulgas usaticos appellat cum commentariis supremorum Juris Consultorum Jacobi Calicii, published in Barcelona in 1594. Beneyto-Perez, "Jaime Callís u su 'Tratado de las Cortes','" 55-65; Kagay, The Usatges of Barcelona, 48; Elías de Tejada, Las doctrinas políticas en la Cataluña medieval, 181-86; Lalinde Abadía, "Los Parlamentos y demas instituciones representativas," 162.
Corts in 1283 and subsequent emendations that limited the power of
the king in Corts as necessary and practical to effective governance.
He argued that a king cannot dissolve Corts impulsively, or at will,
if there is still business to conduct that he may wish to avoid,
considering these actions to be a violation of the mutual, sworn
agreement to work together. 129

Callís began writing the Curiarum in 1413 while he was a
member of the royal commission responsible for the revision and
unification into a single volume the constitutions of the kings, the
acts of the Corts, and the Usatges. This compilation, one of Callís's
most important contribution to Catalan jurisprudence, formed the
core of the Curiarum, a closely reasoned study of parliamentary
theory, Catalan law, and precedent. 130 In it, Callís maintained that
the legality of the royal prerogative to work through lieutenants was
implied in the Usatge "Iudicium in curia datum." 131 He did admit,
however, the necessity of the process of legitimization of the
authority of the lieutenant general. Although Callís did not write the
Curiarum with Maria in mind, nor, as far as I know, did Alfonso
press him to publish it in 1422, no modern commentators have

129 In 1393, he took part in the Corts of Valencia as a
procurador, was royal advocat fiscal in 1414, and handled the
greuges and petitions for the Corts of San Cugat-Tortosa in 1419.
Alfonso often referred to him as "jurist e cavaller," but he was from
a non-noble family and may have acquired noble status as a result of
his service to the Crown. Beneyto-Pérez, "Jaime Callís y su 'Tratado
de las Cortes,'" 55, 64.

130 Beneyto-Pérez, "Jaime Callís y su 'Tratado de las Cortes,'" 61-65.

131 For the text of this Usatge, see Constitucions, 37;
Kagay, Usatges, 48-49.
discussed the significance of the timing of its publication. Nevertheless, he was an adviser to the king, his works were widely read and discussed in his time, and the *Curiarum* was published just in time to support the legality of Maria's convocation of the *Corts* of Barcelona. If not deliberate, the timing certainly was fortunate.

This session of the *Corts* was particularly productive. The initiative for grievances and proposed statutes came from the prelates and was a compromise between the radical pactism of earlier sessions and absolutism of king. One important aspect of the *Corts* touched on the issue of convocation by someone other than the king himself and the prorogation of it by kings as a stalling measure. The *Corts* stipulated that once convoked, it could be prorogued only once and for no more than forty days.132 This provision reflects a concern on the part the estates that an absent king could prolong the sessions indefinitely, which was not only expensive, it was detrimental to the life of the *Corts* itself. By keeping control of the number and length of prorogations, the *Corts* were insisting that the king take the parliaments seriously. The wording is interesting, however, in that it refers only to the king or his successors and not to a lieutenant or other designee, leaving open a loophole which gave

132 "Ab aquesta present Constitucio statuim, e ordenam, que de aci avant, com lo dit Senyor, o successors seus hauran convocada Cort, o Parlament en alguna Ciutat, Vila, o Loc del Principat de Cathalunya, e lo dit Senyor Rey, o successors seus no seran personalment en la Ciutat, Vila, o Los assignada, o asignat, la dita Cort, o Parlament no pugan esser prorogada, o porrogat en una vegada, o en moltas sino per quaranta dies: e si dins aquells lo dit Senyor, o altre successor seu no seran vingut personalment a la dita Ciutat, Vila, o Loc, la dita convocacio e unjunctio de la Cort, o Parlament sien reipsa circunducta, e absolta." *Constitucions*, 41. The *Corts* added a proviso to this statute that the *Corts* cannot be convoked in a town of less than two hundred household.
Alfonso and his lieutenants plenty of room to maneuver.

At that same session in 1422, the Diputació pressed for enactment of a law stipulating that the king consult only Catalan lawyers concerning the Corts and that a permanent Catalan council should be appointed to advise María when he was absent. The acts of this session established the criteria for royal officials in the Audiència, chancery, treasury and finance office, vicars and bailiffs, algutzirs, procuradors fiscal, the governor general, and inquisitors. The members' prime concern was that royal officials be native Catalans and, to prevent any royal incursion into the Corts, they insisted that all royal officials be prohibited from serving in the Corts. In addition, they acted on a wide variety of measures from laws regulating commerce, to clarification of certain procedural issues of the Corts itself.

To formally legitimize the Corts of Barcelona of 1421-23, on 23 February, as the Corts were concluding, Alfonso had Francesch

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133 Cortes, 12: 92, 192, 199, 277-80; Rycraft, "The Catalan 'Corts' in the Late Middle Ages," 247.


135 These acts touched on minters and moneylenders, economic policy, inheritance, lawyers, and notaries. Cortes, 13: 136, 172, 288-89; Constitucions, 128, 136, 164-65, 172-73, 285-86. These measures were the first new legislation to be included in the newly compiled Constitucions i altres drets de Cathalunya.

136 As later events showed, this provision was essentially toothless. It was neither adhered to nor subject to any fine or means of enforcement. Cortes, 13: 41. In addition to the acts and capitols, nineteen personal petitions were granted. Cortes, 13: 357, 455-63. For a discussion of the work of this Corts, see José Coroleu and José Pella y Forgas, Las Cortes Catalanas (Barcelona: Revista Historicà Latina, 1876), 65-68, 239-43.
Davinyo read a letter confirming the acts and capitols promulgated by the *Corts*, to reiterate that María was well within her powers to negotiate with the members, and to promise that he would ratify all laws enacted during that session. This second oath and confirmation was repeated in all subsequent *Corts*, just as each oath was repeated at all opening sessions since the reign of Jaume II.

In an act both symbolic and tangible, María, a queen, had, through the office of the lieutenant, assumed one of the more significant aspects of kingship.

She affirmed the need for this oath with a famous act known as "Lo fruyt de las Leys," which stated that the benefit of a law was only found in the observance of it, and, at the same time, granted to the *Diputació* the authority to investigate all alleged violations of the *Usatges*, laws, constitutions of Catalunya. One of the fullest statements to date of the role of the *Diputació* as caretaker of Catalan law, it gave the *Generalitat* extensive powers and made it a political institution which acted as a counterweight to Alfonso's authoritarianism. It summed up decades of incremental

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137 The letter is sealed with the lead seal and witnessed by two knights, Guillem Ramón de Montecateno and Ramón de Perillion; a jurist, Michael de Navas; and two members of the royal council, Francesch Dezplà and Guillem de Santcliment. *Cortes*, 13: 521-25.

138 *Constitucions*, 44-45.

139 "Lo fruyt de las Leys es observança de aquellas, en altra manera en va son ordenadas: en per amor de aço, desijians, los *Usatges* de Barc elona, *Constitucions*, e *Capitols* de *Cathalunya*, e altras leys de la Terra, e encara los *Privilegis* *Generals*, e *Communs* a tots los tres *Braços* atorgats, esser observats, de assentiment, e approbatio de la dita *Cort* donam facultat, e statuim, e ordinam, que si sera cas, que lo *Senyor Rey*, o nos . . ." *Constitucions*, 45-46; reprinted in García Gallo, *Manual de Historia de Derecho Español*, II: 967-68
change, and it became the legal guideline for all subsequent debate over Crown attempts to recuperate alienated patrimony, investigate titles to landholding, and grant manumission to the remença peasants.

The acts of the Corts of Tortosa reflected the Catalans' fear that the increasing Castilian influence in government would result in an inversely proportional loss of their own political power. They clearly wanted a return to the traditional pact between the king and the people with the Usatges and the Constituciones of 1413 as the blueprint. It is worth noting that the Catalans and the Aragonese were not alone in their preference to work directly and personally with the king rather than with a lieutenant. In 1318, the Cortes of Castile, meeting at Medina del Campo, demanded that all future assemblies meet where the king was.

It is doubtful that Maria took the initiative in any form in this Corts. This was Alfonso's first foray into Italy, and it is likely that she regarded her role as a short-term substitute. She had no reason to believe that he would not return, their marriage was still reasonably amicable, and except for the protests of her convocation, there was little that was remarkable about this session. Taking into consideration that she was not the first queen to stand in for the king in the Corts, even the protests themselves seem a bit pro forma, more an attempt to legitimize the proceedings rather than a

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140 Kagay, Usatges, 49; Los Trasámaras, 707-11.

141 O'Callaghan notes that the issue there was more than just the absence of the king but also the potential for a division of the Cortes which would weaken its force. Cortes of Castile-León, 45.
serious challenge to her authority. Had she overstepped her limits, it is certain that the outcry would have been loud and prolonged. But, Alfonso's purpose in calling the assembly was to secure a subsidy, which María complied with. The estates wanted only concessions and guarantees in return. The fact that she did not always act on her own initiative, however, should not diminish the importance of what she did do. María swore the oaths, promised to uphold and protect the law, actions which were normally reserved for the king alone. These acts were important symbols of monarchical power, and the substitution of a female body for a male, of a queen for a king, was not a routine act. She was a queen, taking the place of a king, in the most important rites of kingship in the Crown of Aragón.

The Corts of Catalunya and the Cortes of Aragón: 1429-30, 1431-34

The chain of events in the Corts of 1421-23 is fairly typical of all eight Corts convoked by María. The protests lodged by the Corts were more than legal niceties but less than hostile challenges. They were important as a way of making certain that the proceedings went completely by the book. Above all, they signify an abiding respect for the law, a conscientious application of it, and the knowledge that it was in their best interest to dot the "i"'s and cross the "t"'s. The Catalans, like the English, were well versed in the fine points of law and observed it with the utmost seriousness especially when their own rights and privileges were at stake. These petitions and the mutual oath-taking became a common feature of all
of María's convocations, and not just in Catalunya.

For example, María presided over the Cortes of Aragón at Maella in 1423 to raise a subsidy for Alfonso's return from Italy. This was the first Aragonese assembly of Alfonso's reign and the bishop of Huesca insisted that she enter into the official records some proof of her right. She reaffirmed her position as Lieutenant General in Aragón, appealed to the needs of the kingdom and the king himself to justify the convocation, and swore to uphold the fueros and laws of the kingdom.142 The attitude at this session was favorable, not hostile, and the subsidies were granted without much fuss on the condition that Alfonso would swear the oaths when he returned.143 When Alfonso convoked the Aragonese Cortes at Teruel in 1427, he swore the oaths and confirmed the acts passed by the Cortes of Maella.144

Subsequent convocations demonstrate that the issue was not always who convoked the Catalan Cortes. In the fall of 1429 Alfonso summoned the parliamentary assemblies of all three realms to discuss the war between Navarre and Castile that threatened to spill over to the Crown of Aragón. Alfonso travelled to each realm to open the session, and then left the Aragonese with Juan Jiménez Cerdán, the

142 A copy of her oath is in García Gallo, Manual de Historia de Derecho Español, II: 803-804.

143 Like the Catalan Cortes of 1421-23, this meeting was consumed with legislation concerning administration, finance, and commerce. González Antón, Las Cortes de Aragón, 112; Sánchez Aragonés, Cortes, monarquía y ciudades en Aragón, 137, 420-26; Sesma Muñoz and Sarasa Sánchez, Cortes del Reino de Aragón, 1357-1451, 89-95.

144 Sánchez Aragonés, Cortes, monarquía y ciudades en Aragón, 420; Los Trasámaras, 379-80.
This was at best a cumbersome way to conduct business, so on 19 January 1430, María took over for Alfonso at Tortosa, with the support of all three estates of the Cortes and full powers from Alfonso to act in his place.

In a hurry to get the money and return to Italy to fight the war, Alfonso was forceful and intolerant of opposition. He shuttled between Aragón, Valencia, and Catalunya in the face of widespread protests, not over María's convocation but over the issue of who started the war with Castile and why anyone should have to pay for it. The Aragonese granted him 62,000 florins for the defense of the realm plus 1,000 men on horseback, and 1,000 foot soldiers while the Valencians contributed 28,000 florins. María continued to cover for Alfonso in Catalunya for the duration of the session, where she was relentlessly questioned about the king's

145 Medieval Crown of Aragon, 143; Alfonso the Magnanimous, 153-74; Los Trasámaras, 385-92, 711-15.

146 The summons was issued on 19 September 1429, the first session was held on 19 November, and the assembly concluded on 11 May 1430. Cortes, 14: 1-355; 15: 1-130; Conde, et al., "Fonts per a l'estudi de les Corts i els Parlaments de Catalunya," 39; Coroleu and Pella y Forgas, Las Cortes Catalanas, 245-46.

147 The Cortes of Aragón was held in Valderrobres. González Anton, Las Cortes de Aragón, 112; Sánchez Aragonés, Cortes, monarquía y ciudades en Aragón, 219–21, 421; Sesma Muñoz and Sarasa Sánchez, Cortes del Reino de Aragón, 1357-1451, 107-30; Sarasa Sánchez, "Las Cortes de Aragón en la edad media," 299-301.

148 Very little is known about the Valencian session, held in San Mateu, because the acts of the Valencian sessions have not been published. Muñoz Pomer and Carbonell Boria, "Las Cortes Valencianas medievales" in Les Corts a Catalunya, 279. For Alfonso's whereabouts, see Andrés Giménez-Soler, Itinerario del rey don Alfonso de Aragón i de Nápoles (Zaragoza: Mariano Escar, 1909), 97-106.

149 Los Trasámaras, 385-91.
motives. The Catalans, especially the barons and prelates, demanded to be convinced that the war was legitimate and not a frivolous waste of their time, money, and manpower. Juan of Navarre was widely blamed for instigating the war, and his involvement cost Alfonso dearly. He asked for 60,000 florins, but had to settle for 30,000.\textsuperscript{150} When she went to Castile to intervene personally to intercede in the dispute between her brother, her husband, and her brother-in-law, she left Joan de Funes, the vice-chancellor, and Pere Ram, the prothonotary, in her place.\textsuperscript{151}

Among the accomplishments of this long session, which lasted two and one-half years, are a reform of the judiciary, a statute concerning creditors, a promise to void all proceedings arising from the 1429 war with Castile, more acts concerning the jurisdiction of royal officials, and one very important statute entitled "Commemorants," which obliged peasants fleeing servile tenure to sell the land to an approved successor within one year or risk it falling forfeit to the lord.\textsuperscript{152}

That there was little or no opposition from the Catalans to María's convocation in this instance may have been due to the fact that Alfonso was not in Naples, but relatively close at hand. María had taken over for her husband frequently after 1429 and before his

\textsuperscript{150} Cortes, 14: 81-82, 118, 221-23, 315.

\textsuperscript{151} When and if Cerdán was absent, the vicechancellor, or prothonotary presided. There is no indication of who that person was in Valencia, but it was most likely a prothonotary or vicechancellor. For Aragón, see Sánchez Aragonés, Cortes, monarquía y ciudades en Aragón, 219-21, 421; Sesma Muñoz and Sarasa Sánchez, Cortes del Reino de Aragón, 1357-1451, 107-30.

\textsuperscript{152} Cortes, 17: 180-83.
final departure for Naples in 1432. The Catalans may have felt that, with Alfonso nearby, their traditional privileges would not be abused, or perhaps they felt could request a prorogation if they felt things were not going well. Once again, this affirms Harriet Lightman's observation that there was less opposition to a governing queen when a fully competent king was nearby. Moreover, there was no long, drawn-out history of the king's absences from Spain, no bad memories to fuel hostilities. María had only been in charge of one full session of the Corts, Alfonso had returned, and thus in all respects, the government had not fundamentally changed.

This sense of a return to a status quo did not last long, however. When he left for Naples in the spring of 1432, Alfonso left behind unfinished business in the Corts of Catalunya. As he did so, the secretary of the Corts noted, because Alfonso "found it necessary to leave at once from the Corts, and once again left and went, God willing, away from his realms and lands . . . constituting and creating as Lieutenant General in the said principality of Catalunya and president of the Corts, to continue it [Corts] in his absence, the Queen, his wife, giving and authorizing full authority to the said Queen." Alfonso literally took the money and ran: Having extracted the sum of 50,000 florins, he immediately left Barcelona to

153 A serious illness kept her out of the public eye for much of 1429. Coroleu and Pella y Forgas, Las Cortes Catalanas, 244.


155 This lengthy assembly (it opened on 16 August 1431 and closed on 15 January 1434) fills two volumes. Corts 17: 1-328; 18: 329-444.
begin to provision his fleet.156

The Corts of Monzón: 1435-36

The Corts general, which was summoned to meet in Monzón on 15 November 1435, was the most problematic of all the convocations because the estates met to discuss an unprecedented situation: the capture of the king by the Genoese at the battle of Ponza on 5 August 1435.157 It is also the session about which very little is known. Chronicles and other narrative sources report that sessions of the Corts were held in a particular town, but otherwise are of little value for this assembly as well as all the others. The procesos of the Corts general of Monzón and the regional sessions in Aragón and Valencia that immediately followed have not been edited; only those of the Corts of Barcelona are available in printed form. As a result, I have had to rely on a few secondary sources that include some transcriptions. Moreover, few modern scholars have looked at any of these assemblies. The most useful study, by Luisa María Sánchez Aragones, is an analysis of the role of Aragonese towns in the joint session of the three realms and later Aragonese sessions,

156 Cortes, 17: 215: "E per ço com al dit Senyor cove de necessitat partirse de present de la dita Cort e encara exit e anar, Deus volent, fors sos regnes e terres . . . constitueix e crea loctinent sua general en lo dit Principat de Catalunya e president en la Cort, per continuar aquella, en absencia del dit Senyor, la Reyna sa muller, e dona e atorga plen poder a la dita Reyna . . ." For the details of Alfonso's trip, see Alfonso the Magnanimous, 179-83.

157 For the background on Ponza, see Alfonso the Magnanimous, 203-209. The Diputació included a lengthy account of the king's capture in their dietari. Dietari, 102-104. A firsthand account of the battle was also reported by the Catalan ambassadors to Naples. See document 29, Mensajeros Barceloneses, 101-103.
but not the Catalan or Valencia. Still, she is better at analyzing María's actions than most other scholars and is particularly adept at comparing the relative actions of María and Juan of Navarre in the Corts. The Catalan sources are not entirely silent, and Madurell Marimon's collection of the letters from the Catalan embassies is helpful, as are the published proceedings of the Consell de Cent and the Diputació del General.158 By piecing these works together, some sense of María's role in them can be established. A peripheral view is no substitute for careful analysis of the sources themselves, but an investigation into this one assembly was outside the scope of the project at hand. This means that a great many questions are left unanswered, but until the procesos of Monzón are transcribed and edited, my conclusions concerning this parliamentary assembly depend on the work of others and remain, unfortunately, provisional.159

The news of the defeat at Ponza travelled quite quickly and tensions were extraordinarily high. The king as prisoner made everyone nervous, and the general and regional assemblies of 1436 were defining moments for both the office of the lieutenant and the institution of the Corts. On 29 August the Consell de Cent of Barcelona wrote to María, assuring her that they would meet with


159 For a review of the archival material, see Conde, et al., "Fonts per a l'estudi de les Corts i els Parlaments de Catalunya," 41. For Catalunya, see Coroleu and Pella y Forgas, Las Cortes Catalanas, 246-49.
her as soon as possible to discuss terms of the king's release. In early September, the Catalan ambassadors who were present in Italy at the time conveyed news of the king's safety. María personally issued the summons to Cortes on 15 October 1435, citing the obvious inability of the king to do so as justification for her unprecedented action.

Given the dangers inherent in her position, María asked for and received two extraordinary guarantees: the first, an official order of safeguard from the Cortes and the local authorities for herself and the royal officials assisting her; and second, that six or more algutzirs be permitted to exercise royal jurisdiction in Monzón, which at the time was not included in the privilegio of 1432. She was not exaggerating the threat: In December 1436 there were rumblings of unrest in Barcelona. She dealt quickly with the troublemakers, but the possibility of widespread civil insurrection

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161 The ambassadors--Joan Llull, Joan Bussot, and Francesch Castelló--were in Naples from 2 June 1435 to 12 June 1436. Mensajeros Barceloneses, 10-24, documents 24-103. See, for example, letters from Castelló to the Consell de Cent: document no. 47 September, (pages 115-18), 48, 7-8 September, (118-21); 50, 9 September (122-23); 51, 9 September (123-24); 52, 12 September (124-25); 53, from Castelló and Bussot, 16 September (125-26); 54, from Castelló and Bussot, 23 September. The letters list the prisoners, the conditions of their imprisonment, and suggestions for their release.

162 She did, however, communicate with Alfonso through an intermediary, his prothonotary. Hernández-León de Sánchez, Doña María de Castilla, 115-20; Los Trasámaras, 393-96.

163 Los Trasámaras, 393.

164 Batlle i Gallart, La crisis social y económica de Barcelona, 2: 398-99.
could not have been far from her thoughts.

The first session was to begin on 15 November but was prorogued until 25 November because the three realms struck again at her "illegal" convocation, despite the force of precedent and the obvious need to work together to aid the king. The protests were nearly identical in substance and tone to those noted earlier. To be on the side of safety and legality, María, as in prior sessions, had read into the record a copy of the privilegio of 1432 during her plenary address to the assembled delegates. She reiterated that she possessed "full and sufficient power, generally and specifically, to call, convok, celebrate, convok or serve at the Cortes in each one of the aforementioned kingdoms and lands . . . and ordered the aforementioned cedula and the letter (respuesta) with those powers from the king to the queen authorized and given there be inserted in the proceso of the aforementioned Cort." To bolster his wife's position, Alfonso sent the Cortes three letters of support, one each to the Catalans, Aragonese, and Valencians.165 The estates, at the urging of the Abbot of Montearagon, consented to the proceedings in light of the gravity of the situation. As she had done before, María agreed to abide by the fueros, Usatges, and all other rights and

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165 "... el qual notoriament es absent de sus regnos e terras la ha constituhido, creado su lugarteniente en todos sus regnos e tierras e le ha dado pleno e bastant poder general e encara special para poder clamar, convocar, celebrar, convocar o servar cortes en cada uno de los ditos sus regnos e tierras . . . E mandada la dita scedula e la present respuesta con el poder por el senyor Rey a la dita Reyna atorgado e dado eyer insertades en el proceso de la dita Cort." Extract from the Cortes of Monzón-Alcañiz, 1436-36, ACA General Procesos de las Cortes, no. 976, fols. 42v-43, quoted in Sánchez Aragonés, Cortes, monarquía y ciudades en Aragón, 141, n. 23.
privileges of each realm. As in other sessions, the delegates then broke off into committees to consider the royal requests.

Meanwhile, the Genoese began to release their hostages. In October, Juan of Navarre and a number of barons and prelates were set free. María's personal pleas were instrumental in obtaining 4,500 florins from the Consell de Cent needed from to free the Catalan ambassadors, and she continued to press the Corts for the money needed to ransom the king. On 15 December she formally addressed the Corts and ordered the representatives to work with her to secure the king's speedy release, and discuss negotiations for a settlement with the Genoese and payment of the ransom for the other prisoners.

What María and none of the delegates knew at that time was that in mid-September, Alfonso, although still technically a prisoner of war, had been released from the Genoese into the comfortable custody of Filippo Maria Visconti, the Duke of Milan. She may

166 AHCB CCO, X-7, 170, 23 October 1435; document 66 in Mensajeros Barceloneses, 140-41. Juan arrived in Barcelona on 29 December 1436. Dietari, 106.


168 "per la dita raho, aquell consell favor e ajuda, que lo dit senyor rey e nos speram de vosaltres, e de gran naturalesa e amor que de vosaltres se pertany . . . en manera que a la total deliurança de la persona del dit senyor, e a la presta recuperació de aquella." ACA, Proceso Cortes Generales de Monzón (1435–36), document 78, Mensajeros Barceloneses, 150–51.

169 Geronimo Zurita, Anales de la Corona de Aragón, edited by Angel Canellas López, 8 volumes (Zaragoza: 1967–77; originally published, 1562–82), 6: 98; Mensajeros Barceloneses, 17–18; Alfonso the Magnanimous, 205–207.
have been unaware that Alfonso had been officially released on 1 December when, on 6 January 1436, María granted permission to a delegation from the Consell de Cent to negotiate directly with the Genoese and conveyed to the full session of the Consell de Cent her complete faith in the delegation. 170 On that same day, Alfonso ordered Bernat Corbera, Andreu de Biure, and the town council of Barcelona to keep María informed of their actions at all times. 171 She worked closely with them and with the Diputació during the winter of 1436, meeting often with councillors and deputies to negotiate the terms of the agreement with Genoa and the status of Catalan merchants in Italy. 172 When Alfonso's release from captivity was discovered, along with the fact that Visconti had personally loaned Alfonso 30,000 ducats to help cover the expenses incurred while in the duke's custody, there was debate among the estates about the need for a Cortes at all. María pushed ahead anyway, but it is not clear whether she did so because she felt that Alfonso would still need the money whether he was free or captive because Aragón was still officially at war with Genoa, or because she was waiting for explicit orders from Alfonso himself. 173

170 AHCB CCO, X-8, folio 7, 6 January 1436; folio 21, 26 January, cited in Mensajeros Barceloneses, 17-18; Alfonso the Magnanimous, 209.

171 AHCB Procesos de las Cortes de Monzón, 116r-v, 6 January 1436, printed as document 83 in Mensajeros Barceloneses, 155-56.

172 AHCB CCO, X-8, 7r-v, 6 January 1436; 25r-26v, 6 February 1436; 26v, 7 February 1436; and ACA Cancillería, Diversorum 3129, 69v, 6 March 1436; documents 84, 87, 95 and 98 in Mensajeros Barceloneses, 155-58, 160-61, 162-64, 169-70, 172.

173 Alfonso the Magnanimous, 208.
Meanwhile, at Monzón, disputes erupted among the various estates of the three realms, and very little was accomplished even though Alfonso sent Juan of Navarre to convince the Cortes of the seriousness of the situation. On 20 March, María directed the Cortes to stop wasting time, conveyed the king's intention to continue the war with Genoa, and ordered the estates to discuss the king's demands for six armed ships and three hundred men to assist him in Italy. Her arguments fell on deaf ears. On 31 March 1436, backed by Alfonso, she suspended the Cortes general, left Monzón, and told each realm to meet separately and vote a subsidy independent of the others.

In a surprising turnabout, the Catalans responded favorably at first, while the Aragonese proved surprisingly difficult for María to handle by blocking her every move. The representatives greeted her with coldness ("fredament") and were unwilling to work with her at all. Alfonso decided to compromise, and he substituted her with Juan of Navarre, who presided over the regional Cortes of

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174 Mensajeros Barceloneses, 18-19.

175 María's comments, contained in the procesos, were quoted in Mensajeros Barceloneses, 18, note 32. Among the issues María had to deal with were the complaints by the Aragonese knights and nobles that they shouldn't have to serve at sea. Sánchez Aragonés, Cortes, monarquía y ciudades en Aragón, 141-42, 421.

176 It appears that Alfonso began preparations for an attack on Genoa almost as soon as he was released from Milan. The plans were well along as early as May 1436, when he wrote to the Diputació del General that his armada was nearly ready. AHCB Procesos de Cortes, 1436, 5v, document 98 in Mensajeros Barceloneses, 172; Dietari, 106.

177 "E com la senyora reyna vehees los affers de la present General Cort ésser tant fredament . . ." Mensajeros Barceloneses, 18, note 32.
Aragon at Alcañiz\textsuperscript{178} while María went on to do the same in Barcelona and Valencia.\textsuperscript{179} By then, the Catalans had toughened their stance and now they, too, refused to provide money to Alfonso because he was unwilling to come to preside personally over the Cortes. Both Juan and María faced tremendous resistance to their attempts at negotiation. María made a rare personal appearance before the plenary session of the Consell de Cent, and successfully persuaded them to change their minds and agree to work together.\textsuperscript{180}

Angel Canellas López has attributed María's failure with the Aragonese at Monzón to personal weakness.\textsuperscript{181} He argued that Alfonso substituted Juan for María in Aragon because she had not succeeded in dominating the Cortes, but the answer is not as simple as that. The events of late 1435 and 1436 underscore the difficulties of government at a distance: important messages from Naples, Milan, and Barcelona literally crossed paths, no doubt leading to rumor and doubts about the truth. The chaos must have undermined María's credibility and authority as lieutenant and led, at least in part, to

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item \textsuperscript{178} Los Trasámaras, 395-96.
\item \textsuperscript{179} Muñoz Pomer and Carbonell Boria, "Las Cortes Valencianas medievales" in Les Cortes a Catalunya, 279.
\item \textsuperscript{180} Report of the Consell de Cent, 15 March 1437. Llibre de les Solemnitats, 1: 82-84. The account of the queen's appearance is interesting on several levels, not the least as a detailed description of the ceremony and an index of the pomp and public display of status by all parties. In all, she may have made no more than half a dozen such ceremonial visits to the Casa de la Ciutat, where the Consell de Cent met, in her entire tenure as lieutenant.
\item \textsuperscript{181} Angel Canellas López, "Alfonso el Magnánimo e Aragón," in Estudios de Alfonso el Magnánimo (Barcelona: 1960), 7-24.
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
the difficulties she had with the **Corts**.

Furthermore, María Luisa Sánchez Aragónés argues that María was caught in a constitutional crisis. Conceding that Juan was indeed able to strong-arm the Aragonese, Sánchez Aragónés believes that María's difficulties were a symptom of a much wider problem. In her opinion, the **Cortes** of Monzón was part of the Aragonese attempt to impose on the king a pactist policy much like that of the Catalans. While recognizing that María was fully empowered to act in the place of the king, the estates in the **Cortes** saw themselves as a legally constituted executive body. Unlike her convocations in 1429-30, this time the king was not close by. Who would rule should Alfonso die? They probably did not relish the prospect of rule by a queen, even one as fully empowered as María was, and dreaded a second succession crisis. Even after they knew of Alfonso's release, all the promises of money and arms came attached with a demand that he return immediately to his Spanish realms. They wanted the king, not a stand-in.182

If Sánchez Aragónés is correct, as I am inclined to think she is, that explains what happened next. María opened the **Corts** in Barcelona on 15 May 1436 and the previously cooperative Catalans became combative.183 Almost immediately María had problems with the clergy and nobles, who resented having to pay for Alfonso's Italian ventures. She expelled dissenters from the session and had them

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182 Eventually, the Aragonese estates voted to provide 225,000 florins and promise of a fleet of galleys. Sánchez Aragónés, **Cortes, monarquía y ciudades en Aragón**, 421-22.

183 Conde, et al., "Fonts per a l'estudi de les Corts i els Parlaments de Catalunya," 41.
imprisoned. The estates vehemently argued that her actions were in violation of their privileges, but she argued that she acted under the peace and truce statutes. While the estates stiffened their resolve, Alfonso continued to pressure María to move quickly to get the money he needed to arm his ships, pay his soldiers, and maintain his court in Italy. Recognizing the difficulty of her situation, he wrote to the Corts once again making clear his support for her ("ab creença a vos comanada") as his legitimate representative. By the time the session was closed on 12 June 1437, the issues at hand were less important than the discord within the Corts itself. The real problem was the two competing executive institutions in the realms—the Corts and the Diputació del General on the one hand, and María, the Lieutenant General, on the other.

It would be foolish to rule out gender as a factor in the events at Monzón, but the issue is not that simple to resolve. Even Juan of Navarre, now Lieutenant General in Aragón, was not a fully acceptable substitute. In 1436, at the Cortes of Alcañiz, Juan was obliged to swear an oath approving the fueros, promise that his royal officials would observe them, and agree to expand the powers

184 Cortes, 19: 453.

185 AHCB Procesos de Corts, 1436, 25v, 12 November 1435, document 107 in Mensajeros Barceloneses, 179-80.

186 Coroleu and Pella y Forgas, Las Cortes Catalanas, 249-53.

of the Diputación.¹⁸⁸

Juan's tough stance worked in Monzón in 1436, but it could only carry him so far. Often preoccupied by affairs in his own kingdom of Navarre and a troublemaker in Castile, he practically left Aragón to its own devices. For instance, the representatives at the Cortes of Zaragoza, summoned in 1439 to deal with the defense of the kingdom against French invasion, objected to Juan's presiding,¹⁸⁹ demanded to see his credentials, rebuffed his requests for a subsidy to cover his personal expenses, and repeatedly called on Alfonso to return because the situation was grave. María took over at the next Aragonese convocation, in 1441 at Alcañiz and Zaragoza, and the mood was much calmer. The demands for her credentials took the tone of pro forma requests, not hostile challenges.¹⁹⁰ In return for reform of the judiciary and legislation designed to bolster the Aragonese economy, Alfonso received his much-needed money (although the amount was only one-half of what he requested), and the Cortes loaned María 17,000 florins.¹⁹¹ The

¹⁸⁸ González Anton, Las Cortes de Aragón, 112; Sánchez Aragonés, Cortes, monarquía y ciudades en Aragón, 144, 422.

¹⁸⁹ Alfonso removed Juan as Lieutenant and replaced him with María on 24 November 1438, but he sent Juan to Aragón because María was occupied with the Parlament of Barcelona, which had been in session since 12 November 1438. Conde, et al., "Fonts per a l'estudi de les Corts i els Parlaments de Catalunya," 42. For details on the privilegio of 1438, see chapter three, 106-107.

¹⁹⁰ Sánchez Aragonés, Cortes, monarquía y ciudades en Aragón, 221-22, 422; Sesma Muñoz and Sarasa Sanchez, Cortes del Reino de Aragón, 1357-1451, 139. For an overview of the wider events, see Los Trasámaras, 397-98.

¹⁹¹ Sánchez Aragonés, Cortes, monarquía y ciudades en Aragón, 222-23, 423; Los Trasámaras, 398-402.
tense hostility reappeared in 1446 when Juan of Navarre once again convoked the Cortes of Zaragoza to deal with the war with Castile. When the Cortes repeatedly demanded that Juan produce evidence of his power to convoke, he responded with hostile intransigence. In their letters to Alfonso, representatives of the Cortes accused Juan of starting the war. Juan's absences from the sessions provoked absences in kind, and the Cortes retaliated by rebuffing all of Juan's requests. The only business conducted was that which came at the specific, personal request of Alfonso, whose obvious conciliatory tone was not lost on the Aragonese. In the end, it mattered little who the lieutenant was. There were times when only the king would do.

The Cortes of Lleida (1439-40) and Tortosa (1442-43)

After 1436, the confrontations over María's right to preside over the Cortes of Catalunya became more frequent and the hostility more obvious. Alfonso's continued absence and María's convocations were a persistent theme in instructions from the Consell de Cent to their Catalan ambassadors resident in Naples, who tried to use these issues as leverage in the ongoing negotiations for money to support the king's military campaigns in Italy. The consellers complained vehemently of the delays and dissolutions of the Cortes, which were the unfortunate, but inevitable, outcome of long-distance government. And, in a very rare mention of their distress at the lack of a legitimate male heir, the consellers even suggested that the

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ambassadors appeal to Alfonso's marital duty ("lo gran deute de matrimoni") in order to get him to leave Italy, reunite with María, and produce a son.\textsuperscript{193} This is a remarkable admission of their unease with the fact that Alfonso was still absent two years after his release from captivity, that he seemed unconcerned about the succession, and that he was perfectly comfortable with María governing in his stead. In the eyes of the Catalan ruling elites, Alfonso was neglectful of his Spanish realms and the traditional duties of any king, but their concerns fell on deaf ears.

Alfonso felt obliged to stay in Italy and complete the task he had begun. He asked María to summon a \textit{Corts} to meet in Lleída to seek a subsidy to fund his fight against the Genoese.\textsuperscript{194} María was so ill that her opening speech was read for her, but that did not stop protests over her right to preside. At the opening session in Lleída on 23 February 1440, Simon Salvador, the bishop of Barcelona, speaking on behalf of the all the members ("nomine totius dicte Curie"), told María that before they could consider any requests from the king, they needed verification that she had the

\textsuperscript{193} "E que plagues a Déu que tals pràtiques de porrogacions e dissolucions de Corts, fossen deus terra e no fossen axí introduhides e praticades segons són molt enamigues de la honor e glòria del dit senyor e de tota cosa públiqua de tots sos regnes e terres . . . E més deuen induhir lo dit senyor a venir, perque vist personalment la molt alta senyora reyna, ab la qual segons Déu e lo gran deute de matrimoni requer, és tengut fer personal e acomplida residència." Instructions from the \textit{Consell de Cent} to the Catalan ambassadors in Naples. Arxiu de la Catedral de Barcelona, 24 July 1438, document 131, \textit{Mensajeros Barceloneses}, 191-94.

\textsuperscript{194} \textit{Cortes}, 20: 349-443; Conde, et al., "Fonts per a l'estudi de les Corts i els Parlaments de Catalunya," 42. Coroleu and Pella y Forgas, \textit{Las Cortes Catalanas}, 253-55; Doña María de Castilla, 121. For the background on Alfonso's final campaigns to secure Naples, see \textit{Alfonso the Magnanimous}, 239-51.
authority to convoke and preside.\textsuperscript{195}

María complied with their request by submitting a copy of the privilegio of 1432.\textsuperscript{196} Then, in a ritual strikingly similar to that of ceremony of the king swearing an oath to the Cortes, she agreed to observe the privileges, constitutions, and laws of Catalunya and "with her own hands touching, [she agreed] to abide by and not violate, to observe and make known and to hold to the prelates, religious people, clerics, high-ranking people, nobles, barons, knights, landholders . . . and the citizens, burgesses, and inhabitants of the cities, towns, and places, all the Usatges of Barcelona, constitutions and capitols of the Cortes of Catalunya, liberties, privileges, uses and customs."\textsuperscript{197} Satisfied that the queen would abide by the same rules as the king would, the bishop of Barcelona recognized her right to preside. His affirmation is followed by similar ones from each estate, and a final declaration of

\begin{quote}
\textsuperscript{195} "Supliquen los dits couocats que lo dit jurament vostra senyoria faça continuar los dits conuocats que lo dit proçes de la dita Cort e liurar aquell a la dita Cort auçentricament . . . placia vos, Senyora, prestar lo dit jurament e manar aquell continuar en lo dit proces ab les saluetats e protestacions apres de aquell offeridores e continuadores, e a part esser ne fetas vna e moltes cartes publies liuradores a la dita Cort e a altres qui lan volran." Cortes, 20: 426.
\end{quote}

\begin{quote}
\textsuperscript{196} ARV MR 9050, 3v–4r, 24 May 1432.
\end{quote}

\begin{quote}
\textsuperscript{197} "E aqui mateix la molt alta senyora Reyna, lochinent dessus dita . . . ab les suas man corporal tocats, tenir e iniuolablament obseruar e fer obseruar e tenir als prelats, religiosos, clergues, riches homens, barons, nobles, cauallers, homens de paratge e a ciutats, viles e altres lochs de Cathalunya . . . tots los Vsatges de Barchinona, conscitucions e capitols de les Corts de Cathalunya, libertats, priuilegis, vsos e consuetuts . . ." The reference to her touching hands may indicate that she was in the pose of a Christian at prayer. Cortes, 20: 427.
\end{quote}
satisfaction that all the legal requirements have been met. Their consent, however, was only for this one time ("Consenten per aquesta vegada tant solament conuocacio, congregacio e celebracio de la present Cort") and for the specific reasons given by Alfonso, when he summoned the Corts to meet in his absence under the direction of María as lieutenant, provided they did not violate the liberties and customs of Catalunya. Once again, María repeated her earlier promise to uphold the rights and privileges, and she emphasized that it was not her intention to cause any prejudice to any person or group.

The queen and the estates then settled down to business, but very little was accomplished because of María's illness. Delays, prorogations, and changes of venue prompted the estates to ask

198 "lo qual jurament mana la dita Senyora en lo proces de la dita Cort esser continuat e esser ne feta carta publica vna e moltes liuradoras a la dita Cort e altres qui lan volran." Cortes, 20: 427, 429.

199 "Consenten per aquesta vegada tant solament conuocacio, congregacio e celebracio de la present Cort, protestant expressament, retenint e saluant a la dita Cort e als conuocats en aquella e al dit Principat, e als Braços, staments e singulars de aquell que per lo dit consentiment fet per aquesta vegada tant solament e per les dites causes e rahons no sia fet algun preiudici, nouacio o derogacio, tacitament o expressa, directament o indirecta, als dits Vsatges, constitucions, capitols, priuilegis, vsances, consuetuts, pratiques e altres libertats ne al dit Principat, Braços, staments e singulars de aquell en vnuiuersal e en particular . . . ." Cortes, 20: 430.

200 "No fo es de sa intencio fer preiudici algu al dit Principat de Cathalunya ne als singulars de aquell vnuuiuersament o particular, e per mes seruar indemne lo dit Principat e singulars de aquell, plau a la dita senyora Reyna e consent que per la dita conuocacio e per qualseuol actes en la present Cort fets e fahedors ne per lo dit consentiment per los del dit Principat ne las Vsatges de Barchinona, constitucions de Cathalunya, priuilegis, pratiques, vsances e consuetuts o altres drets del dit Principat, generalment o particular . . . ." Cortes 20: 431.
Alfonso to come home to personally preside. Alfonso ordered everyone to work together but he took the precaution of formally drawing up a privilegio naming his nephew, Carlos of Viana, as Lieutenant. María eventually recovered, but the Corts never finished the business it started.\textsuperscript{201}

The last assembly María presided over before the remença dispute dominated the discussion sums up the mood of the Catalans and their strong desire to work directly with the king. The genesis of this Corts was unique and an indication of the growing influence of the Diputació del General. In the summer of 1442, just after Alfonso's final conquest of Naples on 4 June,\textsuperscript{202} the Diputats del general met with a more or less representative group of Catalan nobles which then went to María to ask her to summon the Corts.\textsuperscript{203} This act violated no statutes, it neither usurped royal authority to call the Corts nor the Corts own authority to negotiate with her. The reason for the Corts, the Diputats told María, was simply to remind the king of his obligation to come to Catalunya, and personally swear to uphold the laws and constitutions before the three estates of the realm. If he did so, they would happily grant him a large subsidy. In August, Alfonso had hinted that because Naples was safely in his control he might consider a trip to

\textsuperscript{201} Coroleu and Pella y Forgas, \textit{Las Cortes Catalanas}, 253-55.

\textsuperscript{202} ACA Generalitat, N-655, 51r-v, document 153 in \textit{Mensajeros Barceloneses}, 211.

\textsuperscript{203} \textit{Cortes}, 21: 1-3; Dietari, 152. Rycraft, "The Catalan 'Corts' in the Late Middle Ages," 253.
In preparation for the king's return, María summoned the estates to meet in Ulldecona on 7 September 1442 but, because she still had to close the Aragonese Cortes at Zaragoza, the opening session had to be prorogued until 19 October. Again, she faced protests over her convocation by the representatives at the Cortes who doubted that the king would keep his word. Their distrust was fueled by their fear that the king was not only physically but also financially beyond their reach. They were generous in the wake of the defeat at Ponza, but they found themselves increasingly at arm's length from the center of power. During a year in Naples (29 July 1442 to 20 August 1443), Antoni Vinyes, the Consell de Cent's ambassador, complained at length that he was granted only two personal meetings with Alfonso, both of them short and fruitless. If the Catalans thought that their support of Alfonso in the aftermath of Ponza would buy them influence, they were wrong. Alfonso kept them at bay for months, sending Galceran de Requesens, the next governor general of Catalunya, to Barcelona with personal letters in which he promised that María's convocation was temporary, that he planned to return as soon as possible. By December, however, Alfonso, well aware that he was being bribed,


206 Mensajeros Barceloneses, 31-32.
told María in a letter that "As for the suggestion that they [the Catalan Corts] might agree to offer us some amount of money provided we consent to go there, we tell you it is not our intention to sell them our coming at any price . . . Without any price or money that may be offered for that purpose we intend to do it with God's help, and we wish to be always at total liberty to go and come as we will."207 She was to work with them, as before, but Naples was too newly conquered and his presence there was far more urgent than in Barcelona.

This was not the first time either Alfonso or the Diputació had played games to force the other's hand. After Ponza, the Corts often tied strings to their subsidies and lured him with promises of money, but making it contingent upon his return. Alfonso toyed with the Corts, telling them, as he did in 1440, that a generous subsidy would hasten his victory and thus his return home. Each side had the other pegged: the Corts knew that Alfonso needed their money, and Alfonso knew that without the king, the Corts was, in the words of Bishop Margarit in 1454, "like a widow."208

Alfonso, as king, had the upper hand, of course. He had two lieutenants covering for him, his wife in Catalunya, Mallorca, and Valencia, and his brother in Aragón. He maintained his staunch support for them as they struggled to govern his Spanish realms while he ruled Naples. And while he was in Naples, he grew to prefer a more authoritarian hand than the Catalans, or even the

207 ACA Cancillería, Instructionem 2939, 54r-v. Transcription and translation by Ryder in Alfonso the Magnanimous, 369.

208 Alfonso the Magnanimous, 369-70.
Aragonese, would have permitted him. What he did not see, or did not care to see, was that by staying in Naples not only was he avoiding face-to-face meetings with the unruly and contentious Catalans, but also he was refusing to face the increasingly difficult situation in which he had placed his wife. 209

Just at this moment, as María was increasingly beleaguered with procedural and constitutional challenges to her authority in the Cortes, she received juridical support from Tomás Mieres, a prominent jurist and member of the king's council. 210 Mieres, who may well have written this work on Alfonso's request, discussed the issue of a lieutenant's convocation at great length in Apparatus super Constitutionibus Curiarum Generalium Cathalonie, written in 1446. Mieres was attempting to harmonize older native customary laws which emphasized monarchical aspirations of control with demands by the urban ruling elites for greater liberty and political control. Mieres ruled that the authority to convocate the Cortes did not rest entirely with the king, but that it could be delegated by him and thus could fall to representatives such as ambassadors, papal nuncios, or sindichs. He disagreed with commentators, notably Callís, who felt that the approval of the estates was needed for any and all royal designates, and felt that the task of convocation could legally fall under the jurisdiction of the Governor General, who was

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209 Alfonso the Magnanimous, 358-67.
210 Mieres was also Alfonso's legal counsel to the office of the Reial Patrimonio and in that capacity wrote on feudal and seigneurial landholding and the status of the remenca peasants. For his comments on the Cortes, see Elias de Tejada, Las doctrinas políticas en la Cataluña medieval, 189-99; Lalinde Abadía, "Los Parlamentos y demás instituciones representativas," 162-63.
not even a member of the royal family.

Mieres's clear-headed thinking became contradictory when he tackled the issue of women and the rights of queens to convoke the Corts. He cited the precedent of Leonor of Sicily, wife of Pere IV, as a fully empowered lieutenant whose Corts were ratified by the king. He qualified his argument, however, by noting that he felt that the queen, as a woman, could not exercise ordinary jurisdiction because women were, by nature, weak, changeable, and unstable and unable to give truthful witness. He noted that some women were superior to others, and made it clear that he found María to be "prudentissima" and "sapientissima" and that when she interpreted the Usatges and other laws, she was as thoughtful as the king. He concluded with the contradiction that even though queens should not convoke Corts, out of necessity he would make an exception in the case of María.²¹¹ Mieres shares with John of Salisbury the belief that women were unfit to rule, except when that woman was the Empress Matilda or the wife of his employer. While the opinions of both Callis and Mieres resolved certain points of law with regard to representation of the king before the Corts, their misogynist sidestepping—logical, when seen in the context of the times—muddied the legal waters.

It is noteworthy that the jurists working on behalf of the Corts and the Diputació chose not to make gender an issue. In all their protests and petitions read before the Corts or written directly

²¹¹ Elias de Tejada, Las doctrinas políticas en la Cataluña medieval, 189, 194-99; Lalinde Abadía, "Los Parlamentos y demás instituciones representativas," 162.
to the king they put aside their personal sentiments. They adhered to a strict interpretation of Catalan law and argued that the king himself had to convoke the Corts, swear the oaths, and approve all legislation. Nowhere in the extant records is there a trace of the misogynist language of Mieres.

It now remains to answer the question: Was the opposition to María's convocation due to her personality, her gender, or her status as lieutenant and stand-in for the king? In my mind the answer is: all of the above.

I believe that the opposition to María's administration, serious though it was, nevertheless was mitigated by the fact that she did not try to supplant the king. She knew as well as anyone that she was not ruling in her own right but was acting in the place of a fully competent adult king who happened to be elsewhere, and who could presumably be called on in an emergency.212

Despite the protests and challenges to her authority with respect to the Corts, there were no calls for her recall or demotion. This may be due in part to a respect for the royal family, partly to the undeniable legality of her authority, and partly to Alfonso's ardent defense of her. It is noteworthy that whatever the nobles and prelates and townspeople may have felt about rule by a queen-lieutenant, they were careful to keep any personal sentiments to themselves and they couched their protests in strictly constitutional terms. I have not found a single example of an ad feminam attack on

Maria as lieutenant, and even jurists such as Tomás Mieres who bent over backwards to exclude women from political life, defended María as a capable lieutenant. To do otherwise would have been unnecessary. It was clear to all that María worked hard and lived as circumspect a life as possible. I believe that the fact that María was able to govern despite protests and objections can be explained in large part by the fact that Alfonso was very much alive and well in Naples and she never overstepped the limits of her authority as granted in the privilegio. It was clear all along that she never intended to supplant her husband's rule, so that the debate never focussed on whether a woman could or should rule, but rather on the fine points of the legality of a lieutenant's authority in the Corts.

Moreover, she respected the seriousness with which the Catalans took the formal oaths the king swore before the Corts to uphold and defend their laws and privileges. In her dealings with the Corts, more than anywhere else, she was particularly careful to adhere closely to Alfonso's explicit intentions. Her actions in the Corts were prudent, carefully measured, and diplomatic, but she was not a pushover, either. She could be very tough-minded when necessary, and was an expert at stalling to buy time.\(^\text{213}\) The Catalans' may have believed that she would have been easier to manipulate than Juan, but she managed to extract money and to make deals with an extraordinary contentious populace during very

\(^\text{213}\) Joan Ros, a representative of the Barcelona Consell de Cent at the Corts in Perpinyà in 1450, accused María of stalling and buying time while she waited for a letter from Alfonso. AHCB CCO, X-20, 71r-v, 13 March 1450.
Although the fear of government without the king may have lessened over time, but the longer Alfonso was away, the more tensions mounted and tempers flared. The Catalans resented not only his absence, but also the costs they incurred in their embassies back and forth to Naples. By the late-1440s relations between the king and the Cortes were strained almost to a breaking point. I believe that at that point, María was hindered in her ability to govern, not because she was a woman, but because she simply was not the king. Juan of Navarre, Lieutenant General of Aragón at various times, faced similar challenges with the complaints against him phrased in much the same language as those against María. This is not to say that María was treated exactly the same as Juan of Navarre but the documents, even when one reads between the lines, do not support any charge of misogyny in challenges to María's authority to govern. The issue was strictly constitutional.

It could be argued that the protests never led to her demotion because she was merely a figurehead, but I believe that is an incorrect assessment of her lieutenancy. First, the very strength of the Cortes that caused her so much trouble may have actually worked in her favor at the same time. Because all acts and laws went through the Cortes and the Diputació del General, the ruling elites must have felt that they had some measure of control over her actions. As long as she stayed within the agreed-upon parameters by swearing the oaths and providing the appropriate letters of credential, and as long as Alfonso approved in writing all the acts and constitutions of the Cortes, the estates were willing to accept her
as Alfonso's legitimate representative.²¹⁴

Furthermore, Alfonso worked with her, not around her, and insisted that everyone else do the same. His letters and instructions expressed his intentions but left her with considerable leeway in the actual implementation. This, and the fact that she was not a passive bystander but rather an opinionated critic of her husband's policies, is more clearly evident in an event which dominated the last years of María's lieutenancy, the remença dispute, which is the subject of the next chapter.

²¹⁴ For a comparison with the reign of Mary Tudor, see Constance Jordan, "Woman's Rule in Sixteenth-Century British Political Thought," Renaissance Quarterly 40:3 (1987): 421-51, especially 441.
CHAPTER 6

THE STRUGGLE TO LIBERATE THE REMENÇA PEASANTS,
1446-1453

Thirty-six years ago, Santiago Sobrequés i Vidal attempted to fill what he termed a "vast unknown period" that encompasses some forty years from the death of María de Luna in 1406 until 1448, treated by most historians as a time of "legislative calm, of silent and underground agitation" among the remença peasants that foreshadowed the Catalan civil war.¹ His essay took the first step toward filling in the gap by analyzing Alfonso's politics. His description of the events was a solid refutation of the presumed serenity of the 1440s but, inexplicably, to me at least, no one followed him into the fascinating archival richness of the period. Thirty years later, when I began my research into the reign of Alfonso V in Catalunya, a near-total void concerning the remences during his reign still existed in the bibliography. This thesis, while drawing on sources from three archives during the agitated, clamorous, and unmistakably public conflict over the remences of

¹ "Existe un vasto periodo desconocido que abarca unos 40 años, o sea la época de María de Luna hasta 1448, aunque parece evidente que se trató de un periodo de calma legislativa, de una época de sorda y subterránea agitación . . ." in "Política remensa de Alfonso el Magnánimo en los últimos años de su reinado (1447-1458)," Anales del instituto de estudios gerundenses (1960): 117-54. The scant research into these decades was also noted by Jaime Vicens Vives in Historia de los remensas en el siglo XV (Barcelona: 1945), 49. Throughout this study, I use the Catalan spelling of remença (plural, remences); remensa (-as) is the Castilian spelling.
Alfonso's reign, still taps only a fraction of the documents available.²

The principal studies on the remences are four fundamental studies that set out the problems and sources available. Now nearly a century old, they remain tremendously useful descriptions of an important, complex historical era. These epic works are essentially regional studies, derived from public and private archives of Girona, the epicenter of the remenca crisis, and the historians are known collectively as the "Girona school." It is these scholars who, in Sobrequés i Vidal's mind, created and perpetuated the myth of quiescence in the Catalan countryside in the 1440s. Francisco Monsalvatje y Fossas's collection of documents pertaining to the county of Besalú,³ and Julián de Chía's monumental work on the unrest in the Girona countryside, both contain a wealth of primary sources concerning the peasants in and around Girona, including transcriptions, but unfortunately little analysis of the wider political situation.⁴ Eduardo de Hinojosa y Naveros was interested in the legal aspects of peasant servitude and his study remains the standard

² For a valuable synthesis of current research on peasants and lords in medieval Europe, see Paul Freedman, The Origins of Peasant Servitude in Medieval Catalonia (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 1-25. This volume has supplanted two older works on the mals usos and the remences by Vladimír Piskorski, Origen e importancia de los seis malos usos en Cataluña. Translated by Julia Rodríguez Danilevsky (Kiev: 1899); and La servidumbre en Cataluña en la Edad Media (Kiev: 1901).

³ Colección diplomática del condado de Besalú, 26 volumes (Olot: Noticias Históricas, 11 [1901], 12 [1902], 13 [1906], and 20 [1910]).

⁴ Bandos y bandoleros en Gerona. Apuntes históricos desde el siglo XIV a mediados del XVII, 3 volumes (Girona: 1888-90).
work of its kind. In his wide-ranging study of the county of Empúries (the region is known as the Empordà), José Pella i Forgas discussed the remences at length in a richly detailed portrait of a region in the heart of upland northeast Catalunya, often referred to Catalunya vella (ancient Catalunya). All three historians identified the legal, social, and economic determinants of peasant life in general, and traced the trajectory from freedom to servile tenure to manumission. All briefly discussed María's role but, typical of the historiography of the times, saw the issue through Alfonso's eyes, or those of the landlords, and none analyzed in detail much of the period of the 1440s.

Newer works have picked up the story after the deaths of María and Alfonso. In the first modern analytical study of the remences themselves, Jaime Vicens Vives brought the fifteenth century into sharper focus. His primary interest, however, was Fernando I and the Sentencia Arbitral de Guadalupe of 1486 which

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5 Hinojosa was best on the thirteenth century, but he does look briefly at the events before the civil war, and he compared Catalan law to that of France, England, and Germany. *El régimen señorrial y la cuestión agraria en Cataluña durante el Edad Media* (Madrid: Victoriano Suárez, 1905). José Coroleu also looked at servitude from a mostly legal standpoint, but he looked at the reign of Juan II and the civil war. *El feudalismo y la servidumbre de la gleba en Cataluña* (Girona: 1878).


legally freed the remences. For Vicens Vives, 1486 was the end of an ancien régime in much the same way that 1789 was in France. He saw the Sentencia Arbitral as a new leaf for the peasants, one which redefined their lives both legally and economically, and so he devoted just over twenty pages to an analysis of the decades between 1388 and 1462.8

The topic of peasant servitude informs a number of works on wider topics, such as those by Pierre Bonnassie, Archibald Lewis, and Josep Salrach on early Catalan society.9 Differing somewhat in their analytical perspectives—Bonnassie and Lewis traced the social groupings, while Salrach looked at the formation of a "national" identity—these scholars situated the remences within the larger social and economic milieu in the tenth and eleventh centuries. They left more or less untouched Vicens Vives's thesis on the social and economic impact of the Sentencia Arbitral.

The weaknesses in the Vicens Vives thesis were thoroughly examined and challenged by Eva Serra i Puig in her ground-breaking book on the peasants of the barony of Sentmenat in the seventeenth century.

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8 For other works devoted to the Sentencia Arbitral, see M. Fila Golobardes, Els remences dins el quadre de la pàgines catalan fins el segle XV (Figueras: Arts Gràfiques Traiter, 1970). See also, Concepción Fort Melia, "La Diputación de Catalunya y los payeses de remensa: la Sentencia Arbitral de Barcelona (1463)," in Homenaje a Jaime Vicens Vives (Barcelona: 1965), 1: 431-44.

century. Serra i Puig takes issue with Vicens Vives, and with Pierre Vilar, who painted a rosy picture of a prosperous early modern peasantry. She argues instead that the legal status of the peasants may have changed in 1486 but agricultural life remained grindingly poor, and that real social and economic change did not occur until nearly two hundred years later. By shifting the emphasis from legal norms to actual practice, her work has singlehandedly altered the tone and direction of peasant studies in Catalunya.

The historiography of the remences in recent decades has picked up the thread of regional studies, more or less where Hinojosa, Chía, Monsalvatje y Fossa and Pella y Forgas left off but still ignores the 1440s. The emphasis now, however, is on closely argued studies of one region in one short time span that, when knitted together, will form a more nuanced of peasant life in


Catalunya. Some of these are modest regional studies, published in local historical journals, and were written to commemorate the quincentennary of the Sentencia Arbitral. The aftermath of the civil war and 1486, however, remains a particular preoccupation of most Catalan historians. Anyone studying the Catalan civil war naturally mentions the remences.

Paul Freedman, on the other hand, is interested in origins. In his recent work, he looks at the early medieval origins of the remences and describes the legal, social, and economic aspects of process of enserfment from the Carolingian period. Both a synthesis of current historiography concerning medieval agrarian life and an analysis of the particular legal, social, and economic conditions in Catalunya, The Origins of Peasant Servitude is an essential text on the remences. Nevertheless, like all his colleagues past and present,


he gives short shrift to Alfonso's reign, and nowhere does he mention the actions of Maria of Castile.  

In this study, however, I am not interested in the origins or conditions of peasants' servitude, but on their efforts to gain manumission from the Crown, and especially the political support they received from María. The issue had been brewing for decades, came to the fore in 1447, and occupied Maria and the Corts for the next seven years. Ultimately, the issue became not just peasant manumission, but who was to decide the issue itself—the king? The Lieutenant General? The Corts? The remençà dispute thus became emblematic of the wider theoretical issues of authoritarian rule, contractual kingship, the scope of the office of the Lieutenant General, and representative government.

Peasant Servitude in Catalunya until 1416

The remences, peasants of northeast Catalunya who were tied to the land in onerous serf-like conditions, were the last vestiges of a quasi-feudal landholding system that was antiquated long before its institutional demise in the late fifteenth century. Their name is derived from the Catalan term remençà (redemption), the monetary

payment required to purchase their freedom from a secular or ecclesiastical lord. Their legal, social, and economic status evolved over the centuries following the Carolingian period. What was a contractual arrangement in the tenth century became a rigidly codified system of both landholding and social hierarchy. There are several key chronological markers—1202, 1283, 1348, 1388, and 1432—that mark the trajectory of peasant servitude.

The most sweeping and harsh law concerning the peasants was written in the Cortes of Cervera in 1202. This session was called during a period of widespread renewal of aristocratic violence which Pere II was unable to suppress, and he was forced to relinquish direct control of much of the realm to barons and local lords. Towns were classified as either subject to or immune from seigneurial pressure, thus leaving most peasants outside royal protection and negating the limits to arbitrary coercion against free men inscribed in the Usatges of Barcelona.

Peasants were more clearly defined as subordinate to lords and the mals usos (evil customs) were used to define their legal

16 For a discussion of the legal dimension, see Hinojosa y Naveros, El régimen señoríal, 6-7; Vicens Vives, Historia de los Remensas, 23-26; Freedman, Peasant Servitude, 89-118.


status. Some customs were strictly financial, but the most universally despised customs were those that not only restricted a peasant's freedom but were humiliating as well. For example, a lord could arbitrarily demand labor services, force a nursing woman to serve as wet nurse, and subject the peasant to unwarranted physical abuse. Three mals usos were especially onerous: intestia, the lord's right to a considerable portion of the moveable goods left by a peasant who died intestate; exorquía, a similar levy exacted when a peasant died without legitimate heirs; and cugucia, the seizure of a peasant's property if his wife was adulterous. Two other mals usos were more routine levies: arsina, a fine for deliberate or accidental burning of a peasant's house or other property; and firma di spoli forçada, a payment in return for the lord's guarantee of agreements concerning dowry. And, the redemption payment itself should be considered a sixth mal uso. The legislation of 1202 further recognized the ius maletractandi that permitted not only physical coercion but also the seizure their property without justification or explanation.

Nevertheless, implementation and enforcement of statutes

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concerning peasant tenure were by no means uniform throughout the thirteenth century. Conditions varied widely and law cases involving peasants and lords had an ad hoc quality which indicates first, that there was no universal index of servitude, and second, that the lords themselves were not strong enough to make the legislation stick. The long reign of Jaume I, from 1213 to 1276, provided both greater wealth and stability, which enhanced the power of the lords relative to the peasants.21

The resurgent strength of the lords is evident in the statute known in Catalan as "En les terres o llocs," enacted in the Corts of 1283. This legislation was little more than a legitimization of what had been customary seigneurial practice for centuries, but it effectively defined servile status for the next two hundred years and created a hierarchical categorization that linked social and geographical distinctions.22 In essence, this legislation prohibited tenants who customarily made redemption payments from seeking protection on royal lands, and in so doing identified the payment of redemption as the key element of servile tenure. Conditions of landholding were deemed more important than personal obligations, and, as in southern France which in many areas very closely resembles Catalunya in terms of landholding, the peasant was bound

21 For more on landholding during the thirteenth century see Sobrequés i Callicó, "La crisi social agrària de la Baixa Edat Mitjana: els remences," 47; Freedman, Peasant Servitude, 121-35; Hinojosa y Naveros, El régimen señorial, 216-25. On Jaume's reign, see Medieval Crown of Aragon, 58-85; History of Medieval Spain, 333-49.

22 Cortes, 1: 147; Constitucions, 347; Alfonso García Gallo, Manual de Historia de Derecho Español, 2nd edition, 2 volumes (Madrid: 1964), 754.
more closely to the land instead of a person.\textsuperscript{23}

There does not seem to have been wide-scale flight from the north, perhaps due in part to the differences among lords and strong economic and familial connections to one's place of birth. The king and ecclesiastical lords were the most lenient, less likely to use violence to enforce their lordship, and until the late fourteenth century, the lay lords were not substantially different. The price of redemption varied widely over time, according to personal status (age, marital status, or gender) and from place to place (most remences were concentrated in the upland northeast near Girona and Vic, and lands to the west of Barcelona).\textsuperscript{24} After the Black Death, however, the conditions of tenure under both ecclesiastical and lay

\textsuperscript{23} A letter of commendation of 1285 illustrates this personal bond: "Vobis facio homagium manale . . . Et ego predictus Arnaldus de Planis . . . promitto tibi Bartolomeo Nonel, quod quando tu volueris exire de meo dominio et servitate, solvam faciam et redam te, et omnem prolem a te natam et nascituram et omnes res suas mobiles et immobiles, franchum liberum quitium et absolutum . . . cum v solidos Barchinonensis de terno quo nobis vel nostris dare tenearis et nihil aliud in morte nec in vita." Hinojosa y Naveros, \textit{El régimen señorial}, 87, note 1; reprinted in Garcia Gallo, \textit{Manual de Historia de Derecho Español}, 754-55. Although these letters were from an early period, because the commendation was for the individual as well as his family ("et omnem prolem a te natam et nascituram"), this letter served as the basis for servitude for generations of peasants.

\textsuperscript{24} For example, in the letter cited in note 22, above, the price of redemption in Barcelona in 1285 was five solidos, but in another letter of commendation from the lands of the Abbot of Sant Martí in 1218, the redemption was fixed at fifteen solidos. It is difficult to know for certain whether such variations reflect local conditions, change over time, or adjustment for currency fluctuations. The letter of 1218 is printed in Monsalvatje, \textit{Colección diplomática del condado de Besalú}, IX: appendix 33, 277-78 and reprinted in García Gallo, \textit{Manual de Historia de Derecho Español}, 753-54. For an example of a letter of redemption (from Girona, ca. 1190), see García Gallo, \textit{Manual de Historia de Derecho Español}, 484-85. For a table of redemption prices before 1283, see Freedman, \textit{Peasant Servitude}, 227-30.
lords changed dramatically. 25

The social and economic conditions in Catalunya after 1348 were not unlike those in other areas similarly struck by recurrent virulent outbreaks: profound demographic decline followed by the desertion of villages (masos ronecs), wide economic fluctuations, rising wages, unstable currency, and massive social disruption. 26

The immediate consequences of the plague favored the peasantry, and until the 1380s, the lords were forced to offer more favorable terms in order to attract tenants. When the lords tried to remedy their situation by insisting on exactions based on their old rights, they discovered that the old social and economic patterns had altered.

The nobles, whose economic power was slipping long before 1348, lost ground to the commercial and political elites of Barcelona who were able to maintain, and later, extend, their seigneurial arrangements. By the turn of the fifteenth century, the elites of the city of Barcelona controlled substantial rural lordships, thus realigning the social, political, and economic forces of the realm. Except for a handful of families closely affiliated with the royal


family, the older baronial families had all but disappeared by 1400. Many barons were still potent political forces, but no longer did they control the largest lands.27

The most violent and widespread peasant unrest was confined to Catalunya vella, especially the region near Girona and Vic, which had a seigneurial structure unlike elsewhere in the Crown of Aragón. In the south and west, few peasants were serfs and they worked the land within a structure of great lordships, especially ecclesiastical. In the northeast, on the other hand, lordships were smaller in size and seigneurial power consisted of little more than local comital jurisdiction. It was in these areas where lords and lordships were more numerous that the crisis was most acute. Alongside the remences were numerous peasant freeholders, and this juxtaposition of free and servile tenures stimulated unrest, while in areas where freeholders were lacking (for example, west of the Llobregat river), peasant unrest was minimal. After 1348, even the slightest social and economic distinctions between peasants became heightened, with some able to take advantage of the deserted holdings and wage increases, while others sunk even deeper into poverty.28 A frequent cause for rural unrest was attempts by the

27 Santiago Sobrequés i Vidal, Els barons de Catalunya (Barcelona: Editorial Teide, 1957), 139-42; Sobrequés i Vidal and Sobrequés i Callicó, La guerra civil catalana del segle XV, 1: 20-24, 30-39.

28 On the social realignment of Catalunya in the fifteenth century, see Sobrequés i Vidal and Sobrequés i Callicó, La guerra civil catalana del segle XV, 1: 17-39. The authors claim that by 1462, the small rural towns had grown strong enough to comprise a veritable "fourth estate" that posed a serious threat to Barcelona and Girona, which were fractured and weakened by partisan disputes.
lords to make relatively prosperous peasants pay extra seigneurial
dues for the deserted farmsteads that they had acquired in the
aftermath of the plague.29

Even though all varieties of peasant unrest collided in the
mid-fifteenth century, it is not my purpose to examine any other
than the problem of the remences, nor will I take up the related but
distinct issue of the recuperation of alienated royal patrimony, even
though, strictly speaking, the two are unrelated.30 One has to do
with landholding, the other peasant servitude, but during Alfonso's
reign the two commingled, first, when he stirred up the landlords
by sending Pere de Besalú to investigate landholdings, and later,
when he proposed to place the remences under royal protection by
claiming that all alienated lands without valid title would revert to
the Crown. The lands he seized were in Catalunya vella or near
Barcelona, and thus had substantial numbers of remences living on
them, so that when the nobles protested Crown actions concerning
the remences, they were also protesting Crown attempts to repatriate
their lands. There is some doubt among scholars as to whether or
not a return of lands to royal control meant an abolition of the mals
usos on that land. Alfonso saw that he could make money two ways,

29 Feliu i Montfort, "El pes econòmic de la remença i dels
mals usos," 150-59; Freedman, Peasant Servitude, 166-68; Jaime
Vicens Vives, Els Trastàmares, el segle XV (Barcelona: Editorial
Teide, 1956), 26-27.

30 Maria Teresa Ferrer i Mallol has made a strong case
against any link between the recuperation of royal patrimony and the
issue of peasant servitude before 1410. "El patrimoni reial i la
recuperació dels senyorius jurisdiccionals en les estats catalano-
aragoneses a la fi del segle XIV," Anuario de Estudios Medievales 7
first by collecting a fee for the manumission, and then by reaping the benefits of the land itself and the servile labor of the peasants. To cover all the types of peasant unrest and the many disputes over the royal patrimony and landholding in general would be far beyond the scope of this project.

For the remences the issue was not entirely economic, it was more a question of a fundamental change in their legal status. They believed that the abolition of the mals usos would remove the most humiliating mistreatment, and that their improved legal standing would naturally bring with it the freedom to make a better life. There were, in fact, two wings of the remenca movement. One group was relatively affluent, conservative, and willing to pay the seigneurial dues and rents, who wanted above all to suppress the mals usos and obtain a confirmation of their free status. The other group was poor, and they proposed a more radical reform of landholding that not only guaranteed them their legal freedom but also granted them full and free ownership of their lands and an abolition of all seigneurial dues.

In some ways, the remenca wars bear a strong resemblance to other social revolts of the later middle ages such as the Ciompi in Florence, the Jacquerie in France, and the English rising of 1381. The remenca risings became entwined with urban unrest on the part


32 Angus MacKay, Spain in the Middle Ages: From Frontier to Empire, 1000-1500 (London: Macmillan, 1977), 178; Freedman, Peasant Servitude, 184.
of artisans and lesser guild masters. Like the Ciompi, the
Jacquerie, and the English rising of 1381, the immediate outcome of
the remença uprisings was violence and bloodshed. But the remença
struggle went on for generations, prompting Pierre Vilar to call the
years between 1348 and 1486 as "the Hundred Years' War of the
Catalan countryside."34

The remença struggles differed from these other European
revolts, however, in that the most important allies the remences had
were the Aragonese kings and their lieutenants. The English kings
effectively suppressed the risings of 1381, which were not confined
to the countryside but included urban centers, too. But these
revolts are not entirely dissimilar.35 In France, the king violently
quashed the revolt of the Jacquerie in 1358. In Florence, the Ciompi

33 Carmen Batlle i Gallart, La Crisis social y económica de
Barcelona a mediados del siglo XV, 2 volumes (Barcelona: Consejo
Superior de Investigaciones Científicas, 1973), 171, 217, 338-70;
Vicens Vives, Història de los Remensas, 64-66; Sobrequès i Vidal
and Sobrequés i Callicó, La guerra civil catalana del segle XV, 1:
26-37.

34 Vilar, La catalogne dans l'Espagne moderne, 379-80, 467-
71. This phrasing recalls Rodney Hilton's "continuous Jacquerie" in
Naples in Bond Men Made Free, 111. For a multi-faceted comparison
of these revolts, see The English Rising of 1381, edited by R. H.
Hilton and T. H. Aston (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University
Press, 1984), especially 1-8, 74-83, 143-64; and Michel Mollat and
Philippe Wolffe, Popular Revolutions of the Late Middle Ages

35 Barbara Hanawalt noted similarities with English peasants
and the remences, especially in the attitude of the peasants toward
the king as the person who would right the wrongs and act as
protector. "Peasant Resistance to Royal and Seignorial Impositions,"
in Social Unrest in the Late Middle Ages, edited by Francis X.
Clines (Binghamton: State University of New York Press, 1986), 23-
47. See another work in the same volume by J. A. Raftis, "Social
Change versus Revolution: New Interpretations of the Peasant's
Revolt of 1381," 3-22.
overthrow of the ruling oligarchy in 1378, only to be themselves
brutally thrown out within weeks. In spite of intense pressure from
the barons and landlords, the Aragonese kings since the 1390s had
attempted to abolish servile tenure. They were not always consistent
in their policies, nor were they acting out of purely philanthropic
motives: For Joan I (1387-95) and Martí (1395-1410), the most
pressing cause for their pro-remença policy was the rise of peasant
agitation. The remença revolt thus can be seen as a kind of active
petition directed at the king, whom the peasants perceived as an
idealized arbiter between the peasants and the lords.

The earliest serious negotiations to reform laws concerning
the remences dates to the reign of Joan I. In 1388 the king, citing
moral justification and legal precedents, questioned whether
servitude and the mals usos had outlived their supposed value. He
sought a bull from the Avignonese pope, Clement VII, that would
order the release of the remences held by ecclesiastical lords from
liability to the mals usos in return for the payment of an unspecified
amount of money. The peasants would compensate the lords in return
for an end to the most degrading aspects of servile tenure, but the
institutions of rent and tenancy would not change. Nothing
substantial happened immediately, but his proposition later became
the basis for all settlements. 36

Conditions in the countryside worsened after the anti-Jewish
riots of 1391 extended beyond towns into rural areas. The peasants'
violent actions against both secular and ecclesiastical lords--systematic destruction of land and goods, threats against lords carried out by bands of peasants--and the widespread refusal to remit customary services and payments, demonstrated that they were not only angry, but well-organized.\textsuperscript{37} It had become clear that the Crown needed to find a permanent solution to the problem, and rather than suppress the peasants' protests, he acted in their behalf. Joan permitted the peasants to hold assemblies, and in 1395 he renewed his request for a formal admonition of the harsh treatment of the peasants by the ecclesiastical lords, this time to the new Avignonese pope, Benedict XIII.\textsuperscript{38} He offered to collect four florins per year from each peasant household, with half earmarked for the pope and half for the Crown in return for the peasants' manumission. He died that year, however, before he could fully implement any reform programs.

During the reign of Martí, the Crown continued its support of the remences. In 1402, Martí's wife, María de Luna, appealed to Pope Benedict, her kinsman, to order the condemnation of servitude on church lands. In her letter to Benedict, she denounced servitude as unjust, detestable, against God and imperiling the souls of those

\textsuperscript{37} Chía, Bandos y bandoleros en Gerona, 1: 260; 2: 62; Freedman, Peasant Servitude, 182.

\textsuperscript{38} Benedict was Aragonese, born Pedro Martínez de Luna in 1328 or 1329. He was elected pope in 1394, in the midst of the schism, on the promise that he would step down peacefully when the time came. He did not, and was deposed 1417; he died in 1422. For a recent biography, see José Angel Sesma Muñoz, Benedicto XIII: la vida y el tiempo del Papa Luna (Zaragoza: Caha de Ahorros de la Inmaculada, 1987). For an overview of his writings on the remences, see Freedman, Peasant Servitude, 182-83.
who hold peasants under such abominable conditions. Benedict issued a bull to the Cardinal-Bishop of Girona condemning the landlords' most serious abusive practices against the peasants, but the queen's intention was to abolish servitude not just on ecclesiastical lands but secular ones as well. Maria preferred that the next steps be taken from within Catalunya, and a commission was established, but she died in 1406, before anything of substance resulted. Some money had been collected and these assets were frozen in an account, but it is not known exactly what became of it. Freedman, like Javierre Mur, credits Maria with acting out of conviction, not political expediency. Indeed, her work on behalf of the remences proved to be one of her most enduring of her many accomplishments. By taking the discussion beyond purely political motivations to see the issue's moral and ethical dimensions, her actions served as precedent for all later settlements.

I believe that María of Castile followed in the footsteps of her predecessor and may have felt that Benedict XIII's opinion on the remences justified her passionate defense of them in the 1450s. María worked closely with Jaume Ferrer, a notary and jurist whose family had worked on behalf of the remences with Martí and María de Luna;


40 Her biographer, Aurea Lucinda Javierre Mur is almost hagiographical in her descriptions of María as liberator of the peasants. Indeed, throughout the book, Javierre Mur never writes a critical comment about María.
his expertise in the issue and opinions must have had an effect on María of Castile's own views. Ferrer's knowledge of his father's and grandfather's writings may well have been the basis of María's argument to Alfonso, and the weight of papal opinion must surely have bolstered her in the fight. This may been an especially potent weapon against recalcitrant ecclesiastical lords, as when in 1449 she reminded Pere de Urrea, the Archbishop of Tarragona, of Benedict's ruling on the remença peasants. 41 Moreover, the information was widely known among the educated ruling elites. In a letter of 19 October 1450, the Consell de Cent wrote to Joan Marimon and Bernat Sapila, their representatives in Naples, outlining Benedict's opinion and the actions of Martí and María de Luna. They urged Marimon and Sapila, in their upcoming discussions with Alfonso, to argue very carefully, protest only Alfonso's "novel" actions that not only freed the peasants but placed them under crown jurisdiction, and not to tread on those areas dealt with in Benedict's bull that were limited only to mistreatment of the peasants. 42

Seen in this light, María of Castile appears to be the inheritor of a line of reasoning rather than the inventor of one. Still, María of Castile forcefully advocated the manumission of the remences in one venue where María de Luna, due to her early death, did not—in the Cortes. Where María de Luna worked behind the scenes to obtain Benedict's support, María of Castile worked in the full light of public scrutiny. By refusing to give in, despite

41 ACA Cancillería, Curiae 3203, 43v-44r, 21 February 1449.
42 AHCB Ll. Cl., VI-15, 149r-v, 19 October 1450.
ferocious protests and the threat of violence in the countryside, and by maintaining a high profile throughout the debates, she changed not only the terms of the debate over servile tenure, but also the character of the lieutenancy and Aragonese queenship.

The Crown's Early Initiatives in Favor of the Remences: 1416-46

A brief economic upsurge in the first decades of the fifteenth century helped to ease the relations between lords and tenants, and the outbreaks of violence in the countryside subsided briefly.\textsuperscript{43} It would be misleading, however, to interpret this as a sign that harsh tenure had disappeared or that the problem had faded away. The nobles may have been weakened economically by the havoc of the plague, but as a group they remained a formidable political bloc. Newly emboldened by their governance of the realm through the Corts during the interregnum and their role as kingmaker in the Compromise of Caspe, they still could force the king to make concessions in return for either money, or political advantages, or both. The remences suffered a setback in the Corts of Barcelona in 1413 when Fernando consented to legislation ("Com a molts") that strengthened the power of landlords by enforcing existing peace statutes against anyone whose land had been confiscated but who continued to make threats against new tenants.\textsuperscript{44}

\textsuperscript{43} Claude Carrère ascribed relative peace in the countryside to this upturn, especially the devaluation of the currency in 1413 which lightened the peasants' burden by reducing the real value of their fixed payments. \textit{Barcelone}, 2: 703-707.

\textsuperscript{44} \textit{Cortes}, 11: 226-27; Freedman, \textit{Peasant Servitude}, 184.
When Alfonso succeeded his father in 1416, he inherited a combination of frustrated peasants and infuriated noble, ecclesiastical, and urban landlords. Like his father, he wanted to placate both the nobles and the peasants, and his policies for the duration of his reign were no doubt as infuriating to his subjects as they are to anyone today. Instead of equilibrium, he achieved only a perpetual state of imbalance. The issue of remenca manumission and the king's right to decide the issue without first taking counsel from the Catalans, was handed off to María to settle in the Corts, which, as we have seen, was on the verge of a constitutional crisis and the site of numerous challenges to María's authority. Of course, this prelude to civil war, which is so clearly seen from the distance of five hundred years, developed slowly and incrementally from the first Corts over which María presided in 1420.

At the Corts of Tortosa in 1420, María (no doubt acting on Alfonso's expressed intention) approved the right of peasants to pay a fee to transfer tenure from one lord to another in seven parishes in vall d'Hostoles and la Muntanya and authorized peasants from the regions of La Selva (Vilobí d'Onyar) and the Baix Empordà (Pedrinyà, Caça de Pelràs, and la Pera) the right to form groups led by official representatives (sindichs). She also After 1420, however, Alfonso became increasingly occupied with affairs in Italy

45 These fees were known as luïcions. Like the recuperation of royal patrimony, this issue often became entangled with that of the remences, many of whom were on lands subject to luïcion transactions. For the sake of clarity in this study, I will treat it as a separate issue. Chía, Bandos y bandoleros en Gerona, II; 64; Sobrequés i Vidal, "Política remensa de Alfonso el Magnánimo," 122; Sobrequés i Vidal and Sobrequés i Callicó, La guerra civil catalana del segle XV, 1: 15.
and Castile, and between 1420 and 1432, he made some concessions to the peasants and some revocations of permission to form sindichs. In 1431, the remences of Olot were granted permission to meet and form sindichs, only to have it rescinded later.\textsuperscript{46} It was a time in which high rents created a reactionary mood, especially among the ecclesiastical lords from Muntanya, Empordà, and Girona, who were guided by the bishop Bernat Pau, an obstinate feudal landlord.

This group used the Corts of Tortosa in 1432 to pressure the Crown to act in their favor and not make any changes in the legal status of peasants. The delegates requested and Alfonso granted to them concessions over peasants with respect to jurisdiction, ignoring Benedict XIII's prior opinion. Alfonso agreed to stipulate that certain peasants were bound to the land under the laws of the realm. Using the peace and truce statutes as a model, he allowed landlords to seize the lands of any peasant regardless of status who deserted his lands and abolished any rights of freedom for fleeing peasants.\textsuperscript{47} The power of custom in the hands of the lords was still too strong a force for the king to supersede with a "novetat," no matter how many papal opinions he could muster.

The next decade was dominated by the successes and failures of Alfonso's military campaigns in Italy. Whatever was happening in the countryside remains, to us at this time, a mystery. Given later

\textsuperscript{46} Chía, Bandos y bandoleros en Gerona, 2: 64; Sobrequés i Vidal and Sobrequés i Callicó, La guerra civil catalana del segle XV, 1: 15.

\textsuperscript{47} Cortes, 17: 180-83; Constitucions, 348-49. Alfonso's confirmation of the statute can found in Cortes, 18: 205. Canal i Roquet, "Els remences a les Valls d'Hostoles i d'Amer," 54; Freedman, Peasant Servitude, 196-97.
events, it is unlikely that the remença peasants were silent or inactive. They were not, however, actively seeking Crown support or taking arms against their lords, and by the same token, the Crown took no action either in favor of or against the peasants.

In 1442, Maria conceded to the peasants of Corça, Sant Sadurni, and Cruïlles the privileges and freedoms of Barcelona, but a year later required them to pay a higher price for their freedoms. In 1444 she halted altogether the process of redemption of the peasants of Begur and Peratallada, probably due to opposition from nobles. This halting, zigzag course of action bears María's name but Alfonso's hallmark. As later events demonstrate, she felt a strong obligation to stand by her decisions, but Alfonso was a little more willing to sell his policy to the highest bidder.

Although there is truth to Vicens Vives's claim that the Aragonese kings used the peasants as a tool to weaken the nobles, Alan Ryder has pinpointed the larger issue. He attributes the Crown's pro-remença policy to economic self-interest rather than to ethics or morality: Alfonso wanted to use the redemption payments to

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48 Hernández-León de Sánchez reported that María presided over a Corts in Valencia in 1443 but said nothing of what was accomplished. Doña María de Castilla, 121-22. The records of this, as with other Valencian Corts, have not been published. María Rosa Muñoz Pomer and María José Carbonell Boria, "Las Cortes Valencianas medievales: aproximación a la historiografía y fuentes para su estudio," in Les Corts a Catalunya, 279.

49 Chia, Bandos y bandoleros en Gerona, 2: 64; Sobrequés i Vidal and Sobrequés i Callicó, La guerra civil catalana del segle XV, 1: 15.

make up his chronic financial shortfalls. Alfonso recognized the futility of collaboration with the Corts because many of the lords who fought against any changes in the legal standing of the remences were either themselves members of the urban patriciate of Barcelona, or their close allies among the higher clergy and nobility, and they had tremendous influence in both the Corts and the Diputació del General. It was at precisely this moment in 1442 that the Diputats del general petitioned María to summon a Corts with the underlying motive of offering Alfonso money in exchange for his return to Barcelona. 51 Unwilling to accept a subsidy so firmly attached to strings, Alfonso sought an alternate means of obtaining much-needed money. 52 His advisers, mostly canon and civil lawyers, investigated the possibility of recovering the alienated royal patrimony as a way of both undermining feudal types of jurisdiction and alleviating the Crown's fiscal problems. His advisers also suggested that he assist the remences in their struggle to obtain their freedom.

Alfonso's financial situation was dire. He had devised a complex financial strategy whereby wealthy cloth merchants and financiers received bills of exchange drawn on a variety of royal funds throughout the Aragonese domains, usually Barcelona, Valencia, or Perpignan. In this system, much like the Italian imprestanza, the Crown purchased Catalan cloth using bills of credit; the cloth was used as a payment-in-kind substitute for three

51 See chapter five, pp. 180, 232-33.

52 He seemed forever preoccupied with money, but starting in 1437, after Ponza, the problem became more acute. Ryder, "Cloth and Credit," 6-7.
months wages for a soldier in the army. The Crown's bills of exchange were backed by estimated collections of the hearth tax in Naples and tax revenues from the cloth trade, and these in turn were used by the merchants and financiers as letters of credit for international investments. Alfonso's innovative solution worked wonders for the Catalan cloth trade and paid for his army, but inflated estimates in the collections of the Neapolitan hearth tax nearly ruined the fragile scheme.\[53\] The Aragonese treasury had a perennial problem with cash flow, and often had barely enough to cover routine disbursements. The amounts owed to the merchant-bankers was far from routine. In 1444 the Aragonese treasury owed Jacme Casasaia of Barcelona 50,000 ducats; in 1448, it owed Bertran Crexells of Perpignan 41,500 ducats. Payment in cash was out of the question, and quasi-barter solutions were unacceptable to the merchants.\[54\]

María spent much of her time in the late 1440s and early 1450s haggling with the Catalan Corts about the getting and spending of money,\[55\] but even revenue from the bills of exchange fell short of the king's needs. As his bills of exchange came due, Alfonso looked around again and decided to let the remença peasants purchase their legal freedom. In this matter he could afford to be

\[53\] On the financing of the Italian campaigns, see Ryder, "Cloth and Credit," 11-2.

\[54\] Ryder, "Cloth and Credit," 3-11.

\[55\] He encountered fewer difficulties in Aragón and Valencia, due in part to their more robust economies and their greater willingness to give in to his needs. Medieval Crown of Aragon, 143-45.
generous—the vast majority of remences did not live on crown lands. Maria of Castile, like Maria de Luna fifty years earlier, took the side of the peasants. Subsequent events, discussed in the next sections, demonstrate that she vigorously implemented Alfonso's decrees and imposed fines and censures on any landholder who physically threatened her royal agents as they enforced the collection of the tall, the remença redemption payment. When a bidding war between the landowners and the remences ensued, Alfonso played one side off the other in an attempt to extract the most money while ruffling the fewest feathers.

Tentative Royal Actions and The Corts of Barcelona, 1446-48

On 30 June 1446, Maria summoned a Corts to meet on 27 July in Barcelona at the Priory of Natzaret to discuss Alfonso's request for money. The diputats del general and the estates reiterated their now-familiar petitions for the king to return to Barcelona, meet

56 Alfonso was not the first medieval king to recognize the value which individuals of servile status placed on gaining full liberty. Philip IV of France sent royal commissioners to Toulouse and Albi in 1299 to persuade nobles and other lords to transfer their rights over individuals of servile tenure to 'more powerful persons and royal officials.' The tactics of the royal agents were brutal and the sums they demanded were unreasonable, so that it is unlikely that anyone relinquished their rights willingly. In the end, however, Philip ordered an overall agreement to end servile status in the Toulousain in return for 200,000 livres tournois. Elizabeth A. R. Brown, "Royal Commissioners and Grants of Privilege in Philip the Fair's France: Pierre de Latilli, Raoul de Breuilli, and the Ordonnance for the Seneschalsy of Toulouse and Albi of 1299," Francia 13 (1985): 151-90.

57 The procesos are collected in Cortes, 21: 191-502. Rafael Conde, Ana Hernández, Sebastià Riera, and Manuel Rovira, "Fonts per a l'estudi de les Corts i els Parlaments de Catalunya," Les Corts a Catalunya, 43; Coroleu and Pella y Forgas, Las Cortes Catalanes, 259-64; Dietari, 173.
personally with them, and swear the oaths before the Corts. But Alfonso, who would not be coerced into returning to Catalunya against his will, told María that "the Catalans can keep their money to spend some other time." He was burdened with the complexity of Italian politics, and even though Juan of Navarre was once again dangerously enmeshed in Castilian intrigue, he had to stay in Naples to safeguard his still-fragile kingdom there. Even though María was ill, the diputats and their advisers came to her bedside to tell her that they would grant a subsidy of 104,000 florins after their grievances were resolved. Among those grievances was the problem of the king's absence, but Alfonso would not budge. He insisted that they continue to work with María in his absence. The payment was delayed, the king froze all Crown expenditures and ordered all embassies to stay put. As both sides began to stiffen in their resolve, the Corts, for the first time, began to take up the issues of landholding and the remences.

58 ACA Cancillería, Litterarum et albaranorum 2940, 23 r-v, 11 December 1446, transcribed and translated by Ryder in Alfonso the Magnanimous, 369.

59 In a letter to María written on 11 December 1446, he told of troubles with Pope Eugene, the duke of Milan, and the commune of Genoa that caused him to spend not only time and energy, but money. ACA Cancillería, Litterarum et albaranorum 2940, 22r-v, transcribed and translated by Ryder in Alfonso the Magnanimous, 270.

60 Letter from Alfonso, via his emissary Joan de Marimón, dated 23 October 1447: "... fora content scriura a la senyora reyna d'equí continuàs la Cort." AHCB CCO, X-17, 153r-v, document 206 in Mensajeros Barceloneñas, 279-80.

61 Letter from Alfonso to María, 17 January 1447: "... nos no volem quens façen ne trameten armadad ne embaxada ne façen res que sia o redunas en despeses del general." ACA Cancillería, Curiae 2654, 108v.
Earlier that year Alfonso had ordered Pere de Besalú, the conservador reial, to compile an inventory of all landholdings, secular and ecclesiastical, with an eye to recuperation of royal patrimony alienated since Pere IV. He started in Valencia, primarily the with the lands of the bishop of Tortosa, and all lords were required to produce a valid title or copy to their land. Jaume Ferrer, a jurist who was known to be sympathetic to the remences, began to work with Besalú as procurador reial for the county of Pallars, which had no remences but a lot of alienated royal property which came under their close scrutiny. The very presence of both Besalú and Ferrer in the vicinity was enough to stir up the local lords, who began to harass and physically threaten Ferrer.

Meanwhile, in February 1447 peasants in the Empordà were granted royal permission to hold meetings, but little is known of these meetings except the bare outlines. The origins and outcome remain a mystery, and it is not certain that these peasants were remences alone or joined with other, free tenants. They had been agitating for some relief from their onerous status for decades, but the timing of the grant may have been in response to isolated reports of remença peasants abandoning farmsteads under secular or ecclesiastical lords or those of the diputats del general and settling


63 Sobrequés i Vidal and Sobrequés i Callicó, La guerra civil catalana del segle XV, 1: 17.

64 AHCB Ll. Cl., VI-14, 164r-v, 19 November 1449.

65 Pella y Forgas, Historia del Ampurdán, 2: 666.
on royal lands. More ominous reports from the period indicating that peasants in scattered locales had been threatening their lords in a variety of ways, such as erecting crosses and digging large pits on the lords' lands.

On 4 August 1447, the secular and ecclesiastical lords presented a petition to Joan Marimon, Alfonso's personal envoy, conveying their concern over the peasant unrest, and their annoyance ("gran vexació") with the actions of Besalú and Ferrer. They minced no words. In their opinion, Besalú was "un home scandalós, gran inventor de novitats, scelerat, detestable," and they referred to him as the "so-called royal secretary." They claimed that Ferrer was personally responsible for the destruction of much of Pallars, not only the lands of the count but other as well. They then took their petition to the Corts, demanding the recall of Jaume Ferrer and Besalú. The Consell de Cent of Barcelona soon followed suit, complaining at length about prorogations of the Corts and how

66 The diputats del general wrote to the bailiff of Bellver, a royal town, to request the return of remenca peasants who had fled there from the lands of the viscount of Illa-Canet, who was then one of the three executive diputats. ACA Generalitat, N-657, 76v-77r, 1 June 1448.

67 These actions resonate deeply even today, with echoes of the Ku Klux Klan in the United States. Pella y Forgas, Historia del Ampurdán, 2: 51; Freedman, Peasant Servitude, 184; Sobrequés i Vidal, "Política remensa de Alfonso el Magnánimo," 118-19; Vicens Vives, Historia de los Remensas, 56-57.

68 They did not refer to remences per se, but "homens propris se aiustaren e fou prop següirsen un gran scandal," which may indicate that the unrest was not strictly confined to the remences and may not have involved them at all. Cortes, 21: 475.

Maria's royal council was giving her bad advice.\(^{70}\)

Alfonso took his time responding to this verbal assault, and when he did it was evident that he did not want to break completely with the lords.\(^{71}\) In January 1448 he backed down. He promised to make public the information gathered by Jaume Ferrer, and to establish a commission composed of the Maestre Racional Pere de Santcliment, his assistant, Barthomeu Scayó, and the prothonotary Pere Ram to mediate the dispute.\(^{72}\) And, in gesture of conciliation, he recalled Besalú to Naples.\(^{73}\) But he made it clear, via a letter read before the Cortes, that, for the moment at least, he did not intend to return to Catalunya.

In April 1448 Maria granted the Cortes a three-month period of suspension from all royal investigations into landholding and closed

\(^{70}\) "Com los mals juristes sien causa de la destrucci6 del món e és fama que en . . . Catalunya ne haie molts de tals." AHCB L1. Cl., VI-13, 9r-10r, 3 September 1447; Cortes 21: 473-76.

\(^{71}\) "lo dit Senyor ha gran voluntat poder lo dit Principat e altres terres e vassalls seus en aquelles parts visitar e ho haguera sens lur supplicacio ia executat si la pau de Ytalia se fos seguida, en la qual lo dit Senyor, ab gran voluntat ha treballat e treballa e ha confiança en nostre Senyor Deu que prestament aquella se seguiria, la qual seguida per manera quel dit Senyor puxa lo seu regne de Sicilia [Naples] deça far lexar en repos durant la absencia sua enten ab la ajuda de Deu anar visitar lo dit Principat e los regnes e terres seus de part della." Cortes 21: 495, 3 January 1448.

\(^{72}\) Cortes, 21: 497. Sobrequés i Vidal, "Política remensa de Alfonso el Magnánimo," 125-26; Sobrequés i Vidal and Sobrequés i Callicó, La guerra civil catalana del segle XV, 1: 17.

\(^{73}\) Pere de Besalú went on to have a distinguished career in Alfonso's government. In 1450 he was named governor of Majorca and procurador reial of Sardinia and was granted substantial property in Sicily. Juan II named him Gran Senschal and Conservador of Sicily in 1462, but had to relinquish his property there when Juan granted it as a lordship to his Fernando. Besalú died shortly thereafter, perhaps as early as 1463. Sobrequés i Vidal, "Política remensa de Alfonso el Magnánimo," 125-26.
the assembly on 11 May. 74 Alfonso turned down an offer of 30,000 florins from the Corts rather than cede to them the right to decide on the remences and landholding, but urged María to keep working with the Corts and the diputats del general to come to an agreement agreeable to all parties. 75

During this respite from the Corts, María met with four peasant representatives from Girona on 2 June 1448 near Vilafranca del Penedès. The details of this meeting, unprecedented not only for what was done but also for its symbolic importance, are not known. The information is reported obliquely, after the fact, in letters between Alfonso and María in which they discuss strategy and implementation. I have found no record of the event itself—no notarial record, no crown document, no instruction from Alfonso ordering the meeting—but the registers are filled with letters describing the angry reactions of the lords that refer to the meeting. 76

We know very little about the peasants themselves and even less about the sindichs who represented them. The names of individual peasants appeared in various letters, but, to date, little else can be said of them. For example, we know of a remença sindich named Pere Amay ("sindich del negoci de les remences") and a

74 Dietari, 180–81; Conde, et al., "Fonts per a l’estudi de les Corts i els Parllaments de Catalunya," 43.

75 ACA Cancillería, 2656, 120r–121r, 14 April 1448.

76 See the Generalitat registers from 1448 and 1449, ACA Generalitat, for example N–657, 182v–186v, 19 November 1448; 193v–195r, 7 December 1448; 195r–v, 9 December 1448; N–658: 29r–v, 27 January 1449. It is possible that private or ecclesiastical archives in or near Vilafranca del Penedès may turn up something.
peasant named Ramon Seriat ("home de rehemença"), because María intervened on his behalf to the *veguer* of Rosselló-Cerdanyà, to whose court he had been summoned for his role in fomenting unrest. María ordered Seriat's release on the grounds that he had been unlawfully detained, and warned the *veguer* that further harassment would result in fines or imprisonment. although we know very little about the communities or localities they represented and how they were selected, we do know the identity of a few of the notaries--Joan Bacaller, Pere Morera, and Jacme Coma--who worked on their behalf only because they were mentioned in letters kept in either crown or municipal archives. The information at present is frustratingly vague, and Catalunya needs historians of agrarian life who can apply research methods used so successfully by Judith Bennett to uncover the details necessary to fill in the many gaps in our understanding of Catalan peasantry.

These second-hand sources do agree on certain key pieces of information. In the name of all the communities subject to the *remença*, the representatives of the *remences* offered the Crown a combined payment of 64,000 florins for the intervention in the *Corts* securing their redemption. There appears to have been no mention of their legal status nor of any measures concerning landholding of

77 ACA Cancillería, Diversorum 3154, 9r, 14 January 1451.

78 Notarial records may ultimately prove the most useful. In a search of notarial registers in Barcelona and surrounding towns, I turned up no documents relevant to the *remences*, but further research in Girona, Vic, Lleida, and Puigcerdà may be more fruitful.

79 For Bennett's methodology, see Women in the Medieval English Countryside: Gender and Household in Brigstock before the Plague (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987).
existing tenancies. 80 Alfonso took the decisive step on 1 July 1448. 81 In a letter patent he ordered that representatives of the peasants could meet, provided that the groups were no larger than fifty and that they met in the presence of a royal official and set a combined price for their redemption of 100,000 florins. On September 1448 Alfonso formally notified his prothonotary, Arnau Fonolleda, that the remences had his approval to meet under the terms of the 1 July letter patent, and he authorized María to collect the redemption (tall, meaning "cut"). 82 He instructed María to apply the tall collected directly to his debt to Bertran Crexells, the merchant banker from Perpinyà who held some of the Crown's bills of exchange. 83 Alfonso's actions in 1448 may well have been the first serious attempt by an Aragonese monarch to resolve the problem peacefully, as Vicens Vives has argued. It is not clear whether his timing was a direct response to María's meeting with the peasant representatives the month before, the result of the increasing tension in the countryside, or the poverty of his treasury. In its

80 Chía, Bandos y bandoleros en Gerona, 2: 69; Monsalvatje, Colección diplomática del condado de Besalú, 2: 26; Sobrequés i Vidal, "Política remensa de Alfonso el Magnánimo," 128-29; Sobrequés i Vidal and Sobrequés i Callicó, La guerra civil catalana del segle XV, 1: 18-19; Vicens Vives, Historia de los remensas, 57. For a breakdown of the remença population in the northeast, see Pella y Forgas, Historia del Ampurdán, 577-629.

81 A 1460 redaction of this grant appears in Freedman, Peasant Servitude, appendix 1, 224-26.

82 ACA Cancillería, Curiae 2657, 85v.

83 ACA Cancillería, Curiae 2657, 75r, 7 September 1448; and Curiae 3203, 11v-13v, 14 October 1448. The debt to him was nearly paid on 22 July 1449. ACA Cancillería, Secretorum 3227, 68r-v. Ryder, "Cloth and Credit," 11.
details, his plan was not a new idea but rather a confirmation of preexisting conditions.

The first meeting of the remença sindichs, who were elected by the members of the community subject to the redemption, under these terms took place on 13 October 1448 near Girona. The landlords strenuously opposed this measure. The bishop of Girona, on the pretext that the remences had instigated unrest and therefore broke their side of the bargain, claimed that he had the rightful jurisdiction as their feudal lord and opposed their meetings. In the late fall and winter of 1448, the Diputació del General, stepping into the fray because the Corts had been suspended, joined forces with the Consell de Cent of Barcelona in opposition to the publication of the royal provision of 1 July 1448. Lords from Barcelona who controlled large tracts of land in Sabadell, Terrassa, and Montcada (and thus a high proportion of remences under Barcelona's jurisdiction) agreed to detain royal officials who tried to work with the remences. This alignment of forces anticipated almost exactly the alliances of the civil war twelve years later, and at times,

84 Chía, Bandos y bandoleros en Gerona, 2: 68; Monsalvatje, Colección diplomática del condado de Besalú, 2: 25; Sobrequés i Vidal, "Política remensa de Alfonso el Magnánimo," 129; Sobrequés i Vidal and Sobrequés i Callicó, La guerra civil catalana del segle XV, 1: 20; Vicens Vives, Historia de los remensas, 58.

85 Pella y Forgas, Historia del Ampurdán, 2: 666; Vicens Vives, Historia de los remensas, 57.


87 AHCB Ll. Cl., VI-13, 189r-v, 6 December 1448; ACA Generalitat, N-657, 193v-195v, 7 December 1448.
especially in their defiance of royal orders and subsequent actions
toward royal officials, they were openly treasonous.

The diputats ordered that anyone who tried to implement the
order would be arrested and fined.\textsuperscript{88} They asked a jurist, Joffre
d'Ortigues, to determine the validity of the letter patent which was
sent not under Alfonso's autograph signature but that of his
chancellor, the bishop of Urgell, and to ascertain whether such a
letter had to be obeyed.\textsuperscript{89} And, they wrote directly to María in
Perpinyá,\textsuperscript{90} telling her that they considered the letter patent to be
in violation of the constitutions of Catalunya and therefore, they
were unable to comply. They gave Bernat Aybrí, a prominent citizen
of Perpinyá and an oidor de comptes for the Diputació, the power to
act in their name.\textsuperscript{91} Then, under the signature of the Archbishop of
Tarragona, they wrote to the estates and other cities and towns to
muster their support in a unified action to fight royal actions that
were prejudicial to their lands, lordship, and status in the realm.\textsuperscript{92}
Letters were sent to all the vicars throughout Catalunya, with
individual requests sent to Pere Deztorrent, procurador from

\textsuperscript{88} ACA Generalitat, N-657, 182v-184r, 19 November 1448.

\textsuperscript{89} ACA Generalitat, N-657, 185v-186r, 19 November 1448.

\textsuperscript{90} She moved her court there after a severe earthquake
destroyed parts of Barcelona. For a vivid description of the scene
on 23 May 1448, see Dietari, 181.

\textsuperscript{91} ACA Generalitat, N-657, 186r-v, 19 November 1448.

\textsuperscript{92} "Ab totes nostres forces obviar als dits preuudicis encara
hauem plen de vostar excitacio e com dels dits afers hauer lo
sentiment que a vosaltres de aquelles hauer es pertinent." AHCB
CCO, X-18, fol. 164, 7 November 1448. ACA Generalitat, N-657,
184r-185v, 19 November 1448.
Barcelona whose jurisdiction included the Ampurdán. They notified all royal officials in Rosselló and Cerdanya that they considered the royal decree a violation of the constitutions and privileges of Cataluny, specifically the act of the Corts approved by Pere IV at the Corts of Monzón, the statutes of Pere III in 1283, and those of Jaume II at the Corts of Girona. 93

María was undaunted. She continued implementation of Alfonso's letter patent, sent royal officials into the field to begin collection of the tall, and ordered three Crown lawyers, Francesch Castello, Johan de Foxa, and Francesch Giganta, to discuss the matter with the Diputació's lawyers. 94 She sent Jacme Coma to Naples to relay news and give a report directly to Alfonso, who gave a blanket approval of the actions she had taken. 95 Feeling the pressure of all this royal activity on behalf of the remences, the Consell de Cent and diputats del general met on 16 December to discuss how to respond. 96 They agreed that María was not to be easily persuaded, and sent the viscount of Illa–Canet, who represented the braç militar in the Diputació and had substantial landholdings in the baronies of Pinós and Mataplana (in the Alt Berguedà) and Illa i Canet (in Rosselló), all of which contained large

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93 ACA Generalitat, N-660, 106r-107v, 16 December 1449.

94 Castelló, a lawyer, was regent chancellor and assessor to the governor of Rosselló and Cerdanya. Both Foxa and Giganta were chancery officials (their specific position was not noted). ACA Cancilleria, Secretorum 3227, 35v-38r, 30 December 1448.

95 ACA Cancilleria, Curiae 2657, 70r-v, 7 December 1448.

96 ACA Generalitat, N-657, 195r-v, 9 December 1448; AHCB Ll. Cl. VI-13: 195r, 16 December 1448 and 197r, 30 December 1448.
numbers of remença peasants, to meet with Maria personally.97 In his strongly worded instructions to Illa-Canet, the Archbishop of Tarragona outlined why the remences should not be freed: they do not pay any extraordinary taxes ("seruituts" or "drets de generalitats"), they are defiant of authority ("traydors"), and to free them would lead to the destruction of Catalunya.98

On 29 December, the diputats del general wrote directly to the twelve remença sindichs "electes per lo fet vulgarment dit de les remences," telling them in no uncertain terms that they opposed the royal decrees.99 The inherent danger from such an organized opposition was palpable, and it worked: The peasants abandoned their meetings in February 1449.100

The 1449 Decree Granting Remença Manumission

Unmoved by the opposition, on January 16 1449 María ordered all cities, towns, villages, and other locales throughout the realm to publish openly a copy of Alfonso's intention to collect a tall of three florins from each remença household in return for abolition of the mals usos. This decree contains the three essential elements that

97 Sobrequés i Vidal, "Política remensa de Alfonso el Magnánimo," 130; Sobrequés i Vidal and Sobrequés i Callicó, La guerra civil catalana del segle XV, 1: 21.

98 ACA Generalitat, N-658, 9r-11r, 9 January 1449.

99 "Si algunes coses apres en los dits afers se son innouades lo que no sentim deuien ne hauer ausats a nos qui jassie entenam en mudar en aquexa ciutat nos e nostre consistori la dita mutacio precipitarien tan e tanta porie esser la dita nouitat." ACA Generalitat, N-658, 4r.

100 Sobrequés i Vidal, "Política remensa de Alfonso el Magnánimo," 129.
later appear in the Sentencia Arbitral of 1486: the right to elect representatives, the right to assemble openly and freely, and the payment of a tall. On the same day she wrote a similar letter to Francesch Castelló, Francesch Giganta, and Johan de Foxa, her chancery officials who handled materials concerning the remenca, informing them of the decision. Within the year, nearly one-third of the tall was collected from close to 20,000 peasant households, which even María admitted was almost a miracle. This indicates either that the tall was a reasonable amount to expect a peasant household to pay (for comparison, the Consell de Cent paid three florins to the messengers who delivered their letters), or that most peasants anticipated some sort of royal bargain for their legal freedom.

In an act of open defiance, the lords of Barcelona, Vilafranca del Penedès, Sabadell, Terrassa, Montcada and other neighboring lands impeded collection of the tall by refusing to grant royal officials access to their lands. The Archbishop of Tarragona, in a

101 ACA Cancillería, Diversorum 3148, 189v-190r, a letter patent from María to the sindichs and all royal officials working with the remences. The proceeds were to be deposited with Johan and Bernat Banqueres, merchant bankers in Barcelona who also held bills of exchange from Alfonso. ACA Cancillería, Diversorum 3149, 155v-156r. Sobrequés i Vidal and Sobrequés i Callicó, La guerra civil catalana del segle XV, 1: 22-23; Vicens Vives, Historia de los remensas, 58.

102 ACA Cancillería, Secretorum 3227, 53r-55v, 9 June 1449. In her letter to Berenguer de Montpalau she stated that it was "quasi miracle" considering the objections of the dipuats and the Consell de Cent.

103 This information was recorded on the verso of the letter, along with the date received. See, for example, AHCB Ll. Cl., VI-15, 46v-47v, 28 April 1450.
letter to Arnau d’Orta, diputat local in Manresa, said that the clergy and knights of Eparraguera, near Barcelona, were opposed to the remenca decrees and, with money from the Diputació, they were willing to go to war. The Diputació declared that the counties of Empuriès (once part of the royal demesne) and Pallars, the viscounty of Illa-Canet, and the bishopric of Girona were not royal territories, despite the findings of the procurador reial.

Alfonso tried to defuse the situation and agreed to turn the matter over to the Corts for open discussion. On 30 January, with Alfonso’s letters of support in hand insisting that María possessed full authority to convocate, preside, prorogue, and negotiate in his place, María issued a summons to the three estates to meet in Barcelona on 15 March. This session did not officially open until a year later, on 11 March 1450. Beset by countless delays and prorogations, the assembly moved twice, first from Perpinyà to Barcelona, because the estates complained about having to meet in the royal palace, which they considered filled with unhospitable royal agents, and finally to Vilafranca del Penedès, because of an outbreak of pestilence in Barcelona. These many prorogations bred

104 ACA Generalitat, N-658, 31v-32r, 30 January 1449.
105 Sobrequés i Vidal and Sobrequés i Callicó, La guerra civil catalana del segle XV, 1: 22.
106 Alfonso to Galceran de Requesens and Antoni Cerda, the bishop of Lleída. ACA Cancillería, Secretorum 2699, 154r-155r, 22 January 1449.
107 Cortes, 22: 1-2. AHCB, Cartes reials originals, A-574, 30 January 1449, from María to the Consell de Cent of Barcelona; ACA Cancillería, Curiae 3201, 132v-133r, 30 January 1449, María to the towns.
distrust. In May 1449, the Consell de Cent reported Maria's comment that Alfonso was serious about continuing the Corts, but in their opinion she said that because she wanted to buy time while waiting for explicit instructions from Alfonso.

For the next year, in the interim before the Corts officially opened, however, the Diputació functioned as the permanent representative body of Catalunya. During 1449, these two groups stirred up a considerable amount of unrest among the estates, causing Maria to complain that they considered themselves omnipotent. The ruling elites of Barcelona led the offensive, but by their intentions as well as actions it was the diputats del general who, allied with the Consell de Cent, demonstrated over and over again that indeed they constituted, in Rycraft's phrase, a "parallel executive." On 15 May 1450, the consellers wrote to their representatives to the Corts in Perpinyà, telling them to insist that the remença issue be handled in the Corts, where they can control it, rather than in either Maria's or Alfonso's royal council. This coalition was joined by two prominent and influential barons--Bernat

108 AHCB CCO, X-19, 41r-v, 16 March 1449. Cortes, 22: 20-23. Conde, et al., "Fonts per a l'estudi de les Cortes i els Parlaments de Catalunya," Les Corts a Catalunya, 43. The delays met, of course, with formal protests from the Diputació. ACA Generalitat, N-658, 82r-84r, 22 April 1449.

109 AHCB CCO, X-19, 94, 8 May 1449.

110 Maria to Berenguer de Montpalau on 30 April 1449. ACA Cancilleria, Secretorum 3227, 44v-48v. Vicens Vives, Historia de los remensas, 61, n. 60.

111 AHCB Ll. Cl., VI-15, 59v-60v, 15 May 1450. See also Sobrequés i Vidal and Sobrequés i Callicó, La guerra civil catalana del segle XV, 1: 25.
Joan de Corbera, the count of Módica and Arnau de Vilademany i de Blanes. Vilademany was a particularly harsh lord who forced his peasants to formally recognize their obligations, a practice which María later outlawed.\textsuperscript{112}

The Diputació tried again to convince María to change her mind, no doubt hoping to change Alfonso's as well. A twelve-member commission (four from each estate) elected by the diputats del general, led by Galceran de Pinós i Fenollet, the viscount of Illa-Canet, went directly to her to demand that she issue an order to stay ("sobreseiment") the remença decrees. If she would not, the viscount threatened to take the matter over her head and travel to Naples to request that Alfonso return to deal with the matter directly.\textsuperscript{113} The commission had little influence over María, however, and she proved that she could be just as obstinate as they were.

When her Jacme Coma and Joan de Montbuy reported that Bernat de Pau, the bishop of Girona, had failed to comply with the collection of the tall,\textsuperscript{114} she alerted Alfonso and, most probably with his support

\textsuperscript{112} AHCB CCO, X-20: 18r–v, 22 January 1450; 22r–v, 31 January 1450.

\textsuperscript{113} ACA Generalitat, N-658, 28v–29r, from the Archbishop of Tarragona to the viscount of Illa-Canet, 27 January 1449. This end-run had already been proposed on 9 January: "Si la dita Senyora Reyna no fara o no volra fer provisió alguna sobre los dits afers, lo dit Noble vezcomte dient que los dits deputats per la dita raho han trames al Senyor Rey, suplich a la dita Senyoria li placie manar e fer sobreseure en los dits acted e procehiments en lo interim tro lo qui es anat al dit Senyor sie retornat." ACA Generalitat, N-658, 9v–11r. Dietari, 185–86. Sobrequés i Vidal, "Política remensa de Alfonso el Magnánimo," 130; Sobrequés i Vidal and Sobrequés i Callicó, La guerra civil catalana del segle XV, 1: 21.

\textsuperscript{114} AHCB CCO, X-19, 21r–v, 4 February 1449. This letter is a report of his meeting with Coma and Montbuy from the bishop to the Consell de Cent.
if not his explicit instruction, ordered the seizure of the temporalities of the contumacious bishop and the cathedral chapter of Girona if he did not comply immediately with the royal decrees.\textsuperscript{115} The bishop retaliated by threatening her officials with excommunication, but she continued collection in spite of it.\textsuperscript{116}

At Alfonso's urging, she promoted Joan de Montbuy, a knight who strongly supported the remenca decrees, to the post of regent governor of Catalunya and sent him to Girona.\textsuperscript{117} The lords' reaction to Montbuy was reminiscent of the outcry against Pere de Besalú.\textsuperscript{118} The lords were particularly virulent in their attitude toward Montbuy, even though Galceran de Requesens, whom Alfonso personally assigned to work with Montbuy,\textsuperscript{119} was doing practically the same thing but took very little abuse for it until later. The answer may lie in the fact that Requesens, a wealthy landholder and governor of Catalunya, outranked Montbuy, a knight ("cavaller") and regent governor, on both counts. It may also be that Montbuy was the agent most often present, whereas Requesens was more often present.

\begin{footnotes}
\item[115] ACA Cancillería, Curiae 3203, 32r-v, letter close from María to the vicar of Girona, 17 January 1449.
\item[116] Pella y Forgas, \textit{Historia del Ampurdán}, 2: 666; Vicens Vives, , 57.
\item[117] ACA Cancillería, Curiae 3203, 38v-39r, 14 February 1449. Montbuy, according to Diputats del general, was in the direct employ of the remences: "va per lo dit Principat salariat per los dits pagesos vertaderament se pot dir." ACA Generalitat, N-658, 58r-63v, 13 March 1449. See also AHCB Ll. Cl. VI-14, 45r-v, 9 April 1449 and 184r, 2 January 1450.
\item[118] AHCB Ll. Cl., VI-14: 45r-v, 9 April; 46v-47v, 12 April 1449; 184r, 2 January 1450.
\item[119] ACA Cancillería, Curiae 2656, 172r, 20 April 1449; Curiae 2658, 3v, 16 May 1449.
\end{footnotes}
in Barcelona than Girona. To calm the furoir, Alfonso suggested that Montbuy be removed as an appeasement, but María wrote him a strong letter supporting all of her officials.\textsuperscript{120} No matter who bore the brunt of the baronial oppositions, because of the sensitivity of the matter and the sums of money involved, María was forced to devote more of her staff to collect the tall and to keep order in the countryside. And she had them keep an eye on one another's work, as when she ordered Pere Roig, a lieutenant treasurer, to report on Garcia Boran, a procurador fiscal in Girona. Her actions indicate that she was acutely aware of the need to adhere as closely as possible to the precise letter of the law and to avoid the appearance of overstepping legal boundaries.\textsuperscript{121}

The behavior of the high-ranking prelates, which ranged from the open hostility of the bishop of Girona to the moderate passivity of those prelates who stood outside the fray, was not commendable. The Archbishop of Tarragona was, admittedly, in a very difficult position. As spokesman of the Corts and the ecclesiastical representative for the Diputació, he had a tacit obligation to speak on behalf of the clerical estate. As a landlord, he controlled extensive properties, but there were no remença peasants on his lands, nor were there any allegations of the mistreatment of anyone under his jurisdiction. It is not surprising, therefore, that María would try to convince him to abandon his opposition. She wrote to him in February 1449, reminded him of Benedict XIII's

\textsuperscript{120} ACA Cancillería, Curiae 2655, 59v-60r, 2 April 1449.

\textsuperscript{121} ACA Cancillería, Curiae 3203, 98r, 7 June 1449.
opinion on the matter, and in a placating tone, she appealed to him as one of the Crown's most loyal supporters. Even though the decree did not appeal to him directly, she implied that his support, as a member of the diputats del general, was crucial. 122 Alfonso added his own very influential voice, and sent Galceran de Requesens to speak with the archbishop on his behalf. He urged Requesens to argue in favor of the moral and ethical issues, that all men should be treated alike, rich as well as the poor ("principalment . . . axi en aquella igualment tractar lo chich com lo gran e lo pobre com lo rich car aquella en si no admet accepcio, o distincio de persones alguna"). 123 He then wrote directly to the Diputació, accusing them of usurping royal jurisdiction, and repeating his comment that all people should be treated alike. 124 Alfonso's emphasis on treatment was, in itself, a compromise no matter how noble and egalitarian the phrasing. He was not advocating a radical restructuring of the social hierarchy, simply insisting on decent treatment for everyone subject to his law. To drive home the point, María read a letter from Alfonso to the Consell de Cent on 29 March 1449 that reiterated the substance of Alfonso's letters. 125

Finding María to be stubbornly steadfast, the Diputació

122 ACA Cancillería, Curiae 3203, 43v-44r, 21 February 1449.

123 ACA Cancillería, Curiae 2656, 162v-163r, 27 February 1449.

124 "E deuen pensar que en preclamar los dits pagesos libertat ne en esser administrada justicia per exhibicio de la qual son constituted los regnes e senyories e que axi igualment si tractat lo pobre com lo rich e lo chich com lo gran." ACA Cancillería, Curiae 2656, 164v-165r, 29 February 1449.

125 AHCB CCO, X-19, 59.
changed tactics. The viscount of Illa-Canet convoked a meeting of prelates, nobles, and townspeople to elect nine ambassadors to go over María's head and confer personally with Alfonso in Naples. After months of seemingly intractable negotiations, each side gave a little bit. Alfonso softened his stance and offered a compromise. If the lords would immediately stop mistreatment of their peasants, he would suspend all royal orders concerning the remences. Many small proprietors signed this compromise, but the barons and ecclesiastical lords remained fiercely opposed to all royal orders as an unnecessary humiliation. On 30 April, María issued a stinging letter to all the disobedient lords, telling them in no uncertain words that by their actions they have placed the land in great turmoil such as had never been seen before, and that only God could pardon them. The Diputació gave in, probably because their embassy to Naples was fruitless, and on 5 May 1449, ordered comital officials to comply with the collection of the tall. Nevertheless, the issue was far from fully resolved. The collection of the tall proceeded very slowly, royal officials and peasants faced widespread routine harassment, and María's Audiència began to fill up with cases involving unrest in the

126 ACA Generalitat, N-658, 28v–29r, 27 January 1449. It is not known whether this embassy ever reached Naples. There is no mention of it beyond this one reference. Sobrequés i Vidal things that economic difficulties may have prevented it from sailing. "Política remensa de Alfonso el Magnànim," 132; Sobrequés i Vidal and Sobrequés i Callicó, La guerra civil catalana del segle XV, 1: 21.

127 ACA Generalitat, N-658, 75r–84r, 9 April 1449.

countryside.129

These lords, with the Diputació and the Consell de Cent as their mouthpiece, simply changed their tactics. They flooded María's Consell with protests. They raised jurisdictions issues: The count of Pallars argued that Joan de Montbuy, whom he considered a private person, did not have the proper authority to act in the Empordà and refused to honor his royal letter of credential.130 In addition to claiming that the decrees violated the constitutions and privileges of Catalunya,131 or they deliberately dragged their feet concerning publication or compliance,132 or simply refused to publish the decrees,133 or to refused to comply with them,134 or considered the

129 ACA Cancillería, Curiae 3203, 59r–v, 31 March 1449; Secretorum 3227, 60v–62v, 4 July 1449; Curiae 3203, 105r, 6 July 1449.

130 ACA Generalitat, N-658, 71r–72r, 1 April 1449 and N-658, 75r–78v, 9 April 1449; AHCB CCO, X-19, 97, 15 May, 1449; ACA Generalitat, N-660, 117v–118v, 3 January 1450.

131 ACA Generalitat, N-660, 106r–107v, 16 December 1449. This is one of the rare letters that specifically cites the violations.

132 Alfonso to Perot Mercader (treasurer general) on 9 March 1449, ACA Cancillería, Curiae 2657, 231r–v; María to the procurador of the Abbey of Sant Joan de les Abadesses, 20 March 1449, Diversorum 3151, 10r; María to the Consell de Cent of Barcelona, 18 June 1449, Curiae 3203, 101v–102r; María to the vicar of Vilafranca del Penedès, 14 July 1449, Diversorum 3150, 106v–107r; María to Galceran Oliver, her treasurer, concerning Vic, Vilafranca del Penedès, Martorell, Sant boy, and Barcelona on 16 July 1449, Secretorum 3227, 66v–67r; María to Galceran Oliver, 3 September 1449, ACA Cancillería, Secretorum 3227, 86r–87r; María to Galceran de Reguesens, 29 October 1449, ACA Cancillería, Curiae 3203, 130v–131r; María to the vicar of Cervera, 8 November 1449, ACA Cancillería, Diversorum 3151, 139v–140r.

133 ACA Cancillería, Curiae 2656, 172r, 20 April 1449; AHCB Ll. Cl., VI-14, 90v–92r, 8 July 1449.

134 ACA Cancillería, Curiae 3203, 63r–65r, 16 April 1449; Curiae 3203, 79v–80r, 6 May 1449.
decrees illegal because they lacked the king's or queen's autograph signature, or complained of fraud in the collection. They argued that the king was not the remences' immediate overlord and therefore he did not have the right to alter their legal status in any way. Some lords, the count of Cardona for example, claimed that they had no remences on their lands and therefore were exempt. In defense of the Crown, María asserted that as king and queen, they were the natural overlords of all subjects regardless of intermediate jurisdiction and that she would regard all actions against the peasants as a dishonor to the king, subject to punishment and fines. Treason was not part of the vocabulary, and would not be until 1462, but dishonorable actions against the king was tacit treason nevertheless.

Legal disputes, protests, and negotiations notwithstanding, María still struggled to collect the tall and maintain public order, and in the summer of 1449 she sent her treasurer Galceran Oliver,  

135 ACA Generalitat, N-658, 94v–95r, 13 May 1449.

136 María to Joan de Montbuy, 14 March 1449, ACA Cancilleria, 3203, 51v–52r; María to Pere de Santcliment, 20 June 1449, ACA Cancilleria, Curiae 3203, 101r–v; María to Joan Sabastida, 26 June 1449, ACA Cancilleria, Diversorum 3150, 98r–v; María to Galceran de Requesens, 6 August 1449, ACA Cancilleria, Secretorum 3227, 71r–v; María to Jaume Ferrer, ACA Cancilleria, Curiae 3203, 130r–v, 20 October 1449.

137 AHCB Ll. Cl., VI-14, 68v–69r, 14 May 1449.

138 ACA Cancilleria, Curiae 3203, 118v. 11 September 1449. The lords of Terrassa, Sabadell, and Montacada used this as a defense of their actions. AHCB Ll. Cl., VI-14, 169v, 4 December 1449. So too, the abbot of Santes Creues, 12 January 1450, ACA Generalitat, N0660, 125r–v.

139 ACA Cancilleria, Curiae 3203, 184v–185r, 19 August 1450.
to meet personally with Alfonso and give an account of the state of the realm. She asked him to come to Catalunya, stressing the seriousness of the situation. She then outlines the major problems she faced: her jurists had doubts about Alfonso's legal right to collect the luècions; French troops summoned by the Count of Pallars were massing at the border; she had been having difficulty collecting the maridatge subsidy but on the bright side, she collected 28,000 of the 36,000 florins from the remences.140 Before he could respond, she fell ill, further delaying the opening of the Corts.141 Her illness prevented her from speaking in person at the plenary session and she sent Jacme Vila, her secretary, read her letters to the Consell de Cent. In the letter she scolded the estates for their unreasonable tardiness in collecting the tall and gave them twelve days to do so or risk fines of 5,000 florins.142

She remained firm in her support of the remences, as she stated in a letter to Alfonso written on 18 February 1450.143 She

140 ACA Cancillería, Secretorum 3227, 76v–83r, 10 August 1449.

141 ACA Cancillería, Secretorum 3227, 86r–87r, 3 September 1449.

142 ACA Cancillería, Diversorum 3151, 139v–140r, 8 November 1449.

143 "dels dits diputats e conseller de Barchinona e barons, cauellers, e gentils homens qui ab terrors e altres vies meten mal cor als Sindichs e homens de la dita remença veent que aço redundaua en gran dan e detriment de les costes que seran benefici de la justicia e gran seruey e util de vostar excellentia ... vista per tenor de les dites supplicacions e protest ls llur gran passio e pratica insolita aquella humil supplich vulla prouehir sobre aço lo que ha sguard e la justicia e descarrech dels entreuenints en lo negoci que reuiudato en gran merit honor e seruey e util de vostra excellencia." ACA Cancillería, Secretorum 3227, 109r.
may have sensed that Alfonso was wavering, or perhaps had heard from her emissaries that he was swinging in favor of the lords. Whatever her underlying motives may have been, she described the threats against the peasants and urged him not to change his mind.

He responded on 1 March that he would take her advice under consideration. She responded quickly, reminding him that the remences had acted in good faith and that he should not be fooled or led on by the embassy from the Consell de Cent and Diputació, and denounced his willingness to play one side off the other. Whether or not Alfonso had yet made up his mind to abandon the peasants, he knew that it was a risk to convoke the Corts in an atmosphere where passions ran high on all sides. But he would not abide the effrontery of contumacious subjects. In February 1450 he ordered María to seize the lands of lords in Sabadell, Terrassa, and Montcada, an action that was met with an unsurprising flood of protests by the Consell de Cent, within whose jurisdiction these localities fell. María fully supported this decision despite the ardent outcry against it, and when he wavered, she told him that to restore them would be a mistake and then, in an appeal to his regal pride, she predicted that the crown would suffer a loss of

144 ACA Cancillería, Secretorum 3227, 111v–112r, 3 March 1450; Secretorum 3227, 112r–113r, 13 March 1450.

145 ACA Cancillería, Secretorum 3227, 106r–108v, 4 February 1450, and 110r–v, 19 February 1450.

146 AHCB Ll. Cl. VI-15: 46v–47v, 28 April 1450; 65r–66r, 23 May 1450. The following letters have been published in Mensajeros Barceloneses: AHCB CCO, X-20: 213r–v, 12 September 1450; 250r–v, 18 October 1450, 277r–v, 11 November 1450; AHCB Ll. Cl. VI-15: 152v–153, 26 October 1450; documents 280, 298, 308, and 315; pages 331–33, 342–43, 348–49, 352–54.
reputation. 147

Maria continued collection of the tall as though nothing out of the ordinary had happened: She wrote to the remença sindichs approving their twelve pagadors who were to handle the administrative fees incurred in the collection, 148 and even sent out a letter patent to all lords with remença peasants reiterating the 1 July 1448 decree. 149 The Consell de Cent and the Diputació were enraged, and demanded that the issue be adjudicated in the Corts. 150 The problem with this solution was that the estates were pitted against the crown and there was no impartial jurist or judge on whom everyone could agree. The most respected jurists were Arnau de Vilademany i de Blanes, who was staunchly in favor of the lords, and Tomás Mieres, who was just as staunchly royalist. Mieres, in fact, had represented the king in the Corts of 1449-53 as "legum doctores, consiliarii domini Regis" and had denounced the mals usos as early as 1438 in the Apparatus super Constitutionibus curiarum

147 "... que es causa de fer perdre la reputacio e cor als qui ensembles fets ponderosos nos cancellan creem al demeys haurets fet les provisions de la dita restitucio vinguem ab alguna justificaccio." ACA Cancilleria, Secròtorum 3227, 145r-146r, 7 December 1450. For other letters to Alfonso in support, see ACA Cancilleria, Secretorum 3227: 118r-v, 8 April 1450; 119v-120r, 20 April 1450.

148 ACA Cancilleria, Diversorum 3151, 186v-187r, 6 February 1450.

149 ACA Cancilleria, Diversorum 3152, 52r-53r, 10 February 1450.

150 The diputats del general outline their demands and strategy to Pere Dusay, a member of the Consell de Cent, a diputat del general appointed to meet with Maria. ACA Generalitat, N-660, 189r-192r, 10 March 1450. For the opinions of the Consell de Cent, see AHCB Ll. Cl., VI-15, 65r-66r, 23 May 1450.
One month later, when the Corts finally opened on March, both sides were well armed with familiar arguments, strategies, and tactics.152

The Corts of 1449-53

As soon as the Corts met in Perpinyà, the Diputació del general, the Corts's representative when it was not in session, disbanded and the Consell de Cent stepped forward as the driving force behind the opposition to the remenca decrees. As strong a political force as Barcelona was, it could be outflanked by upland towns and villages who resented its dominance. Like the urban craftsmen, the peasants of Catalunya could neither tolerate nor afford a political system which subsidized, economically as well as politically, the elites at the expense of the middling and lesser ranks of society.153

The estates protested the delays and the choice of the queen's palace in Perpinyà, where they felt they could not speak freely. The selection of the place to hold the meeting was, in principal, the prerogative of the king and depended largely on royal needs, but in theory it required the consent of the Corts. For


152 Cortes 22: 56-57. Joan Ros, a jurist working on behalf of the Consell de Cent reported to them the events of the opening session. AHCB CCO, X-20, 65, 6 March 1450.

153 Rycraft, "The Catalan Corts in the later middle ages," 266.
Maria, the venue often depended on such variables as her health, outbreaks of epidemics, the weather (she preferred southern locales, if possible), and convenience to most members. They were, however, much less agitated than before over the absence of the king. They acknowledged that María had special authority from Alfonso, a sign either that his earlier letter had preempted any challenges, or that they had simply given up hope that Alfonso would appear and decided to concentrate on the matters at hand. Their first concern was that the assembly proceed quickly, without further delays and without suspension of the meetings before all the business was concluded. They wanted the matter settled in the Corts, where they had more control, and they clearly did not want a repeat of the hamstrung and aborted Corts of 1448.

Barcelona's influence was evident from the start, as seen in a series of letters from their representatives at Corts—Antoni Vinyes, Joan Ros, Pere Deztorrent, and Felip de Ferrera. They exchanged detailed regular reports of the proceedings in Perpinyà and in


156 Cortes, 22: 71-75.

157 On 23 May 1450, the Consell de Cent reiterated their desire for a resolution in the Corts. AHCB Ll. Cl., VI-15, 65r-66r.
Barcelona. On 20 April the consellers wrote to their sindichs telling them to block any action until they were satisfied with the outcome of negotiations over the remences. They complained of the delays due to the late arrival of various representatives (the Corts was prorogued thirty-four times between 22 March 1449 and 14 March 1450), and Joan Ros accused María of stalling for time while she awaited letters from Alfonso. Felip de Ferrara agreed with Ros, saying that he was convinced that they always consulted with one another and used mail delays as a ploy to stall. He went on to question María’s legal capacity to convocate the Corts and asked the consellers to obtain legal advice on the matter.

The diputats del general, still functioning during this early stage of the Corts, had by that time already allied with the Consell de Cent and mustered the support of the nobility. A split in the noble estate appeared, however, when a dispute arose between the viscounts of Illa-Canet and Vilademany over the selection of a nine-
member commission responsible for advising the Corts on the remences. The nobles were not alone in their factional rifts, and their problems were quickly mended. The truly serious split was taking place in the braç real, as expected with Barcelona acting against Perpinyà and Lleida. María tried to resolve one of the principal grievances of the Corts and placate the nobility by ordering the remences to pay the usual "censos, rendes, e altres drets" while the tall was being collected but before any final decision was made concerning their legal status, but her order to the lords to stop harassing the peasants did little to pacify their temper.

During the summer of 1450, María began to have doubts about a mutually satisfactory outcome, even as she reassured her own officials and received reassurances in return from Alfonso. María confessed to Pere de Besalú that although she thought that Alfonso would be diligent with the latest embassy from the Corts in Naples and not give in to their demands if the price was right, she thought that if Alfonso were to change his mind that it would prejudice royal rights and prestige in Catalunya. The slow pace of collection of the last of the tall began to take its toll on her patience. On 30

164 AHCB Ll.Cl., VI-15, 27r-28v, 24 March 1450; ACA Cancillería, Secretorum 3227, 119r, 15 April 1450.
165 "... los dits honorables sindichs de aquesta ciutat . . . mostren gran odi a aquesta ciutat e entre los altres sindichs de leyda e de perpinya." AHCB Ll. Cl., VI-15, 95r-96r, 15 July 1450; and 174v-175v, 12 December 1450.
166 ACA Cancillería, Diversorum 3155, 57v-58r, 15 May 1450; Secretorum 3227, 132r-v, 12 August 1450.
167 ACA Cancillería, Secretorum 3227, 123v-125r, 7 June 1450.
April 1450 she snapped at her royal officials. She gave them six days to force the lords' compliance or risk forfeiture of their own jurisdictions and possessions and thus also would be held responsible for payment of all expenses incurred by the Crown in their prosecution. Some of her letters reveal how terribly alone she must have felt that summer. On 1 July 1450, she wrote to Jaume Vila of Jaume Ferrer's impending arrival from Naples and told Vila to stay for a few days so they could all meet together, because there is such a scarcity ("gran fretura") of intelligent people at her court. Bowing to pressure from the nobles, Alfonso asked María to demote her close and loyal assistant, Joan de Montbuy, but she insisted that to do so would impair the negotiations with the remences and make all the other royal officials vulnerable to harassment and threats. María asked Jaume Vila, then on his way to Naples, to plead with Alfonso on Montbuy's behalf using "paraules molt dolces e gracioses."

As the tensions mounted and the stakes were raised, the personalities of both Alfonso and María come into clearer view than before, when the correspondence was routine and formulaic. Alfonso appears far more hard-headed and determined to win his point at all costs, while María seems to have a far clearer sense of her dignity as a queen and lieutenant, which for her was a non-negotiable item. As she came to realize that her husband is willing to use the

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168 ACA Cancillería, Diversorum 3155, 97v-98r, 30 June 1450.

169 ACA Cancillería, Secretorum 3227, 125v-126v.

170 ACA Cancillería, Secretorum 3227, 134v-136v, 3 September 1450.
peasants as bargaining chips, or perhaps that he never really bargained in good faith at all, she began to doubt his intentions and her letters to Alfonso took on a passionate tone that was not present before. On 20 July 1450, in a letter to Jaume Vila, she considered the entire matter of the remences in peril of collapse ("E lo negoci per ço sta en bassat e en gran perill") because the peasants have lost hope ("sindichs e pagesos començer a perdre cor e sperança"), all because of Alfonso's bad faith negotiation and double dealing. Shortly thereafter, she begged Alfonso not to change his mind and revoke his support, or risk serious unrest among the peasants ("qualsevol sinistre o perill que de aço pugues insurge lo que deu no vulla"). She was not exaggerating the seriousness of the situation. That summer, the countryside which had been quiet for over a year came alive again with hints of unrest. María reported to Jacme Vila that she had news from Jaume Ferrer and Pere Prats that the remença sindichs were nervous. In September, there were reports of unrest in Cruilles, and in November more localities in and around Girona reported peasant unrest.

The Corts—impeded by factional disputes, procedural debates, and ineffectual commissions—stalled and little was accomplished until the fall of 1451. The events of 1451 and 1452 were

171 ACA Cancillería, Secretorum 3227, 128v-129r.
172 ACA Cancillería, Secretorum 3227, 156r-v, 30 July 1450.
173 ACA Cancillería, Secretorum 3227, 129r-130r, 2 August 1450.
174 ACA Cancillería, Secretorum 3227, 134v-136v, 3 September 1450.
mostly filled with watching and waiting and embassies to and from Naples, marked by Alfonso's periodic changes of heart. On 20 July 1451, Maria met personally with the Consell de Cent of Barcelona and the deputats del general to request that the Corts provide 400,000 florins in exchange for his return to Catalunya to personally deal with the remença issue and the recovery of patrimonio reial. The importance of the queen's rare personal appearance at the Casa de la Ciutat was signified not only by the ceremonial rituals, which are similar in many respects to the ceremony depicted in Martorell's frontispiece miniature, but also by the prominent barons who accompanied her: Joan Ruiz de Corella, the governor of Valencia; Andreu de Biure, the Count of Cocentayna; and Ramon Gilabert, a knight who served as lawyer in Maria's court. The account of the meeting, written by the secretary of the town council, suggests that Maria was carrying out Alfonso's wishes rather than acting on her own initiative: "She made it known that the king needed 400,000 florins to be used to leave Naples and recover his patrimony [in Catalunya]." The councillors and deputats del general agreed to consider the king's request, and three months later, on 15 September, the Corts agreed to the subsidy. On 22 November 1451, Maria wrote directly to the homens de remença explaining that,

175 "Significara lo dit senyor rey que hauria mester cccc m. florins que servissin axí per quitar e recobrar son patrimoni." The miniature is that illustrated on page i and discussed in chapter one, pages 5-9. Llibre de les solemnitats de Barcelona. Volume 1: 1424-1546, edited by Agustí Duran i Sanpere and Josep Sanabre. (Barcelona: Institució Patxot, 1930), 189-90.

176 Sobrequés i Vidal and Sobrequés i Callicó, La guerra civil catalana del segle XV, 1: 28-29.
in light of the fact that the manumission decrees would be prejudicial to the lords, she and Alfonso were seriously considering a revocation of the original decrees of 1 July 1448 and ordering a return to the status quo ante.\textsuperscript{177} A "gran clamor" among the peasants resulted,\textsuperscript{178} but the threat of violence and rebellion notwithstanding, in March of 1452, Alfonso tentatively accepted the offer from the \textit{Corts}, but delayed public announcement until May.\textsuperscript{179}

Their working relationship was transformed by Alfonso's revocation of the \textit{remença} decrees. María's frustration and annoyance spilled over in her letters to him. Having made a decision to abandon the \textit{remences} against her advice, in effect over her head, she insisted that he tell her precisely why he changed his mind. As if to emphasize that he now wanted her to simply carry out intentions without listening to her, she wanted to know explicitly what he wanted her to do and when.\textsuperscript{180} She has lost all credibility within the \textit{Corts}, she wrote, and no one will work with her directly. As for the \textit{remences}, they were most aggrieved ("gransissimament agreuijats") at the turn of events. The \textit{remença sindichs} were afraid to return home where they would face 400,000 very angry peasants who would not be happy if they came home without the deal they were

\textsuperscript{177} ACA Cancillería, Diversorum 3155, 194v-195r. For the original decree, see ACA Cancillería, 3155, 57v-58r, 15 May 1450.

\textsuperscript{178} ACA Cancillería, Diversorum 3155, 195r-v, 30 March 1452.

\textsuperscript{179} Sobrequés i Vidal and Sobrequés i Callicó, \textit{La guerra civil catalana del segle XV}, 1: 28-29.

\textsuperscript{180} ACA Cancelloria, Secretorum 3227, 170r-172v, 21 October 1452.
promised. 181

María's pleas fell on deaf ears. In May 1452 Alfonso reinstated the remenças obligations to their lords and suspended collection of the tall. He made no serious attempt to return, and grew annoyed at the Corts' insistence that his subsidy was predicated on his return. His economic problems mounted and he grew impatient with the lords. On 30 March 1453, he changed his mind once more. 182 He revoked the obligation he ordered in May 1452, and reordered the collection of the tall. The peasant unrest grew intolerable, 183 and by the spring of 1453 Alfonso must have realized that he could not ignore it any longer. In a final about-face, on 15 July 1453, Alfonso re-established peasant obligations to their lords. 184

María, exhausted and spent, continued to work through the summer of 1453. In her letters to Alfonso she described seemingly endless wrangling in the Corts and frustration with petty demands. Her health began to decline, but her anger did not falter. On 25 July 1453 she wrote another angry letter to Alfonso about the

181 "Apres del dit acte, o reuocacio, los dits sindichs de les remences sentint se grandissimament agreujats de aquella son vinguts a mi dients que yo vull cessar, o dilatar ultra del degut llur justicia, e que per aquesta raho ells son en punt que no gossen anar per la terra per dubte de llurs principals que com saben senyor son en nombre circa de xxxx Milia homes los quals pensen que per culpa llurs sindichs aquest negoci se dilate, e supliquam continuament" ACA Cancilleria, Secretorum 3227, 174r–175r, 16 June 1453.

182 He notified María in February. ACA Cancilleria, Secretorum 2700, 17v, 15 February 1453.

183 ACA Cancilleria, Varia 2939, 155r–158r26 January 1453.

184 He kept moving ahead the date of his return, and in August 1453 he extended the deadline for his return to August 1454. Sobrequés i Vidal and Sobrequés i Callicó, La guerra civil catalana del segle XV, 1: 29.
remences, this time telling him that the remences are very angry at having spent a lot of money for nothing, and that the burden of this decision—she foresaw great quarrels with the remences—was on both their consciences. 185 In August 1453 she notified Alfonso that she intended to resign as Lieutenant General of Catalunya on the pretext that she was needed in Castile to broker another peace between her ever-sparring brother-in-law and brother. 186

Maria notified her closest advisers and members of her staff in September that she would be resigning as Lieutenant General and that Alfonso had appointed Galceran de Requesens to take her place. 187 Appointing Galceran de Requesens, a knight without any connections at all to the royal family, to the lieutenancy was a move that broke with all tradition and legal precedent. 188 The Requesens family was only remotely connected to the more powerful and far wealthier viscounts of Rocabertí, but it was their financial strength placed them in the service of the crown, first as magistrates and then as governors of Catalunya, a post which took on an almost

185 "Afferen hauer despeses grans quantitats de peccunia e que aço no passa sens gran carrech de les consciencies vostra e mia segons pus largament vostra alteza haura poscut veure en dites mies letres a les quals me reffer." ACA Cancillería, Secretorum 3227, 175v–176r.

186 ACA Cancillería, Curiae 3215, 84v, 27 September 1453; AHCB CRO, A–654, 1 November 1453.

187 Alfonso issued the privilegio to Requesens on 31 August 1453. ACA Cancillería, Curiae 2661, 29r–30v. That same day he notified the clergy, nobles, and members of the royal council of Catalunya. ACA Cancillería, Curiae 2661, 31r–32r.

188 ACA, Cancillería, Curiae 2661, 29r–30v, 30 August 1453, transcribed as Document XX, page XX. For background on the nomination, see Los Trasámaras, 632–35.
hereditary quality.\textsuperscript{189} Galceran de Requesens had served Alfonso as governor of Majorca, \textit{batlle general} (bailiff) and later governor of Catalunya. As governor, his pro-\textit{remenca} connections and anti-baronial alliances alienated almost all entrenched noble and patrician factions and very nearly united all the warring factions in the \textit{Corts} in opposition to him.

Before she left, she warned Alfonso that the new government may not go smoothly.\textsuperscript{190} The government of Barcelona was torn apart over electoral reform that would weaken the ruling elites in favor of the middling and lower ranks of society. Requesens's lieutenancy was opposed by many who knew him to be an advocate of the \textit{remences} and the reform program in Barcelona, and she did not think things would go well.\textsuperscript{191} She expressed her sadness that she had spent five years in fruitless negotiations in the \textit{Corts} ("non ha sortit algun fruyt ni algun util"), and predicted that the quarrels over \textit{Corts} and peasants would continue.\textsuperscript{192}

Her predictions proved accurate: Requesens took office on 19 October 1453 and remained in office for a year and was driven out by the nobles in northeast Catalunya who opposed the \textit{remenca} decrees and the patriciates in Barcelona who opposed electoral


\textsuperscript{190} On 1 November 1453, she notified the \textit{Consell de Cent} that she had turned over the government to Requesens. AHCB CRO, #654.

\textsuperscript{191} ACA Cancillería, 2661, 33r, 13 September 1453.

\textsuperscript{192} ACA Cancillería, Curiae 3200, 84v–85r, 2 October 1453. Her departure was noted in the \textit{Dietari}, 208.
Requesens' position was difficult from the start. He wrote to Alfonso on 20 October to report the protests to his lieutenancy, and in a letter to María a week later he asked her to intervene on his behalf with the Consell de Cent, who were opposing his actions. The latter letter is a remarkable admission of the difficulty of his position, in which he asked María to return to Barcelona and resume as lieutenant in his place. Alfonso recognized his mistake and did not repeat it: In July 1454 he replaced Requesens with Juan of Navarre who, for all his shortcomings, was at least a member of the royal family and, in theory, more palatable to the Catalans. Juan continued to have difficulties with the Corts, particularly over his support of the Busca party in Barcelona and the remenca peasants. For some, only the king would do: Joan Moles de Margarit, bishop of Perpinyà, lamented that Catalunya was "totally ruined and lost" without the king. Alfonso ignored his words, and once again, those of his

193 Dietari, 208-209.
194 ACA Cancillería, Secretorum 3227, 180v, 20 October 1453.
195 ACA Cancillería, Secretorum 3227, 181r-v, 26 October 1453. He reiterated his difficulties on 1 December 1453. ACA Cancillería, Secretorum 3227, 182r-v. See also Batlle i Gallart, La Crisis social y económica de Barcelona, 2: 442-44.
196 Dietari, 215; Vicens Vives, Els Trastàmares, 164-67; idem, Juan II de Aragón: Monarquía y revolución en la España del siglo XV (Barcelona: Editorial Teide, 1953).
197 Dietari, 216-17.
198 "Catalunya se veu totalment roïnada e perduda per l'absència del seu glorios príncep e senyor, lo senyor rey." Parlaments a les Corts Catalans, edited by Ricard Albert and Joan Gassiot, volume 19-20 of Els Nostre Classics (Barcelona: Imprinta Varia, 1928), 214.
wife: He reversed his policy toward the peasants, and on 5 October 1455, he issued a letter patent that ordered a provisional suspension of the mals usos and remenca obligations.\(^\text{199}\) This provided a temporary respite from the wrangling, but one that would not last long.

Juan succeeded Alfonso as king in 1458, but the Catalans did not go down without a fight, and the disastrous civil war from 1462 to 1472 overshadowed his reign. They called on his own son, Carlos of Viana, as well as Pedro of Portugal and Louis of Anjou to rule instead. Catalunya never fully recovered from the civil war until the nineteenth century and in 1479, along with the other realms of the Crown of Aragón, was absorbed under the united rule of Fernando II (1479-1516) and Isabel (1474-1504).

As for María, after leaving Catalunya on 9 October 1453, she spent the rest of that year and most of 1454 engaged in negotiations with her brother and brother-in-law concerning the Castilian succession.\(^\text{200}\) As in 1429, she took a leading role in getting the two sides to cooperate and due to her diplomatic skills, her nephew Enrique peacefully succeeded Juan II as king of Castile in July 1454.

\(^{199}\) Sobrequés i Vidal and Sobrequés i Callicó, La guerra civil catalana del segle XV, 1: 27-29.

\(^{200}\) The situation was an extremely complicated squabble that involved Juan of Castile; his son, Enrique, who did not get along well with his father; Juan's highly unpopular favorite, Alvaro de Luna; Juan of Navarre and his son Carlos of Viana, whose relationship was still troubled; and Enrique, infante of Aragón. Jaime Vicens Vives, Juan II de Aragón (1398-1479): Monarquía y revolución en la España del siglo XV (Barcelona: Editorial Teide, 1953), 150-57; Alfonso the Magnanimous, 273; Ferran Soldevila, "La reyna María, muller del Magnànim," Memorias de Real Academia de Buenas Letras de Barcelona 10 (1923): 213-345, especially 225-34.
Her last years, from 1454 to 1458, were spent mostly in Valencia, where she governed as Lieutenant General and only occasionally took part in events in Catalunya. For instance, on 16 March 1458, only a few months before her last illness and death, Barthomeu Sellent was sent by the Diputació to Valencia to discuss with her events of the Corts.

The office of the Lieutenant General proved useful to later kings. Juan relied on lieutenants—Carlos of Viana and his second wife, Juana Enríquez—but his kingdom did not include Naples, which was inherited by Alfonso's son, Ferran, who ruled until his death in 1494. In 1482 Juan II's son Fernando II reformed the office; his grandson, the Emperor Charles V, made extensive use of this newly reformed institution, which he renamed the viceroyalty, and used it to rule the vast Spanish empire in the New World. And, continuing in a tradition of female governance in the Spanish kingdoms and the Habsburg empire, the precedents established by the office of queen-lieutenants appeared later in the capable female

201 Doña María de Castilla, 96–97; Soldevila, "La reyna María," 250.

202 Dietari, 248–49.


governance of the Low Countries first by Charles's aunt, Margaret of Austria (1480-1530), and later by his daughter, Margaret of Parma (1522-86).205

The remença dispute was an issue that had an impact beyond the manumission of the peasants: it redefined kingship. The king was the supreme authority, yet the nobles and ecclesiastical lords argued that he was violating their jurisdiction, that he had no right to come in and tell them what to do. He said, as king I have this authority, period. Because he was in Italy, however, the debate in the Corts got bogged down over procedural squabbles, such as who signed a letter, which really were smokescreens to buy time. Meanwhile, the nobles and prelates were uniting with the Diputació to do whatever it would take to get Alfonso to change his mind. In the end, his need for money was more important than his desire to weaken the nobles, or maybe he just realized that he did not have the clout—militarily, especially—to stick to his original intentions. He also did not have the stomach for prolonged conflict with the Catalans—he styled himself as a Renaissance prince and had no serious intention of ever leaving Italy, especially to face the prospect of constitutional haggling with the Catalans. So he relented, knowing that the peasants were less a military threat than the nobles. But the peasants had kept their side of the bargain and came very close to realizing their goals, only to have them snatched

away at the last minute. Alfonso probably underestimated the strength and fervor of the rencences, and he did not live to see the end product of his mutability.

Both king and the Cortes had very nearly run out of the two most important elements in contractual kingship—mutual respect and a willingness to compromise. Alfonso and María were not able to satisfactorily resolve the problems they faced in the 1440s and 1450s: repatriation of royal patrimony, the manumission of the rencences, and lordship in the Catlan countryside. It was a troubled legacy that they bequeathed to Juan of Navarre, his wife Juana Enríquez, and their son, Carlos of Viana.

As for the rencences, they fought a revolution brought on by rising expectations, as time and again, they came close to achieving some measure of change, only to witness a return to the status quo ante. Three features of this period in the reença conflict are particularly striking. First, the fundamental issue at stake between the Cortes and Diputación on the one hand and Alfonso and María on the other was the legal status of the enserfed peasantry. The continued efforts by the peasants to secure an abolition of the mals usos despite an economic boost underscores the fact that they clearly understood that status mattered, and they made the removal of legal impediments an essential component of their demands.

Moreover, the peasants were aware that they held a legal and moral position that was favorable in terms of their own social setting, not just with respect to royal support but also judged by the unease of jurists to bolster servile tenure. This generation of rencences differed from their ancestors in that they were able to
organize themselves financially, politically, and, as they demonstrated in 1462, militarily, too. And, third, balanced against these advantages were the potent forces of custom and the entrenched power of the lords.

The constitutional battles did not end with Alfonso's death. The protracted and extremely bitter fight over the remença peasants was not fully resolved until well into the modern era. In 1460, when Juan II tried to halt the erosion of royal authority in Catalonia, he was forced to surrender to the Capitulations of Vilafranca under which he had to abdicate all claim to participate in Catalan politics and agreed to let the principality be run by a council in Barcelona. Certain issues were resolved by civil war, but the final blow to the Corts came when the Crown of Aragon was joined with the kingdom of Castile under the rulership of Fernando II and his queen, Isabel of Castile.

206 Eva Serra i Puig, Pagesos i senyors a la Catalunya del segle XVII: baronia de Sentmenat 1590-1729 (Barcelona: Editorial Critica, 1988).

CONCLUSION

A Castilian princess by birth and an Aragonese queen by marriage, María of Castile was born and raised to be queen but not necessarily to rule. In some ways she fit the more conventional image of a medieval queen: She made substantial charitable donations, endowed a number of religious institutions, and on several occasions she acted in a more traditional queenly capacity as peacemaker between her husband, her brother, and her brothers-in-law.

Yet, unlike most European queens in the Middle Ages, María governed Catalunya for over two decades as her husband's legitimate representative. She was the sixth Aragonese queen who was also Lieutenant General of Catalunya, and in this regard, one could argue that she was following local tradition. It was the scope of her official authority and the length of her tenure in office, however, that set her apart. Her royal council and court of justice were recognized as the supreme royal institutions in Catalunya, superseded only by Alfonso's government in Naples. Her royal officials administered routine justice, financial accounting, and supervised regional and municipal officials. She punished wrongdoers and rewarded those who served the Crown. In other words, she was an integral part of the day-to-day governance of the principality during times of calm and crisis.

María's active role in the Corts and in the efforts to liberate the remenca peasants provides strong evidence of her effectiveness.
as an administrator, a shrewd negotiator, and a savvy diplomat. Everyone, from the loftiest baron to the lowliest peasant sindich, took her seriously. They may not have liked the idea of a lieutenant, and they may not have liked her, but they understood that her signature on a letter was as good as the king's. It is especially impressive that she was able to maneuver skillfully to obtain the greatest sums of money in exchange for the fewest political concessions, and to support the remença peasants despite bitter opposition from the Corts, the Consell de Cent of Barcelona, the barons, and the high-ranking ecclesiastical lords. Although María was fully vested in her powers as lieutenant and in fact wielded considerable authority, Alfonso, by his prolonged absence from his Iberian realms, risked civil insurrection by granting manumission to the remences and he must have known it. María's calm and reasonable temperament, coupled with her quiet diplomacy, tact, and skill at pacifying bellicose tempers, must not be underestimated. The strength of her character reduced the risks of Alfonso's absence, but as subsequent events demonstrated, diplomacy was no substitute for a workable solution.

The fact that the ruling elites tried to go over her head and negotiate directly with Alfonso demonstrates that they were aware that policy did not originate with María. At times she even used the Catalans' awareness that she was not the originator of policy as a dodge, as a way to buy time, or to avoid making a difficult decision. She worked with Alfonso, in his place and always on his behalf, but this did not diminished her prestige, nor did it negate the Catalans' recognition of her authority. It was simply a clear statement of the
limits of her office, and may have assuaged any lingering fears that she would make a move toward rule in her own right. She was a hard-working queen, driven perhaps out of a sense of duty and obligation to both her husband and the Catalan people. María recognized that her authority stemmed not from her own right to rule as heir to the kingdom but rather from her husband's will, and in general she deferred to Alfonso's judgment. She did not hesitate to express her opinions or to suggest alternative solutions, but she never initiated new policy or acted against his will.

Even though María was careful not to supplant completely the king's authority, she did not simply carry out orders. Alfonso was not a micromanager, and he permitted María considerable freedom to implement his expressed intentions. What is most striking is what is not explicit, however, especially in the realm of day-to-day administration of justice, an area traditionally associated with kingship. Except for a handful of prominent cases, María did not consult with Alfonso concerning the cases that came before her in the Audiència. Furthermore, she supervised financial administration and territorial governance with only the merest involvement from Alfonso. She wrote to him, telling him what she planned to do, or what she had done, and he approved of it in substance. He reserved to himself the prerogative to approve only the highest-ranking official appointments, but in all others she acted without his prior approval.

When wealthy urban and rural landlords did go directly to Alfonso in Naples, their actions say more about the Catalan elite's notions of rulership than it does about María's political skills. Their
political bargain was with the king, and in their minds only the king himself would suffice. No lieutenant, regardless of status or legal mandate, was acceptable when it came to an issue as divisive as the remences.

The problems María faced in both the Corts and with respect to the remences underscore the importance of linking kingship and queenship in order to fully understand monarchical government. Her actions at the center of power made her a lightning rod for contemporary juridical attitudes concerning delegation and representation. The heart of the dispute was the constitutional and jurisdictional definition of the legal boundaries of the authority of the king and his lieutenants. The legal treatises that addressed the issue of the limits of María's power as queen-lieutenant were also eloquent statements of the limits of kingly power and the rightful place of the ruler in society.

Thus, the heart of the struggle between María and the estates in the Corts was not about rule by a woman. I could find no evidence of misogyny directed against María, leading me to conclude that in general the Catalans were not overly troubled by rule by a woman. Which is not to say that the Catalans would have embraced María as a ruling queen, but neither does it mean that they would have rejected her. It simply means that a queen as Lieutenant General was acceptable, in much the same way that the French tolerated a queen-regent but could not abide a ruling queen. The presence of a fully competent adult king no doubt served to reassure the Catalan elites that the social order would not be disrupted, and in that sense, gender was an issue, but one so deeply imbedded in
culture and society that its presence is not apparent in the words that remain preserved in registers.

The issue went beyond gender and moved into the highly subjective realm of personality. The estates in the Cortes made it clear that they preferred María to Juan of Navarre. His difficulties as lieutenant in Aragón are ample evidence that María was not singled out for attack, and that the political issues were the same regardless of gender. The problem, then, was not whom the king left in charge, but that he preferred to govern his Iberian realms through lieutenants. In a strictly political sense, the Crown of Aragón in the fifteenth century witnessed an ideological clash between older, feudal notions of a personal contract between the king and his subjects, and Renaissance forms of impersonal, bureaucratic rulership.¹ In many ways, Catalan notions of kingship in the fifteenth century were archaic and ill-suited to the needs of a monarchy with vast territorial possessions. Alfonso was perfectly comfortable working with a series of trusted lieutenants who governed with him, in his place. Whereas Valencia and Aragón had grown accustomed to rule by the lieutenants of an often-absent king, the Catalan barons and prelates had not. They clung to their older ideas of oaths and contracts and resented having to work with the king's delegate instead of the king himself.

This ideological clash can be most clearly detected in the repeated and protracted challenges to María's authority to convocate and preside over the Cortes. The noble and ecclesiastical estates

framed their arguments as a defense of traditional privileges against what they believed was an authoritarian monarch's abuse of power. Alfonso argued that he was acting well within the law when he appointed María as his fully empowered Lieutenant. The barons, prelates, and the Consell de Cent of Barcelona had a valid point when they complained that the king had a responsibility to personally meet with the Corts. They were correct when they argued that this personal contact was fundamental to the pact at the heart of Catalan government and was, indeed, integral to contractual kingship. For his part, Alfonso saw nothing wrong in substituting what he believed was an outmoded and unworkable ideology with one more in line with his needs, and presumably, those of his realms.

The dispute was cultural as well as political. Alfonso, personally, was much more inclined toward the more forceful Castilian monarchy, and he had an authoritarian streak that was evident even before he first went to Italy. Like his father before him, his relations with the Catalans had always been stormy and he used Naples as a refuge from their contentiousness. He procrastinated, delayed, and complained about the problematic Catalans, but this does not mean that he broke his part of the bargain, because he always paid serious attention to their petitions. During his years in Italy, however, he had formed an opinion of rulership that was at odds with contractual kingship. He carefully guarded his royal prerogatives and was not averse to institutional experimentation, which the diputats and the members of the Consell de Cent referred to as "novelties." His working relationship with María developed out of geographic necessity, and he was guided by
pragmatism, not theory. In defense of María's rights, Alfonso asserted that as king, his authority superseded that of all others, and that his interests above all were for the well-being of his subjects of all ranks.

When Alfonso's views on rulership collided with those of the Catalans, the end result was not a lessening of tension, but rather the transfer of the burden of coping with that tension from himself to María. Until she left for Castile in 1453, María implemented Alfonso's expressed intentions as forcefully as she could and maintained the public order in an environment filled with anxiety, hostility, vacillation, compromise, demands, counterdemands, retaliation, and more compromise.

It is remarkable, then, that Alfonso's government by lieutenants worked despite enormous pressure. For a medieval monarchy, ruled by an absentee king and his queen-lieutenant, to remain intact in the face of serious threat of rebellion was more the exception than the rule. Despite the fact that the nobles and the Corts played an important role in making a king in 1412, they clearly had no intention of unmaking him in 1453. The Catalans wanted a king, but on their own terms, or at least a return to past kings who had more respect for their traditional liberties and privileges. Both Alfonso and the members of the Corts and the Diputació pushed Catalunya's distinctive contractual kingship to the practical limits of its theoretical boundaries.

In the end, only one side could prevail, and the disputes came down to the fundamental question of who should be the ultimate authority. That question, however, would not be fully answered
during Alfonso's lifetime.

The constitutional debates that divided Catalunya during Alfonso's reign were taken for granted as precedent in the decades following the king's death. When Juan of Navarre succeeded Alfonso as Juan II, he faced little resistance when he named his wife, Juana Enríquez, as his Lieutenant General in Catalunya. Juana was truly co-ruler with Juan: She had proved her worth as his right hand during the tumult of the civil war and governed Girona during the siege, and became Lieutenant in her own right in 1465. Her authority was as full as María's, covering all aspects of government in all three realms, including the tutelage of their son, Fernando. Juana's governance was not easy, but it was not clouded by the same controversy over her rights to convoke the Corts. Perhaps the populace was preoccupied with more pressing matters, such as fighting a civil war, than to quibble over a queen's rights to convoke the Corts. Perhaps Juan's close proximity calmed any fears of a powerful ruling queen. Nevertheless, Juana rode on the coattails of a resurgent monarch who did not gladly suffer challenges to his authority.

The experiences of Fernando's aunt, uncle, father, and mother were not lost on him. When he inherited the Crown of Aragón in 1479, he formalized the power of the lieutenancy. In the Corts of 1480-82, he stipulated that the Lieutenant General had complete authority to convoke the Corts regardless of the mental or physical

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condition of the king. In addition, he passed this model for territorial administration on to lands governed by Castile. The office was the model for the viceroyalty, which proved so valuable to later Spanish kings.

Without the power to convoke parliamentary assemblies, the viceroy's power would have been seriously curtailed and the king would have to personally travel to various realms or rely on the centralized enactment of legislation and adjudication of law suits. Such an arrangement would have been cumbersome at best for the European possessions and nearly impossible in the case of the territories of the New World, which were months away by sea voyage.

It is ironic that what began as an attempt to protect the ancient privileges and customs, and an assertion of the contractual nature of medieval kingship, ended up instead as the impetus for political change. The modern form of kingship that resulted relied heavily on delegated authority within a centralized institutional structure, one which better suited the needs of kings ruling vast maritime empires.

María of Castile typifies the exceptional role women could play in late medieval Europe, one of the few documented pre-modern cultures where women of various social ranks exercised formal, legitimate political authority. She foreshadowed not only Juana Enríquez but also Margaret of Austria, regent of the Netherlands for Emperor Charles V, who also derived her authority from the office

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3 Jane de Jongh, Margaret of Austria, Regent of the Netherlands, translated by M. D. Herter Norton (New York: 1953).
of lieutenant. María set a precedent for her niece, Isabel "la Católica" (1474-1504). The office of the lieutenancy may be been unique to Spanish queens, but they were not the only late medieval or Renaissance queens who were able to wield political power. In France, a series of formidable queens-regent governed: Louise of Savoy, for François I in 1515 and 1525; Catherine de Médicis for Charles IX from 1560-63; Marie de Médicis for Louis XIII from 1610-14; and Anne of Austria for Louis XIV from 1643-51. In England, Mary I Tudor (1550-58) and Elizabeth I (1558-1603) governed England, and Mary I Stuart (1560-67) ruled Scotland.

A number of researchers have recently found that the Renaissance, particularly influenced by humanist thought, may have opened up new opportunities for women in terms of access to education, financial control of inheritance and wardships, and the

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5 For a discussion of queens as regents, see chapter two, "Queens as Regents."

This modest "renaissance," not just for queens but for non-aristocratic women too, argues against Joan Kelly's famous essay that hypothesized the contrary. This "renaissance," if it did happen—and I am not convinced that these studies prove little more than that the period was incredibly complex and filled with ambiguities we are still trying to decipher—was brief and confined largely to women of the upper social and economic strata.

Substantial political authority for queens did not last long. Isabel I was the last Spanish queen to rule in her own right, and England would not see another ruling queen for centuries. Reformation and Counter Reformation ideologies and the social and economic dislocation caused by decades of warfare produced an


atmosphere particularly hostile to women in possession of political authority. Queens were not immune to these changes. Religious affiliation during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries muddied the waters of women and rulership and created unpredictable political alliances, especially during the reigns of Mary Tudor, Mary Stuart, and Elizabeth I. Their rights to inherit and to rule seriously eroded in a backlash of autocratic rulership during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries that affected women of all social ranks and from which western society would not recover until well into the modern era.


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Political history--long scorned by social and cultural historians dismissive of political biographies, narrative, and political theory--has experienced a marked resurgence within the last decade. The field's interaction with gender studies has led scholars to dismantle long-held assumptions about women and the exercise of political power and has resulted in a new awareness of how structures and ideologies both influence and mask realities of power.

This thesis takes up the challenging problem posed by queenship as office. Much of the work on women and power, influenced by Annales-inspired studies of power structures from the bottom up, regards queens as unrepresentative of women in general. But status mattered, especially in the political arena. A queen's prominence and proximity to the center of power made her a lightning rod for contemporary theological and juridical attitudes toward gender and power which affected all women, regardless of social rank or wealth.

María of Castile (1401-58), queen of the Crown of Aragón, exemplifies the exceptional role queens could play in medieval Europe. For twenty-six years she governed Catalunya, the political and economic backbone of the realm, as Lieutenant General while her
husband, Alfonso V, "the Magnanimous" (1416-58), was occupied with the conquest and governance of the kingdom of Naples. María was Alfonso's fully empowered legal representative, second only to the king himself. She was an effective administrator, a shrewd negotiator, and a savvy diplomat. Her role in government constituted a political partnership unique to the Crown of Aragón where the Lieutenant General formed an integral part of the institutional structure of monarchical government.

An abundance of archival material, including official records and correspondence contained in municipal and crown archives in Barcelona, has made it possible to determine the theoretical and practical limits of María's political authority and to assess the extent to which she took action on her own initiative rather than on Alfonso's orders. She maintained a curia and council separate from, and roughly equivalent to, Alfonso's court in Naples; supervised local and regional government; directed financial administration; regularly presided over the highest court of justice in Catalunya and the parliamentary assemblies; and maneuvered skillfully to obtain the greatest sums of money in exchange for the fewest political concessions. Despite formidable challenges to her authority, she judiciously handled one of the most contentious issues of the day—the debate over royal attempts to grant manumission to the remences, servile peasants bound to the land under harsh, quasi-feudal conditions.
VITA

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