Coping with Crises: Christian –Jewish Relations in Catalonia and Aragon, 1380-1391

by

Alexandra Eni Paiva Guerson de Oliveira

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Graduate Department of History
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Abstract

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This dissertation explores Christian-Jewish relations in the decades prior to the watershed of 1391, when Christian mobs throughout Castile and the Crown of Aragon killed or, more often, forcibly converted many Jews. My research indicates that the explosive violence of 1391 was not the predictable, inevitable result of growing interfaith animosity in the Crown of Aragon but was sparked by developments in Castile. Because of the resultant converso problem many historians consider 1391 to be a turning point in Iberian history. Yet historians have not closely explored Jewish-Christian interaction in the crucial later fourteenth century, particularly not in the Crown of Aragon, and have assumed, wrongly I believe, that the period following the Black Death (1348) saw a steady deterioration in the Jews’ relations with Christians. The first three chapters of the dissertation deal with the “crises” that marked late fourteenth-century Catalonia and Aragon. In the first chapter I outline the long-term precedents - the Black Death and successive wars – of the economic crisis that would follow. The second chapter focuses on economic matters – the Jewish contribution to the economy as well as the impact of growing debt and the development of new credit mechanisms. Chapter three, in turn, focuses on the impact of increasing taxation on Jewish communities. The final three chapters explore ways in which Jews and Christians coped with crises: chapter four deals
with sources of conflict within Jewish communities, chapter five with conflict between Jews and Christians, while the last chapter looks at conversion as a way of coping with the crises of the fourteenth century. Throughout, my research shows how Jews and their Christian neighbours and rulers developed strategies and means of coping with the effects of epidemic disease, famine, and frequent warfare. I pay particular attention at how the law became a mechanism for coping with the worsening of economic conditions.
For Alan Bell and Heloisa Beazzi
Acknowledgements

The seed from which this dissertation grew was planted in a seminar on Crime and Disorder in Medieval Society taught by Shannon McSheffrey at Concordia University, Montreal, in the Fall of 2002. Being of Iberian background, I originally resisted the pull towards Iberian history but I am glad its diversity and complexity proved too attractive to resist. I have to confess that four Montreal winters also helped moving to a field that required constant trips to Spain. A Canada Graduate Scholarship by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada enabled me to spend a year at the archives in Barcelona and Girona. An Ontario Graduate Scholarship and a grant from the Fond québécois de la recherche sur la société et la culture supported the early stages of my doctoral degree. I would not have gone far at the archives without the patience and generosity of Joaquín García Porcar, Virginia Moreno García-Cano, Rosa Gregori i Roig, José Luis Cabo Pan, and endless conversations with Felix de la Fuente Andrés at the Archives of the Crown of Aragon. At the Historical Archive of the City of Girona, I could not have located certain volumes without the help of Albina Varés.

Mark Meyerson’s work attracted me to the University of Toronto, where his humanity, engagement, passion, and wisdom have served as an example during the eight years of my doctoral degree. His confidence in me kept me going when the challenges seemed insurmountable. My debt to him far exceeds what I can express here.

At the University of Toronto, I had the privilege of receiving some of the best training a medievalist could dream. Virginia Brown, A. G. Rigg, Jill Ross, Joseph Goering, all ensured I had the technical and linguistic skills necessary to access the archival sources upon which this dissertation is based. The credit for introducing me to the wonders of the Iberian world goes, oddly enough, to a historian of medieval England, Shannon McSheffrey, my undergraduate advisor. Kenneth Mills made the comprehensive exams a more enjoyable experience and
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My graduate school years were some of the best of my life and I owe much of that to the incredible friends I made in Toronto and Barcelona. My dearest friend Dana Wessell Lightfoot was a mentor from my very first visit to Toronto and has continued to be my wisest sounding board. She kept me afloat when I thought I would drown. A gifted teacher, I have to credit her any success I may have in the classroom.

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I probably would not have considered becoming an academic if not for the collegial atmosphere I found at Concordia University’s History department, led at the time by the very considerate and thoughtful Ronald Rudin. At Concordia, Graham Carr, Norman Ingram, Rosemary Schade, Franziska E. Shlosser, Dana Sajdi, Shannon McSheffrey, and Frank Chalk made every course I took both challenging and fascinating. The breadth and depth of my training there shaped my graduate career and when I began to teach, I was fortunate to be able to draw from the experience of so many gifted teachers. My classmates Geneviève Vallerand, Ingrid Ravary-Konopka, and James Dodson became life-long friends.

The writing of this dissertation coincided with the development of a rich café culture in Toronto. Over a period of four years, many of the chapters were sketched and written over countless hours in the many excellent independent cafés of this diverse city I now call home. I have to acknowledge the support of the wonderful staff at Manic Coffee, Te Aro, Crafted, B Espresso, Jet Fuel, Rooster Coffee House, Dark Horse, Seven Grams, and Pamenar. Thiago Trovo taught me much about coffee during the past few years and the baristas in Barcelona taught my husband and I to appreciate cortados, which Toronto baristas were happy to make for us.

I was fortunate to find the most collegial working environment at New College, at the University of Toronto, during the final year of my doctoral degree. At New College, I would like to acknowledge the encouragement of Yves Roberge, June Larkin, and Deborah Knott. At the International Foundation Program, Kevin Fray, Bruce Russel, Lily Kwiatkowski, Andrew
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I am enormously grateful to my family in Brazil. My parents Marcos Heleno Guerson de Oliveira and Zilmar Bezzi Paiva Guerson de Oliveira raised me for the world. My older brother Marcos Jr taught me to read and write when I was four and instilled in me a love of books and of learning. My younger brother Marcelo did not want to have anything to do with books but patiently suffered through endless lessons as we played “school” and I discovered my love of teaching. I owe special debt to my late grandmother, Heloisa Bezzi, who turned her back to a life of leisure in search of a life of meaning. She went to university in a day and place when few women did, and faced any difficulty life threw at her with unflattering strength.

Ultimately, however, I could not have found the confidence or energy to write this dissertation without the unwavering support of my soul mate, Alan Bell. To say that his positive attitude and love of life were crucial would be an understatement (although I could have done without the text messages about the state of the beach in Barcelona while I was buried in the archives). This dissertation is for him.
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Abbreviations

ACA C Arxiu de la Corona d’Aragó, Registros de Cancilleria
ADG Arxiu Diocesà de Girona
AHCG Arxiu Historic de la Ciutat de Girona
AHN Archivo Historico Nacional


Introduction

The summer of 1391 marked a turning point for the Jews of the Iberian peninsula. The long-standing (and often romanticized) co-existence between Christians and Jews was shattered when the masses of Seville, agitated by the archdeacon of Ecija, Fernán Martínez, attacked the local Jewish community. Two synagogues were converted into churches and hundreds of Jews lay dead or converted to Christianity.¹ Had it remained confined to Seville, the episode would perhaps have been relegated to annals of local or micro history. News of the attacks, however, spread like wildfire and within a week similar attacks took place everywhere in the archdioceses of Seville. Ten days later it spread to the bishoprics of Cordoba and Toledo. Within the next two months it would reach the great Jewish communities of Valencia, Barcelona, and Girona, among others.²

In a post 9-11 world in which religious conflict is often on the front page of our newspapers, it is tempting to see this violence as inevitable. This is particularly the case when

¹ The contemporary chronicler Pedro López de Ayala lists the numbers killed in Seville as “more than 4,000”. Cited in José María Monsalvo Antón, Teoría y evolución de un conflicto social: el antisemitismo en la Corona de Castilla en la baja edad media (Madrid, 1985), 259. See also Emilio Mitre Fernández, Los judíos de Castilla en tiempo de Enrique III: el pogrom de 1391 (Valladolid: Universidad de Valladolid, 1994); Julio Valdeón Baruque, Los judíos de Castilla y la revolución Trastámara (Valladolid: Universidad de Valladolid, 1968); El chivo expiatorio: judíos, revueltas y vida cotidiana en la Edad Media (Valladolid: Ambito, 2000).
dealing with the Middle Ages, a period seen by historians and non-historians alike as marked by persecution of minorities. This was after all not the first time a Jewish community was attacked in medieval Europe. The eleventh-century call for crusade against Muslims in the Middle East led to attacks on several Jewish communities in the Rhineland. Given the choice of conversion or death, hundreds, if not thousands, of Jews chose martyrdom. The attacks of 1391, when seen in the context of earlier and later cases, seems to be just another predictable case of violence in a history marked in the popular imagination by martyrdom and suffering. But just as it would be misleading to see the current conflict between the United States and al-Qaeda as essentially a conflict between Western and Islamic values rather than a much more complex issue involving access to resources, geopolitical disputes, an economic interests, conflict across cultural and religious lines in the Middle Ages cannot easily be explained without considerable attention to social, political, and economic forces. Although they inhabited a world in which religion played a defining role, as I argue throughout this dissertation, relations between Christians and Jews in the medieval Crown of Aragon were complex and not always shaped exclusively by their religious identity.

The Holocaust has sparked renewed interest in the study of European Jewry, especially during the Middle Ages, when Europe arguably became a "persecuting society," to use R. I. Moore’s term. Among the Jews of medieval Europe the oldest communities lived in southern Europe. The Jewish presence in Iberia pre-dates the destruction of the Temple in the first century CE and evidence suggests this community was quite sizeable by the early fourth

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This early Jewish presence was followed by Christianization and later by the Islamic conquest of 711, giving the peninsula a degree of religious diversity unparalleled in western medieval Europe, making the region ideal for the study of relations between religious minorities in the past.

The study of Christian-Jewish relations in Iberia has changed significantly in recent years. Scholars have started to move away from an analysis based on a dichotomy of tolerance and persecution according to which the history of Iberian Jewry is characterized either as a Golden Age marked by tolerance, as in the case of the Jews of Muslim Spain or of Christian Spain during the Reconquista, or as a period of decline marked by increased persecution, as in the case of the Jews during Visigothic rule or in the century and a half between the Black Death (1348) and the expulsion (1492). New emphasis on more nuanced, contextualized studies has brought many of the paradigms in the field into question and has done much to blur the lines between tolerance and persecution.

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7 This is particularly evident in the work of Mark Meyerson and David Nirenberg, as cited below.
The need for more nuanced studies regarding the relations of Christians with the religious minorities of Iberia was clear by the late 1970's when Thomas Glick launched perhaps one of the most sophisticated and influential attacks on the dichotomy between inclusion and exclusion, tolerance and persecution that had hitherto marked the history of the Jews in medieval Iberia. Glick saw cultural contact as a creative process and argued against the bias of much of the literature on interfaith relations in Iberia that saw ethnic conflict and cultural diffusion as "mutually exclusive phenomena" and acculturation as akin to assimilation.8 The first misapprehension, as Glick surmises, leads historians "toward a conflictive view of the Spanish Middle Ages" and consequently to "either play down the positive features of culture contact or ... to look for lulls in the storm, necessary in this view for cultural borrowing to occur."9 The second misapprehension confuses a cultural process (acculturation) with a social one (assimilation) which leads scholars "to assume that the lessening of cultural distance must perforce result in the diminution of social distance – to confuse ethnic with social cleavages without realizing that these can be cross-cutting."10 While Glick's critique was framed as a contribution to the Castro-Sánchez-Albornoz debate, it is of great relevance to any scholar, Jewish, Spanish or North American, engaged with interfaith relations in medieval Iberia.11

Despite Glick's work, scholarship on Christian Spain is still largely dominated by the shadow of the expulsions of 1492 and ultimately of the Holocaust. The murder of European Jews in the Second World War caused many Jewish intellectuals to rethink their assumptions about history and led to scholarship that sees the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries as not

9 Ibid.
10 Ibid.
11 Glick places the ideas of Castro's mentor Menéndez Pidal, Castro and Sanchez-Albornoz in the context of biological and cultural evolutionism that dominated scholarship in the turn of the century. The polemic over Spanish identity stifled research in many areas; Castro mostly encouraged further studies in literary history while Sanchez-Albornoz had profound negative impact in intercultural studies. See discussion over these issues in ibid, 338ff.
only an era of decline for Spain’s Jews but also as symptomatic of social attitudes that would eventually lead to the Holocaust. Most influential among historians who espouse this view is Yitzhak Baer, whose monumental History of the Jews in Christian Spain is still accepted as the standard survey of the period.\textsuperscript{12} Baer’s concept of Jewish history is made clear from the very outset: "Jewish History, from its earliest beginnings to our own day, constitutes an organic unit. Each successive stage in its development reveals more fully the nature of the unique force guiding it, a force whose initial vitality is universally recognized and whose future course arouses widespread interest.\textsuperscript{13} While before the Holocaust Baer had argued against seeing Jewish life in Christian Spain as being in decline, the fate of the Jews led him to rethink the whole of Jewish history: “Every episode in the long history of our people, every significant point in our historical existence, contains within it the secret of all previous and subsequent generations.”\textsuperscript{14}

Yitzhak Baer influenced the “Jerusalem School”, a school of historians that sees the history of the Jews as a series of persecutions leading up to the Holocaust.\textsuperscript{15} The fate of the Jews becomes independent of the context of history. Baer’s conclusion of his influential survey illustrates this view:

In Spain we see recapitulated, as it were, what took place – albeit against a wider historical backdrop – on two other occasions in the history of the Jews: once in the course of the drawn-out struggle with the united powers of Graeco-Roman civilization and early Christianity, and again in our own times, that began with the call to assimilate among the nations of Europe and whose continuation may be seen in all that has happened to the Jewish people ever since, down to our own generation. Whether they are aware of it or not, the different ages – whatever their external form or motivating ideology – have

\textsuperscript{12} trans. Louis Schoffman (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1961); Baer’s study is monumental in both the scope of his research and his scholarship.
\textsuperscript{13} Baer, 1:1.
\textsuperscript{15} For more information on the Jerusalem School see David N. Myers, Re-inventing the Jewish past: European Jewish intellectuals and the Zionist return to history (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995).
struggle for the preservation of the same value whose depth cannot be plumbed in terms of time and place. Here is one of the great mysteries of the historical process.  

The “Jerusalem school” is often seen as a secularized version of the “lachrymose school of Jewish history,” a term coined by Salo Baron.  

While Baron’s term referred to the dominant Jewish historiography on the early twentieth century, his observations can be applied to some of the interpretations of the Jews’ fate in Spain. The darkness of the early modern period offered stark contrast to the emancipation brought by the Enlightenment and it is this black-and-white view of history that Baron is opposed to. In their haste to praise emancipation to ensure its fulfilment scholars reduced everything that predated it to a period of darkness and despair, thus greatly distorting history. Similarly, a teleological view of Christian-Jewish relations loses sight of historical context which leads to a skewed view of the past. In this sense, Baron’s assertion can still be applied: “Surely it is time to break with the lachrymose theory of pre-Revolutionary woe, and to adopt a view more in accord with historical truth.”  

However, Baer’s overall chronology of Jewish history in Christian Spain – a golden age during the frontier period of thirteenth and early fourteenth century turning into a period of decline and persecution in the fourteenth century and culminating in the expulsions of 1492 – is still

16 Baer, 2: 443.
17 Nirenberg, Communities of Violence, 9; Mark Cohen sees this “lachrymose school” as the exception to the “golden age” myth. Both rose from nineteenth-century Jewish scholars’ search for emancipation. These views have evolved into what he terms the “neo-lachrymose conception of Jewish-Arab history” which sees Jewish life under Arab rule in the Middle Ages as marked by hatred and persecution. For the political circumstances that led to this change of scholarship see Mark R. Cohen’s preface in his Under Crescent and Cross; and his articles “Islam and the Jews: Myth, Counter-Myth, History,” Jerusalem Quarterly 38 (1986): 125-137; and ibid., “The Neo-Lachrymose Conception of Jewish-Arab History,” Tikkun 6, no. 3 (May-June 1991): 55-60.
18 Salo W. Baron, “Ghetto and Emancipation,” 63; Baron’s interpretation applies mainly to the Middle Ages; see David Engel, “Crisis and lachrymosity: on Salo Baron, Neobaronianism, and the study of modern European Jewish history,” Jewish History 20, no. 3-4 (November 2006): 243-264. For a recent reflection on Baron and his influence in Jewish scholarship, see Robert Chazan, Reassessing Jewish Life in Medieval Europe (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010).
followed by most scholars. Yom Tov Assis’ recent study of the Jews of Aragon during the frontier period, while seemingly more balanced than Baer’s survey, accepts the same general chronology, concluding with an overview of the dark days ahead.19

Regardless of where one stands on the general chronology of Jewish history, the late fourteenth century was a turning point for the history of the Jews in Iberia. In 1391 riots erupted against Jews throughout Castile and the Crown of Aragon leading to mass conversions and killings of Jews as well as the destruction of many communities. Throughout the Spanish kingdoms synagogues were burned or turned into churches and only a minority of Jews escaped death or conversion. Many historians consider 1391 to be a turning point in the history of Iberia, in particular in Christian-Jewish relations. Yet, despite its importance in Iberian history, it has not yet received the concentrated attention of a major study.20 David Nirenberg, a leading historian of medieval Iberia, considers the massacres of 1391 as “the greatest remaining gap in the historiography of Iberian Jewry.”21

This gap is particularly true of the Crown of Aragon, where studies of Christian-Jewish interaction tend to focus on the period before the Black Death (1348) or the century following the massacres of 1391.22 The intervening period is assumed to be marked by steady deterioration of Christian-Jewish relations but this assumption has yet to be tested against

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20 Bejamin Gampel is currently working on such a study.
21 Nirenberg, Communities of Violence, 246, n52.
archival evidence. In Castile, it is clear that the violence of 1391 was connected to the civil war of the 1360s, during which the Jews became easy targets for the monarchy's opposition and public discourse in that realm acquired a distinctly anti-Jewish tone. The anti-Jewish preaching of the archdeacon of Ecija, Ferrant Martínez, from 1378 onwards worsened the situation for the Jews of Castile and furnished the spark for the violence that would erupt later on.

This temporal split in the historiography is partly determined by the sources and by the nature of modern politics. It is one of the paradoxes of medieval studies in general that the areas most studied are not necessarily the best documented. Medieval Spanish history is dominated by Castilian historiography, which is unsurprising considering the dominant role of Castile within the early modern and modern Spanish state. What is ironic is that medieval archival collections for the Crown of Aragon have survived in much larger numbers than in Castile. Catalan and Aragonese rulers kept records from the earliest times, much of which survived the centuries. While thousands of documents survive from the ninth to the eleventh centuries for the areas of the Spanish March and Catalonia, making it one of the largest collections of documents for the period, many of the archival collections of the early and high Middle Ages are scattered and incomplete. The great territorial and political expansion that marked the reign of King Jaume the Conqueror (1213-1276) and the more complex bureaucracy necessary to manage Jaume's new territories led to the creation of the Royal Archive of the Crown of Aragon (ACA), a development furthered by the revival of Roman Law and the acquisition of paper-making technology from the Muslims with the conquest of

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23 Assis ends in 1327 but nonetheless implies that the subsequent period was marked by universal decline. In this he follows the master narrative set by Baer and perpetuated by subsequent scholars.

24 See Valdeón Baruque, Los judíos de Castilla; Monsalvo Antón, Teoría y evolució, 207-276; Mitre Fernández, Pogrom.

Valencia. The renewed emphasis on the written record contributed to the development of a royal bureaucracy committed to a level of record-keeping hitherto unparalleled in Iberia. Subsequent monarchs continued to improve on the foundations laid by Jaume the Conqueror.  

Today, the royal registers in the ACA total over 6000 volumes of nearly four million documents spanning seven centuries. This material forms the main archival sources for this dissertation. The royal chancery of Pere the Ceremonious alone produced 1,164 volumes of an average of 200 folios each. The Crown viewed Jews as part of the royal treasury and thus had direct jurisdiction over them. Although the Jews of the Crown of Aragon had their own internal courts and made use of municipal courts, they routinely filed cases at the royal court not only to seek redress of grievances they might have with their Christian neighbours or local Christian authorities, but also to seek solutions for internal problems. Royal chancery registers are thus a treasure trove of details on the daily life of Jews in the medieval Crown of Aragon. Due to its volume, accessing this documentation in a comprehensive manner is a major challenge for historians and one of the reasons we know more about the thirteenth century than we know about the fourteenth. Nineteenth-century archivists and early twentieth-century scholars have catalogued and indexed the documents dealing with Jews in the royal chancery registers for the period of 1213-1327. Generations of scholars have also benefited

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26 For introduction on the development of the royal archives during the 13th century see Burns, Diplomatarium, 1: 15-25.
27 Ibid, 1: 23.
28 Sevillano Colom "Apuntes para el estudio de la cancellería de Pedro IV el Ceremonioso." Anuario de historia del derecho español, 20 (1950), 140.
29 The main catalogue is Jean Regné’s "Catalogue des Actes de Jaime Ier, Pedro III et Alfonso III, rois d’Aragon, concernant les Juifs (1213-1291)" originally published in instalments by the Revue des Études Juives in 1911, 1914, and 1920. The indices are incomplete for the reign of Jaume II (1291-1327). This invaluable source has been significantly revised and indexed in a new edition by Yom Tov Assis with a new introduction. See History of the Jews in Aragon: Regesta and Documents, 1213-1327 (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, Hebrew University, 1978); Much more comprehensive in both geography and scope is Yitzhak Baer, Die Juden im christlichen
from Y. Baer’s edition of many of the sources he used to write his comprehensive survey of the history of the Jews. Yet, the ambitious temporal scope of Baer’s work prevented a more thorough search of the chancery registers, particularly for periods in between major dates such as 1348 and 1391.

To make such a thorough combing of the chancery registers possible, the methodology employed for this dissertation was to limit the period under study to a relatively-short window (1379-1391). In one year, I read through 150 chancery registers at the Archive of the Crown of Aragon and catalogued over 3,000 documents written in Latin, Catalan, or Aragonese dealing with the Jews of the Crown of Aragon. To this source base I added legal, notarial, and municipal documents made available by scholars and archivists. I also had to make difficult choices in terms of geographical scope. Although initially I intended to include all areas of the Crown of Aragon, in the writing of this dissertation I was forced to leave out important areas such as the Kingdoms of Valencia and Mallorca, whose Jewish communities have been the subjects of detailed study in recent years. This research has led to important new questions in the field of Christian-Jewish relations, and the social, economic, and legal history of Catalonia and Aragon during the late fourteenth century.

More importantly for the focus of this dissertation, while we know well the background to the 1391 violence in Castile, the same conclusions cannot be applied to the

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Spanien, Erster Teil. Urkunden und Regesten. (Farnborough: Gregg, 1970); J. Jacobs, An Inquiry into the Sources of the History of the Jews in Spain (London, 1894) is much more superficial; For a discussion of the methodology employed by each of these scholars see David Romano, “Analisis de los repertorios documentales de Jacobs y Regné,” Sefarad 14, no. 2 (1954): 247-264.

Crown of Aragon. If civil war provided the background to the violence in Castile, the same cannot be said about the Crown of Aragon, where there was no civil war in the late fourteenth century. The revolt of the Aragonese and Valencian Unions against Pere III in 1347-48 was not marked by the same anti-Jewish propaganda that marked civil war in Castile. While some studies of the events surrounding the pogroms of 1391 exist, we lack in depth studies of the Jews of the Crown of Aragon in the late fourteenth century. The lack of such studies means that the reasons for the breakdown of coexistence in Castile—such as anti-Jewish royal policies and pressure from mendicant preachers—are sometimes inaccurately applied to the Crown of Aragon. This dissertation, therefore, is less about the events leading up to the violence of 1391 and more about Jewish life and the nature of Christian-Jewish relations in Aragon and Catalonia during the decade preceding the violence.

Within Jewish history, acculturation and identity have been for long the prism through which Jewish life is evaluated. But while historians of Yitzhak Baer’s generation tended to see acculturation as a weakness and looked at Jewish identity as divorced from local contexts, a new generation of Jewish historians, inspired by new turns within the study of cultural history, have re-evaluated Jewish life within Christian societies. Thanks to the work of Robert Bonfill, Kenneth Stow, and Elliot Horowitz, questions of acculturation have perhaps been answered with greater sophistication regarding Italian Jews. Horowitz’s many studies point out that

31 See Meyerson, *Frontier kingdom.*
many social developments marking Jewish communities in Italy paralleled similar developments in mainstream Christian society – not so much because Jews were copying from Christians but because they were exposed to the same environment that triggered those developments in Christian society in the first place. In other words, the focus is not so much in defining who borrows what from whom but in highlighting that Jews and Christians were members of the same urban environment.  

While the debate over convivencia has done much to stifle an interest in questions of acculturation in the Spanish kingdoms, Elka Klein’s recent work has done much to address this gap in the scholarship on Sephardic Jews. Her untimely death, however, has left a void in the field that I can never presume to fill but this dissertation echoes her call to see “Jews as participants in the culture of the period rather than receivers of a borrowed culture.”

A closer look at Christian-Jewish relations in Catalonia and Aragon during the 1380s contributes important findings to understanding the repercussions of the violence of 1391 in the Crown of Aragon as well as exploring issues of acculturation and identity. On the one hand, it draws a much needed picture of the relations between Christians and Jews in the crucial period immediately preceding the violence of 1391. Although it is true that the late fourteenth century was marked by social, political, and economic crises, this dissertation shows how Jews and their Christian neighbours and rulers developed strategies and means of coping with the effects of epidemic disease, famine, and frequent warfare. Although there was much conflict between Christians and Jews in the 1380s, it was less ideologically driven than the result of social and economic pressures. In other words, what drew Christians against Jews

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35 This is more clearly articulated in her superb study of the Jews of Barcelona - Elka Klein, Jews, Christian Society, & Royal Power in Medieval Barcelona (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2006).
in Catalonia and Aragon were the same issues that drew Jews against Jews – squabbles over
debt, disputes over property, and contracts unfulfilled. This does not mean that religious
identity did not play a role in social relations but I have to stress yet again the need to be
careful in seeing the explosive violence of 1391 as the predictable, inevitable result of
growing interfaith animosity in the Crown of Aragon. Arguing that there was not a steady
decline of interfaith relations, however, does not imply that it was a golden age, of course. The
late fourteenth century was a period marked by conflict just about everywhere in Europe.

But one needs not see every dispute between a Christian and Jew as the inevitable breakdown
of centuries of coexistence. To do so is to read history backwards.

In the end, the greatest change to Christian-Jewish relations in the Crown of Aragon in
the late fourteenth century was arguably not political and religious in nature but rather
economic and fiscal. The period saw greater demand for credit and the development of new
credit mechanisms that allowed wealthy Christians to openly engage in the credit business,
thus pushing many Jewish moneylenders to short-term loan markets. While in the long term
this did much to alleviate the stigma of moneylending for the Jews, in the short term the
growing dependence on censals and violari, new credit mechanisms emerging in the
fourteenth century, pushed Christians and Jews into a tight corner. The fiscal demands of an
expanding monarchical state led to much pressure throughout Catalonia and Aragon and to
the growing indebtedness of the population. Not only individual Jews and Christians were
borrowing more but also cities and aljamas were increasingly borrowing beyond their means

36 In this it confirms Mark D Meyerson, A Jewish Renaissance in Fifteenth-Century Spain
37 See for example T. H Aston and R. H Hilton, The English rising of 1381 (Cambridge: Cambridge
University Press, 1984); Samuel Kline Cohn, Lust for liberty: the politics of social revolt in
medieval Europe, 1200-1425: Italy, France, and Flanders (Harvard University Press, 2006), 217-
226 shows that popular revolts over taxation sprang all over France and Italy throughout the
1350s-1370s.
38 See chapter 2 for a more thorough discussion of censal and violari.
to finance their deficits. When the 1390s arrived, Christians and Jews were locked in ever more complex webs of financial interaction.

Before we can begin such a study, however, a survey of the earlier period is necessary to set the scene. Therefore, chapter one follows both a thematic and a chronological approach. After a brief survey of the population of Catalonia and Aragon before the Black Death, I look at some of the political, economic and social consequences of the crises of the mid-fourteenth century on Catalan and Aragonese Christians and Jews alike, paying particular attention to their impact on Christian-Jewish relations. The Black Death caused more conflict within Jewish communities as individual Jews moved from their places of residence fleeing plague or seeking better opportunities. This migration often caused fiscal problems for aljama officials who could no longer count on the taxes those Jews had contributed. Family members, on the other hand, squabbled over the inheritances left behind by those who perished. During the war with Castile (1356-1365) Catalan Jews contributed to the war effort and Aragonese Jews were caught in the crossfire as Castilian troops invaded Aragon. All subsequent chapters deal in one way or another with the long-term effects of plagues and wars.

Chapter two focuses on the Jewish role in the economy of Catalonia and Aragon and surveys the impact of the late fourteenth-century economic downturn on Christian-Jewish relations. Debt and fiscal pressures quickly emerge as the main challenges Christians and Jews faced in this period. This is followed, in chapter three, by a look at the effects of fiscal pressures on relations within Jewish aljamas. The case study of the murder of a Jewish tax collector by his fellow Jews, shows just how intense struggles over taxation could be within Jewish communities of Aragon and Catalonia. Chapters four and five focus, in turn, on the nature of conflict within Jewish communities and between Christians and Jews. I pay particular attention to some of the ways Catalans and Aragonese, be they Christians or Jews, coped with
crises. Law here emerges as a stabilizing factor in such a litigious society.

The final chapter focuses on conversion. Despite the expansion of research on the subject of Jewish apostates in Iberia, or *conversos* as they are more commonly known, we still know distressingly little about the history of Jews who converted to Christianity prior to the riots of 1391. While Jewish conversion to Christianity is presumed to have been the result of Christian violence, a closer look at Jewish apostates shows that reasons for conversion varied greatly in the late fourteenth-century Crown of Aragon. Jews sought conversion not only as a way out of economic and legal troubles but also in exchange for specific rewards from the king. Conversion led to much conflict between Jews and *conversos* and records suggest that the period experienced a rise in conversions. Yet rather than being the product of Christian harassment, which is entirely absent from the records, conversion may have been one of the few avenues left for marginal Jews to weather the declining economic conditions of the late fourteenth century. As such, conversion was one way Jews coped with social and financial crisis.

This dissertation, therefore, contributes not only to the fields of Jewish history and Christian-Jewish relations but also to the work of cultural and legal historians who have looked at the legal agency of those deemed powerless such as women, slaves, and immigrants. Such groups are no longer seen as simply “acted upon” by the law, but rather, as active participants in their society and as legal agents. Scholars now see “law” and “social life” as related fields. As Ariella Gross puts it, “[r]econceptualizing law as an element of culture - a source of cultural

39 Paola Tartakoff’s recent dissertation was not yet available during the writing of this chapter. Both the dissertation and her upcoming book do much to fill this important whole in the historiography. I am thankful for her encouragement and help in the writing of this chapter.
narratives and rituals - has allowed legal history to catch up with social history in recognizing people of color and white women as agents."\textsuperscript{41}

In this dissertation, I have taken this approach to the study of another group - the Jews. The Jews often appear as victims in the historiography - victims of mobs, of changing policies, of exclusionary rules. The degree to which historians discuss Jewish agency is often connected with how "autonomous" a Jewish community might have been and to what extent its leaders were able to exert authority. Yet, when looking more closely, Jewish autonomy proves to be a complicated issue. As chapters 4 and 5 show, by readily using Christian courts to solve conflicts that fell under the jurisdiction of Jewish courts, individual Jews routinely undermined their own communities, thus eroding their own autonomy, but they often did so because it was to their individual advantage. We need also to make more explicit how ordinary Jews were agents shaping their own history. But beyond that, we can see in the way Jews acted in Christian courts many similarities - despite cultural and legal differences - with mainstream Christian society. Like Christian women, Jewish women also took legal action against their husbands or other male relatives. The way Jews consciously manipulated the courts is certainly an example of their agency and one that shows them acting as Catalan or Aragonese men and women. A closer look at legal disputes between Christians and Jews illustrates, and here I borrow from Gross’s elegant words, "the rich fabric of local life and the messiness of law as it was lived on a day-to-day basis by ordinary people."\textsuperscript{42} Relations between Christians and Jews cannot be simplified between poles of tolerance or acceptance and persecution - the reality is that it was quite messy. Cultural change, acculturation, assimilation, minority relations are all issues that plague our postmodern global world. Rather than looking at Christian-Jewish relations in medieval Iberia to understand what makes societies fall apart, we can look at Jews

\textsuperscript{41} Gross, “Beyond Black and White,” 656.
\textsuperscript{42} Ibid., 682.
and Christians in the Crown of Aragon to understand how multicultural societies can work in times of adversity.
Chapter 1 - Catalonia and Aragon at the end of the 14th century

Late-medieval artists used freely a reference to the Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse, who bring death, famine, disease, and war, in their illustration of contemporary life. During the fourteenth century, often dubbed the “calamitous century”, Catalonia and Aragon were not spared frequent visits by each of the Four Horsemen.¹ King Pere the Ceremonious’ reign, the second-longest reign in the history of the Crown of Aragon, was marked by natural and man-made crises from the outset.² Recurring bad harvests and plague epidemics were accompanied by various wars, including civil wars in Aragon and Valencia and an invasion by Castile.³ The period also witnessed great reorganization of royal bureaucracy, which enhanced royal power and set a framework for future monarchs.⁴ This chapter will sketch the impact of the Black Death and the war with Castile on Catalonia and Aragon, paying particular attention to their immediate consequences for Christian-Jewish relations in both states.

Population

The founding states of the Crown of Aragon, Catalonia and Aragon, stretched from the

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¹ “Calamitous century” has been popularized in Barbara W. Tuchman, *Distant Mirror: The Calamitous 14th Century* (Ballantine Books, 1987).
² This thesis will follow the Catalan enumeration, so Pere the Ceremonious is Pere III, rather than Pedro IV of Aragon, Pere II of Valencia or Pere I of Mallorca.
⁴ José Trenchs i Odena and Antonio Maria Aragó, *Las cancillerias de la Corona de Aragon y Mallorca desde Jaime I a la Muerte de Juan II* (Zaragoza: Institucion Fernando el Católico (CSIC), 1983); Francisco Sevillano Colom, “Apuntes para el estudio de la cancillería de Pedro IV el Ceremonioso,” *Anuario de historia del derecho español* 20 (1950): 137-241.
Pyrenees in the northeast side of the Iberian Peninsula, facing the Mediterranean sea and bordering the kingdoms of Navarre, Castile, and Valencia to the south and west. Medieval population figures are hard to come by and notoriously unreliable. Documents approximating census data only survive for the period after 1365 in Catalonia and 1404 in Aragon. Estimating backwards from this data, Hillgarth suggests a population of 100,000 inhabitants in late thirteenth-century Aragon and about 500,000 in Catalonia. Recent demographic studies of southern Aragon show that the region had experienced a steady process of colonization and diversification of the economy during the thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries. Yet population density on the eve of the Black Death was still comparatively low, with a total of ten inhabitants per square kilometre. To put it in the context of the peninsula at large, Castile-Leon is estimated at four million in 1225, with about 300,000 subsequently added through conquest, while the Kingdom of Valencia had 130,000.

Figures for the Jewish population are no less hard to come by. In Aragon, the largest Jewish community was in Zaragoza, which in the fifteenth century housed 200 families. Figures for the earlier period are harder to estimate, but Baer argues that the Jewish population of Zaragoza equaled that of Huesca during its most prosperous period, for which

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7 Sesma Muñoz, 244

8 Hillgarth, The Spanish kingdoms, I: 29-30. The much higher numbers for Castile does not mean the region was necessarily over-populated. Teófilo Ruiz has shown that the population of northern Castile was shrinking rapidly long before the onset of the Black Death. See his Crisis and continuity: land and town in late medieval Castile (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1994), 291ff.

we have more reliable data. In 1340 Huesca had 300 male Jews over fifteen years old, that is, about 200 families or roughly 1,000 Jews depending on how large we understand families to have been. Calatayud had about the same and other Aragonese communities had between thirty and fifty families. The numbers for Catalonia are similar. Jaume Riera estimates the proportion of Jews in Catalonia in between two percent for communities of less than 500 inhabitants and seven percent for the largest cities. Historians estimate the aljama of Barcelona, for example, to have had anywhere between 1,000 and 4,000 individuals in the fourteenth century. Next in importance came the communities of Girona and Perpignan, with about 1,000 souls each. A reasonable figure for the total Jewish population of Catalonia in the fourteenth century is about 10,000 (12,000 at the very most) individuals.

In Aragon, a significant Muslim minority completed the human landscape. Until the eleventh century the kingdom of Aragon was limited to a series of valleys above the river Aragón. Most of its present-day territory was conquered from the Muslims after the collapse of the caliphate of Córdoba in 1031. The Aragonese king Alfonso the Battler (el batallador) conquered the Islamic taifa-kingdom of Huesca in 1096 and the kingdom of Zaragoza in 1118. Catalonia too would expand through the conquest of Muslim territories with Tortosa (1148) and Lleida (1149). Vicens Vives estimates that the by the fourteenth century 35% of the population was Muslim.

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10 Baer, History, I: 193; see also 420-421, n.7
12 Riera i Sans, 54; Guilleré agrees with Riera estimating a 5% of Jews living in Girona, see his Girona al segle XIV (Girona: Ajuntament de Girona, 1993), 50.
population of Aragon was still Muslim. As David Nirenberg makes clear and is worth stressing, "every major town in that kingdom [of Aragon] had witnessed continuous Mudejar habitation in the centuries since its reconquest, and in some rural areas Muslims constituted a majority of the population." Catalonia had a much smaller Muslim population – about 6,000 in the thirteenth century – with most mudejares concentrated in the border with the kingdom of Valencia to the south, near the river Ebro. By the fourteenth century, Muslims and Jews had been a constant presence in Catalonia and Aragon for centuries.

The Black Death and its impact

Disease and unprecedented mortality visited both states in the spring and summer of 1348. Catalonia, a region actively engaged in Mediterranean trade networks, was hit by both land and sea. The plague first arrived in Perpignan by land from Narbonne in the north in early April. In mid April Girona city councillors received a letter from the vicar of Narbonne, where the plague had started at end of February, warning of the disease, which the vicar attributed to the alignment of the planets and the poisoning of wells by the poor, allegedly found near the entrance of many large cities in Languedoc with packets of "suspicious powder". The epidemic hit Barcelona in early May arriving independently by sea routes. Girona was hit in mid-May, either from the north through Perpignan or by sea, either through its port in St Felix de Guixols or Barcelona. The plague then spread through the interior towns of Vic and

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16 Guilleré, Girona al segle XIV, 167-168.
Campodron by late June.\textsuperscript{17}

The arrival of the plague was preceded by a subsistence crisis in Catalonia. Although local chroniclers considered 1333 the first of the "bad years," there is evidence that bad harvests also marked the period 1315-1318 and 1322-1327.\textsuperscript{18} This was followed by a series of crop failures in 1345 and 1346. In contrast, Aragon felt no Malthusian pressure before the arrival of the Black Death. Prior to the Christian conquest at the end of the twelfth and early thirteenth centuries, the region was sparsely populated. Despite steady Christian settlement, by the fourteenth century Aragon remained underpopulated and predominantly rural.\textsuperscript{19}

In Aragon, the plague raged a bit later than in Catalonia, arriving in the early fall. Initially, the king sought refuge in Aragon from the plague in Valencia, and was holding Cortes, or parliament, in Zaragoza when the plague arrived in September of 1348.\textsuperscript{20} By October, according to King Pere's chronicle, "300 people died every day in the city."\textsuperscript{21} As early as 2 September, King Pere sent the Jew Jucef to inquire in the area around Huesca for a safe place for the royal family to take refuge.\textsuperscript{22}

The epidemic could not have arrived at a more inauspicious time as the region lay in the

\textsuperscript{17} Paul H Freedman, \textit{The origins of peasant servitude in medieval Catalonia} (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 161.
\textsuperscript{19} The pattern in Aragon resembles that of Castile, where the Black Death also hit an underpopulated region. See Ruiz, \textit{Crisis and continuity}.
\textsuperscript{21} \textit{Chronicle}, ch. IV, 51. The same figure is given for Valencia above and is not to be taken at face value.
\textsuperscript{22} ACA C 1062: 71v (2/09/1348) [DAPN: 312].
midst of a civil war.\textsuperscript{23} The Revolt of the Unions, as the conflict became known, was organized by King Pere’s brother Jaume in reaction against the king’s decision to name his daughter Constança heir in the absence of a direct male heir.\textsuperscript{24} Prince Jaume initiated the revolt in Aragon, where he was able to tap into long standing resentments towards the monarchy in order to win the support of most of the local nobility and most important cities in the kingdom.\textsuperscript{25} Only Huesca, Calatayud, Daroca and Teruel stayed on the king’s side.\textsuperscript{26} The revolt spread to Valencia and continued despite Jaume’s sudden death in Barcelona. Jaume and Pere’s half-brother Fernando picked up the reins of the revolt and by the spring of 1348 had made significant progress. The king had been forced to recognize Fernando as his heir and was held prisoner in Valencia when the Black Death hit. The plague epidemic allowed the king to leave Valencia and with the help of Catalan resources, to defeat the Union of Aragon in June 1348 and that of Valencia in December of the same year.\textsuperscript{27}

Estimating the plague’s mortality rate is a difficult matter since we lack precise population figures for the period. Jordi Nadal estimates that the general population of Catalonia dropped about five percent during the subsistence crises of the first half of the

\textsuperscript{24} For Pere’s personal take see his Chronicle, ch. IV, 4-5.
\textsuperscript{25} Esteban Sarasa Sánchez, “El enfrentamiento de Pedro el Ceremonioso con la aristocracia aragonesa: la guerra con la Unión y sus consecuencias,” in Pere el Cerimoniós i la seva època (Barcelona: Institució Milà i Fontanals, 1989), 36-38; for earlier roots of the conflict see Luis González Antón, Las Uniones aragonesas y las Cortes del reino, 1283-1301 (Madrid: 1975). For the family conflict within the royal family see Rafael Tasis i Marca, Pere el Cerimoniós i els seus fills (Barcelona: Editorial Teido, 1957).
\textsuperscript{26} Chronicle, ch. IV, 10.
\textsuperscript{27} Bisson, 109. For more information on the Union of Valencia see M. Rodrigo Lizondo, “La Unión valenciana y sus protagonistas,” Ligarzas 7, (1975): 133-166.
The fourteenth century. For the Black Death itself, most historians agree on an average between 25-30 percent. One of the lowest figures is given by Guilleré, who estimates a loss of 15 percent for the city of Girona, although he admits that certain segments of the population, such as notaries and physicians, lost 40-50 percent. Based on a study of wills, Emery estimates a loss of about 50 percent in Perpignan and Gyug estimates a loss of about 60 percent among the clergy of Barcelona. While we lack in-depth studies of the plague in the Kingdom of Aragon, some recent studies have suggested the region did not differ greatly from other parts of the Iberian peninsula. Juan Utrilla, for example, has estimated that Calatayud, the second largest city in Aragon, experienced a cumulative loss of about 38 percent during the second half of the fourteenth century.

Although it is impossible to know precisely how many Christians and Jews were killed by the Black Death, evidence for the demographic impact is abundant in the records of the period. Houses lay abandoned in both Catalonia and Aragon, administrative institutions collapsed as notaries, city officials, postmen, officers of the royal mint, lawyers, and judges, perished along with their neighbours. As early as July of 1348, the prohoms and councillors of Barcelona asked the king to appoint replacements for the positions vacated during the

28 Jordi Nadal, La población española (siglos XVI a XX) (Barcelona: 1971), 66.
29 Bisson, 165; Freedman, 162.
33 ACA C 655: 79r [DAPN, 334]; ACA C 663: 117r [DAPN, 394-5];
epidemics. Berga, a town in northern Catalonia lost not one but all of its jurats and the assistant of the vicar and bailiff. Notaries were particularly hit as they were exposed to the sick when drafting their wills. In the same month of July King Pere was notified that almost all notaries and officials in Rosselló and Cerdanya perished and immediately ordered the governor to appoint new officials. But officials were dying faster than they could be appointed, leading many communities to creatively solve the problem of lack of legal and administrative officials. When a smaller community such as Almudevar, in Aragon, lost all of its notaries during the fateful summer, local scribes or other literate people stepped in to write wills, whose legitimacy became a concern later on. Some, like Juan de Atraro from Almudevar, would later be appointed officially as notary. L’Arboç, in the Penedès, lost all its judges and since it could neither replace them nor send its cases to be adjudicated elsewhere, the king authorized its bailiff to adjudicate the cases himself with the help of a notary or someone else with legal experience.

Some towns could not wait for the king's actions and took it upon themselves to fill

34 ACA C 1062: 100v (17/07/1348) [DAPN, 304]
35 ACA C 1062: 74v (16/09/1348) [DAPN, 315]
36 The necessity to write wills before death to ensure the transmission of property to legitimate heirs is fortunate for the historian as studies of the chronology and impact of the Black Death and subsequent epidemics are possible through the statistical study of such wills. For an example see Guilleré, Girona al segle XIV, especially table on 176-7, where he shows that in Girona, 225 wills were recorded each month on June and July of 1348, compared to less than ten per month between January and April. Similar patterns emerge in Perpignan, where prior to April 1348, the city's notarial registers abounded with records of loans, real estate transactions, commercial acts. See Emery, “The Black Death of 1348 in Perpignan”. After the onset of the plague in mid-April 1348, Emery shows that these practically vanish from the records for the rest of the summer, replaced by wills. Sixty-three wills were recorded between April and June, compared to eight during the rest of the year. After the wave of disease left the town, most of the records in the second half of the year were dedicated to the settlement of estates, inheritance disputes and the guardianship of heirs, continuing well into 1349.
37 ACA C 960: 43 v (16/07/1348) [DAPN, 302-3]
38 ACA C 677: 118v–119r (26/05/1353) [DAPN, 415-6]; ACA C 652: 159r (27/09/1348) [DAPN, 316]
39 Juan de Atraro, the scribe who acted as notary at Almudevar after all the notaries perished is one of those who got confirmed in the position afterwards. See ACA C 652: 159r (27/09/1348).
40 ACA C 961: 133v [DAPN, 355-6]
empty positions normally at the king’s discretion. While the appointment of local bailiffs was normally the prerogative of the general bailiff, in practice the king took personal interest in appointing bailiffs for the most important cities.\textsuperscript{41} When the city council of Berga appointed a temporary replacement for its late bailiff it presumably did not know the headaches it would cause. When a new royal bailiff was finally appointed by the king, some of the local citizens took advantage of the irregular status of the temporary bailiff to appeal decisions he made, bringing into question his authority since he had not been confirmed by the king. The case was solved only when the king ordered that the decisions of the temporary bailiff be upheld by the new bailiff. It illustrates both the urgency of towns to restore a modicum of order but also the ways in which people could take advantage of the chaotic situation.\textsuperscript{42} Surviving officials saw their area of jurisdiction increase; northern Catalonia, a region that had previously been administered by two vicars, was left to one.\textsuperscript{43} The breakdown of the administrative infrastructure was widespread.

The loss of population was certainly marked enough to elicit concern over the ability of each state to protect itself against invasion. One of the earliest letters that reached the royal chancery dealing with the Black Death was a frantic call for reinforcements for the island of Mallorca, where so many died that its governor claimed it lay unprotected.\textsuperscript{44} Menorca would also need reinforcements later on.\textsuperscript{45} The islands were not the only regions affected in such a way. In the spring of 1349, King Pere cancelled military aid he had agreed to send to Castile to

\textsuperscript{41} Luis Blanco Domingo, “Una visión institucional de las mutaciones del siglo XIV: el Bayle General de Aragón durante el reinado de Pedro IV el Ceremonioso (1336-1387),” Revista Zurita 69-70 (1994): 66.
\textsuperscript{42} ACA C 654: 91r-v, 28/1/1349 [DAPN, 335]
\textsuperscript{44} ACA C 1062: 80v-81r (9/05/1348) [DAPN, 294-6]
\textsuperscript{45} ACA C 1413: 56r (15/06/1349) [DAPN, 354]
help in the war against Granada and prohibited his nobles and knights from going to Castile in
pursuit of glory or spoils since the loss of so many soldiers had left the Crown vulnerable to
invasion. It would take another year before the king would send the promised help to
Castile.

Perhaps it was not invasion that King Pere feared but a collapse of public order. Home
invasions and plunder became common as houses lay abandoned after their owners fled or
died from the plague. As vicars, bailiffs, and jurats died, many places were left with
insufficient officials to guarantee public order. In Tárrega, a city northwest of Barcelona, extra
officials had to be appointed to help the bailiff deal with the civil strife that had engulfed the
city after the death of many of its inhabitants. Crime also led to further population loss as
people moved out of areas that had become lawless.

The Jews were no less affected by the epidemic than Christians. Living in crowded urban
centres, often amidst Christians, Jewish communities throughout the Crown of Aragon
experienced the same breakdown of administrative structure, loss of population and the
resultant economic downturn. Zaragoza seems to have been particularly hard-hit. In October
1348, King Pere temporarily suspended the levy of taxes on its aljama after being notified that
only one fifth of the aljama of Zaragoza survived. While the figures presented by the Jews of
Zaragoza were no doubt inflated, the death rate in Aragon was high enough to make it

46 ACA C 1062: 158r; 163 r-v [DAPN, 348, 350]
47 ACA C 1064: 64v-65r, 29/01/1350 [DAPN, 374-5]
48 The royal registers have numerous examples of these cases. See DAPN, 306, 338-9, 343-4,
353, 381-2, 413-4.
49 ACA C 654: 14r, 6/10/1348 [DAPN, 318-9]
50 Prades, in Catalonia, was still losing population five years after the plague arrived due to
ongoing crime. See ACA C 677: 190v-191r [DAPN, 417-8];
51 Aljama is the body of Jews or Muslims, i.e. the community; it is comparable to the Christian
municipality or universitas.
credible at court. "Three hundred died a day", registered Pere the Ceremonious in his chronicle. The court ordered that the amount of peyta, a property tax, be recalculated according to the number of survivors after the crisis subsided.\textsuperscript{52} That the situation was difficult in Zaragoza is evident when officials seemed unable to attend the Cortes of Aragon, convened in the summer of 1349 in Teruel.\textsuperscript{53} Although we lack even imprecise figures for the demographic impact of the Black Death on Jewish communities of Catalonia, they did not escape lightly. Jewish cemeteries in Girona and Barcelona quickly became overcrowded and new burial sites needed to be found. In Barcelona, the aljama administration was left depleted of its leaders as few suitable members of their community were left.\textsuperscript{54}

It is against this backdrop of chaos and uncertainty that violence erupted in five cities of the Crown of Aragon. On May 17th, 1348, Christians accompanying a funeral procession passing by the call of Barcelona spilled into the narrow streets of the Jewish quarter brandishing weapons in a scene that royal scribes did not measure words to describe.\textsuperscript{55} Under

\textsuperscript{52} ACA C 654: 29 [Baer I: 332]: "Cum aliama judeorum civitatis Cesarauguste occasione vehementis epidimie et mortalitatis, que in ipsa aliama invaluit hiis diebus intantum, quod vix quinta pars ipsorum judeorum remansit, ad depauperationem irreparabilem sit deducta (...)", the king goes on to prohibit the demand of any "subsidiis, tributi, assignationum, cavalleriarum, ce[na]rum et debortorum" until "dicte mortes divina clementia cessaverint et juxta numerum personarum, que remanserit in dicto ebraysmo, quantum et per quem modum peytare debeant..."

\textsuperscript{53} ACA C 1062: 133v (19/11/1348) [DAPN, 332].

\textsuperscript{54} On the cemeteries: ACA C 678:101v [DAPN, 415]; ACA C 888: 228 [Baer I: doc. 243]; on the death of aljama officials, see ACA C 942: 198v [Baer I: doc. 244].

the call of "Muyren los traydors", similar attacks occurred in the Catalan cities of Tárrega, Cervera and Lleida prompting historians to quickly place them in the context of scapegoating that marked violence against the Jews around Lake Geneva and the Rhineland. In places such as Strasbourg, struggling to cope with and understand the magnitude of the epidemic, Christians accused Jews of poisoning wells and sought revenge and this is still a popular explanation for anti-Jewish violence anywhere in Europe during the Black Death. While it is tempting to place the attack against the Jews in Catalonia within the same accepted pattern of reactions to the Black Death, a closer look at the attacks and their local contexts tells us a different story.

For one, there is no evidence that Jews were accused of well-poisoning anywhere in the Crown of Aragon. Other marginal groups were the targets of that calumny. That first letter announcing the arrival of the plague in Narbonne, mentioned previously, accused the poor of spreading the epidemic. As mentioned earlier, when the Vicar of Narbonne announced the arrival of the disease, he attributed it not only by the alignment of stars and planets but by the action of the poor allegedly found near the entrance of many large cities in Languedoc with

irruere non sunt meriti absque omni penitus ratione calles et hospitia ipsorum Judeorum expugnando et invadendo et ipsos judeos in non modico numero crudeliter et impie occidendo, vulnerando et percussionibus faciendo de pecunias, instrumenta debitoria, vestes, superlectilia et alia bona universa qui in domibus dictorum Judeorum ceperunt, more predonum secum asportando et eos in itineribus disraubando que sie temerarie // et detestabiliter attemptata in maximum dampnum et irreparabilem detrimentum dictorum Judeorum qui sub nostra garda, protectione et custodia speciali, constituти existunt et regaliarum et jurium nostrorum diminutionem et nostre dominationis minus pretium ac rei publice lesionem et malum exemplum noscuntur proculdubio redundare."

56 This is certainly the version vividly presented in Ildefonso Falcones’s *La catedral del mar* (*L'església del Mar* in Catalan) the 2006 best-selling novel set in fourteenth century Barcelona that has captured the imagination of critics and public alike, quickly becoming a publishing phenomenon in Spain and several countries and accumulating literary awards. See particularly, pp. 346-352. Robert Chazan’s recent survey of the history of the Jews in medieval Europe also suggests scapegoating as the root of the violence - *The Jews of Medieval Western Christendom, 1000-1500*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006).
packets of "suspicious powder". Suspicion was also directed at foreigners in general, such as pilgrims, who had to request special safe-conducts from the king to pass through the area. Even the clergy were not above suspicion. In Catalonia, two Augustinian monks, on their way to a general chapter of the order in Italy, were warned that rumours were circulating in Barcelona that people disguised as clergy were poisoning wells. On their way to Girona they ran into two Franciscans friars who decided to turn back on their way to a meeting of the order in Verona, afraid of the hostility displayed towards strangers. 

Scholars have found no evidence that similar rumours involving well poisoning were circulated about the Jews in the Crown of Aragon. In 1348 or 1349 we see no similar requests for extra protection on the part of Jews, or a fear that they may be blamed for the plague. This accusation is notably absent from both the letters of the Jewish community protesting the attacks and the many letters issued by Pere the Ceremonious describing the events and seeking punishment of those responsible for what was described as a "dangerous scandal and a scandalous danger". The closest connection between the Jews and the plague would appear six years later, in 1354, when two representatives of the Jewish communities of Catalonia met with a representative of the Jewish community of Valencia and together they drafted a supra-aljama agreement to obtain bulls and ordinations from Christian religious and secular authorities to ensure Jewish well-being. Among other requests, the accord requested the king to intercede with the pope to prohibit Christians from attacking Jews at times of plagues or famines or accusing them of host desecration. The gist of the complaint,

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57 Guilleré, Girona al segle XIV, 167-168.
59 ACA C 1313: 106r [Pogrom, n. 12]
60 A recent edition of this document can be found in Eduard Feliu, “Els acords de Barcelona de 1354,” Calls 2 (1987): 145-180; for Hebrew original see Louis. Finkelstein, Jewish self-
however, was not that Jews were accused of spreading the plague by poisoning wells but rather that some Christians understood that they were being punished by God for sins committed by Jews.\textsuperscript{61}

David Nirenberg has suggested that Christians turned against their Jewish neighbours because of their sins.\textsuperscript{62} Divine will was certainly the main explanation given in the sources for the arrival of the plague and its mortality.\textsuperscript{63} Contemporaries understood that God sent the plague to punish them for their sins. At one level, this prompted a greater concern for reform, which would dominate European society for the next two hundred years, but it also had more immediate effects. In Mallorca, as Nirenberg points out, "[r]oyal officials... attempted to forestall the pestilence of 1348 by banning gambling, swearing, working on Sundays, fishing for profit on holidays, and dressing ostentatiously."\textsuperscript{64} If the sins of Christians could cause such a calamity, the sins of Jews were equally, if not more, damning. Although the psychological impact of the sudden death of a significant proportion of the population cannot be underestimated, not all communities reacted the same way and not all cases of violence were connected to the epidemic. If that was the case, surely more communities would have been attacked. Zaragoza, for example, despite being ravaged by the plague, witnessed no tensons of this kind.

\textsuperscript{61} Feliu, “Els acords de Barcelona de 1354,” 153: "...que aturi el mal capteniment de la gent del poble, la qual el dia que s’esdevé qualsevol pesta o fam fa tremolar la terra cridant: Tot això passa per culpa dels pecats de Jacob; destruïm aquesta nació, matem-los!” Jaume Riera warns against reading the accords as an accurate description of the situation of Jewish communities in the Crown of Aragon. See Jaume Riera i Sans, “Guia per a una lectura comprensiva dels acords,” \textit{Calls} 2 (1987): 168. Its context had perhaps more to do with internal politics and conflicts with aljamas of Valencia and Catalonia than actual threats to the Jewish community. .

\textsuperscript{62} David Nirenberg, \textit{Communities of Violence}, 238-9.

\textsuperscript{63} López de Meneses, “Una consecuencia de la peste negra en Cataluña: el pogrom de 1348,” 96.

\textsuperscript{64} Nirenberg, \textit{Communities of Violence}, 239.
Perhaps the reasons need to be sought beyond the plague. The case of the Jews of Morvedre is a useful example. A town 30km north of Valencia, Morvedre housed the second largest Jewish community in the Kingdom of Valencia, a community that was attacked in the summer of 1348. A recent detailed study of the Jewish community of Morvedre shows that the Jews were attacked not because of any scapegoating for the plague but rather because they were "caught in the crossfire" of various conflicts among Christians – that is, between Valencian rebels and royalist forces, between the municipalities of Valencia and Morvedre and between the city and rural lords.65 That the violence happened during the time of the plague was more a coincidence than a cause. It is worth stressing that the Black Death arrived in the Crown of Aragon during a civil war that pitched the king against noble factions in Aragon and Valencia. The Jews of Morvedre had close connections not only to the king himself but also to local Christian families on the royalist side and the attack was led by those on the side of the Unionist rebels.

Local political strife also seems to have preceded the violent attacks against the Jews of Tárrega.66 In that city, the local bailiff played a key role in inciting the population to attack the Jews. The reasons remain unclear and it was not the first or last time the Jews would get into conflict with overzealous municipal or local royal officials. The town continued to be embroiled in civil strife for years after the epidemic, prompting many Jews to migrate to other cities and causing those who stayed behind to be fearful of leaving the call.67 Concerned with the impoverishment of the community, caused by the loss of so many influential Jews, King Pere would continually attempt to block the emigration of Jews from Tárrega as well as encourage (or force) their return. In 1350 the king gave thirty days to all the Jews who had left

65 Meyerson, Iberian Frontier, 212.
66 Nirenberg, 243; López de Meneses, “Pogrom,”116ff
67 Ibid,122-3
in the previous decade to return, an order later repeated in 1356. Tensions remained high throughout the 1350's for those who stayed behind. In 1352 Jewish creditors in Tárrega did not dare collect their debts, fearful of attacks.

In Cervera, the years prior to the attacks were preceded by Christian-Jewish conflict as well as anti-Jewish preaching by a local friar. In 1346, at the request of the local aljama, King Pere the Ceremonious asked for the transfer of the friar Pere Dezquo from Cervera due to the virulent nature of his preaching. There is also evidence that foreigners played a role in the attacks on the call of Cervera. In both Cervera and Tárrega, the violence was preceded by a traditional rallying call of "Muyren los traydors." The cry of "death to the traitors" does not necessarily mean the attackers were punishing the Jews for a perceived betrayal. As David Nirenberg points out, the cry was applied to any attack, including against fellow Christians. As for Barcelona and Lleida, more research needs to be done at the local level to understand the social and political context of the attacks there. The attacks in Lleida are barely reflected in the sources for the period, suggesting they were of a more limited nature. López de Meneses places the violence in Barcelona in the context of absence of authority during the epidemic, which allowed "all kinds of excesses" but we know little about those involved in the attacks.

Another possible motive for the attacks was financial and economic. Although

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68 ACA C 690: 79r, 88r; Girona would received a similar order in 1356: ACA C 690: 88r-v. Both orders would be subsequently cancelled. Cited in Pogrom, 125.

69 "...ut antea consueverant metuunt vel non sunt ausi ad eorum credita recuperandum, per loca dicte ville et aliter ire vel reddere..." ACA C 668: 181r 18/01/1352 [Pogrom, Doc. 22]

70 Pogrom, 110. The role of mendicant preachers in the deterioration of Christian-Jewish relations is amply demonstrated in Jeremy Cohen, The friars and the Jews: the evolution of medieval anti-Judaism (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1982) but as we will see in chapter 5, King Pere reversed the conversionary policy of his predecessors and often interfered to protect Jewish communities from the harassment of preachers.

71 ACA C 1321: 116r-v 31/05/1352 [Pogrom, doc. 29]

72 Pogrom, 110, 115-6

73 Nirenberg, Communities of Violence, 238, n.27.

74 Pogrom, 99.
medievalists like Norman Cantor dismiss the notion that Christians "cynically used the plague as an opportunity to dissolve their debts to the Jews and to recoup some of the wealth that had passed into Jewish hands," it remains evident that one common feature of the attacks against the Jewish quarters of Barcelona, Tárrega, Cervera and Lleida was the burning of credit records. The scribes specify over and over again that the attackers "burned many instruments and written records of contracts of the Jews".  

Here it is worth taking a moment to stress that moneylending was by no means the only occupation open to Jews in medieval Spain. As we will see in chapter 2, unlike their co-religionists in Northern Europe, Spanish Jews were well integrated into the local economy as artisans, merchants, producers of wine and other foodstuffs. Jews were also the only ones to engage in credit business; the emergence of new credit mechanisms, such as the *censal* and *violari*, a form of mortgage loan, in the mid to late fourteenth century allowed for more and more Christians to get involved in moneylending.  

Faced with increased competition from Christians, the Jews diversified and specialized in short-term loans, leaving the long-term lending to Christians. They also increasingly shifted their credit operations to the countryside. By the mid fourteenth century, nearly 90% of Jewish credit in the city of Girona, for example, was lent in the countryside, rather than in the city.  

Considering that the densely-populated Catalan countryside was particularly hard-hit by the plague, it should not be surprising if some Christians would take advantage of the breakdown of public order during the Black Death to attack their creditors and get rid of their short-term debt.  

What is perhaps most interesting is that these attacks were not more widespread.

75 ACA C 658: S2r-v, Pogrom, #14.  
76 Christians were involved in lending money before but as we will see, the *censal* and *violari* made lending easier and therefore more widespread. *Censal* and *violari* were also not considered usury by the church.  
Among the dozens of Jewish communities in the Crown of Aragon only five were attacked during the time of the Black Death, which suggests not a popular reaction to the plague - since that affected the whole area - but more local reasons, as the example from Morvedre suggests. In other words, the attacks were not necessarily plague-related. It is worth noting that despite the virulence of the plague in places like Zaragoza and Calatayud, no such attacks occurred in the kingdom of Aragon.78

The destruction of credit records greatly aggravated the economic situation of many Jews, who found themselves unable to collect their debts. Two years after the attacks, the Jews of Cervera and Tárrega were still trying to enforce the contracts lost. Since the Crown took seriously the financial health of the Jewish communities, King Pere issue directives in the years following the plague instructing local scribes and notaries to aid the Jews in re-registering their lost credit records.79 Considering that many Jewish moneylenders increasingly specialized in short term loans in this period, the loss of contracts no doubt had immediate economic consequences.80 But Christians were not the only ones who took advantage of the loss of credit records to shirk their obligations. Abraham Azday, for example, accused the aljama of Tárrega of defaulting on the money it owed to him after his receipt was lost during the attack of the call.81

Default payments were not the only source of conflict Abraham Azday had with the aljama of Tárrega. Fleeing the violence in Tárrega, Azday relocated to Lleida in 1348. For Jews, 78 This does not mean that Aragonese Jewish communities were not worried about the possibility of the more violent among the local Christian population taking ritual violence too far during the epidemic. In July 1348, answering a request by the aljama of Teruel, the king ordered the bailiff and justice of the city to complete the closure of the judería so that they could be protected from "offensis, injuriis, violentiis et oppressionibus," particularly at Easter. It makes no reference to the plague. See ACA C 887: 37r; Pogrom, #4]. This fear might have been related to the civil war, however, as Teruel hosted royalist forces during the conflict. 79 Pogrom, 114, 122. 80 Guilleré, “Juifs et chrétiens,” 56. 81 ACA C 670: 159r (15/06/1352); [Pogrom, #30]
migration had marked fiscal consequences. Since they were under direct royal jurisdiction, the Jews of the Crown of Aragon had to pay direct and indirect taxes to their sovereign. Each Jew belonged to an aljama, which itself belonged to a wider grouping known as a collecta, which typically included a large Jewish community and smaller Jewish aljamas in its outlying areas.\(^{82}\)

The king would demand a certain contribution from his aljamas which would then internally collect the money from their members, based on an assessment of individual property and wealth. If a Jew moved to a town or city outside his collecta, he had to obtain a dispensation from his original aljama, otherwise he might be doubly taxed. He would be expected to contribute to the taxes collected by his new aljama, particularly if he bought property, which was often seen as a sign that the move was more permanent. Abraham Azday claimed he had secured an agreement with his aljama over his move, which was ignored, making him liable for paying taxes in both Lleida and Tárrega. Azday was not alone in this situation as Mosse Naçan, also from Tárrega, was still embroiled in disputes over his move from Tárrega in 1356.\(^{83}\)

Taxation proved a source of conflict even among the Jews who stayed in their towns. Some Jewish families weathered the economic effects of poor harvests and plague epidemics better than others, leading to disputes to re-calculate the proportion of taxes paid by individual families. In 1353, members of the Cavallería family of Zaragoza asked that the proportion of the tributes that they owed to the Order of the Knights Hospitallers be reduced as their family was hit heavily by the epidemics, losing the head of the family as well as significant revenues. This reduction would be offset by increasing the proportion owed by the Alazar (or Abenalazar) family, which, they claimed, had actually grown wealthier since the plague. The Hospitallers acceded to this request since they agreed that the Cavallería family

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\(^{83}\) ACA R 669: 157v-158r; 1/07/1352 [Pogrom, #31].
had been reduced to "so few" and the Alazar "were many... and had improved much in their property....". 84

Royal response to the crisis lay in efforts to encourage re-population, discourage further demographic loss in smaller communities, financial reprieves and attempts to control prices. Marriage was suddenly a matter of national import and the king did not hesitate to write to the pope in the fall of 1348 to ask for a dispensation so that his people could marry within the prohibited degrees since many of his lands lay unpopulated. 85 Later on he would pardon a scribe who married a widow without waiting the required minimum period of mourning of one year (any de plor) since "it would be in everybody’s best interest, considering the amount of widows left by the plague, to have them remarry in the shortest amount of time." 86

Urban and rural communities, Christians, Jews, and Muslims, all sought financial reprieve to weather the crisis caused by the combination of bad harvests and plague. Moratoria and tax breaks were the most widely employed mechanisms Pere the Ceremonious used to promote recovery or at least ensure the survival of towns and aljamas in Catalonia and Aragon. The crisis often took precedence over military interests. The city of Calatayud, for example, was exempted from contributing reinforcements to the royal forces fighting against the Union of Valencia and the town of Cornella de Confluent had its contribution to defend

85 ACA C 1062: 125r-126v (5/11/1348), [DAPN, 326-7]
86 ACA C 891: 8r (8/07/1350), [DAPN, 385-6]
Mallorca reduced to one third. Other communities, like the Jewish aljama of Montblanc, received moratoria while others had their debts remitted by royal grants.

It was certainly more beneficial to landowners to accommodate tenants in difficulties than to lose them altogether and be unable to find someone to work the land. The Knights Hospitallers articulated this well in 1349: "it is more beneficial to us and our order to lower our rents and tributes than to have those possessions revert to our hands." In other words, it was better to have less income in the short term than no income at all. It was precisely in this vein that Pere the Ceremonious allowed Muslims without legitimate heirs to will their goods to other members of their community.

One of the best known economic effects of the loss of workers to plague or emigration was the rise in salaries and prices. The rise in salaries was beneficial for the peasants and middling classes that survived the plague, sparking greater economic aspiration and resistance to lords and urban oligarchies who tried to protect their revenue and influence through the use of legislation and the courts. In Castile, royal policy led to increasing Christian-Jewish conflict as Castilian kings attempted to supplement their dwindling incomes by farming taxes to Jews. As incomes fell, urban oligarchies clashed with Jewish tax farmers for access to the profits of such activities. In Catalonia, Pere ordered that a tax be imposed on the salaries of artisans and other workers in order to curb the rise in salaries, while in Aragon,

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87 ACA C 1131: 96r-v [DAPN, 321-22]; ACA C 1317: 3r-v [DAPN, #82]
88 ACA C 654: 129r-v [DAPN, 342-3]; ACA C 888: 175v [DAPN, 349-50]
89 AHN, Registro de la Castellanía de Amposta, I: 107r-108r, cited by Luttrell, 503.
90 Normally, the goods of a Jew or Muslim who died without legitimate heirs would revert to the Crown. In the aftermath of the plague, many communities founds themselves unable to continue paying taxes to the king since much of the property over which this tax would be levied had reverted back to the Crown. See ACA C 888: 154r-v [DAPN, 340-1]
91 The English Rising of 1381 and the Ciompi Revolts in Italy are well known examples of these struggles. See Christopher Dyer, Standards of living in the later Middle Ages : social change in England, c. 1200-1520 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998) as well as the articles in R.H. Hilton and T. Aston, eds., The English Rising of 1381
92 Ruiz, 303-306.
the Cortes of Zaragoza discussed legislation to control prices. The situation had hardly stabilized when war erupted in 1356 worsening the plight of those who survived the plague epidemic.

**War with Castile**

Relations between Castilian and Aragonese monarchs remained stable during the first decade of King Pere's rule. As we have seen above, Aragonese troops were sent to Castile before and after the Black Death to aid in the Castilian wars of conquest against the Muslims. Yet tensions between the two crowns lingered under the surface. Castile never got over the Aragonese takeover of Murcia and Alicante in 1304, and in 1347-48, King Alfonso XI encouraged the revolt of the Unions in Aragon and Valencia against King Pere. In addition, loss of income caused by the Black Death led many among the nobility to favour a war against Castile to supplement income. Open conflict finally rekindled when Pedro the Cruel (1350-1369) succeeded to the Castilian throne and, recognizing the weak state of King Pere's dominions after civil war and plague, launched an attack in 1356. The war continued until 1365, although final settlements were not reached until the treaties of Alamzán (12 April 1374) and Lleida (10 May 1375).

Dwindling financial resources limited King Pere's ability to respond to Castilian pressure effectively. The king depended on Catalan resources to fight the war, yet the financial crisis that followed the plague epidemics meant that the more direct sources of income and aid, such as financial and military aid given by individual cities and noblemen, were insufficient to fight the war. Considering that "great expenses ... would have to be incurred over the affairs of

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94 For an outline of the war see Bisson, 110ff.
the war, the king had to turn, therefore, to the Corts, the Catalan representative assembly, which was mainly interested in defending Catalan interests regardless of the urgent nature of the situation in Aragon and Valencia. The Corts effectively held the purse strings and when aid was finally approved it often took months to materialize. Troops promised in the Corts of Cervera for November 1358 only appeared in May 1359, allowing Castilian troops to advance into Aragonese territory unchecked. It took a direct attack by sea in 1359 for the Corts to approve finally more substantial aid in the form of a hearth tax but not without obtaining from the king the power to control how the money was raised and spent. The extra money allowed King Pere the opportunity to launch an offensive against King Pedro that ultimately resulted in the peace of Deza-Terrer.

King Pedro rekindled war in 1362 prompting King Pere to summon a Cortes Generales in Monzón for April 1363. Once again, practical agreements took time to materialize. In December 1363 representatives from Catalonia and Mallorca signed an agreement with the king to arm a fleet of six galleys. To pay for his share of the costs, King Pere had to sell royal properties and privileges throughout his states. The fleet would finally sail out in the spring of 1364, the same year in which the Catalan Corts decided to place its weight behind the king after it concluded that Castilian advances in Aragon and Valencia hurt Catalan trade interests. Perhaps more pertinent for this dissertation, however, is the effect of war on the Jews of Aragon and Catalonia and their relations with Christians.

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95 José Luis Martín, “Las cortes catalanas en la guerra castellano-aragonesa (1356-1365)” VIII Congreso de Historia de la Corona de Aragón: La Corona de Aragón en el siglo XIV 2, 82
96 Martín, 83; Chronicle, ch. VI, 28-29. Peace was aided in no small way by Castilian fear of an attack from Granada, whose ruler, Muhammad VI, had allied with Aragon as well as by King Pere’s concern of a threat from Roussillon, increasingly popular with mercenary companies released from service after the peace of Brétigny, between England and France.
97 Chronicle, ch. VI: 32.
98 ACA: C 1404: 11r-12v (1/12/1363) [Martín, 84.]
99 Martín, 85.
100 Martín, 89.
Many of the battlegrounds in the long, protracted war between Castile and the Crown of Aragon lay in the Kingdom of Aragon, where Jews, Christians, and Muslims were drawn more directly into the conflict. During the war, Calatayud, Tarazona and Teruel were seized and occupied by Castilian troops. Each of these cities had sizeable Jewish communities, whose members were caught in the crossfire of the Castilian-Aragonese conflict. Years after the conflict, Isaac de Quatorze, a Jew from Calatayud, would attribute his imprisonment by Castilian troops to his previous service to King Pere and his role in defending the city. Whether Isaac was exaggerating his role in the defense of the city in order to ensure a sympathetic ruling from King Pere is hard to say, but it would not have been the first time that Jews took the royal side in a conflict. During the revolt of the Valencian Union in 1347-48, the Jews of Morvedre made alliances with royalist nobles, eventually leading to the attack on the jueria in 1348 by the Unionists. In other cases, such as that of the Shepherds' Crusade and the Lepers' Plot in southern France in the 1320s, Jews (and lepers) were attacked in part because attacking them would be akin to attacking the monarchy itself. Either for representing royal interests or for acting in support of the king, Jews were particularly vulnerable to attack in times of conflict and instability and the Castilian-Aragonese war was no exception.

Imprisonment, such as that suffered by Isaac de Quatorze, was not the only fate that
marked the experience of Jews in occupied cities. While Isaac was kept in captivity in Calatayud itself, other Jews were taken to Castile and sold as slaves or hostages. Some, like Sento Saprut, were lucky enough to be redeemed from captivity by their co-religionists in Castile, while others like Juce Benvenist seem not to have returned, leaving their heirs scrambling to take possession of his goods.

The war also led to increased conflict among Jews. Isaac de Quatorze, a wealthy Jew of his community, accused other Jews of his juderia of taking advantage of his captivity to break into his house and steal his goods; he found no moveable objects left upon his return. In Tarazona, Juce Benvenist's goods were stolen by Jews, Christians and Muslims, involving so many people that his heir asked that the case be adjudicated by an outside court to guarantee a fair trial. Similar to the post plague period, the displacement of Jews during the war also led to conflicts over taxation and goods. After being redeemed from captivity by Castilian Jews, Sento Saprut relocated temporarily to Tudela in Navarre. After the war, he moved to Zaragoza, which caused not a small amount of conflict as the aljama of Tudela sought to prevent him from moving his goods to Zaragoza. The same happened to Juce de Quatorze from Calatayud, who fled to Zaragoza during the war, but whose return to Calatayud was prevented by the aljama of Zaragoza, which attempted to charge him extra taxes and other contributions to release him from his obligations in Zaragoza.

The crisis caused by a combination of plague and war was prolonged for many aljamas

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106 This experience was of course not limited to Jews; in Morvedre over seventy people were captured and sent to Castile as slaves or hostages during Castilian occupation. See Meyerson, Frontier kingdom, 239.
107 ACA C 812: 65v-66r (18/05/1380); ACA C 836: 121v-122r (10/06/1383).
108 ACA: C 828: 39r-v
109 ACA: C 836: 121v-122r
110 ACA: C 812: 65v-66r (18/05/1380)
111 ACA: C 822: 71r (13/05/1381)
of the Crown of Aragon. Lleida not only needed a new cemetery in 1353 but by 1381 it had lost so many souls that its council was officially reduced from thirty members to ten.\footnote{ACA C 678: 101v [DAPN, 427-8]; ACA C 936: 79v-80r [DAPN, 434]} Recovery from both the demographic and economic effects of the Black Death might have been swifter had it not been for the eruption of war. The financial burden of the war was enormous and, as we will see in a future chapter, long-lasting. Christian, Jews, and Muslims alike were expected to contribute, in human and financial resources, to the war effort. The Muslim aljamas, for example, saw their annual taxes go from an average of 7,000s before the war to 22,342s between 1355-1360 and 14,011s between 1361-1366.\footnote{Boswell, 240-241.} The Jewish aljama of Zaragoza alone contributed 10,000s to the war effort.\footnote{Motis Dolader, Miguel Angel, Los judíos en Aragón en la edad media (siglos XIII-XV) (Aragón: Caja de Ahorros de la Inmaculada, 1990), 131; see also A. Gutiérrez de Velasco, "La financiación aragonesa de la Guerra de los dos Pedro," \textit{Hispania} 19, (1959): 3-43.} In February of 1359, King Pere realized that his excessive tax demands had caused the depopulation of the Jewish aljama of Morvedre, in the Kingdom of Valencia, prompting him to give tax breaks to the community in order to encourage their return.\footnote{Meyerson, 231-7.} Throughout the war, the king would repeatedly plead for more funds from the Catalan Corts, which eventually acquiesced in the form of a hearth tax that would lead to the chronic debt of cities in Catalonia. The city of Manresa, for example, found itself in dire straits in 1358 and 1359 due to increasing tax demands.\footnote{Jeffrey Paul, "The Catalan city of Manresa in the 14th and 15th centuries: A political, social, and economic history" (University of Toronto, 2005), 55-56.} The end of the war offered no breaks for cash-strapped cities and aljamas as King Pere continued to make demands to finance the defense of his territories against possible invasions and to finance his Sardinian campaign.\footnote{Jordi Morelló i Baget, \textit{Fiscalitat i deute public en dues viles del camp de Tarragona} (Barcelona: Institució Milà i Fontanals, 2001), 187ff.
Plague epidemics continued after 1348. Another wave of mortality hit Catalonia in 1362 and would reappear again in 1371 and 1384.118 While none of these later episodes were as deadly as the initial plague epidemic of 1348, their cumulative impact was not negligible. Furthermore, the full demographic effect of the plague of 1362, which targeted mostly children, would not be felt for another fifteen or twenty years.119 In Aragon, the plague would hit again in 1363, 1371 and 1384. In that kingdom, the situation was so bleak in the 1350s and 1360s that the king had to suspend embargoes placed upon many towns due to their default in the payment of taxes; there was little point in forcing communities to pay taxes when they could not even keep their fields in cultivation.120 The Knights Hospitallers were still issuing moratoria and lowering rents throughout the 1380s, when many of their monasteries remained unoccupied, and attributed the loss of population and the economic crisis to the "wars, sterility of the weather and deaths."121 In Catalonia as well, some fields were still uncultivated in 1364.122

In short, Jews and Christians alike arrived at the 1380s still smarting from the calamities of previous decades. While some indicators point to the beginning of recovery - salaries stagnated for first time, since their rapid rise after massive population decline caused by plague pandemics - both disease and war still echoed in the lives of Jews and Christians. The

118 ACA C 1178: 113r-v (10/01/1362) [DAPN, 425-6]; ACA C 1088: 1r (3/07/1373) [DAPN, 432]; ACA C 1748: 80r (4/05/1384) [DAPN, 435]. See also Guilleré, Girona al segle XIV, 190, 203. For a recent study of the effects of the Black Death and subsequent plague epidemics in Catalonia see Jordi Günzberg i Moll, "Epidemias y mortalidad en la Cataluña medieval: 1300-1500," in Le interazioni fra economia e ambiente biologico nell’Europa preindustriale secc. XIII-XVIII. Economic and biological interactions in pre-industrial Europe from the 13th to the 18th centuries, ed. Simonetta Cavaciocchi (Firenze: Firenze University Press, 2010), 57-80.
119 Guilleré, Girona al segle XIV, 198.
120 Sesma Muñoz, “Movimientos demográficos de largo recorrido en el Aragón meridional,” 268, n.56.
121 Luttrell, “Los hospitalarios en Aragón y la peste negra,” 506-507. Some recent research has brought into question how quickly the Kingdom of Aragon recovered from the plague of 1348. See chapter two and three.
122 ACA C 1573: 25r (3/05/1364) [DAPN, 431-2].
central question remains to what extent these setbacks would lead to growing tensions between Christians and Jews in the 1380s. As we have seen, the displacement of Jews, for example, seemed to cause more internal problems for Jewish communities than conflict between Christians and Jews. Even the violence against Jews in the wake of the Black Death could not be solely explained as a rise in anti-Jewish sentiment. In order to understand to what extent social, economic and political tensions set the stage for the violence of 1391, the following chapters will focus on the decade between 1380-1391 to examine more broadly the nature of Christian-Jewish relations during this important decade.
Chapter 2 – Jewish work, the economy, and the changing nature of debt

On February 17, 1385, Jucef Camhi, a Jewish coral worker (coralero) from Barcelona, hired the young Astrugo, son of the tailor Jafuda Navarro, as an apprentice in his trade.1 Less than a year before unprecedented violence would pit Christians against Jews in Barcelona, two merchants, one a Jew and another a Christian, hired another Jewish coralero to make rosaries for them.2 A few months earlier, the young Davi Cresp had found employment as a servant to the Jewish physician Astrug Bonafos.3 Artisans, merchants, physicians, servants, were only a few of the occupations open to Jews in Aragon and Catalonia at the end of the fourteenth century. Catalan and Aragonese Jews, like elsewhere in the Iberian Peninsula, could and did pursue a variety of economic activities. Since no other factor played a stronger role in shaping Christian-Jewish interaction, this chapter will survey some of the economic avenues open to Jews in the Crown of Aragon, paying particular attention to evidence of economic hardships and how these could lead to increased tensions between Christians and Jews. Royal policy devoted to protecting Jewish economic interests to ensure the Crown’s fiscal health had the unintended consequence of worsening the effects of the economic crisis for some Christians, who increasingly resented Jews. In the end, however, both Christians and Jews were similarly affected by the increasing indebtedness and fiscal pressure that characterized the late fourteenth century.

1 AHPB. Francisco de Pujol, leg. 1, man., years 1385-1386 [Madurell, n. 17]
2 AHPB. Bernardo Nadal, leg. 17, 1390: 50 [Madurell, n. 78]
3 AHPB. Mateo Ermengol, leg. 1, man., years 1389 [Madurell, n. 61]
Like Islamic rulers throughout the Mediterranean, the rulers of the Crown of Aragon issued few restrictions on Jewish economic activities. Muslim rulers based their more tolerant policy both on a positive attitude towards commerce and as well as a theological understanding of Jews and Christians as protected minorities within the Islamic state. In the Crown of Aragon, rulers based their policies on pragmatic considerations and tradition. Jews, after all, had been part of the social landscape of Iberia since Roman times and they played an important role in the process of Christian expansion into Muslim territories. Economic considerations also led Catalan monarchs to encourage Muslims to remain in newly acquired territories, adding to the ethnic plurality of the expanding Christian kingdoms. As inhabitants of a Mediterranean polity, Catalans tended to value commerce highly and allow financial and commercial interests to dictate policy. These pragmatic considerations led to very few restrictions imposed on Jewish (or Muslim) economic activities. As Mark Meyerson and Benjamin Gampel have shown, Jewish economic diversity and integration into local economies contributed to better relations with the Christian population. Yet Yom Tov Assis suggests that by the 1320s Jews were increasingly marginalized economically, being pushed away from merchant guilds. While it is true that Jewish merchants faced increasing competition from Christians, wholesale, maritime commerce was only one sector of the economy, though a

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lucrative one. Before turning to economic relations between Christians and Jews, this chapter, will discuss the range of occupations open to Jews in the late fourteenth century. In general terms, Jews continued to work in a variety of occupations, being particularly prominent as physicians and brokers, bringing into question any assumption about their marginalization. Although their role in the credit business changed considerably in the late fourteenth century, their fiscal contributions remained important and a source of conflict between cities who sought to tax them and the king, who had exclusive fiscal jurisdiction over the Jews. A close look at complaints over moratoria issued by the king also suggests that although the economic crisis affected all states of the Crown of Aragon, Aragon began to recover earlier than Catalonia, opening more opportunities for Jews.

**Jewish economic activities**

The challenge in exploring the nature of Jewish occupations in the medieval Crown of Aragon lies in the sources. The economic activities of Jews were seldom specified in the royal registers and in notarial documents. Whereas Christians derived their status and were identified according to their profession - and in the case of women by their relationship with a man - Jews derived their status from their identity as Jews. The standard formula in the royal chancery registers as well as in notarial records was simply to identify someone as a Jew, followed by the city of residence. This practice makes it a challenge to assess properly Jewish economic activities. Yet, although the vast majority of Jews were not identified by their profession in the royal registers, the fact that Catalan monarchs employed Jews and regulated certain professions ensured that at least some Jews were identified in the context of their profession. These documents give us at least a sense of the range of activities in which Jews were involved. Like their Christian neighbours, the Jews also registered work contracts with
local notaries; these, as well as a host of local studies, give us a glimpse of the level of Jewish integration in local economies.

Jews had played an important role in financial and bureaucratic positions in the royal administration until the end of the thirteenth century. Their administrative skills and dependence on the monarchy made them officials of choice of the count-kings of Catalonia and Aragon. Jews served as bailiffs, ministers and financial advisors. This policy stood in violation of royal laws and church doctrine, which determined that Jews should not hold positions of authority over Christians and was deeply resented by local Christian elites, who felt that Jews were taking their legitimate place within the state. The issue loomed large in the rebellion of the Aragonese Union in 1283. Among the concessions made to the rebels, King Pere II promised to dismiss his Jewish officials. This episode has been interpreted by scholars in a variety of ways. Some look at it in a positive way by arguing that the dismissal of Jewish officials in the Christian courts allowed Jewish elites to turn their administrative skills towards the internal administration of Jewish aljamas. Others see this decline of Jewish power in a more negative sense as the beginning of the end of Jewish relevance and influence in medieval Spain. Yom Tov Assis, for example, concludes a chapter on the relationship between the Jews, the Church, and the Crown in the Crown of Aragon thus: “Having lost their political power at the end of the thirteenth century, the Jews of the Crown of Aragon showed

9 González Antón, *Las Uniones aragonesas y las Cortes del Reino (1283-1301)*; For a summary of the conflict as well as its repercussions in Valencia, see Meyerson, *Iberian Frontier*, 64-78. R. I. Moore has famously connected a worsening of attitudes against Jews in medieval society with the development of a literate Christian administrative class, which saw Jews as competitors.
10 González, *Uniones aragonesas*, 2: 14-19. On Jewish bailiffs, it determined: “demandamos riccos omnes e todos los otros sobredichos que en los rregnos de Aragon e de Valencia ni en Robagorça ni en Teruel que non aya y bayle que judio sea.”
the first signs of decline in the 1320s (...) [and] in retrospect they assume great importance and mark the end of a golden age in the history of the Jews in the Crown of Aragon."13 Although it is true that Jews were no longer appointed as bailiffs, the royal family continued to find them useful and to employ them in a variety of positions at the royal court; however, they were careful not to raise them too high. More importantly, the loss of political prominence of the Jews in the Crown of Aragon arguably minimized anti-Jewish sentiment, which raises questions about how to characterize decline.14

At least twenty-four Jews, both men and women, are cited by name in the 1380s as employed by the king, the queen, and the *infantes* in the royal registers of the Crown of Aragon. Of those, the best known are Benvenist de la Cavalleria and Alatzar Golluf, from Zaragoza, and Salamon Abendahuet, from Calatayud. Some of these families had served the king since the early part of the thirteenth century. The de la Cavalleria family had performed services for the royal family since the days of Jaume I when Judah aben Lavi de la Cavalleria served as bailiff of Zaragoza and chief tax-collector for the crown.15 Hailed by historians as “the most distinguished member” of the family, his descendant Benvenist de la Cavalleria served under Pere III, Joan I, and Martin I.16 Although we still do not know the full range of his activities for the monarchy, he appears often in the records for his services to the king and to the treasury.17 In 1381 Benvenist was responsible for collecting the contributions King Pere requested from Christian municipalities to finance his son’s wedding.18 Alatzar Golluf and Salamon Abendahuet also performed services as financiers and collectors for the king and his family. In 1381, Salamon Abendahuet was granted immunity by Pere the Ceremonious for his

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14 This was the situation in Valencia at the end of the fourteenth century. See Meyerson, *Iberian Frontier*, 274ff.
15 Baer, I: 145
16 For a survey of his career, see Baer, I: 58-60.
17 For example, see ACA C 1285: 109v.
18 ACA C 1102: 49r-v, 76r.
work in the treasury. Golluf appears for the first time in 1383 as an official in Prince Joan’s treasury. After Joan’s coronation in 1387, Golluf was appointed treasurer of Queen Violant. Such examples illustrate the continual reliance on Jews by Catalan monarchs and their families.

But it was not only as financiers and tax-collectors that Jews found work in the royal court. The majority of the Jews employed by the monarchy in the 1380s were employed either as physicians or as servants in the king’s, queen’s, or infantes’ household. Among physicians we have Juneç Trigo, Bahia Constantin, Mosse Enoch, Salamon Savoga, Vital Gracia, and Salamon Caravida. Others, such as a Jewish woman named Chiva or a man named Graxa, were simply referred to as Jews “of our household” or as household servant (*domesticum*). Employment in the royal household offered many benefits to Jews. Individual Jews working for King Pere, King Joan or other members of the royal household were well compensated for their loyal service. The royal registers list many payment orders for services rendered by Jews. The amounts are considerable. In March of 1384 Salamon Abendahuet was paid 5,000 *sous* for services rendered to the king. Benvenist de la Cavalleria and Juce Abenduhet each received 500 gold florins. Salamon Caravida, a physician for the king, received 3,000 *sous*. To give an idea of what these figures mean, an armed cavalryman during the war with Castile made

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19 ACA C 824: 32r. “Salamon abenduhet juheu de la ciutat de Calatau ha traballat e traballa continuament en los affers de la cort e Tresoreria nostra de las quales reportam profit.”
20 ACA C 1454: 50v-51r, 52v, 58r-v; ACA C 1829: 26v-27r; ACA C 1869: 52r-v, 62r.
21 On Juneç Trigo: ACA C 1100: 83r; 938: 168v, 1836: 66v-67r (about conflict with Jewish community); Bahia Constantin: ACA C 814: 126r; Mosse Enoch: ACA C 1271: 2v-3r, 3r-v; Salamon Savoga: ACA C 938: 90r-v; Vital Gracia: ACA C 1898: 61r; Salamon Caravida: ACA C 1280: 39r.
22 See, for example, ACA C 853: 54v and ACA C 1890: 152r-v.
23 ACA C 1280: 39r.
seven sous per day, while a weaver of sails would be paid 14 sous for a set of sails and a wetnurse 20 sous per month.  

But perhaps the highest benefit that a Jewish servant of the king sought was tax exemption or immunity against prosecution. Although we know little of what Chiva, the Jewish woman named above, did for Queen Sibilia, we do know she enjoyed tax exemption in Zaragoza, where she lived. Perhaps she provided medical services. Jewish women often worked as midwives or as specialists in gynecological ailments. Cardoner Plañas has found three Jewish women who worked for the court between 1368 and 1381. When the treatments they prescribed proved successful these Jewish women were well compensated for their time.

A Jewish woman called Na Floreta Ćanoga, from Santa Coloma de Queralt, for example, treated Queen Sibilia in 1381 and received, between January and April, 165 gold florins and well as 206 sous and 4 dinars. Chiva’s tax exemption may well have come from performing similar services. Many communities had a certain number of “free” Jews (judios francos), Jews who were free from taxes. As we will see in chapter 3, tax exemption caused much tension within Jewish communities that were expected to contribute more and more taxes to the crown.

As a member of the royal household, a Jewish servant could expect at least to share in all the “graces, privileges, honours, freedoms, immunities, prerogatives, and favours” enjoyed

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25 ACA R 823: 32r-v.
27 Na Ceti, a female Jewish physician from Valencia had not been so successful in 1368. We have no notice she received more than an initial provision of 248 sous and an extra 88 sous to travel from Valencia to Barcelona to attend to the Queen. ACA P 491: 50v; 60v cited by Cardoner, 442.
by other servants. Jews who worked for the Crown would exploit this connection to weather the economic crisis that marked the 1380s. Juneç Trigo, for example, exploited his connection to the king to make sure his debtors did not obtain moratoria from the king.

Only a very small number of Jews, however, worked for the royal family. The average Catalan or Aragonese Christian came into contact with Jews not as members of the royal household, but as physicians, moneylenders, artisans, merchants, or farmers and landowners.

The Cortes of Monzón in 1363 had determined that Jews and Muslims could be licensed to practice medicine freely by passing an examination administered by two local physicians - a Christian and a Jew or Muslim depending on the identity of the candidate. There had been some effort, in the Cortes of 1359, to exclude Jews from practicing medicine by inserting a requirement to attend an Estudio General, an institution closed to Jews, but the measure seems to have been short lived, being replaced, as it was, by the decision of the Cortes of Monzón. The many licenses issued to Jews by King Pere and, later, by his son Joan, show that the 1363 decision remained in effect, sometimes with a variation in the number of Jews involved in the process of granting medical licenses. In July of 1386, Tedroz Abenduet, from

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28 These were listed when a Jews was admitted to the status of “familiarium et domesticorum”. See ACA R 1898: 61r. “…recipimus et admitimus aliorumque familiarum et domesticorum nostrorum consortio aggregamus” and conceded to the servant and his family “gratis privilegiis honoribus libertatibus immunitatibus prerogativis et favoribus” enjoyed by other servants.

29 See chapter 3.


31 Constitutions, Vol I, Libro II, Titulo VI-I Item III, capitulo 12 determines that those seeking the office of judge, regidor, had to have attended five years of a studi General, and “aço mateix en los Metges de art de phisica volem esser observat: Saul que basta aquelles en General Studi per tres anys tant-solament haver oit.” ; Vol. 3, Book II, Title III, Section I, Chapter 17: “Los jueus empero, e Serrahins Metges, hajem esser examinats per Metges de lur Ley, o secta si algu ni haura, empero un Metge Christia ajustat en lo examen de aquells, e Metges de aquella Ley, o Secta no havents, hajen esser examinats per dos Metges Christians, la qual examinatio feta si sufficients seran trobats, hajen a jurar publicament, be, e lealment praticar, ans que a la pratica sien admesos.” (Vol. 3, page 37 of the 1707 edition)
Calatayud, was examined by a Christian and two Jewish physicians prior to being licensed to practice medicine throughout King Pere’s lands.\textsuperscript{32} Even women, as indicated above, could be licensed. In 1387, Joan I confirmed the license issued by his father Pere in 1380 to Na Bellayna, widow of Samuel Gallipapa, and Na Perla, wife of Iafuda Gallipapa.\textsuperscript{33}

The Jews were in fact overrepresented in medicine. Michael McVaugh’s recent study of medical practitioners in the Crown of Aragon in the late thirteenth and early fourteenth century highlights well the importance of Jewish physicians. In Barcelona, for example, despite Christians outnumbering Jews twenty to one, McVeigh found that Christian physicians outnumbered Jewish physicians only 2-1.\textsuperscript{34} In Huesca, nearly half of all physicians were Jews.\textsuperscript{35} Despite some effort by the Church in the thirteenth century to prevent Jewish treatment of Christian patients, in the Crown of Aragon both Jews and Christians freely practiced across religious lines.\textsuperscript{36} Jewish physicians were well respected and towns sought to hire at least one Jewish physician.\textsuperscript{37}

\textsuperscript{32} Pere III’s order to the Christian physicians Raymundo Querol and Bernardo Oriol to examine Tedroz Abeduet alongside two Jewish physicians is on ACA C 852: 37r-v (06 July 1386) and the license was registered on ACA C 947: 196r-v (17 July 1386). See other licenses in ACA C 937: 127v-128r; 142v-143r; 939: 133r; 945: 112r-v; 1100: 27v; 822: 18r-v; 832: 106v-107r; 840: 111r-v; 1895: 235v; and 1896: 192r-v. It seems that it had become common practice for Jews to be examined by one Christian and two Jewish physicians. A similar exam is also described in ACA C 849: 95r-v.

\textsuperscript{33} ACA C 1891: 90v-91r; original license in ACA C 937: 127r-v. This aspect deserves a closer study. David Nirenberg has pointed out that women were increasingly shut out from the medical profession in the fourteenth century. In 1329, the physicians from Valencia lobbied to get women banned from practice. See David Nirenberg, Communities of violence, 120-121; Monica Green, “Women’s medical practice and health care in medieval Europe,” Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society 14 (1989): 434-473.

\textsuperscript{34} M. R McVaugh, Medicine before the plague: practitioners and their patients in the crown of Aragon, 1285-1345 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 55-56.

\textsuperscript{35} Ibid., 56.

\textsuperscript{36} Ibid., 60ff. McVaugh cites many interesting examples of this including clerics hiring Jewish physicians and a Jewish aljama who hired a Christian physician to provide medical care to the Jewish community.

\textsuperscript{37} David Nirenberg cites an offer of an annual stipend by the council of Jaca to a Jewish physician to lure him to settle in the town. See Nirenberg, Communities of violence, 38, n69. See
Although the only Jewish occupations identified in the royal registers were physicians and members of the royal household, notarial records reveal a wider range of occupations available to Jews. A survey of work contracts involving Jews in Barcelona reveals seventy contracts for the years 1370-1391. Of those, unsurprisingly, the vast majority involved artisans. Fifty-one of the Jews entering a contractual obligation with an employer were artisans, eighteen were servants, and one was a broker (curritor). Of the artisans, twenty-two were coraleros, coral fishermen and artisans - twelve of whom were apprentices, the remaining ten split between artisans hiring themselves to do piecework or work full time for a particular master artisan. The second largest group of artisans were weavers, particularly weavers of sails, a thriving industry in Barcelona. A few were dice makers, shoemakers, and tailors. This range is also reflected elsewhere in Catalonia. In Valls, for example, a small town near Tarragona, Jews worked as landowners, stock farmers, artisans in the textile industry, tailors, wetnurses, silversmiths, agents or brokers, parchment makers, and merchants. In Aragon as well, most Jews worked as artisans, producing consumer goods whether in the textile industry (as weavers and tailors) or the leather industry (in leather-making or shoemaking). In Zaragoza and Jaca, for example, over 40% of Jews were artisans. In smaller communities such as Borja and Epila, these numbers reached over 70%.

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40 Miguel Angel Motis Dolader, Los judíos en Aragón en la Edad Media (siglos XIII-XV) (Zaragoza: Caja de Ahorros de la Inmaculada, 1990), 152-54.

also Joseph Shatzmiller, Jews, Medicine, and Medieval Society (Los Angeles, CA: University of California Press, 1994).
In general terms, Jewish occupations varied according to the economic structure of the places in which they lived. In Aragon, which had a more Agrarian economy, Jews also owned rural property. Internal aljama regulations from Huesca, for example, show that Jews in Aragon owned vineyards, fields, and huertos, as well as urban property such as houses and stores. This participation in the countryside varied significantly – from 3.03% of rural property belonging to Jews in Huesca to as many as 30% in smaller Aragonese villages such as Biel. Of the Jews involved in agriculture, the vast majority focused on viticulture. Motis Dolader has studied Jewish agriculture in the mid fifteenth century, a period for which notarial records are more complete, and has found that in Aragon well over 60% of Jewish rural properties were vineyards. This is not surprising considering the demand of Kosher wine within Jewish communities.

The Jews were also prominent as intermediaries in business transactions. In Aragon, Jews brokered deals in the trade of clothing, oil, wheat, livestock, hides, as well as operating more broadly as "agents of the ear." Known as corredores de oreja in Castilian or corredors d'orellà in Catalan, the latter consisted of brokers who relied on their ears; that is, they kept well informed of other people's business and brought together parties with mutual interests.

According to Motis Dolader, although there were equal numbers of Jewish and Christian

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41 M. A. Motis Dolader, ed., Ordinaciones de la Alcabala de la Aljama Judia de Huesca del Año 1389 (Zaragoza: Anubar Ediciones, 1990), 34. See also his Motis Dolader, “Explotaciones agrarias de los judíos de Tarazona (Zaragoza) a fines del siglo XV,” Sefarad 45, no. 2 (1985): 353-390. Jews also owned stores in Catalonia, of course. See ACA C 1842: 13r-v (22/06/1389) for a Jewish shopkeeper’s dispute with his neighbour, a weaver. The Jews of Barcelona also owned land. See Yom Tov Assis, “La participación de los judíos en la vida económica de Barcelona s.XIII-XIV,” in Jornades d’Història dels Jueus a Catalunya (Girona: Ajuntament de Girona, 1990), 82-83.
42 Miguel Angel Motis Dolader, Los judíos en Aragón en la Edad Media (siglos XIII-XV), 143-44. The numbers reach 79.07% in Sos and 76.92% in Tarazona.
43 Ibid., 144-46.
45 For more information on “agents of the ear” see Debra Blumenthal, Enemies and familiaris, 58-60.
brokers in the livestock trade, and only a small number in the textile industry, Jews had a near monopoly as corredores de oreja by the fifteenth century.\textsuperscript{46} This role as broker implied a great degree of trust on the part of their clients, who employed "agents of the ear" particularly for sensitive and private business. In Zaragoza, brokers were appointed by the jurados after a candidate forwarded his name. The only exception were trade brokers who had to be recommended by the confraternity of Santa María de Predicadores, which was Zaragoza’s merchant guild. While this would seem to have militated against the appointment of Jewish trade brokers, the original municipal authorization to the guild to name twenty trade brokers specified that there should be fourteen Christian and six Jewish brokers.\textsuperscript{47} The Christian confraternity continued to appoint Jewish brokers until the expulsion of the Jews in 1492.

The middling and higher classes among Jews needed servants, making that occupation the second most listed in the notarial contracts. Jewish servants belonged to one of two categories - male servants hired often by a physician (six out of sixteen) or female servants hired as wet nurses for periods of up to one year (five out of sixteen). Of the sixteen servants in the contracts catalogued by Madurell Marimon, only seven were women, five of whom were wet nurses. The absence of female servants hired to do domestic work is notable but not surprising. It was common for the middling classes in the Mediterranean to employ female slaves from North Africa or the Baltic region.\textsuperscript{48} Although Jews could not own Christian slaves, they did own Muslim slaves, which might explain the absence of female domestic workers in the contracts from Barcelona. Female Jewish servants are remarkably absent from

\textsuperscript{46} Miguel Angel Motis Dolader, “Los corredores judios en Aragon en la Baja Edad Media,” 99, note 8.

\textsuperscript{47} María Isabel Falcón Pérez, “Notas sobre los corredores de comercio de Zaragoza en el siglo XV,” \textit{Aragon en la Edad Media} 6 (1984): 176, 180-181. “… de los dichos vint corredores, los quatorze han de ser cristianos y los seys judios…”

\textsuperscript{48} See Blumenthal, \textit{Enemies and Familiars}; William D Phillips, \textit{Slavery from Roman times to the early transatlantic trade} (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1985), ch. 4 and 5.\ldots
Rebecca Winer’s recent study of Christian, Jewish, and Muslim women in medieval Perpignan.\textsuperscript{49}

In Barcelona, the only contract involving a single female Jewish servant involved no more than the exchange of work for food and shelter. When she was 6 years old, Reguo was sent to the household of Samuel Benvenist to work as a servant for ten years, in exchange for shelter, food, and clothing.\textsuperscript{50} Usually, when young girls were hired out as servants at an early age, their contracts stipulated either a salary at the end of the contract or provisions made towards a dowry. Reguo’s contract, however, lists only the necessities of her upkeeping, with no other payment for her services. Reguo’s father, a Jewish tailor, was originally from Agramunt, a town over 100km from Barcelona. Could it be that having migrated to Barcelona, he found himself unable to provide for his daughter and felt compelled to leave her in the care of another household?

**Contact with Christians**

The range of Jewish occupations described above shows the degree of Jewish integration into the local economy. By the late fourteenth century, the economy in Barcelona, for example, centered on the manufacture of goods. The four pillars of the local industry were textiles, leather, iron, and coral.\textsuperscript{51} Dice making and shoemaking were also important industries in Barcelona. Of those, the Jews had a near monopoly on the coral industry and were heavily involved in textiles.\textsuperscript{52} Their monopoly on coral work often brought Barcelonese Jews into


\textsuperscript{50} Madurell, n. 67. [AHPB. Mateo Ermengol, leg. 1, ms year 1389]

\textsuperscript{51} Bonnassie, 15-16

\textsuperscript{52} The specialization in coral fishing and manufacturing can be seen even as late as the end of the sixteenth century when many coraleros were of converso origin. Bonnassie, 36.
contact with Christians. As mentioned in the introduction to this chapter, in 1390, two merchants, the Christian Gabriel Gomes and the Jew Isaac Ferrari Jucef, hired Jucef Alies, a master coralero, to produce rosaries for them to sell.\textsuperscript{53} That Jews could be hired to produce Christian religious objects illustrates not only the connections between merchants and artisans but also the kinds of business partnerships possible between Christians and Jews. Economic interests could and did trump religious differences. In this case, Jews were clearly not considered impure when it came to using their skills to manufacture religious artifacts. Trade specialization often promoted this level of interaction; in Aragon, for example, Muslim builders were routinely hired to build or restore Christian churches.\textsuperscript{54} The contract to produce the rosaries cited above seems to have been negotiated by Samuel Capi, a Jewish “agent of the ear”.\textsuperscript{55} In the same year, the Jew Adret Aninay, from Girona, negotiated a sale of a censal, a form of mortgaged loan, between Pere Guillem Sunyer, a representative of the city of Girona, and Guillem de Vilà, from Banyoles.\textsuperscript{56} Another telling example of Christians hiring Jews is that of Francisco Genestar, a mattress maker in Barcelona, who in 1372 hired Salamon Tangit, a lathe operator, to work for him part-time.\textsuperscript{57} The trust between the two sides is evident; Genestar paid Tangit in advance for his services. In Girona, Jews would be hired by Christians to perform all sorts of mundane services such as fixing a hoe or binding books.\textsuperscript{58}

\textsuperscript{53} Madurell, n. 78 [AHPB. Bernardo Nadal, leg. 17, 1390: 50]
\textsuperscript{54} A classic example of this is the Cathedral of Santa María de Mediavilla in Teruel. See Icíar Alcalá Prats, \textit{Guía del Arte Mudéjar en Aragón}, 1st ed. (Zaragoza: Centro de Estudios Mudejares, 2005); Jesús Criado Mainar, ed., \textit{Arte Mudéjar Aragonés, Patrimonio de la Humanidad: Actas del X Coloquio de Arte Aragonés} (Zaragoza: Institución "Fernando el Católico, 2002).[cite specific pages]
\textsuperscript{55} See note 42 above.
\textsuperscript{56} AHCG, Manuals d’Acords, núm. 21 (1390): 24r [Escribà, #681]
\textsuperscript{57} Madurell, n. 12 [AHPB. Berenger Ermengol, leg. 1, man. Years 1371-1372.
\textsuperscript{58} ADG, Sant Feliu de Girona, Obra (Despeses) 1374-1384: 32r; Jews dominated the book-binding industry and the city of Girona often hired Jews to bind their registers. See for example, AHCG, Comptes del Clavari, lligall num. 1 (1353-1358), vol. 1380: 108v [Escribà, num. 585]
Employment also worked the opposite way. Jews would at times hire Christians. Isaac del Castiello (alias Abolfacen) from Daroca hired in 1383 a Christian lawyer (procurator), Juan Lope de Sadornin, to file an appeal at the royal courts regarding a casa which was to be adjudicated according to Jewish law.\(^{59}\) That Jews would hire Christians to navigate in the Christian courts should cause no surprise. More surprising was the common practice for Jews not only to seek Christian courts but also to employ the services of Christian arbitrators to settle disputes within the community. \(^{60}\)

The most common contracts between Jews and Christians, however, remained loan contracts. This has led some historians to argue that although not many Jews (if any) lived exclusively from moneylending, most Jews engaged in the credit business at least some of the time. \(^{61}\) Much has been written about Jewish moneylending, its important function in making credit available in a society where lending money at interest was condemned, and its role in shaping Christian attitudes towards Jews. \(^{62}\) In Northern Europe, in the areas that still accepted Jews, lending money at interest had become one of the few avenues left open to Jews by the late Middle Ages. The situation was markedly different in the Spanish kingdoms. Although the Jews of the Crown of Aragon did engage in moneylending, it was not their main occupation.

\(^{59}\) ACA C 828: 20r. “…ac secundum ritum judeorum fuerit faciendum”

\(^{60}\) See chapter 3.


The censal and changing nature of the credit system

The fourteenth century saw a sharp increase in individual and institutional demand for credit. Despite the deleterious fiscal and demographic effects of wars, plague, and bad harvests, historians have recently pointed to the fourteenth century as a turning point in terms of material culture and patterns of consumption. Recent research on debt and material culture in the medieval Mediterranean suggests that the century was marked by a growing demand for luxury goods, even among the general population. Vicent Ferrer would later preach against the dangers of materialism, often associating it with Jews.

Demand for credit was spurred by more than the development of the consumer market. The biggest driver of changes in the credit system was the volume of money suddenly necessary to satisfy royal and seigneurial demands. In the early fourteenth century, Jaume II dissipated much of the royal patrimony through the sales of cities, castles, jurisdictions, and revenues to raise about 663,000 sous to finance the conquest of Sardinia. The sale of so much of the royal patrimony ultimately led to a loss of royal revenue in the long term. Between 1320 and 1324 the royal treasury received 154,000 sous in revenue. This figure dropped dramatically to 59,000 sous between 1330 and 1339.

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64 In a sermon in Valencia on March 29th, 1413, Vicent Ferrer warn against the dangers of being more concerned with one’s possessions than with one’s souls: “Bona vis habere et bonus non vis esse” (sent Agustí): ‘Les coses que tu has, vols que sien bones, mas tu no vols ésser bo.’ Vols haver bona muller, bon fill, bona gonella, e bona calça: e si vols haver bona calça, vulles haver bona anima tant com la calça(…).” In the sermon, Ferrer warns his listeners to be careful or they would become worse than Jews, always the materialistic character in sermon literature. Vicent Ferrer, Sermons De Quaresma, ed. Manuel Sanchis Guarner (Valencia: Albatros Edicions, 1973), 2: 14.


66 Ibid.
The issue of usury and how to conciliate the need for credit with moral and religious qualms was an important one in societies such as Catalonia where trade and industry played a big role in economic development. Borrowing money from Jews was one solution since prohibitions against lending money at interest applied mostly to coreligionists. Pere III and his successors would increasingly rely on extraordinary contributions from communities – be it cities or aljamas – under their jurisdiction. In 1353, Catalan cities and villages would advance 70,000 pounds to the king, a staggering amount that would be followed in January of 1354 with another 100,000 pounds and 50,000 pounds in August of the same year. Despite comprising only about five percent of the population, the Jews of the Crown of Aragon contributed nearly 28,000 pounds to the king in 1335, with nearly 90% of that sum coming from Catalan and Aragonese aljamas.

In order to guarantee these contributions, King Pere authorized communities under his jurisdiction to collect taxes and borrow money. Until the early fourteenth century taxes

67 See Josep Hernando, “El problema del crédit i la moral a Catalunya (segle XIV),” in La societat barcelonina a la Baixa Edat Mitjana, ed. Carme Battle (Barcelona: Universitat de Barcelona, 1983).

68 Manuel Sánchez Martínez, “La fiscalidad real en Cataluña,” 370-1; Jordi Morelló i Baget, Fiscalitat i deute public en dues viles del camp de Tarragona (Barcelona: Institució Milà i Fontanals, 2001), 171-185 outlines the contributions from the cities in the Camp de Tarragona; for the city of Barcelona alone, this meant 186,157lb 9s and 1d between 1353-59, an average of about 33,000lb/year, see P. Ortí Gost, “La construcció del sistema fiscal municipal a Barcelona, segles XIII-XIV,” Barcelona quaderns d’història 2-3 (1996): 33.


70 Medievalists have paid much attention in recent years to the development of stable tax systems, which has been attributed in large part to growing fiscal demands of rulers engaged in wars of expansion. See Pere Ortí Gost and M. Sánchez Martínez, “La Corona en la génesis del sistema fiscal municipal en Cataluña (1300-1360),” in Col.loqui Corona, municipis i fiscalitat a la baixa Edat Mitjana (Lleida: Institut d’Estudis Ilerdencs, 1997), 233-278; reprinted in Manuel Sánchez Martínez, ed., Pagar al rey en la Corona de Aragón durante el siglo XIV: estudios sobre
were temporary measures to collect money for a specific event and the only form of credit was short-term loans. Taxes would increasingly become more permanent and were transferred to the jurisdiction of municipal governments. Cities small and large throughout the Crown of Aragon would increasingly collect taxes on property, income, commercial transactions, and consumption throughout the fourteenth century. Nevertheless, the money raised from taxation was not enough to satisfy demands from territorial lords, so cities and aljamas came to rely increasingly on the sale of *censals* and *violaris* to finance the deficits they incurred.\(^1\)

The *censal* was a contract of sale in which the seller sold the right to collect a pension or annual income against capital given by the buyer. In other words, the lender bought the right to a pension from the borrower. This form of loan offered many advantages over the short-term loans that had previously dominated the credit market, such as a low interest rate – as low as 5-6% in some cases, usually around 7-8% - and long term repayment schedules. Since the principal did not have to be paid back until the borrower was ready to settle, the *censal* quickly became a useful tool for debt consolidation.\(^2\) The *violari* was distinct from the *censal* in that it had a set limit of one to two generations and thus slightly higher interest rates.

The Catalan constitution first included legislation about the *censal* in 1355. Even before then, Catalan preachers, such as Bernat de Puigcerdós, defended the non-usurious  

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\(^1\) Morelló i Baget, *Fiscalitat i deute public en dues viles del camp de Tarragona*, 743.

nature of the *censal* and *violari.* A few decades later, the Franciscan Francesc Eiximenis would agree with Bernat de Puigcerdós that the sale of a right to receive a pension was just and did not constitute usury. By then, municipalities were already highly dependent on the new credit mechanism. The small town of Valls owed 30 censals in 1360, 45 in 1383, and 60 in the 1390s. Barcelona sold about 450 pensions in the 1350s. In Aragon the pattern was not much different. Although we know much less about municipal taxation in the Kingdom of Aragon during the fourteenth century than we do for Catalonia or Valencia, what we know conforms to the pattern seen for Catalonia. There too fiscal pressure from the king led to the development of a municipal tax system and the increasing reliance on the sale of censals. In Zaragoza, the earliest censal on record was sold by the Jewish aljama to a local nobleman. By the mid fourteenth century, it had become impossible for municipalities or aljamas to bear royal demands without the censal. Calatayud, for example, came out of the war with Castile deep in debt. In 1379, to avoid placing further stress on its citizens, city officials tried to raise money by selling city revenue to Juan Mercer, a businessman from Zaragoza for 10,000 pounds of Jaca. Of course, alienating its revenue was not a wise choice and the city tried to have its agreement with Mercer cancelled in court. Prince Joan, however, sided with the businessman and ordered the city to pay him back 7,000 pounds and 22,000 sous for each

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73 *Constitutions y alters drets de Catalunya* Vol. II, Lib IV, Tit XV, Ley XI; Hernando, “El problema del crèdit i la moral a Catalunya (segle XIV),” 130.
74 Ibid., 131; See also Lawrin Armstrong, *Usury and public debt in early Renaissance Florence: Lorenzo Ridolfi on the Monte Comune* (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 2003).
75 Morelló i Baget, *Fiscalitat i deute public en dues viles del camp de Tarragona,* 798.
76 P. Ortí Gost, “La construcció del sistema fiscal municipal a Barcelona, segles XIII-XIV,” 22.
77 For an overview of sources available for a study of municipal finances in Aragon see Maria Isabel Falcón Perez, “El sistema fiscal de los municipios aragoneses,” in *Actes del Col·loqui Corona, municipis i fiscalitat a la baixa edat mitjana,* ed. Prim Bertran i Roigé, Antoni Furió, and Manuel Sánchez Martínez (Lleida: Institut d’Estudis Ilerdencs, 1997), 191-218.
79 Ibid., 267.
year he did not receive payments from the city. In 1381 the city council went through a massive sale of censals and violaris to raise such funds.  

The ability of Christians to loan money openly to other Christians would be of momentous consequence for the Jews of the Crown of Aragon. In the short term it led to changes in the nature of Jewish moneylending. Guilleré’s study of the Jewish community of Girona in the mid fourteenth century has shown that with the increased competition of Christian lenders in the city itself, the Jews of Girona increasingly targeted rural communities. 

The city of Girona itself borrowed 20,000 sous from the Jews in 1339. This amount fell to 15,000 sous in 1340, while the amount the city borrowed from Christians went up from 9,000 sous in 1339 to 14,000 sous in the following year. In 1341 the city borrowed 33,000 sous from Christian lenders and 15,000 sous from Jewish lenders. With the Girona municipal government borrowing less from Jews, the latter began to lend more in the countryside where there was less competition. There was much demand for credit in the Catalan countryside, where not only was the population dense and economically diversified but lords increasingly relied on dues paid in cash. Guilleré argues that the popularization of censals and violaris led Jews to specialize more in short term loans (from a few weeks to a few months) while censals

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and violaris became the preferred choice for long term investments. The same pattern of a shift to shorter-term loans can be found in Aragon where, by the first quarter of the fifteenth century, there is no evidence of loans issued with a due date of more than one year. Motis Dolader found that in 1410, 44% of the loans issued by the Jews of Zaragoza had to be repaid within three months and 32% within six months.

In the long term, it led to a fundamental change in the credit market. By the fifteenth century, Christian censalistas had come to dominate the market, loaning through the censal to the Crown, municipalities, to ecclesiastical and secular lords as well as to Jewish aljamas and individuals. Historians have highlighted the momentous impact that this development had on Christian-Jewish relations in the Crown of Aragon. Mark Meyerson’s study of the Jewish community of Morvedre, in the Kingdom of Valencia, has shown that as Christians engaged more in the credit business, Jews no longer suffered the negative association with moneylending. The same pattern took place in Catalonia and Aragon, where Jewish usury ceased to be a cause of concern.

In some cities at least, Jews often acquired censals and violaris through the acquisition of the rights to a pension from a Christian censalista. That was the case in Girona, where in the 1380s at least 36 Jews received pensions from the municipality, acquired from Christian

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85 Ibid., 56.
87 Morelló i Baget shows that in Valls and Reus, although Jews appear in the records as moneylenders in the earlier fourteenth century, by mid century they had largely been replaced by Christian censalistas. See Fiscalitat i deute public en dues viles del camp de Tarragona, 755, 783-91.
88 Mark D. Meyerson, Iberian frontie, 206-209; Idem, Jewish renaissance, 107-108, 244-245.
A typical case is that of Esclarmonda, a Christian woman from Torroella de Montgrí, who held the rights to several pensions from the city of Girona, investments that she either made herself or inherited from her father, a local llicenciat. In the early 1380s, she ceded parts of these pensions to several Jews from Girona, appearing in the records either represented by her husband Ramon Dalmau or at least once by a Jewish procurator. Levi Jasquell was one of the Jews who held two pensions acquired from Esclarmonda; one that paid six pounds, five sous annually and another worth 125 sous from a larger pension of 12 pounds. Levi also held several other censals as outlined in the table seen in the following page. It is possible that after her father died, Esclarmonda decided to recover the principal loaned to the city as an investment and, once the city could not pay, found it easier to sell the rights to the pension to someone else. It is also possible that it had simply become cumbersome to collect the pensions in Girona. Either way, she was not the only censalista to sell her rights to Jews, as the table in the appendix shows. It is worth noting that a Jew’s acquisition of censals may have happened less as an investment than as a collection from a Christian of debts he or she owed to the Jew. Unable to pay the debt in hard cash, the Christian would bequeath the income of a censal as payment. The king himself routinely financed the Crown’s own debts by buying censals and then passing the responsibility for the censal to a Jewish aljama in lieu of taxes.

Jewish communities and individuals, however, did not act in the credit market only as lenders. They were often borrowers, particularly during the economic crisis of the late

90 See table in appendix.
91 The Jewish procurator was Boniuha Jucef, from Torroella de Montgrí. See AHCG, Llibres d’àpoques, lligall núm. 6 (1378-1381), vol. 1379-1380, fol. 140r [Escribà, #574]
92 AHCG, Llibres d’àpoques, lligall núm. 6 (1378-1381), vol. 1379-1380, fol. 3v; vol. 1381, fol. 68r-v [Escribà, #570; #579]
93 e.g. ACA C 1100: 36v-37r; 37r-v (07/09/1380)
fourteenth century. The crisis seems to have hit the Jews of Barcelona particularly hard. Between 1380 and 1390 the aljama of Barcelona sought and was granted ten licenses to sell censals in order to be able to pay its debts.\(^{94}\) The aljama of Lleida, also in Catalonia, sought to borrow nearly as much through the sale of censals in order to withstand the economic slowdown and its growing debts.\(^{95}\) In its request from 1385, the aljama specifically mentioned its difficulty in keeping up with its debts.\(^{96}\) In 1389, King Joan issued a general license to the aljamas of Girona, Alcañiz, Barcelona, Tarazona, Jaca, Calatayud, and Teruel to sell censals.\(^{97}\) In 1389, the aljama of Girona obtained 3,000 \textit{sous} through a sale of a censal to the Christian merchant Arnau d’Alós, from Barcelona.\(^{98}\) The money was part of 6,000 \textit{sous} that Queen Violant required as an extraordinary contribution from the Gironese aljama.\(^{99}\)

Individual Jews also used censals to borrow money. Jucef Macenuno of Lleida, for example, sold censals in 1388 in order to pay for his daughter’s dowry.\(^{100}\) Samuel Gracia sold a

\(^{94}\) ACA C 937 : 34v-35r (14/7/1380); ACA C 944: 13r, 72v-73r (23/9/1384); ACA C 947: 183r-v (2/7/1386); ACA C 1892: 11r (25/8/1387); ACA C 1892: 106v-107r (2/12/1387); ACA C 1890: 63r-63v (6/2/1387); ACA C 1890: 212v-213r (27/6/1387); ACA C 1891: 40v (6/3/1387); ACA C 1893: 190v-191r (4/5/1388); ACA C 1898: 64r-v (3/8/1390).

\(^{95}\) ACA R 945: 66v-67r (25/6/1385); ACA R 1892: 127r-v (15/1/1388); ACA R 1891: 31v (16/7/1387); ACA R 1893: 181v-182r (3/3/1388); ACA R 1896: 177v (5/12/1389)

\(^{96}\) ACA C 945: 66v-67r (25/06/1385): "Informatis fuimus veridice quod vos Adelantati aljame et singulares judeorum civitatis Llerde estis oppressi oneribus diversis et exinde speratur amplius oppressi diversis fenoribus et usuris ad que estis obligati nisi per nos provideatur vobis de subscriptis remedio... Tenore presentis concedimus vobis licenciam plenariam.... quod possitis per vos et totam dictam aljama vendere mille solidos hacenses annuales et rendales de censuali mortuo..."

\(^{97}\) ACA C 1896: 35v-36v (24/04/1389)


\(^{99}\) This sale would be complemented in the following days by other sales to the same Arnau d’Alós who would pay another 14,000 sous to the aljama. Arnau d’Alós would later sell 1,000 sous of those censals to the Barcelonese weaver Jaume de Viladecans. See ibid., 554.

\(^{100}\) ACA C 1895: 126v.
violari to the aljama of Tárrega in order to borrow some money.\textsuperscript{101} Taxation records from the city of Girona shows that a number of Jews sold censals to Christians – i.e. borrowed money from them – or brokered such deals.\textsuperscript{102}

Jewish borrowers would flood the royal court between 1380 and 1391 with requests to postpone the payment of their debts, owed to both Christians and Jews.\textsuperscript{103} The economic crisis that resulted from the combination of famines, wars, and plague sketched in the first chapter showed no signs of slowing down in the 1380s. According to Jaime Vicens Vives, 1381 inaugurated a period of contraction in Catalonia, “characterized by a paralysis of business, reduction of the investment market, the ruin of rentiers owing to the breakdown in municipal finance, [and] over-production.”\textsuperscript{104} Between 1381 and 1383 the leading bankers of Barcelona, Girona, and Perpignan went into bankruptcy.\textsuperscript{105} Claude Carrère also marks the decade between 1380-1391 as the first sign of the difficulties of the fifteenth century.\textsuperscript{106}

This state of affairs led to much demographic instability as Jews (as well as Christians and Muslims) moved to larger cities in search of better opportunities. As seen above, many aljamas took loans or sold censals in order to be able to pay their debts. In this, Jewish aljamas

\textsuperscript{101} The case did not end well. Perhaps the Jews of Tárrega did not know that Samuel Gracia, as we will see in chapter 3, already owed money across Catalonia. In 1384 the aljama hired a Christian procurator to take its case against Samuel to the king. See ACA C 840: 119r-120r.

\textsuperscript{102} See table in appendix.

\textsuperscript{103} For examples see ACA C 813: 90v (29/02/1380); ACA C 1271: 122r-v (18/09/1381); ACA C 826: 1r (12/08/1382); ACA C 830: 64v-65r (08/07/1383); ACA C 842: 47v (15/10/1384); ACA C 849: 3v-4r (02/05/1385); ACA C 856: 155v-156r (13/04/1386); ACA C 1891: 36r-37r (10/10/1387); ACA C 1892: 210r-v (10/04/1388); ACA C 1838: 116v-117r (07/04/1389).


\textsuperscript{106} Claude Carrère, Barcelone: centre économique à l’époque des difficultés, 1380-1462 (Paris: Mouton, 1967), 1:659-661. The situation in the Kingdom of Aragon was very different, as we will see below.
followed the example of Christian municipalities, which since the 1340s had increasingly relied on the sale of *censals* and *violaris* in order to finance their debts and pay for King Pere’s continuous extraordinary levies. This policy of deficit financing, which depended on cities and aljamas maintaining a steady revenue in order to be able to pay their investors, had dire consequences in a period of recurring plague epidemics. In 1381, the aljama of Huesca found itself at the point of being depopulated because of its debts and inability to pay the *censal* it owed to Prince Martí. The king had already given a reprieve to the local Muslims the previous year, when its aljama also claimed to be too oppressed by debts. King Pere gave the Jews a similar break but the situation had not improved much by 1385 when, in order to guarantee “their recovery and conservation… lest they become depopulated,” the king exempted both the Jewish and Muslim aljamas of Huesca from any taxes or contributions they owed the royal treasury. The exemption was to last fifteen years unless the king ordered otherwise. A few months later, King Pere would grant legal immunity to the aljama of Lleida, also oppressed by debt, in order to prevent its depopulation. This would be followed a few months later by a postponement of the payment of debts the aljama owed to its creditors. Some aljamas, such as that of Uncastillo, were reduced to fifteen homes because of the burden of taxes and debts. Many of the debts oppressing aljamas were probably not only

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108 ACA C 820: 97v-98r. 
109 ACA C 1268: 111v 
110 ACA C 946: 138v-139r. 
111 Ibid., 139r. 
112 ACA C 945: 51r; 
113 ACA C 848: 85r-v. 
114 ACA C 1869: 119v-120r.
from pensions owed from censals and violaris but more likely from increasing pressure to pay more taxes, as we will see in the following chapter.

Although the censal allowed both Jews and Christians to borrow money at lower interest rates, it also prevented them from obtaining emergency relief from the king. In the cortes generales of Monzón in 1363, King Pere confirmed that neither he, nor his heir, nor governors, nor anyone acting on his authority could pardon or postpone the payment of debts acquired through the sale of censals or violaris. This does not mean, of course, that the king (or his officials) did not ignore the limits placed upon him. Censalistas comprised an influential moneyed elite whom the Crown could not afford to alienate. That the rule had to be reconfirmed in each meeting of the Corts in Barcelona in 1365, 1369, and 1372, is telling. Constitutional protection for the censal and violari, however, meant that any attempt by the king to postpone the payment of such debts could – and was - challenged in the courts.

Moratoria were a common response to financial crisis. Jewish aljamas and individuals sought a break from the king by requesting either a postponement of payment of their debts or simply a general remission. Outright cancellations of debts were rare but grants of moratoria are numerous in the royal chancery records. The practice of appealing to the king was not employed only by Jews. Christians also sought to have their debts cancelled or at least postponed, a practice that created much tension between creditors and debtors in this period. The growing dependence on censals and violaris, however, limited this strategy since the Crown was always careful to exempt those types of credit from any postponements issued to either Christians or Jews. Municipalities and aljamas were then left with trying to raise

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115 Constitucions i altres drets de Catalunya (Barcelona: Editorial Base, 1973), tit. XXIV, number II-V, 70-71.
116 Ibid.
117 Usually by the simple clause “censualibus mortuis, violaris, comaandis dumtaxat exceptis”. See an example in a postponement issued to the Christian Bernat Talarn in ACA C 837: 88r-89r. In the moratorium issued on behalf of Jucef Abengaston the scribe was even more specific:
revenue through taxation, which as we will see in the next chapter, led to much internal conflict throughout the Crown of Aragon.

**Royal policy during financial crisis: moratoria and the protection of Jewish communities**

The monarchs of the Crown of Aragon had much to lose through postponement of debt payment to Jews. The crown knew that the financial health of the Jews was paramount in enabling them to contribute to royal coffers through direct and indirect taxation as well as through subsidies, gifts, and loans. It was only in situations of intense pressure that monarchs granted cancellations of moratoria on debts owed to Jews. Yom Tov Assis has surveyed such instances and the tensions they sparked in the late thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries. Caught between their Christian subjects and their own financial interests, monarchs followed an inconsistent policy whereby they would issue promises to Jewish communities that they would not issue moratoria on debts owed to Jews, only to proceed to issue such moratoria when pressed by Christian debtors and cancel them later when pushed by the Jewish community.\(^{118}\) This pattern had not changed by the late fourteenth century. If anything, it intensified as the economy worsened and repayment of debt became more problematic.

Royal response was often erratic, depending on the pressure put upon the king. Disputes between individual Christians and Jews or between aljamas would often go back and forth in the royal court. In 1384, for example, Gento Gabay, a Jew from Barcelona, obtained a safeconduct and a postponement of paying the debt he owed to Joan de Montros, a merchant from Barcelona.\(^{119}\) Joan did not accept the decision and appealed to the royal court, getting

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“Per hanc tamen gratiam nulumus nec intendimus enlongare censualia violaria nec comandas versa in quibus judeus ipse obligatus existat.”

\(^{118}\) Assis, *Jewish economy*, 23.

\(^{119}\) ACA C 842: 47v (15/10/1384)
the postponement revoked and filing a claim for sixty pounds. Gento, in turn, appealed to the
king’s mercy and had Joan’s claim dismissed and obtained a remission. Likewise, the aljama of
Daroca complained, in 1386, about the financial burden caused by a general moratoria on
debt payment issued to the villages in the countryside around Daroca. King Pere cancelled the
moratoria, no doubt causing much distress among the local peasants.\(^{120}\)

The king would try to protect Jewish communities by promising not to give moratoria
on the payment of debts owed to Jews and by giving reprieves from taxes, as we saw above.
In August of 1381, King Pere issued a promise to the Jews of Barcelona not to give any
moratoria to anyone owing money to the Jews of their aljama.\(^{121}\) In 1385, he confirmed the
order and extended it for a period of five years. \(^{122}\) King Joan repeated the promise in 1387.\(^{123}\)
Similar promises were issued to the aljamas of Calatayud, Castello d’Empuries, Daroca, Eix,
Girona, Huesca, Jaca, Lleida, Montblanc, Tamarite de Litera, Tárrega, Tortosa, and
Zaragoza.\(^{124}\) In the promise to the aljama of Zaragoza, King Pere went as far as acknowledging
that this principle – of not postponing the payment of debts owed to the Jews – should stand
until he decided otherwise.\(^{125}\) Interestingly, however, Zaragoza, the largest aljama of the
kingdom of Aragon, seems to have been less affected. Of the requests for moratoria either by
individual Jews or aljamas or complaints over moratoria given to debtors, only thirteen came
out of Zaragoza in the 1380s, compared to 119 from Barcelona.

\(^{120}\) ACA C 853: 8r.
\(^{121}\) ACA C 819: 136v-137r.
\(^{122}\) ACA C 945: 110v-111r.
\(^{123}\) ACA C 1891: 35r-36r.
\(^{124}\) ACA C 1892: 64v-65r; ACA C 845: 146r-147r (CHECK); ACA C 942: 147r-148r, 166v; ACA C
942: 153v; ACA C 849: 86v-87r, 88v; ACA C 941: 203r; ACA C 825: 27r-v; ACA C 942: 146v-147r;
ACA C 941: 203r; ACA C 942: 153r-v, 166r-v; ACA C 819: 62v-64r; ACA C 853: 159v-160v; ACA
C 942: 206v-207r.
\(^{125}\) ACA C 942: 206v-207r: “similes concessiones et provisiones nostre debent esse stabiles.”
This contrast is significant both for the history of the Jews and the history of the Crown of Aragon. Until recently, most economic historians tended to generalize about the situation of the Crown of Aragon based on studies of Catalonia. Jaume Vicens Vives, for example, follows his study of the financial collapse in Barcelona with a claim that the decade beginning in 1380 inaugurated a period of instability in the kingdom of Aragon, following the sharp rise in prices that marked the period between 1340-1380. Recent research, however, paints a very different picture. In a detailed study of the economy of the Kingdom of Aragon in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, Zulaica Palacios has shown that the Kingdom of Aragon was much different from the Catalonia and that although both regions were under the rule of the same king and shared many of the crises of the late fourteenth century – plague, war with Castile, increasing taxation resulting from both – their different social, political, and economic make up meant consequences varied between the two places. While Catalonia was well integrated into Mediterranean trade networks and had an active industry, the Kingdom of Aragon until the fourteenth century had an economy based on subsistence agriculture. The loss of population caused by the Black Death and the war with Castile led to a reorganization of the countryside in Aragon that positioned the kingdom much more favourable by the close of the century. Agricultural production not only became concentrated on the best land available, but it also became reorganized towards an export market with an increasing focus on cash crops such as saffron (used in the textile industry) and olive oil. The kingdom benefited as well from the escalation of the economic crisis in Catalonia in the 1380s, a period

126 Vicens Vives, Manual de historia económica de España, 207.
127 Recent research suggests that this may be due to the state of the economy in Aragon, which recovered earlier than Catalonia. Zulaica Palacios shows that by 1370s Aragon had reorganized its agricultural production towards the production of export crops such as saffron, wheat, olive oil, and wool. Taking advantage of the economic crisis in Catalonia, it forged itself as a financial centre. Fluctuaciones económicas en un período de crisis: precios y salarios en Aragón en la Baja Edad Media (1300-1430) (Zaragoza: Institución Fernando el Católico, 1994), 60-1 Financial documentation for this period is somewhat thin and needs to be taken carefully. It does, however, help explain why there were fewer cases of debt in Zaragoza.
marked by a collapse of prices and hike in salaries, which reduced industrial margins. Trade with Castile, Valencia, and the wider Mediterranean grew in Aragon, leading to a quicker recovery from the crises of the fourteenth century. Zaragoza emerged as the financial centre of this evolving economy and the Jews, being well integrated into local and regional economy, benefitted as well, which may help explain why so few demands for moratoria came from the aljama of Zaragoza despite its losses during the Black Death.

Although King Pere and King Joan would often promise not to issue moratoria to those who owed money to Jews, these guarantees were seldom kept. Despite the king’s interest in protecting the financial health of his Jewish communities, he often gave in to pressure from his Christian subjects. The promise not to issue moratoria given to the aljama of Barcelona in 1381, for example, was followed almost immediately by a string of exceptions to individual Christians. Perhaps it was not so difficult for an old widow to tap into the king’s charity. The pattern would repeat itself in all domains of the Crown of Aragon. In Daroca, less than a year would go by between Pere III’s promise not to issue moratoria to those owing money to Jews and his granting of one to a Jewish debtor and his family who owed money to

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128 Zulaica Palacios, 62.
130 There was a significant proportion of Jewish brokers in Zaragoza well until the expulsion of 1492. The number of trade brokers was fixed by the city, which authorized the merchant guild to appoint twenty brokers, fourteen of whom were to be Christians and six Jews. María Isabel Falcón Pérez, “Notas sobre los corredores de comercio de Zaragoza en el siglo XV,” 176, 180-1.
131 Promise in ACA C 819: 136v-137r (07/08/1381), some exceptions in ACA C 1271: 122r-v (18/09/1381), ACA C 826: 59v (06/05/1382). In May 1382, the aljama of Barcelona complained again and the king, again, cancelled moratoria he had issued. See ACA C 824: 192r (26/05/1382).
132 Margarita, claiming to be “most poor” (pauperrima) obtained a postponement for a year of a debt of 150 pounds she owed to the Jews of Barcelona. See ACA C 836: 50v-51.
a fellow Jew. In Girona, a similar promise was followed, five months later, by just such moratoria, which itself was followed by continuous complaints from the aljama. The examples are too numerous to cite.

Often, Pere III and later Joan I would issue a general moratoria to particular cities, such as Barcelona or Zaragoza. Such general postponements would immediately come into conflict with previous promises given to the local Jewish community, prompting an immediate reaction from the local Jews. For example, in 1380, when King Pere issued a moratoria on debt payments to all citizens of Barcelona, the aljama promptly complained that such a measure would bring it to financial ruin. The king retracted and cancelled any postponement of debts owed to the Jews from the aljama of Barcelona. Within a few months, however, the king was issuing exceptions to the general cancellation to individual Christians. As we will see in chapters 4 and 5, individual Jews who were in debt would often try to use such general cancellations in their favour, prompting much conflict even within Jewish communities. The pattern would repeat itself throughout the decade: King Pere issued promises not to give moratoria to any debtor of the aljama of Barcelona in August of 1381, a list of exceptions followed a few months later. After the aljama predictably complained, King Pere canceled the moratoria, then began issuing them again, following it up by another promise to the Jews not to issue moratoria for five years, confirmed it a year after but nevertheless breaking the

133 ACA C 841: 6v (08/12/1384)” Noveritis nos ex regalia nostra de speciali gracia elongasse penis et usuras cessantibus quibuscumque Sento Alimuli et Duenya eius uxorem et Faraig Alimuli et Cetiuxorem suam judeos civitatis Daroce et debitores ac fideiuusiores pro et cum eis obligatos et bona eorum et cuiuslibet ipsorum a solucione omnium et singulorum debitorum que debeant ... in quibus principalia aut fideiuusorio nomine obligati existant quibusvis judeis quibuscumque rationibus sive causis, violariis et censualibus mortuus ac veris comandis inde dumtaxat exceptis hinc ad duos annos a dati presentis...". The letter goes on to state that in the end of the two years stipulated, care should be taken to ensure the prompt payment of the debt.
134 ACA C 849: 86v-87r, 88v; ACA C 845: 44v-45r; ACA C 847: 18r-19r.
135 ACA C 812: 136r-v.
136 See above and ACA C 812: 141v-142r, 154r-v, 164v-165r.
promise time and again. It should be noted that in every moratorium issued by the king, censals and violaris were exempted.

In November of 1386, aljama representatives went to the royal court to complain yet again. The dispute was recorded in a series of letters from the royal court – five in total – in which the Jews bitterly complain that despite the promise issued by the king the previous year, both the royal court and the court of Prince Joan kept issuing postponement of debts. Pere III answered by personally cancelling the postponements he had issued earlier. In December, in another series of letters, King Pere reiterated the promise made to the aljama of Barcelona, being careful to make an exception to those who volunteered to join the king’s armies in his campaign in Sardinia and against the count of Empuries.

Tax exemptions and postponement of debts were common enticements to recruit volunteers for military campaigns. While such enticements proved successful, they also caused much chagrin among the creditors left behind. The aljamas of Castelló de Borriana and Xativa, both in the kingdom of Valencia, alleged that they could not meet their fiscal obligations because of the exemptions issued to those fighting for the king in Sicily. Some Christians exploited the situation and tried to reap the benefits of such exemptions. In 1384, the aljama of Barcelona complained that many of its debtors signed up for passage to Sardinia in order to help with the war King Pere waged, but their galley never actually left the city. Pere decided in favour of the aljama, cancelling the exemption issued to their debtors.

In these disputes, kings tended to favour the Jews because of royal dependence on taxation. The late fourteenth century was marked by increasing fiscal pressure on Jews (as well

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137 ACA C 824: 192r (26/05/1382); ACAC 944: 79v-80v (07/12/1384); ACA C 945: 110v-111r (11/08/1385); ACA C 856: 149v-150r (13/04/1386); ACA C 855: 146v-147v (18/07/1386)
138 ACA C 854: 2v-4r; 8v-9v; 10r; 19v-20r; 24v-25v.
139 ACA C 857: 6v-8r; 8v-9v; 35v.
140 ACA C 937: 213v-214r; 214v.
141 ACA C 839: 152v-153r.
as Christians and Muslims). Jews contributed to local and royal finances in many ways beyond the ordinary taxes they paid to the royal treasure. In Jaca, Fraga, Tarazona, and Calatayud Jews were expected to contribute, alongside local Christians, to the building or repair of the city walls.\footnote{Calatayud: ACA C 838: 33r-v (16/03/1384); Fraga: ACA C 1831: 165v-166r (14/07/1388); Jaca: ACA C 817: 162r-v (20/08/1381); 823: 29r-v (01/09/1381); Tarazona: ACA C 817: 180r (02/09/1381).} Elsewhere, they contributed to the building of noble houses and the repair or security of castles.\footnote{ACA C 822: 99v-101r (20/11/1381); ACA C 1110: 26v-27r (16/11/1386); ACA C 1270: 62v-64v; 65r-v (25/01/1381).} In some towns, such as Fariza, near Calatayud, Jews also contributed to municipal funds while in others they shared in special taxes some royal towns owed to the king.\footnote{ACA C 822: 109v, 129r; ACA C 1839: 122v (07/04/1389)} They were expected to contribute to financing wars and royal weddings, funerals, and coronations.\footnote{The Jews of Tortosa, for example, helped finance military expedition to Sicily and Sardinia ACA C 809: 24v-25r (23/06/1380); Barcelona contributed to the conflict with the count of Empuries, ACA C 845: 14v-15r (11/08/1385); Girona was still paying for the war with Castile in the late 1380s: ACA C 1839: 12v-13r (10/02/1389). Contributions to royal rites of passage can be found in ACA C 811: 115v, 116r-v (05/10/1380); ACA C 1101: 49r (09/03/1381); ACA C 838: 120r (08/05/1384); ACA C 1110: 41v-42r (05/12/1386); ACA C 1829: 85v (29/10/1387). Christians would also be expected to contribute to royal weddings and coronations. In 1381, Benvenist de la Cavalleria collected the contributions made by the towns of Morvedre in Valencia and the communities of Vall d’Aran in the Pyrenees for the coronation of Queen Sibila. See ACA C 1102: 49r-v, 76r.} Legal immunity – i.e. the guarantee that they would not be prosecuted for a certain period of time - was not cheap and the king did not issue it solely with the aljama’s interest at heart. In 1390, the aljama of Fraga paid the significant amount of 400 gold florins in exchange for legal immunity and confirmation of the ordinances issued in its favour.\footnote{ACA RC 1899: 84r-v cited by Salleras Clarió, L’aljama de jueus de Fraga, 153]}

The economic crisis of the late fourteenth century meant that not only were Jewish communities less able to meet some of these extraordinary obligations but also that municipal authorities often tried to overcome their own financial shortfalls by exploiting local Jews. One of the main sources of conflict between Jews and municipal authorities in this period was precisely the issue of taxation and the amount local authorities could expect to collect from
the Jews without incurring the wrath of the king, who zealously guarded his jurisdiction over the Jews. When Pere III ordered a general fortification of Catalonia in 1368, cities everywhere had to pay for their own walls. In many of those cities, in both Catalonia and Aragon, conflict arose over how much the Jews should be expected to contribute to the building of walls. For example, in Jaca, Jews were locked in a conflict with local authorities when they refused to pay for the building of city walls and the salaries of officials. The growing fiscal burden on cities and urban citizens between 1350 and 1400 may well have been behind increasing tensions not only between Jews and local authorities but also between Jews and their Christian neighbours. It also led to growing conflict within Jewish communities and between aljamas as the issue of tax evasion and per capita contributions to the aljama treasury became hot issues in the 1380s, as we will see in the following chapter.

Pere III and Joan I both knew the limits to which they could push their Jewish communities. When King Pere ordered his treasurer to collect 250 gold florins from the aljama of Huesca to help cover the costs of the wedding of Prince Joan and the queen of Castile, the aljama protested that it could not afford that much. The king responded by lowering the contribution to 200 gold florins. Pere routinely excused aljamas in dire straits from certain taxes such as protection fees and other specific levies owed by Jewish communities. In 1380, the king exempted the aljama of Tárrega from having to pay a protection tax “because of its poverty.”

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147 When King Joan granted a lifetime stipend of 10,000 sous to his physician Raimón Carol, 5,000 were supposed to be raised through an extraordinary levy over the aljama of Perpignan and the rest from the aljama of Huesca. ACA C 1840: 80v-82r; 1835: 191r-192r.
148 ACA C 811: 115v, 116r-v.
149 ACA C 810: 166v.
postponement of the debts of the aljama because of the risk of it losing its population. The moratorium was repeated yet again six months later.

Joan I continued his father’s policies. In 1388, he reduced certain debts of the aljama of Ruesca, in Aragon, by half, and its head tax (peyta) from 300 to 200 sous. Likewise, when Joan heard that the aljama of Uncastillo had been reduced to utmost poverty (maximam paupertatem) because of the burden of the excessive gifts demanded by Pere III, he declared it exempt from any taxes for two years. Uncastillo seems to have suffered particularly hard from a drop in population; in his decision Joan noted that the population of the aljama dropped from two hundred houses to fifteen. Although two hundred households is certainly an inflated number for Uncastillo, there is little doubt that smaller communities suffered from a loss of population in the late fourteenth century. Montblanc, in Catalonia, would also stress its loss of population in its request for help. In 1380, Pere III, considering that its population “hardly reached ten houses,” granted the aljama the right to collect consumption taxes on wine and meat for the following five years. This would be followed the next day by granting the aljama the same privileges enjoyed by the larger aljamas of Daroca and Teruel since many “individuals wished to transfer their residence elsewhere.”

150 ACA C 815: 165r-166r.
151 ACA C 819: 62v-64r.
152 ACA C 1895: 20v-21r, 21v.
153 ACA C 1869: 119v-120r.
154 Ibid., 119v.
155 Two hundred houses would put Uncastillo at the same size as some of the largest aljamas in the kingdom such as Huesca and Calatayud, which were clearly much larger cities. Population figures for Uncastillo are difficult to find for the fourteenth century. Based on its contribution of indirect taxes in the fourteenth century, Motis Dolader concludes its population must have been rather modest, as its share of the taxes collected in Aragon was merely 2.2%. A fogatge, the closest we get of a census, done in 1404 reveals 74 Christian households and 29 Jewish households. See M. Á. Motis Dolader, Guía de la judería de Uncastillo (Zaragoza, 2003), 7.
156 ACA C 937: 185r (15/11/1380)
157 ACA C 937: 192r (16/11/1380): “…ratione debitorum et diversorum onerum ad que tenetur in tantum fuit lacessita quod decem casata in numero in aljama ipsa dumtaxat comorantur et quod singulars ipsius aljama hac de causa suas volunt aliunde transferre habitaciones…”
As the example of Montblanc above suggests, royal attempts to improve the finances of Jewish communities went beyond reducing debt. From the king's perspective, postponing or cancelling Jewish payments to the royal treasury was not an ideal policy. Hence the king attempted to increase aljama revenues by granting aljamas the ability to levy consumption taxes. Traditionally, the king would issue a grant to individual aljamas to impose sisas, an indirect tax on comestibles, particularly bread, meat, and wine. The typical grant included a preamble in which the king recognized that the aljama had to pay so many contributions, taxes, and tributes both to him and to its creditors. In order to be able to bear that fiscal burden, the king then grants it the ability to collect sisas.\(^\text{158}\) During the 1380s, Pere III and Joan I would issue these grants to the aljamas of Alcañiz, Barbastro, Borja, Calatayud, Daroca, Ejea, Huesca, Monzón, Teruel, and Zaragoza, in the Kingdom of Aragon, and Barcelona, Lleida, Tarrega, and Tortosa in Catalonia.\(^\text{159}\) The king followed a similar policy with cities.\(^\text{160}\) Unfortunately, with a drop in population, the right to collect consumption taxes had limited impact in balancing aljama finances.

As mentioned above when discussing the new forms of deficit financing through the use of censals, Jewish aljamas were not alone in their struggle to reconcile ever higher contributions demanded of them with dwindling resources. The effect of population loss, 

\(^{158}\) The typical grant would read as follows: “Ut aljama judeorum civitatis Daroce et sue collecte et contribucionis debita peytas tributa demandas et alia onera ad que tam nobis quam aliis creditoribus suis consistit obligata melius valeat exsolvere et supportare. Tenore presentis eidem aljame et singularibus judeis eiusdem concedimus et licentia impartimur quod adelantati eiusdem de et cum consilio et assensu ipsius aljame seu consilii sui imposiciones sive sisas in vino carnibus et aliis rebus in quibus imposiciones sive sisas nostri concessione imponentur statuere imponendas et levandas et per quinque annos (...). Volumus et iubemus concedimus etiam ipsi aljame quod disctas imposiciones seu sisas de quatuor in quatuor menses seu de anno in anum seu de mense in mensem prout sibi melius expediens videatur vendere posit.” ACA C 942: 20v.

\(^{159}\) ACA C 942: 17v, 20r, 94v, 100v-101r, 220v; C 936: 106v-107r; C 1892: 76v-77r; C 943: 119v, 122v-123v, 238r-v; C 936: 103r; C 818: 197v-198r; C 944: 41r-v; 938: 93v; 937: 30v-31r.

whether short or long-term, on public finances and urban populations has only recently begun receiving the attention it deserves. As Jeffrey Fynn-Paul has shown, urban polities in this period had undertaken fixed debts on the assumption the city could count on a steady revenue. The combination of the drop in population caused by repeated visits of the plague and the need to keep taxes at a constant rate resulted in an increased burden per capita. As Fynn-Paul argues, “[s]queezed, therefore, in a quadruple vise of depopulation, war, debt and taxation, urban householders throughout Europe were frequently in an untenable situation during the decades between 1350-1400.” Fynn-Paul goes on to conclude that “[t]he persistent urban unrest which characterizes this period may often have arisen from precisely this combination of variables.” He uses as his case study the Catalan city of Manresa but finds that its example explains much of the urban unrest in the Italian cities of Genoa, Florence, and Venice. This combination of factors also explains unrest within Jewish communities and between Christians and Jews, both issues that will be explored in the coming chapters.

Catalan and Aragonese Jews were well integrated into the economy of their cities. Jews worked as merchants, physicians, artisans, landowners, farmers, brokers, financiers and were employed by fellow Jews, neighbouring Christians, and the king. This integration ensured that Christians and Jews interacted daily or at least frequently and depended on one another in what has been described as an “economic convivencia.” Yet, nearly four decades after the Black Death hit and over a decade after the war with Castile, Catalonia and Aragon were still in the midst of economic uncertainty. Banks were failing and prices were high in Catalonia, and although the economy was on its way to recovery in Aragon, the per capita share of taxes was becoming more and more onerous everywhere. The following chapter will

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161 Fynn-Paul, “Money, Markets and Trade,” 119-120.
162 Ibid., 120.
163 Meyerson, “The economic life of the Jews of Murviedro in the fifteenth century.”
explore some of the consequences for Jewish aljamas of rising taxation in the late fourteenth century.

Debt, in this scenario, was widespread. Christians owed money to Jews, Jews to Christians, municipalities to aljamas, aljamas to municipalities, and everybody owed money to the king. It is in this intricate web of debt and debt relief that Christians and Jews would seek the same solutions to their financial woes – a break from the king. For individuals, this break was often illusory as a long-fought grant for postponement of debts was often cancelled within a few months when it was shown to conflict with other commitments made by the king. As we will see in the following chapter, this problem was exacerbated by growing fiscal pressures placed on Jewish communities. In chapter four we will see how many Jews showed themselves adept at using the various courts at their disposal – the bailiff’s, the king’s, the queen’s, the infante’s – in order to keep themselves from having to pay their debts. Tax evasion also became something of an art as individual Jews would move from place to place claiming they already paid taxes where they originally came from. The growing demands from the king led smaller Jewish communities to seek fiscal autonomy to avoid sharing in larger communities’ burdens. Much of that led to bitter conflict within Jewish communities. In Chapter five, we will return to the implications of economic difficulties and royal policies for Jewish-Christian relations before concluding with a study of conversion as a response to crises within the Jewish communities of the Crown of Aragon.
Chapter 3 – The murder of Baruch Alentenç: royal taxation and the Jews

In 1385, Baruch Alentenç, the treasurer of the Jewish community of Huesca was beaten and stabbed to death by fellow Jews while exercising his duties as an official of the community.¹

We know of Baruch's murder through a series of royal letters regarding the case. The letters contain few details about the actual murder - all we know is that Mosse Ablatronell and his son David were accused of murdering Baruch when he exercised his position as treasurer or tax collector (clavario) of the aljama.² Mosse and David were identified earlier as renters of the rights of the butchery of the aljama.³ In the absence of actual trial records, the thirty-four letters dealing with Baruch Alentenç and his murder found in the royal chancery registers as well as others letters dealing with the Jewish community of Huesca, give us a unique opportunity to explore some of the tensions that existed within Jewish communities of Catalonia and Aragon in the late fourteenth century. What becomes clear when read alongside other cases of internal disputes, is that the Jews of the Crown of Aragon were under enormous fiscal pressure and that this pressure had not only political and economic consequences but was ultimately a threat to the survival of the Jewish community. That Baruch was at the centre of disputes over taxation within the aljama is clear from suits

¹ In March of 1380, King Pere confirmed that Baruch was elected adelantado of the aljama the previous year, with a salary of 300s/year. See ACA 810: 85r-v
² The first mention of the murder is described thus: "percepi mus supplicatione humili lacrimabiler nobis porrecta per parte açaqui alentenç judei fratris baru ch alantenç judei dicte Civitatis hiis diebus crudeliter interfecti quodam iudei perditionis filii dei et nostri timore pospositis manus atroces in di ctum baruch iniacendo ipsum nulli malum seu iniuriam inferentem in judaria ipsius Civitatis nequiter permerunt partes sui corporis lacerando." ACA C 844: 90r (03/02/1385). Later on, the murder is always described as having been committed while Baruch exercised his duties of clavario: "mortis perpetrate in persona baruch alentenç iudei Civitatis Osce qui exercendo ut dictur officium clavarie aljame ipsius Civitatis fuit nequiter interfectus de qua morte inculpatur Mosse et David abatronell" ACA C 851: 167v.
³ ACA C 823: 12v (27/09/1381).
involving him both before and after his death. Beginning with the case of Huesca, this chapter will explore how growing fiscal pressures from King Pere the Ceremonious (1336-1387) and King Joan I (1387-1396) enhanced tensions both within Jewish communities of the Crown of Aragon as well as between Christians and Jews, compounding the growing debt problem outlined in the previous chapter.

As Meyerson has described so poignantly, royal taxation shaped much of Jewish life, identity, and intra- and inter-communal relations in the medieval Crown of Aragon. As is well known, the status of Jewish communities in the Crown of Aragon was predicated on their fiscal relationship with the Crown – the Jews were part of the royal treasury, to which they contributed both ordinary and extraordinary taxes. Beginning with Jaume I (1213-1276), royal demands increased with each new monarch and the pressure did not abate under Pere III and Joan I. As was the case in the kingdom of Valencia a few decades earlier, demands for taxes in Aragon and Catalonia fanned the fires of growing conflict between Jewish aljamas as well as between aljamas and individual Jews. The growing debt of the Jewish community and royal efforts to ease some of this burden would also do much to complicate relations between Christians and Jews in the late fourteenth century, as we will see. Since the Jews’ fiscal servitude was so “elemental to their identity”, as Meyerson put it, it is not surprising that disputes over taxation account for some of the fiercest conflicts among Jews in the 1380s. Behind much of the tension was the collective nature of the contributions the crown expected from its Jewish communities - each aljama had a lump sum imposed upon it and its officials were in charge of collecting the contributions of each member above the age of

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5 For Valencia, see ibid., 100.
Whenever an individual got an exemption from the king in exchange for services or favours, or moved out of the aljama’s jurisdiction, the amount the aljama ultimately had to produce remained the same, which meant an added stress on the remaining Jewish taxpayers.

The murder of Baruch Alentenç in Huesca provides us with a glimpse at the kinds of issues aljama officials and taxpayers grappled with in the closing decades of the fourteenth century.

The political situation in Huesca had been tense for a number of years before Baruch’s death. Although we do not know exactly when Baruch first became involved in aljama administration, we know he was already adelantado in 1379 and that his re-appointment in 1382 was marked by controversy. Normally, Jewish aljamas enjoyed a degree of autonomy similar to that of a municipality. This meant they held the privilege of being able to elect their own administrators and officials. In the case of Huesca, its latest royal charter dated to 1374 and among other privileges, it stipulated that the incumbent administration would appoint a board of electors to choose the new administration. But in 1382, King Pere cancelled the election and re-appointed Baruch as adelantado and clavario – his other letters, privileges, etc notwithstanding. This happened amidst reports that bad administration of the aljama was causing many Jews to leave and that the aljama was at risk of being destroyed. The details in King Pere’s letters are vague but he seems to imply that he felt that re-appointing Baruch was the best way to stabilize the situation in the aljama. We have seen, in the previous chapter, that the aljama was in a tough economic position and had asked the king for a reprieve after it found itself unable to pay a censal it owed to Prince Martí.

Elections had been an issue in Huesca in the past. The first set of royal ordinances issued to the Jews of Huesca that we know are from 1313 (Jaume II), establishing annual elections and setting up the procedures for such events. For some reason, in 1324 the size of

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6 Assis, Jewish Economy, 214.
7 ACA C976: 63v-64v
8 ACA C820: 97v-98r
the electoral board was reduced from eighteen members to twelve. Later on, holding yearly elections became an issue and the 1374 ordinance, therefore, was issued in response to this plea. The new ordinance spaced out elections for every three years and entrusted the reigning adelantados with the choice of the twelve ‘good men’ who would act as a board of electors, as I mentioned before.9

The elections of the adelantados were important events in a Jewish community since they performed a critical role within aljama administration. Also called secretaris in Catalonia, Perpignan and Mallorca, the adelantados were the executive branch of the Jewish community performing essential roles such as designation of other offices within the aljama, the management of economic matters, and the performance of certain judicial functions.10 In addition to the adelantados, an aljama would also employ one to three clavaris, that is, treasurers who were responsible for collecting taxes and submitting them to the inspection of some people called reebedors de comptes in Catalonia and Valencia, and oidores de cuentas in Aragon.11 Baruch Alentenç performed both the role of adelantado and clavario in Huseca, although it was in the exercise of his role as clavario, specifically, that he was killed.

Evidence from the royal letters from the 1380 suggests that conflicts involving aljama officials continued throughout the period, with their official actions becoming the source of long lasting enmity between individual Jews of the aljama. This is particularly clear in the case

9 ACA C 926: 39-41v; Antonio Durán Gudiol, La judería de Huesca (Zaragoza: Guara, 1984), 147-153.
10 A document from Teruel in 1343 specified these roles: "Concedimus vobis judeis dicte aljame quod super quibuscumque causis seu questionibus quas inter judeum et judeum ipsius aliane super peccunia, deposituris seu comandis, possessionibus, patuis vel sedibus sinagoge suscitari contingat vobis facientibus juxta tecanam vel ritum judeorum justicie complementum conquerentibus coram adenantatis dicte aliame prout est fieri assuetum." David Romano, “Els jueus de la Corona d’Aragó en temps de Pere el Ceremoniós (1336-1387),” in Pere el Cerimoniós i la seva época (Barcelona: Institució Milá i Fontanals, 1989), 125.
of Baruch and his family. For about four to five years in the 1370s, the position of adelantado and treasurer of the aljama was occupied by Mosse Aburrabe and Sento el Castiell. For some reason, during that time, Baruch Alentenç and Juce Avenabeç had a disagreement with the adelantados over the amount of tax (peyta) they owed to the aljama and had refused to pay. The aljama officials would not take no for an answer and used their position to force Baruch and Juce to pay what they owed, which neither Baruch nor Juce ever forgot or forgave. Mosse Aburrabe and Sento el Castiell later claimed that Baruch and Juce "hated them completely for it" ("eos odio totaliter...habuistis"). An opportunity to seek revenge presented itself when Mosse and Sento failed to file an account of their affairs at the end of their administration, as they were required to do. Instead of bringing up the issue within the community, Baruch and Juce did what their coreligionists did when they wanted to inflict the maximum amount of damage and expense on their enemies - they took the issue to the royal court. From the royal court, Juce and Baruch obtained a letter of commission giving them powers to obtain the report from Mosse and Sento, who later claimed Baruch and Juce used the letter to harass them with many tasks and expenses.

By-passing the aljama did not earn Baruch and Juce many friends. Baruch, particularly, continued to come into conflict with his fellow Jews as adelantado of the aljama. In 1380, Baruch complained to the king that "some" people had made unfounded accusations against him to the local inquisition and to the vice-governor. Although the scribe did not specify whether those accusing him were Jews or Christians, another letter issued on the same day by King Pere clarified that some Jews of the aljama of Huesca were harassing the treasurers of the aljama out of hatred for them. In response, King Pere ordered his officials and those of Prince Joan to restrain from interfering with the treasurers and to use their authority to

12 Chapter 4 explores this issue in more depth.
13 ACA C 810: 85v
14 ACA C 810: 85r-v
support them in the exercise of their duties. He also reminded the bishops in charge of the inquisition of the king's sole jurisdiction over the Jews of his kingdom.\textsuperscript{15}

Throughout the early years of the 1380s, Baruch managed to keep his enemies at bay by obtaining safeconducts from the king. In 1381 King Pere ordered the bailiff of Huesca to protect Baruch in the exercise of his duties as clavario against those "jealous people" acting out of "hatred" for him. [As you can see, the language here is very formulaic].\textsuperscript{16} This was followed by an official letter placing Baruch under royal protection, renewing a safeconduct that had earlier been issued and which was about to expire.\textsuperscript{17} This particular letter of protection had no indication of a time limit. A week earlier, the Crown had issued a general protection to all Jews from Huesca, but "specially" for its officials.\textsuperscript{18} This did not completely protect Baruch, however, since in 1383 the royal court appointed a judge in Huesca to investigate the accusation that some Jews of Huesca were falsely accusing Baruch Alentenç of conspiracy.\textsuperscript{19}

Royal protection, alas, was not enough and Baruch Alentenç was killed by fellow Jews in 1385. Although the details of the murder are not clear, every single document that mentions his death specified that he was killed while performing his duties as treasurer or tax collector of the aljama. Mosse Ablatronell and his son David, Jews of Huesca, were accused of the crime. What might Mosse Ablatronell and his son David have had against Baruch? What was their relationship with the former adelantados of the aljama with whom Baruch had been in conflict earlier?

All we know about Mosse and David Ablatronell is that they earlier appeared in a list of

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{15} ACA C\textsuperscript{810}: 86r-\textsf{v}
\item \textsuperscript{16} ACA C\textsuperscript{823}: 143v-144r (5/12/1381).
\item \textsuperscript{17} ACA C\textsuperscript{938} : 253v-254r.
\item \textsuperscript{18} ACA C\textsuperscript{938} : 254r-255r
\item \textsuperscript{19} ACA C\textsuperscript{836}: 127v (05/09/1383).
\end{itemize}
Jews who held the right to exploit a very important utility, the butchery of the judería. Interestingly enough, Baruch’s old enemies, Sento el Castiel and Mosse Aburrabe, were also listed, establishing a link between Baruch’s murderers and his old enemies. In 1381, Mosse and David Ablatronell, Sento el Castiel, Mosse Aburrabe, and a few other Jews of the aljama were accused of employing a butcher who was not qualified to ritually slaughter animals, bringing into question the kosher nature of meat sold within the juderia. At the time, the bailiff of Huesca was ordered to investigate the matter and although we have no further evidence involving this particular case, such an accusation would have caused quite a stir within the Jewish community. It is possible that Baruch was collecting fines related to this case when he was killed by Mosse and David Ablatronell or perhaps Baruch had initiated the suit as part of his conflict with Sento el Castiel and Mosse Aburrabe, compromising the reputation of all those in charge of the butchery for the aljama. A closer look at the fiscal problems facing the aljama suggests that Baruch’s murder may have been the result of more than conflict among Jewish officials.

This is where the case of Baruch Alentenç intersects with the larger fiscal history of the Crown of Aragon and the consequences of that history for Jewish life there. As we know, all European states in the late middle ages went through a process of developing a taxation system meant to support their military ambitions as well as the cost of a growing state bureaucracy. As we have seen in the previous chapter, in Mediterranean regions this process was marked by the development of credit mechanisms that supported public debt. There has

20 ACA C 823: 12v (27/09/1381): “Arrendadorum iurium del Alquadem alias carniceria “.
been growing research in this area in recent years but, as Carlos Laliena has recently pointed out, few scholars have explored in depth the social ramifications of these developments.\footnote{22}{One exception is the study conducted by Jeff Paul of the city of Manresa in Catalonia during the 1350s and 1360s. See Jeffrey Fynn-Paul, “Civic debt, civic taxes, and urban unrest: a Catalan key to interpreting the late fourteenth-century European crisis,” in Money, Markets and Trade in Late Medieval Europe: Essays in Honour of John H.A. Munro, ed. Lawrin D. Armstrong, Ivana Elbl, and Martin Elbl (Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2007); Jeffrey Paul, “The Catalan city of Manresa in the 14th and 15th centuries: A political, social, and economic history” (University of Toronto, 2005); Manuel Sánchez Martínez stresses we still need studies on the effects of raising taxation on social relations; see “La fiscalidad real en Cataluña (siglo XIV),” Anuario de estudios medievales 22 (1992): 351-2.}

For the Crown of Aragon, the general chronology is connected to the various wars of the period. In order to fund his conquest of Sardinia and conflict with Genoa (1321-1336), King Jaume II, for example, demanded more than 3 million sous from cities and aljamas in his kingdoms. Forty percent was supposed to be raised in Catalonia, thirty-five percent would come from Aragon and twenty-five percent from the Kingdom of Valencia. In order to be able to come up with such amounts, cities levied indirect taxes on consumption. The amounts required from municipalities were not modest. Between 1333-1335 the city of Daroca, for example, paid about 472,000s in contributions to the royal treasury, the equivalent of 100s per family (an amount sufficient to buy grain for a family of five for one year).\footnote{23}{Carlos Laliena Corbera, Historia de Aragón, ed. Eloy. Fernández Clemente (Madrid: La Esfera de los Libros, 2008), 314.} Jaume II also sold parts of the royal patrimony in order to raise funds for the Sardinian war. He sold cities, castles, jurisdiction, and revenues to raise about 663,000 sous. This led to a drop in royal revenue from 154,000s between 1320-1324 to 59,000 sous between 1330-1339.\footnote{24}{Sánchez Martínez, “La fiscalidad real en Cataluña,” 360.} Cities and aljamas would become the Crown’s main source of revenue.

These royal demands would only increase exponentially during the rest of the fourteenth century until indirect taxation alone became insufficient to meet the demands, as seen in the previous chapter and direct taxation, per capita, would be imposed mid century.
Called fogaje (a hearth tax), we have evidence that the first one was collected in Catalonia in 1358 and in Aragon in 1362 (not surprisingly, during the war with Castile).

The fiscal situation for the Jews was even more complicated since they traditionally contributed annual taxes to the Crown in exchange for royal protection and the right to practice their religion. It was to Jewish and Muslim communities living in royal lands that the Crown traditionally turned to for any emergency levy. In the Crown of Aragon, Jewish communities had to pay a fixed annual tax to the Crown, usually divided into two payments. This amount was altered only if a given Jewish community had a marked change in its economic situation. In Huesca, Jews paid 6,126s each year in taxes (half at the feast of St John in June, and the other half in January) in the first half of the century. The king could supplement his income from his Jewish subjects by asking for subsidies or loans from them.

Historians of the Jewish community of Huesca agree that until about 1340 the town was marked by economic prosperity, to which local Jews contributed and from which they benefited. Jews owned land, and were active in trade. This situation began to change after mid century. Prior to the Black Death and the revolt of the Union of 1348, the Crown had already established a pattern of demanding subsidies from Jewish aljamas for its various military campaigns. In addition to paying subsidies for war, the Jews regularly had to contribute to other royal expenses such as weddings, funerals, and other such events. With the drop in population after the Black Death, the burden of these demands increased on a per capita basis. In this period, King Pere increasingly passed on expenses to municipalities as well as Jewish and Muslim communities. In addition to help footing the bill for improving city fortifications, for example, the Jews of Huesca had to contribute 2,000lb in 1363 to help King

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26 Ibid., 280ff.
27 Durán Gudiol, La judería de Huesca, 34-5.
28 See Assis, Jewish economy, 161-172.
Pere fight the war with Castile. This fiscal burden was not limited solely to the Jews. Aragonese cities involved in the revolt of the Union were heavily fined by the Crown. In addition, they had to pay high subsidies to fund the Sardinian campaign. Huesca, for example, had to pay at least 46,000s. And as we have seen in chapter one, the following decades offered no respite as Aragonese communities suffered the brunt of the war with Castile that marked much of the 1350s and 1360s. Since most of the war happened on Aragonese territories, many cities emerged out of the conflict ravaged and their commercial activity was severely disrupted.

The royal policy of increasing taxation proved disastrous for many communities and the royal chancery records are filled with requests by cities and aljamas for reprieves or moratoria or requests for new sources of revenue. We have already seen some of the erratic ways in which even sensible and efficient monarchs, such as Pere the Ceremonious, granted and undermined those moratoria. By the 1370s, the aljama of Huesca had to pawn some of its precious goods such as religious artifacts to be able to pay what it owed to the king. In 1380, the community was expected to contribute 250 gold florins to the wedding of Prince Joan and the Queen of Castile. The following year the aljama declared itself unable to meet its commitments to pay a censal to Queen Leonor because of “great burdens” to which it was

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29 In 1354 Jews and Muslims from Huesca were ordered to contribute to the establishment of a Estudio General in Huesca until it could be supported by the municipality alone. The amount was not negligible - 1500s/year. Other expenses includes the cost of repairing 17 albacares in 1359 (city had to fix walls and other fortifications; muslims, jews, and christians negotiated how much each community would pay and in 1363 - 2,000 lb jaquesas (for war with Castile). Ibid., 283-4.
30 Laliena Corbera, Historia de Aragón, 280.
31 Ibid., 283.
32 See chapter 2.
34 The amount had to be reduced to 200 because the community could not pay; See ACA 811, f. 115v, 116r-v.
subjected, finding itself “at the point of becoming depopulated.”

These pressures led many Jews to leave the city, which only exacerbated tensions within the aljama since the amount of taxes the aljama had to pass to the king remained the same. During Baruch’s tenure as adelantado and tax collector some Jews complained that the aljama continued to demand taxes from them despite having established residence elsewhere. One example is that of Sento Cogombrell, a tanner who left Huesca in the 1370s with his wife, children, and younger brother, according to him in search of a better job. Despite having set up residence in Zaragoza, Sento complained to the king in December of 1381 that the administrators of the aljama of Huesca wanted to make him and his brother pay taxes there. This was the same year that the aljama declared itself unable to meet its obligations to Prince Martí. In cases such as these, royal officials re-affirmed the principle that people should not be taxed in two places at the same time. That Sento and his families were not the only ones leaving is clear from continuous complaints by the aljama (perhaps by Baruch himself?) that individual Jews were moving to other places so they could evade paying taxes to the aljama. Jews who stayed in the city complained they were overtaxed by the aljama. In the end, it is not surprising that the tax collector ended up murdered. That the problem was not just Baruch, is clear from the fact that many of these complaints continued after his death.

The fiscal situation of Jews in the Kingdom of Aragon was made worse during Prince Joan’s tenure as governor general. In 1382, the year after the aljama of Huesca declared itself

35 ACA C 820: 97v-98r (22/03/1381): “grans carrechs a que es tenguda sa posada en punt de despoblarose.” The king answered with the order that the censal be paid from the taxes the aljama normally had to pay. Not much a reprieve but as we have seen in the previous chapter, debt from censal were not usually reprieved.
36 ACA C 820: 97v-98r.
37 ACA C 815: 167r-168r (21/12/1381): “nullus teneatur nec astringitur in duobus locis contribuere nec peytare maxime in locis ubi non fovet suum incolatum.”
38 See, for example, ACA C 817: 122r-v (19/07/1381) and 1830: 184v-185r (04/02/1387).
39 ACA C 834: 11r (16/12/1383)
unable to meet some of its financial responsibilities, King Pere had to interfere when he found out his son was collecting too many subsidies and taxes from the aljama.\textsuperscript{40} He had been told that officials acting in the name of Prince Joan collected 2,000 gold florins from the aljama of Zaragoza and large amounts from other Aragonese aljamas, which prompted the king to send a direct letter to his son ordering him to refrain from doing so under threat of penalty from the Crown.\textsuperscript{41} By 1385, the year Baruch was murdered, King Pere had promised the aljamas of Aragon a break from extraordinary demands but had to continue to reprimand Prince Joan’s officials for harassing the Jews for subsidies and taxes.\textsuperscript{42}

Internal conflict continued after Baruch’s murder. His enemies did not take long to go after his children, filing suits against the minors for alleged administrative irregularities done by Baruch. When Baruch’s brother protested, King Pere was quick to rule that Baruch’s children should not be held responsible until an audit was done of their father’s administration of the aljama.\textsuperscript{43} The king also clarified earlier that Baruch’s children should not have to pay more taxes than their father.\textsuperscript{44} Prosecution of Baruch’s murderers would itself become a bone of contention between Baruch’s family and the aljama. Since Baruch was murdered while performing his duties as an official of the aljama, his family claimed the aljama should pay the costs of prosecuting his murderers, which, judging by the ill will against Baruch in some circles

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\textsuperscript{40} ACA C 826: 124v (19/07/1382).
\textsuperscript{41} ACA C 826: 125r (19/07/1382).
\textsuperscript{42} ACA C 842: 171v-172r (10/03/1385). This was not the first time King Pere had to admonish his son about the way he dealt with his Aragonese community. In 1377 Prince Joan proved far too eager to prosecute a number of Jews from the community of Huesca of host desecration. As we will see in chapter 5, the much more pragmatic King Pere knew only too well that such accusations were more likely to be based on false accusations and had the potential to escalate. See chapter 5.
\textsuperscript{43} ACAC 843: 125r-v (05/08/1385).
\textsuperscript{44} ACA C 842: 159v (10/04/1385). The issue of the degree of responsibility of underage children for actions of their parents often came up before the royal court. In 1383, the royal court reprehended the merino of Zaragoza for selling property belonging to the underage children of Sento Fateix of Zaragoza to pay for debt owed by their father. See ACA: 837: 40r-v (22/10/1383).
within the aljama, was easier said than done. As early as April of 1385, King Pere ordered the aljama to bear the costs of the trial of Baruch's murderers.\footnote{ACA C 842: 194r (15/04/1385).} By August of 1385, King Pere had to once again write a letter to the treasurer of the aljama to reiterate the previous order since it had been ignored.\footnote{ACA C 843: 125v-126r (05/08/1385).} The unpopularity of Baruch's family was such that the aljama tried to cancel a tax collection concession that had been issued to Baruch's brother Isaac for a period of seven years, alleging that there was great "hatred" for him among certain individuals within the aljama.\footnote{ACA C 848: 8r-v (30/01/1386). The attempt did not work as the court confirmed the appointment. More research needs to be done on the period after 1391 to see what happened to Isaac Alentenç.}

The late 1380s proved particularly trying times for the aljama of Huesca. A series of letters issued in 1388 shows that the problems of the early 1380s continued to be felt. The aljama continued to complain, for example, about individuals moving out of the aljama to seigneurial lands.\footnote{ACA C 1830: 184v} In response, King Joan's officials, acting in the name of the king, instructed aljama officials to issue alatma and niduy - bans imposed by the community - in the synagogue against all those who had left the aljama in the past four years.\footnote{ACA C 1830: 184v (03/02/1388)} Declaring alatma and nitduy against a malefactor was one of the harshest punishment available to aljama officials, although sometimes aljama officials would impose the death penalty for malshinut or corporeal punishment for other crimes. Although banishment does not seem like a harsh penalty against someone who has already left, the purpose here was probably to shame those who had abandoned their communal obligations and dissuade others from doing the same. It would also prevent individuals from transferring all their property to a place outside the city.

If the Jews of Huesca felt they could ease some of the pressures placed upon them by removing the tax collector, they quickly discovered that shooting the messenger did not alter...
the message. Such pressures did not ease with the murder of Baruch Alentenç, on the contrary. Another letter from 1388, for example, confirmed a remission of 1,000s per year for two years given to the aljama by King Pere in December of 1386. Attempts to improve aljama finances by awarding them new sources of revenue only soured the Jews’ relationship with the city. When the aljama was allowed to collect taxes (sisa) on goods bought and sold within the aljama, they ran into trouble with municipal officials who had been in charge of collecting that specific tax in Huesca. Although usually municipalities could not tax Jews, in practice Jews often contributed to city coffers directly or indirectly. In this instance, since the city had obtained the right to collect the sisa in Huesca, municipal officials probably collected it from Jews as well. So when the king, perhaps somewhat thoughtlessly granted to the Jews the right to collect that same tax within the Jewish community, it represented a loss of revenue for the city of Huesca, causing a certain degree of tension in the city as the Jews rightfully claimed they could not be taxed twice.

Unfortunately, King Joan’s attempts to ease the burden of taxes on the aljama of Huesca and prevent its depopulation, as the letters repeatedly affirm, were not consistent and more money was squeezed out when necessary. Less than a year after issuing a remission to the aljama of Huesca, King Joan ordered that the aljama contribute 6,000s a year to pay a stipend for a royal physician to whom King Pere had awarded 10,000s a year for his services. The two-year remission issued by the late King Pere had to be renewed in 1389 for another five years.

In Aragon, most of the more acrimonious conflicts happened not in the principal aljamas such as Zaragoza or Calatayud but in medium-size or smaller communities such as

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50 ACA C 1830: 186v-187r (04/02/1388)
51 ACA C 1830: 185r-v; King Joan confirmed the right to collect sisas in another letter issued a few months later - ACA C 1869: 74r-v (6/07/1388)
52 ACA C 1835: 191r-192r (12/01/1389)
53 ACA C 1894: 25r-v (01/07/1389)
those of Huesca and Alcañiz. There are many possible reasons for this. As we saw in the previous chapter, despite being particularly hard hit by the Black Death, Zaragoza seems to have recovered somewhat by the late fourteenth century. Relatively few requests for moratoria on debts came from the Jewish community of Zaragoza, particularly when compared to other communities in Aragon or Catalonia.\footnote{See pages 73-74 above.} It is possible that the aljama benefitted from the increasing migration from the countryside to the cities as well as from its key economic position both within the kingdom as well as for the Crown. In Zaragoza, the Jewish community was able renegotiate its tax burden in the wake of the plague epidemic, making it an attractive place for Jews seeking employment, such as Sento Cogombrell, the tanner from Huesca who relocated to Zaragoza seeking better opportunities. The attractiveness of larger cities increased pressure on smaller centers, which had population loss caused by plague exacerbated by emigration.

In many aljamás, fiscal and economic pressures contributed to rising conflict between individuals and the aljama administration. We have already seen how in Huesca, Jews focused their frustrations on aljama administrators. Often, conflict with aljama officials led individual Jews to seek residence elsewhere. The decision to abandon family, friends, and one’s hometown was not an easy one to take but if the point was to leave the aljama’s jurisdiction, the decision was easier in the cases when a city had more than one aljama. One example is Alcañiz, which housed at least two Jewish communities. In 1179, King Alfons had awarded to the order of Calatrava the castle in the city, making it one of its central seat in the Kingdom of Aragon.\footnote{“Alcañiz” Gran Enciclopedia de Aragón} At some point in the late fourteenth century, King Pere awarded the master of the order of Calatrava thirty Jewish households in Alcañiz.\footnote{It is unclear exactly when this happened but two letters from 1381 specified that the grant was only for the duration of the life of the master of Calatrava and that those Jews should be included in the two Jewish communities in the city of Alcañiz.} A separate aljama was set up and the
fact that the two communities shared the same space meant that for Jews in trouble within their aljama, crossing jurisdictional boundaries could not be easier. Much harder, however, was solving conflicts that ensued.

A case in point was that of Mayl Avencuerna, a Jew who belonged to the original thirty households awarded to the master of Calatrava. At some point in the late 1370s and early 1380s, claiming he was “oppressed” by aljama administrators, Mayl moved himself and his goods to the royal aljama in the same city. It is unclear whether Mayl asked for permission from local representatives of the master of Calatrava to leave; either way, Jewish officials from his original aljama did not recognize his move and sought to collect taxes from him. In 1381, officials from the aljama under the order of Calatrava succeeded in confiscating several of Mayl’s goods, selling them in order to pay the taxes he allegedly owed to the aljama. It was at this juncture that Mayl appealed to the royal court, claiming that the adelantados of the aljama were acting unlawfully against him since he did not owe them any money and he now contributed with the Jews of the royal aljama.\footnote{ACA C 814: 106r-v (04/02/1381); 108r (09/02/1381).} Initially, royal officials instructed the justice of Alcañiz and the vice-governor of Aragon to adjudicate the case, but about two weeks later, perhaps provided with new information, they more forcefully sided with Mayl ordering the master of Calatrava and the justice of Alcañiz to curb any attempt by the order’s Jewish aljama to exploit Mayl Avencuerna.\footnote{ACA C 816: 144r-v (19/02/1381).} The conflict would not end there, however, and five years later we find Mayl still in court against the adelantados of his former aljama, whom he accused of fabricating false documents against him.\footnote{ACA C 856: 87r (03/03/1386).}

Although it is impossible to know whether Mayl Avencuerna in fact owed money to his former aljama before he decided to move, he was not unique in complaining about the actions returned to the royal aljama upon the death of the master of the order. See ACA C 936: 72r-v (15/02/1381; 72v-73r (14/02/1381).
of aljama officials, particularly when it involved tax collection. Wealthy Jews particularly or those with connections in the royal household did not hesitate to protest the amount they were expected to contribute annually. As we have seen above, Baruch Alentenç’s conflicts with the Jews of Huesca began when he refused to pay his portion of taxes alleging he was being overtaxed. Although he was unable to evade paying his taxes, others had better luck and had their complaints heard by the king; for example, royal officials sided with Mestre Mossé del Portal, physician of the queen, when he protested that he was being taxed excessively.60 Another physician, Jucef Bonafos, complained that the aljama of Vilafranca del Penedes tried to compel him to pay taxes there because he stayed in l’Arboç for a while on business. Jucef claimed that his family and his residence were in Barcelona.61 In the case of Mossé del Portal, officials reminded the aljama administrators that although it was their right to tax members of the aljama, they should do so with justice.

The complaint of being over-taxed was a common one in both Catalonia and Aragon, where individual Jews may certainly have had reasons to protest ever increasing taxes. Although the sources do not allow us to estimate exactly how much each Jewish family was taxed or to determine whether they were over-taxed, the drop in population after the Black Death followed by increasing fiscal demands from a Crown with growing international ambitions no doubt drove many within Jewish communities to seek ways to evade paying taxes either by moving themselves or their goods to other jurisdictions. As we will see in the final chapter of this dissertation, it also drove some to seek conversion in hope of getting out of debt and/or gaining access to Christian charities.

Nevertheless, the situation for Jewish officials was equally difficult. Adelantados throughout Catalonia and Aragon constantly complained that individual Jews were refusing to

60 ACA C 847: 61v62r (30/11/1385)
61 ACA C 852: 147v-148r (12/09/1386)
pay their share of taxes. In 1382, for example, the aljama of Tárrega complained that individual Jews refused to contribute. In Calatayud, the problem was individual Jews who, having been chosen as judges of the community, ruled in their own favour making themselves exempt from contributing with the other members of the community. In both cases King Pere ordered the local bailiff to compel the recalcitrant taxpayers to fulfill their obligations, reminding those of Calatayud that “no one can excuse themselves from communal obligations.” In doing so, King Pere safeguarded his own fiscal interests while also supporting aljama officials in their efforts to force recalcitrant taxpayers to pay. The crown generally walked a fine line between protecting individual Jews from being overtaxed and upholding aljama officials’ authority in order to secure its own revenue. Nevertheless, the practice by successive kings of showing favour to individual Jews by awarding them with tax-exempt status exarcebated tensions within Jewish communities in a time of growing debt and fiscal crisis.

In November of 1381, some individuals from the aljama of Zaragoza, described as being of the worse sort (“condicionis pessime”), placed false accusations against two families (Abenalazar and dela Cavalleria) because of their tax-exempt status. While the letters are frustratingly opaque on the details of the conflict, it is clear from the series of letters about it that relations between the two families and the aljama had become quite difficult. The mistrust reached a point that the Abenalazar and dela Cavalleria requested that conflicts between them and their fellow co-religionists be adjudicated by Jewish officials only if a Jew of similar tax-exempt status could be appointed as one of the judges since “the whole aljama hates the francos and the berurim belong to the aljama”. Interestingly, the Jews of Zaragoza used an accusation of malshinut against the two families to attempt to expel them from the

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62 ACA C827: 80v-81r (10/09/1382)
63 ACA C818: 147v-148r (09/09/1381)
64 Ibid., 147v: “ab onere comuni nemo se potest excusare”
65 ACA C938: 192v-193v.
66 ACA C822: 153v-154r (28/10/1381).
aljama by issuing a sentence of *alacme* against them.\textsuperscript{67} The point was moot, however, since as *francos*, both the Abenalazar and dela Cavalleria families fell outside of aljama jurisdiction.

Other cases involving *franco* Jews show that aljama officials often tried to tax those who held tax-exempt status. Benay Frances, his wife and children were granted tax exempt status by King Pere in 1366 but in 1380, Benay’s widow, Guia, complained to the king that the *adelantados* of Zaragoza were trying to force her to contribute to the aljama’s taxes.\textsuperscript{68} King Pere ordered the *adelantados* to observe the family’s tax-exempt status, which had been given for life, and charged the merino of Zaragoza to ensure that the aljama complied. While the king’s interference seems to have bought Guia and her children some respite, it did not prevent the aljama from trying again after a few years. We find Guia once again appealing to the king in 1389 for exactly the same reason. This time, King Joan not only ordered the *adelantados* to respect the *franquitas* given to Guia and her family but also threatened a fine of one hundred gold florins if the aljama should be found in breach of the privilege given to Guia.\textsuperscript{69}

Tensions caused by increased taxation were not only within Jewish communities but also between them – usually involving the main community of a *collecta* and its members. Such conflicts were more frequent in Aragon, where a *collecta* system was less fixed than in Catalonia.\textsuperscript{70} During much of first half of the 1380s, the Jews of the small community of La Almunia de Doña Godina, under the jurisdiction of the Knights Hospitallers, refused to

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\textsuperscript{67} Malshinut was the crime of informing against a fellow Jew to a non-Jewish court of law. As we will see in the following chapter, although Jews frequently used Christian courts to solve their conflicts in the fourteenth century, accusations of malshinut were infrequent at best.

\textsuperscript{68} ACA C 813: 78r (11/02/1380). See ACA C 825: 17v-18v (23/11/1381) which seems to suggest a tax issue related to this conflict.

\textsuperscript{69} ACA C 1838: 32v-33r (01/02/1389).

\textsuperscript{70} For the *collecta* system in Aragon, see Tov Assis, *Jewish Economy*, 200-04.
contribute with the *aljama* of Calatayud, to whose *collecta* it belonged.\(^{71}\) In 1385 the king once more ordered the Jews of La Almunia to pay its contributions to Calatayud.\(^{72}\) Likewise, the small communities of Caspe and Maella were locked in conflict with the larger community of Alcañiz throughout the 1380s. Caspe had secured a privilege from King Pere making it a separate *aljama* and placing Maella under its fiscal jurisdiction, although traditionally both Caspe and Maella had belonged to the *collecta* of Alcañiz.\(^{73}\) Despite the privilege issued to the Jews of Caspe and Maella, the aljama of Alcañiz would continue to press them for contributions and, as we will see in the next chapter, representatives of the two aljamas would go back and forth to the royal court over the following few years over the issue. Alcañiz had earlier been in a similar conflict with the Jews of the Castellania de Emposta, in the archbishopric of Zaragoza.\(^{74}\) Similar conflicts would also pit the Jews of Teruel and Albarracín against each other a few years later.\(^{75}\)

It is important to stress, however, that the fiscal pressure monarchs imposed on the Jews of Aragon and Catalonia (and the rest of the Crown of Aragon for that matter) in the late fourteenth century was not of the same nature as the exploitation imposed by English or French monarchs on their Jews in the thirteenth century. In mid-thirteenth-century England, for example, King Henry III ordered a full investigation of Jewish wealth in his kingdom. Once this information was gathered he ordered a massive tallage of English Jewry, with disastrous consequences. In the words of Robert Stacey, an expert on the finances of Henry III, this tallage “ruined the Jewish magnates of England, and effectively decapitated the class structure of

\(^{71}\) ACA C 830: 133v (01/06/1383) includes a letter from 1378 that lists La Almunia de Doña Godina, alongside Ricla, Fariza, Arandiga and other communities around Calatayud as belonging to its collecta.

\(^{72}\) ACA C 945: 98r-99v (10/06/1385)

\(^{73}\) See ACA C 945: 100r (10/06/1385); 853: 63r-v (18/08/1386); 855: 67v-69r (05/07/1386).

\(^{74}\) ACA C 936: 128v (26/03/1381)

\(^{75}\) ACA C 1839: 55v [01/03/1389]
medieval Anglo-Jewry. By so doing Henry broke the financial backbone of the English Jewish community, and permanently reduced its value to the Crown.” 76 Both King Pere and King Joan accepted that there were reasonable limits to how much they could squeeze from their Jewish communities. Although Joan had shown less restraint when heir to the throne, he maintained his father’s more conciliatory and pragmatic policies when he became king. 77 King Pere was often aware that there were limits to how much he could expect from any given community as the recurring grants of moratoria discussed in the previous chapter have shown.

Here is where reading the history of the Jews alongside the history of the wider community in which they lived is crucial. What we see in the Crown of Aragon in the late 1380s is not a changing policy regarding Jews specifically. Fiscal changes affected all who lived in Crown territories. Cities throughout Catalonia and Aragon were suffering similar fiscal pressures in this period. 78 We have already seen in the previous chapter how both Jewish and Christian communities adopted similar responses to deal with these similar pressures by engaging in public debt financing. The network of debt became ever more intertwined in this period. At the top, the king would borrow money via the sale of censals and would often use a Jewish community’s revenue as collateral. In many cases, it was common for the king to simply


77 It is unclear whether this was a conscious decision by the king or the result of the bureaucratization of royal administration. Many of the day-to-day decisions regarding a majority of cases to reach the royal court were made by officials acting in the name of the king rather than the monarch himself.

78 Baer noted that in King Pere’s reign, “taxes were as oppressive for the Christian municipalities as for the Jewish aljamas”. See A history of the Jews in Christian Spain, 2: 31. See also Fynn-Paul, “Money, Markets and Trade”; “The Catalan city of Manresa in the 14th and 15th centuries: A political, social, and economic history.”
pass the censal itself to a Jewish community by commuting a tax that the community previously paid to the king into responsibility for a censal. In 1380, for example, the crown had obtained 154,000s through the sale of a censal, for which it would have to pay 11,000s annually. The king also owed 2,000s to one Miguel Cosell. Instead of paying these debts directly out of royal revenue, King Pere passed on the obligation to the Jews of Barcelona replacing the 13,000s in annual taxes (quaestia) that the aljama owed to the crown. As a result, more and more of an aljama’s revenue was used to finance debt, as we saw before.

Jordi Morelló i Baget has recently published a very detailed fiscal study of two cities in the hinterland of Tarragona between the thirteenth and fifteenth centuries. Although he focused exclusively on the development of fiscal and financial institutions in the fourteenth century, leaving aside the crucial topic of the consequences of bankruptcy and fiscal crisis on the population of the cities he studied, nonetheless his study is extremely valuable for understanding the background to the challenges facing urban dwellers in Catalonia in the late fourteenth century. Focusing particularly on the cities of Reus and Valls, Morelló i Baget traces how Catalan cities saw their fiscal obligations increase steadily during the twenty years prior to the war of the two Pedros and made ever worse during the last third of the fourteenth century. Morelló i Baget, like Sánchez and Orti before him, saw the clear relationship between growing taxation and increasing debt in this period as communities tried to figure out how to produce the contributions demanded by the crown. For our

79 ACA C 1100:36v-37r (07/09/1380).
80 ACA C 1100:37v-v (07/09/1380).
81 Rural dwellers were by no means spared these pressures, which in Catalonia would lead to revolts in the countryside. See Paul H Freedman, The origins of peasant servitude in medieval Catalonia (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991).
82 Jordi Morelló i Baget, Fiscalitat i deute public en dues viles del camp de Tarragona (Barcelona: Institució Milà i Fontanals, 2001), 164-7; 170ff.
purposes here, the important factor to highlight is not only the parallel histories of Christian and Jewish communities in this period but perhaps even more relevant is to note the conflict over jurisdictions that such pressures engendered. Morelló i Baget highlights how increasing royal taxation in the Camp de Tarragona heightened conflict between the crown and the church, for example, in the 1370s. Tarragona was the see of an archbishopric and the church had seigneurial jurisdiction in much of the area, including the right to tax its inhabitants. By taxing them directly, King Pere came into conflict with the archbishop. Some of these conflicts would sometimes involve the Jews. In Huesca, for example, the local bishop tried to exact tithes from the Jews, much to the displeasure of King Pere.

After 1350, the main elements of a tax system were in place in the form of tax collection institutions and stable forms of tax distribution. This would have an impact on Jews as well. Although the Jews were among special groups considered outside of municipal jurisdiction – an autonomous group within the city – alongside the clergy and knights, they were increasingly under pressure in the late fourteenth century to contribute more with the city. According to Morelló, in the second half of the fourteenth century, municipalities began to attempt expanding the number of contributors to city coffers by trying to include Jewish communities. In Tarragona, they began to appear in the tax collection records of the city.

This practice constituted a clear infringement on royal jurisdiction and Jews would probably have had no difficulty in appealing to the king against any attempt by cities to tax them. In theory, cities had no right to tax Jews living within their boundaries. In practice, however, the

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84 Morelló i Baget, *Fiscalitat i deute public*, 194-5.
85 ACA C 814: 57v-58r (05/01/1381). The riots against Jews in 1391 would affect Tarragona. See Baer, 2: 103.
87 Ibid., 419; Morelló cities the case of the Jews of Belaguer, where city officials were able to reach an agreement with the Jews in which they (the Jews) would pay taxes over half of their goods to the city. See Montserrat Cases Nadal, “Els jueus de Balaguer en el Llibre de l’Estima de 1412,” in *Colloqui d’Història dels Jueus a la Corona d’Aragó* (Lleida, 1991), 323.
situation was much different. Many Jewish communities seem to have struck an understanding with the municipal government of the cities in which they lived. In Girona, for example, the Jews seem to have routinely paid a levy to city officials twice a year. In fact, the Jews of Girona seem to have contributed with the city for quite some time. In 1339, two wealthy members of the aljama of Girona, Bonjudà Cresques and his son-in-law Saltell Gracià, left 17,500s to the city to fix walls.

Although Jews would often voluntarily agree to contributing with the cities in which they lived, disputes would arise over what precisely constituted a fair contribution. Often, the conflict with municipalities concerned less the issue of being taxed than of being overtaxed. In Tortosa, for example, Jews contributed to the building of the city’s walls but complained that the amount they were expected to contribute far exceeded their ability to pay and caused many individual Jews to leave the city, a prospect that led the crown to consider a “great damage to the aljama... and loss to our treasure.” The Jews of Jaca, on the other hand, received less support from royal officials when they refused to contribute anything to the upkeep of the city’s walls, something they had traditionally done in the past.

The fiscal pressure imposed upon the Jews of the Crown of Aragon had implications far beyond the possible impoverishment of a given community. Perhaps more important than

88 See table in annex
90 ACA C 1270: 62v-64v; 65r-v: “in ipsius aljame et eius singularium damnum et prejudicium redundare... in dominucionem nostrarum regaliarum et iurium...”
91 ACA C 817: 162r-v (20/08/1381); 823: 29r-v (01/09/1381). Other disputes involving contribution to the building or upkeep of city walls involve Tarazona (817: 180r [02/09/1381]); Calatayud (838: 33r-v (16/03/1384); Huesca (1110: 26v-27r [16/11/1386]); and Fraga (1831: 165v-166r [14/07/1388]), where Jews complained that city officials gave better deals to Christians than they did to Jews who found themselves unable to pay their share of contributions.
the purely economic effects of increased taxation were its effects within Jewish aljamas. We have seen the range of conflicts that tax collection could cause both within and between aljamas in both Catalonia and Aragon. All these conflicts led to a steady deterioration of the authority of those who held power within Jewish communities. What we see time and again in the royal letters in the chancery registers is evidence of aljama officials using the king to shore up their authority within the community. Not only did individual Jews such as Baruch Alentenç often refuse to pay their taxes but they also challenged the authority of aljama tax collectors. In Calatayud, for example, some Jews refused to comply with the treasurers of the aljama, doubting their authority. The aljama had to request that the king issue a letter stating they have the power to collect taxes.92 This deterioration of authority happened alongside or perhaps contributed to an increasing acculturation of Jews in the use of Christian institutions. In the next chapter we will explore not only the range of conflict within Jewish communities of the Crown of Aragon but also how individual Jews increasingly relied on the royal courts of justice to solve internal disputes.

92See ACA C 936: 72v-73r. [Calatayud sought the same privileges given to Zaragoza ACA C 942: 67r-69r]
Chapter 4 - Jews and the royal court: autonomy and acculturation

In 1389, Samuel Gracia travelled close to 200 kilometres from Barcelona to Monzón, in the kingdom of Aragon, where the king was holding court. Samuel sought justice in a debt litigation that had been decided in his favour five years prior but still remained unresolved, the money unpaid. The earlier case had been adjudicated by the royal court, one of about eight cases involving Samuel Gracia as plaintiff or defendant against fellow Jews in the royal courts of King Pere III (1336-1387) and Joan I (1387-1396) during the 1380s. Involved in debt litigation across the Penedès region as well as in the provinces of Lleida and Girona, Samuel’s litigiousness and his propensity to manipulate the courts to try to get out of trouble gives us a valuable window on the kinds of internal conflicts that marked Jewish life in the late fourteenth-century Crown of Aragon and how the Jews acted out their differences through a skillful use of the judicial system.

Samuel Gracia was not the only Jew to seek royal justice to resolve a conflict with a co-religionist in this period. Six years prior, on a summer day in 1383, a Jewish widow called Oro left her home in Daroca and walked or rode the 160 kilometres to Monzón. Oro and her son Salamon Far travelled that far to file a suit against Mosse Hapatron, a fellow Jew from Daroca. Ten days earlier, Faraig Albella and Brahem Arripoll, Jews from Monzón, had appealed a

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1 Samuel Gracia was also involved in a number of cases against Christians. For those see, for example, ACA C 1285: 154v (19/08/1384); ACA C 840: 119r-120r (30/08/1384); ACA 840: 119r-120r (06/06/1386); ACA. 852: 78v-79r (26/07/1386); ACA C 1838: 75r-v (10/03/1389).

2 ACA C 830: 96r-v (31/07/1383).
sentence issued by Andrea de Luyano, a local jurisprito.\(^3\) Hundreds of other individual Jews, men and women, did so in the 1380s. Samuel stands out for his frequent consumption of royal justice; whereas the overwhelming majority of Jews appear only once or twice in the records, I have found fifty royal letters dealing with Samuel, who was involved in at least sixteen cases against Christians and/or Jews over a period of six years. The previous chapters have traced the growing burden of debt and taxation among the Jews of Catalonia and Aragon. As we shall see in this chapter, fiscal and financial disputes were common in a litigious society marked by increasing debt, fiscal pressures, and an unstable economy.

The administration of justice was one of the essential roles played by medieval monarchs. When King Jaume I appointed his son Pere procurator to act in his stead as ruler of Catalonia, the charter granting him full powers emphasized the administration of justice as his main role:

> Let it be known to all that we, Jaume etc., give, grant, and deliver at once to you, our dear son Prince Pere, heir to Catalonia, the procuratorship and complete governance in its entirety of all Catalonia, from the Salses to the Cinca [rivers]. Thus you shall control and administer justice well and rightly, absolving the innocent and punishing the guilty, tempering your judgments with mercy. You shall also observe the charter of Peace and Truce throughout all Catalonia, and ensure that the counts, viscounts, barons, knights, and all our other subjects also observe it inviolably. We concede to you full and free authority to hear and adjudicate, personally or through judges delegated by you, all cases, whether civil or criminal..., which according to law are to be treated and determined. And we grant you license and authority... to do and accomplish everything else necessary for our utility and for the defense and good government of the entire lordship and jurisdiction of Catalonia.\(^4\)

Royal courts, therefore, were not only seats of government but also contained courts of law that dealt with matters pertaining to royal jurisdiction and functioned as a supreme court of

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\(^3\) ACA C 830: 77v-78r (21/07/1383).

\(^4\) ACA C 9: 36r [Bofarull, Coleccion de documentos ineditos para la historia de España, vol. 6, 127-128], cited in Marta VanLandingham, Transforming the State: King, Court and Political Culture in the Realms of Aragon (1213-1387) (Leiden [Netherlands]; Boston: Brill, 2002), 83.
justice. Defendants in lower courts would often appeal to the king or the *infante* (prince) when dissatisfied with the way their case was handled by local judicial officials. Suits would also begin at the royal courts as ex officio prosecutions sparked by the rumour of a crime. Thirteenth-century ordinances determined that royal judicial officials were to hear cases every morning in the royal palace while the king himself attended the public one day a week.\(^5\) Until then, the king's role as supreme judge was exercised through his chancery and the royal council. In the thirteenth century a royal Audiencia was formally created and in 1365, under Pere III, it was recognized as a separate judicial institution presided by the king or his lieutenant-general. As the highest court in the Crown of Aragon, the royal Audiencia included not only the king himself, but also a chancellor, three vice-chancellors – representing Catalonia, Aragon, and Valencia –, four jurists for each of the main territories of the Crown of Aragon and two for Mallorca.\(^6\) I have employed the short term "royal court" to indicate this court of law presided by the king and his judicial officials. Since scribes noted which decisions were issued by the king himself as opposed to those that were issued by his officials, I have tried to make this distinction whenever appropriate. Royal justice was also dispensed locally through officials such as bailiffs (*batlles* in Catalonia, *bailes* in Aragon, *bayles* in Valencia), *veguers* (Catalonia), or *merino*, or *zalmedina* (Aragon) or other officials appointed ad hoc by the king.\(^7\) The term "royal court" employed here, however, does not refer to these local courts but rather to the court attached to the king himself. Often I mention also the court of Prince Joan, since the members of the royal family also had their own courts of justice.

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\(^5\) In the thirteenth century this day was Mondays but by the fourteenth it had moved to Fridays. See *Ibid.*, 86; Marie A Kelleher, *The Measure of Woman: Law and Female Identity in the Crown of Aragon* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2010), 30.


\(^7\) For more details on the jurisdiction of these specific officials, see Kelleher, *The Measure of Woman*, 30-32.
That Samuel sought the royal court, and so often, is in itself of interest to historians. The Jews of the Crown of Aragon had enjoyed judicial autonomy since at least the early thirteenth century, a privilege repeatedly confirmed by the Catalano-Aragonese crown. The earliest recorded privilege was issued by King Jaume I to the Jewish aljama of Calatayud in 1229. In this privilege, the king granted the Jews of Calatayud the right to elect four adelantados, officials who had the power to administer justice and punish malefactors. In Catalonia, the earliest privileges date to 1241, when Jaume I gave the Jews of Barcelona the right to elect two or three or more "honest and worthy men (probos homines et legales)" to bring justice against those acting against other Jewish worthies (prohoms) and "to judge cases between you of law, or suits and plaints [raised] by one Jew against another". Jaume I repeatedly issued similar grants to the Jewish communities of all his territories throughout his reign and such privileges were confirmed and upheld by his successors.

Elka Klein has aptly described this policy as signaling a transition from an autonomy by default, in which Jewish communities enjoyed autonomy because of royal neglect or weakness, to an autonomy by design, in which this autonomy was promoted and supported by royal power. She connected this process with the parallel process of the Crown granting more autonomy to cities in the same period, both of which were intrinsically related to the

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8 Elka Klein, Jews, Christian Society, and Royal Power, 129,144; Published in Baer, Regesten, no. 88)
9 ACA C 16: 158; translated by Elka Klein, Jews, 128; [ed. Bofarull, Judios, no. 83, Baer, Regesten, no. 93]. The main emphasis of this 1241 charter given to the community of Barcelona is the punishment of slanderers; the issue of the right to judge cases comes as a secondary consideration at this time. This privilege survives in a register entry from 1269 when the same privilege was extended to the communities of Perpignan, Cerdagne and Conflent. Valencia received the same privileges in 1239 [ACA 941: 176v-177r] and Girona in 1258 [ACA 10: 54v; Baer, Regesten, no. 97]
10 Confirmations under King Pere includes ACA 44: 187v-188 [Baer, Regesten, no. 121]; ACA 59: 56 [Régné, 942] shows similar privileges to Aragonese communities. Under Alfons see ACA 74: 2 [Régné, 1790]
king’s increasing reliance on credit and taxation as a source of royal revenue. The system worked both for the king, who could get money from Jewish and Christian communities more effectively, and for local elites, who had an interest in furthering this system of collection since it enhanced their own claims to power. By the late fourteenth century, the mechanisms for internal dispute resolution were long established and individual Jews were fully aware that they had the right to have their cases heard by a Jewish court without interference from Christian officials.

Bringing accusations against fellow Jews in a Christian court was in fact considered a very serious offence within Jewish communities. The act of informing, or malshinut, was an offence in Jewish law since Talmudic times and Spanish rabbis were quick to condemn the practice of using Christian courts for conflict resolution. The reasons for this were clearly articulated by the teacher of Rabbi Asher ben Yehiel of Toledo, Rabbi Meir of Rothenberg: “when a Jew falls into the clutches of the Gentiles, his life as well as his property is in jeopardy; he can expect from them neither pity nor restraint. The Gentiles are happy to hold a Jew in their power, and, especially when commissioned by another Jew, their cruelty is boundless.” Rabbi Solomon ibn Adret made it even clearer when he said: “Our people, who are in the

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12 Ibid., 147.
13 For the earlier 14th century see Yom Tov Assis, Golden age, 145-154.
15 Cited in Lourie, 109.
estate of the Lord, are prohibited by the Torah from showing a preference for the law of the Gentiles and their ordinances. Moreover, it is forbidden to bring litigation into their courts even in matters where their laws are identical to Jewish law.”¹⁶

Having justice administered internally was of great benefit to Jews, both individually and collectively. Not only were they spared the lengthy trip to the royal court, not always nearby, or the long wait until it passed by, but also they were guaranteed to have justice served according to Jewish law and values. Yet, at least 312 royal letters dealing with approximately 255 individual cases of conflict between Jews between 1380 and 1391 can be found in the royal registers. Involving hundreds of individual Jews, these documents present many challenges. Although they represent legal cases, they are not the full court records but rather requests made to the king regarding a specific suit. Sometimes they can also be an order by the king or officials acting in his name to a judicial official to initiate procedure after news of an offense reached the court. These letters were addressed to an official or to one of the parties involved in the dispute and often deal only briefly with the case since it was understood that all the details, such as witness testimonies and the full charges, would be registered elsewhere.¹⁷ For example, on November 30, 1381, King Pere issued an order to one of his judicial officials in Aragon to adjudicate the “suit or question that arose between Gentio Behor, Jew of Zaragoza, on one side, plaintiff, and on the other, Isaac Taboch, defendant.”¹⁸ No indication is given of the substance of the case. It is often nearly impossible to reconstitute all of the circumstances surrounding a case or evaluate the accusations issued. But most do give a few more details than this, allowing us to study not only the kinds of issues individual Jews

¹⁶ This translation is taken from Ray, The Sephardic Frontier, 131.
¹⁷ For example, when a sentence was issued the main details might be included in the register entry followed by the words “as it is more fully detailed there” (latius est contenta). See for example ACA C 834: 52v.
¹⁸ ACA C 823: 123r [30/11/1381].
brought to the royal courts but also the reasons they chose to seek royal justice. The sheer number of suits among Jews heard routinely by the courts of King Pere and King Joan suggests that the issue of malshinut may well have become a moot point by the late fourteenth century.\(^\text{19}\)

While individual Jews had challenged the authority of their community leaders by appealing to secular courts outside the community since at least Roman times, the nature of the cases brought before the royal courts and the way they were handled by these courts raise many interesting questions regarding Christian-Jewish relations as well as Jewish life in late fourteenth-century Catalonia and Aragon.\(^\text{20}\) Why were Jews seeking Christian justice if they seemingly enjoyed judicial autonomy? Was this a case of Christian encroachment on their autonomy?\(^\text{21}\) But perhaps more importantly, to what extent can Jewish consumption of Christian justice be seen as a form of acculturation and greater interaction with the larger society that Catalan and Aragonese Jews inhabited?\(^\text{22}\)

The issue of acculturation is an important one in Jewish history, particularly in dealing with Christian-Jewish relations. Kenneth Stow has recently shown how the Jews of sixteenth-century Rome adopted Christian institutions such as that of the notary and employed Christian arbiters in their litigation, maintaining their dual identities as both Roman and

\(^{19}\) Both Lourie’s and Meyerson’s studies are based on documentation from the 1330s. Meyerson deals with the issue of recourse to Christian courts in his *Jewish Renaissance*, which focuses on the fifteenth century.


\(^{22}\) The concept of consumption of justice is borrowed from Daniel Lord Smail, *The Consumption of Justice : Emotions, Publicity, and Legal Culture in Marseille, 1264-1423* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2003).
Jewish. Regarding Iberian Jews, the issue was for long overshadowed by the debate over *convivencia*, but scholars such as Elena Lourie, Mark Meyerson, the late Elka Klein and Jonathan Ray have recently began to ask questions about the relationship of the Jews to the culture of Christians among whom they lived.

Since the king often reserved authority over criminal matters, particularly murder, one would expect that the majority of the suits between Jews at the royal courts would be criminal in nature. Yet, the opposite is true. The overwhelming majority of disputes between Jews was civil in nature and concerned matters common in most medieval courts of law: debt litigation, family-related suits over questions of inheritance, dowry, and guardianship of minors, and disputes related to property. Added to these were the ever-present conflicts over taxation, which dominated the lives of medieval Jews.

Beginning with Samuel Gracia’s frequent use of royal courts before broadening the scope to look at the nature of intra-communal conflicts brought to the royal court, this chapter will show how individual Jews litigated in royal courts to resolve everyday conflicts and as a weapon against their Jewish enemies. By working through various jurisdictions – e.g. the courts of local bailiffs and the courts of King Pere and Prince Joan in his capacity as governor

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general – Samuel Gracia succeeded in prolonging the cases brought against him although not without a cost to himself. In all the cases against him, there was no accusation of violence or *malshinut*, or protests against infringement on Jewish autonomy. Samuel’s adversaries in the court seemed just as adept as he was at the use of Christian courts to their benefit. The second half of the chapter will focus on family-related suits, particularly disputes between married couples, to explore how King Pere, King Joan, and their officials dealt with cases that clearly involved Jewish law.

**Part I – The case of Samuel Gracia – debt & taxation**

Samuel Gracia’s first appearance in the royal court of King Pere the Ceremonious was in the winter of 1383 as a defendant in a case brought against him by Salamon de Tolosa, from the small community of Castell de la Geltrú, 45 km south of Barcelona, near Sitges, over a longstanding case of debt.\(^{25}\) In 1381 the *jurisperito* of Vilafranca del Penedès had decided in favour of Salamon, awarding him possession of some of Samuel’s property, which by 1382 Samuel had still not rendered, prompting Salamon to request an order of execution from the *jurisperito*.\(^{26}\) Meanwhile, in June of 1382, Samuel Gracia went to Valencia to seek Prince Joan’s intercession, claiming he had filed an appeal of the sentence. This prompted Prince Joan to issue a stay of the execution against Samuel until the appeal was decided. The appeal, however, was successfully challenged by Salamon at the court of King Pere, causing him to suspend it (*dicta apellatio sit deserta*) and confirm the order of execution. Salamon not only questioned whether Samuel had appealed at all but also claimed that even if he had appealed, his appeal was invalid since he had failed to appear for the original hearing, which led to the

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\(^{25}\) ACA C 834: 52r-53v (04/11/1383)

\(^{26}\) Ibid., 52v.
first judgment being decided against him in absentia. But Samuel had one last strategy left. To evade justice and prevent the order of execution – or at least stall it – he moved to Barcelona in June of 1383, leaving the jurisdiction of Vilafranca. He followed his move with a request that all suits involving him be sent to the bailiff of Barcelona, effectively buying himself some time.  

Salamon did not take this kindly. He protested that Samuel was clearly manipulating the system, prompting King Pere, in the winter of 1383, to issue an order to the jurisprerito of Vilafranca and the bailiffs of l’Arboç, where Samuel lived originally, and Vilafranca, that the execution should be carried out notwithstanding any previous letter issued by either him or Prince Joan. Unfortunately, this is the last we hear about Salamon de Tolosa so we have no way of knowing whether he succeeded in his case against Samuel Gracia.

The normal avenue for Salamon de Tolosa to pursue his litigation against Samuel Gracia was through the aljama of Vilafranca del Penedès, under whose jurisdiction fell the Jews of nearby l’Arboç, where Samuel lived at the time. Yet Salamon took the case instead to the lieutenant governor, Berenguer de Fortiano, who forwarded it to the jurisprerito of Vilafranca. The reasons behind this are not clear. Perhaps Salamon feared that the aljama of Vilafranca would be biased in favour of Samuel, since he originally hailed from there and most of his family still lived in the town. Many of the cases between Jews that were judged by the royal courts in this period in fact involved Jews living in different cities or under the jurisdiction of different aljamas. The Jews of the Crown of Aragon had no juridical organization above the level of the aljama and many individual Jews presumably found it more convenient to seek justice from a local representative of the king, whose jurisdiction had no such geographical limitation and who may have been seen as a more impartial judge.

27 ACA 838: 178v-179r (1/09/1384)
28 Ibid., 53v.
As we have seen above, however, Samuel Gracia also knew how to take advantage of
the different courts at his disposal. He appealed to the court of Prince Joan, who had authority
over local officials, successfully buying some time, a move counteracted by Salamon’s appeal
to the king. When all seemed lost, Samuel simply picked up and moved to Barcelona, causing
more delays as he moved across yet another jurisdictional boundary.

Although Samuel Gracia’s move might have bought him a few months, it locked him
into a long protracted conflict with the aljama of Vilafranca. As we saw in the previous
chapters, migration had marked fiscal consequences. L’Arboç belonged to the collecta of
Vilafranca and the aljama pursued Samuel relentlessly after his move to Barcelona over unpaid
taxes. Salamon de Tolosa did not need to fear any assumed bias in favour of Samuel.

Through his move, Samuel Gracia’s sought to evade not only the execution demanded
by Salamon but also the taxes he owed to the aljama of Vilafranca. The aljama of Vilafranca
seemed at the time to be having a particularly difficult time with tax evasion. In the summer
of 1384 the aljama obtained a sentence of arbitration in its favour and Samuel was ordered to
pay what he owed to his former community, which he promptly refused to do. Thus when
the royal court passed through Vilafranca at the end of August, the aljama obtained an order
from the king himself to the bailiff of l’Arboç to seize Samuel’s goods. But Samuel was back in
Vilafranca (perhaps following the court?) and secured a temporary reprieve through a
safeconduct (guidaticum) from judicial prosecution, valid for a year. To safeguard himself
further he also got a letter from the king exempting him from the jurisdiction of the bailiff of

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29 See chapter 1, n80.
30 ACA C 1831: 97r (12/04/1388); some unnamed Jews – perhaps Samuel? – complained to the
king in 1390 that the aljama was taxing them excessively. The king ordered the charge to be
examined by the local bailiff. See ACA C 1846: 21v (28/06/1390).
31 ACA C 840: 127r (26/08/1384)
32 ACA C 943: 234r-v (01/09/1384); re-issued to include Samuel’s wife in ACA C 945: 34r-35r
(24/05/1385)
l’Arboç. Samuel also did not hesitate to brandish against the bailiffs of l’Arboç and Vilafraanca a general remission issued to the Jews of Barcelona in August of 1385. As we shall see later, the aljama of Vilafraanca’s dispute with Samuel Gracia would drag on for at least the next five years. In 1388, Samuel protested that Vilafraanca’s attempt to tax him was illegal and unfair since he lived in Barcelona and paid taxes with its aljama for the goods he owned elsewhere, obtaining temporarily an order from the king to the aljama officials in Vilafraanca to desist from taxation.

Although Samuel Gracia did not hesitate to use general remissions to avoid paying the debts he owed, he also used the courts to circumvent remissions or moratoria given to his own debtors. Merely two weeks after obtaining an exemption from the jurisdiction of the bailiff of l’Arboç, Samuel went back to the royal court to get an order to the same bailiff stating that any debts owed to him did not fall under a general moratorium issued earlier by the court. In other words, Samuel sought to prevent his debtors from using some of the same strategies he used to stall the payment of debts.

There were limits, however, to how far Samuel could go. In 1386, Samuel’s luck began to change. He and his wife owed 100 pounds in censal and violari pensions to the court of Prince Joan, where they signed a document in court confessing the debt and promising to pay it. They then missed the deadline alleging they had it remitted in the general remission issued to the aljama. Unfortunately, King Pere did not interpret it the same way and personally clarified that he had not intended to include censals and violaris under the general remission and ordered his officials to collect the debt with the help of the bailiffs of l’Arboç and

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33 ACA C 841: 39v-40r (05/10/1384)
34 ACA C 846: 137r (21/11/1385); 856: 165r-166r (10/05/1386)
35 ACA C 1833: 108v (14/04/1388)
36 ACA C 844: 57r-v (17/10/1385)
37 ACA C 1108: 127v-128r (08/02/1386)
Vilafranca, where Samuel held property. Samuel would try again in a case against Vital Brunell, from Barcelona, to whom he was ordered by the courts to pay 25 pounds. In this latter case, Samuel presented a safeconduct issued after the parties had agreed to the sentence of arbitration. The court decided that the safeconduct did not apply not only because it was issued afterwards but also, and perhaps more importantly, because the court understood that safeconducts should not apply “contra nos vel iura nostra.”

The following years saw many executions being made against Samuel by his creditors. In addition to Salamon de Tolosa and his former aljama, Samuel owed money to Jews and Christians throughout Catalonia – Girona, Barcelona, Manresa, and Tárrega. By April 1388, Samuel pleaded poverty, alleging that the seizure of his property by royal officials for the payment of his debts had left him penniless. To ameliorate his situation and prevent him from having to leave the kingdom, as he so threatened, King Joan authorized the bailiff of Barcelona to pursue those who owed money to Samuel, making them exempt from any royal moratoria previously issued.

Money – or lack thereof – was certainly the main spark in the disputes among Jews flaring up in the royal courts in the 1380s. In this the Jews did not differ much from their Christian neighbours in the highly litigious medieval Mediterranea. Daniel Smail has shown that roughly 41 percent of cases brought to the palace court in medieval Marseille dealt with

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38 Ibid., 128r; Despite his move to Barcelona, Samuel maintained property in l’Arboç and other areas of the Penedès. In 1389 some Christians to whom Samuel allegedly owed money broke into a house he kept in l’Arboç. See ACA C 1838: 75r-v (10/03/1389); see also ACA 856: 33r; 39r-v (8/02/1386). As we saw on chapter 2, King Pere and his son Joan, despite often issuing remissions and postponement of debts, consistently excluded censals and violaris from such grants.
39 ACA C 1109: 93r-94r (21/07/1386)
40 ACA C 1829: 98v-99r (4/10/1387); 1828: 135r (20/10/1387)
41 ACA C 1832: 78r (16/04/1388)
“efforts to recover loans, simple sale credits, and other unpaid monetary debt.” In the case of the Jews, however, the existence of internal courts to deal with these issues meant that the cases of debt litigation at the royal courts tended to be either more complex, involving multiple jurisdictions, as in the case of Samuel Gracia and Salomo de Tolosa, or cases where the plaintiff felt more confident of obtaining a favourable ruling from the king. Including conflict over taxes, I found at least twenty-six disputes in Aragon and twenty-five in Catalonia dealing with debt and taxation.

Samuel Gracia was certainly not the only Jew to sue or be sued for money at the royal court. Some cases were prompted by either a breach of trust or the greed of heirs. For example, the Jewish physician Jucef Almelich, from Zaragoza, appealed to the king to get back the 2,000 sous his late mother entrusted to Abraham Alitensi. The language of the case is hopelessly vague – in the scribe’s rendition Jucef Almelich does not mention a loan or contract of any sort, only that his mother entrusted (comendaverit) the sum to Abraham, which Jucef claimed as his after his mother’s death. A similar case involved Bueno Arama, also of Zaragoza, who went to court over the fifty sous he had entrusted to Juce Ripoll and his wife Mira. Once again we lack any information on the circumstances of these transactions. The verb comendare suggests that these may not have been loans in exchange for interest. In ambiguous disputes such as these, the king or the officials acting in his name appointed a jurist to investigate and adjudicate.

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42 Smail, 39-40.
43 ACA C 1835: 180r (04/01/1389)
44 ACA C 817: 105r-v (19/06/1381)
45 The case involving Bueno Ripoll was initially sent to the councilor Francisco Moratonis and later forwarded to the jurist Pedro Lope de Hospital. See ibid and ACA C 823: 136 (25/11/1381).
Only three out of the eight debt litigations originating in Aragon were decided promptly by the royal court. All involved more formal contracts or a close connection to the monarchy. In the first case Bonaffos de la Cavalleria, son of Solomon de la Cavalleria, sued Astrug Abenafici from Alcañiz for 2,600 sous which he owed him for his work as procurator of Astrug’s father.46 The second case concerned Jews from Huesca, where Mariam, widow of Isaac Anipinas, leased an alcavala to five Jews, who failed to pay her.47 In both cases the court of Pere III decided in favour of the plaintiff, ordering the local bailiffs of Zaragoza and Huesca, respectively, to make executions against Bonaffos’s and Mariam’s debtors. The last case involved Çalema Avenposat of Zaragoza, whose creditor, Azmell Aseyvel, broke into Çalema’s house while he was away and stole goods worth between 1,000-2,000 sous.48 In this case, Çalema owed money to Azmell but claimed that he had made a formal agreement with Azmell that he would pay him back within five years. He may have brought a copy of such an agreement with him because the court of King Joan quickly decided in his favour, ordering the arrest of Azmell and his accomplices and the recovery of Çalema’s goods.49 The common element in all of these cases is a breach of contract, making their resolution more straightforward.

It is precisely their more straightforward nature that make these kinds of conflict more unexpected at the royal court. The case of Bonaffos is easier to understand – the Cavalleria family had enjoyed close contact with the monarchy since at least the reign of Jaume I and would remain influential even beyond 1391.50 Not only was the family close to the king, but also its tax-exempt status often brought it into conflict with local Jews and aljama officials,

46 ACA C 814: 49v-50r (16/12/1380).
47 The Jews in question are Azerias Almegron, Isaac Alarag, Jucef Avingascon, Haim Alpellench, and Lope Abigaton. See ACA 814: 60r-v (8/1/1381)
48 ACA C 1840: 18v-19r (10/06/1389)
49 Ibid.
50 Baer, II: 58-60.
making the royal court the natural choice for any dispute with fellow Jews.\textsuperscript{51} As for Mariam and Çalema, they may have chosen the royal court out of fear that their cases would not be fairly adjudicated by the Jewish courts. After all, Azmell Aseyvel had sold Çalema’s property in a public auction without being challenged by local officials.\textsuperscript{52} And Mariam lived in Huesca, where, as we have seen, there was much conflict between the Jews and \textit{aljama} administrators.\textsuperscript{53} Perhaps more to the point, she was suing five Jewish men, some of whom may have had allies in \textit{aljama} government.

Whereas only one of the Aragonese lawsuits involved Jews living in different jurisdictions, all but three of the conflicts over debt in Catalonia involved such Jews (see table below). This chapter began with the case of Salamon de Tolosa, from Castell de la Geltrú against Samuel Gracia, who then lived in l’Arboç. The overwhelming majority of the legal disputes from Catalonia follow the same general outline of a Jew seeking a payment of a debt contracted with another Jew who lived in another city. In cases such as these, litigating at the royal courts was more convenient for Jews living in places such as Barcelona, where the royal court was often in residence, than to travel to Cervera or even Fraga to place a complaint at the Jewish court where the defendant lived. The royal court seemed the court of choice as well when the dispute was between an individual Jew and his own aljama. Isaac Samarell from Cervera, for example, would hire Isaac Cabrit from Barcelona to bring his suit against the aljama of Cervera to the royal court in Barcelona after the aljama took advantage of a request

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{51} The Cavalleria and Azarias families would be locked into a long conflict over their tax-exempt status during 1381 and 1382. See ACA C 825: 6v-7r (20/6/1381); 822: 68v-69r (17/09/1381); 825: 7v-8v (16/10/1381); 825: 70v (03/03/1382); 825: 10r-11r (22/11/1381); 825: 13v-16r (16/09/1381); 825: 16r-17v (20/08/1381); 825: 17v-18v (23/11/1381); 825: 71r-v (04/03/1382); 71v-72r; 825: 80r-v (04/03/1382); 822: 82r-v.
\item \textsuperscript{52} ACA C 1840: 18v-19r.
\item \textsuperscript{53} ACA C 844: 90r-90v (04/02/1385)
\end{itemize}
for a general remission of debts to avoid paying him what it owed. In this case, Isaac Samarell might have expected a favourable ruling from the king since he worked for the royal household.

Only two cases of debt litigation in Catalonia involved individual Jews living in the same aljama. One involved a Jewish master sails maker from Barcelona who lent money to his apprentices and employees in exchange for work and found himself in a bind when his workers walked away. Royal officials sent it to the bailiff’s court for adjudication. Was Abraham Isaac Ardit, the master artisan, already locked into conflict with his workers at the Jewish court and thus thought he would have a better chance at the royal court? Unfortunately, we have no details about the case. The table below illustrates the location of the residence of debt litigators in Catalonia:

Debt litigation in Catalonia

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Plaintiff</th>
<th>Defendant</th>
<th>Amount sought</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Cresques Astruch Aymas (Barcelona)</td>
<td>Isaac Adret (Cervera)</td>
<td>90 gold florins</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Isaac Samarel (Cervera)</td>
<td>Aljama of Cervera</td>
<td>n/a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Salamon de Tolosa (Castell de la Geltrú)</td>
<td>Samuel Gracia (Arbóç)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Abraham Isaac Ardit (Barcelona)</td>
<td>Apprentices in shop</td>
<td>n/a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>Boniuha Isaac Dalell (Barcelona), represented by Mossé Samuel Solan (Sicily)</td>
<td>“a number of Jews from Perpignan”</td>
<td>3,045 sous</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

54 ACA C 1832: 40v-41r (07/04/1388). It is unclear in what capacity Isaac Samarell worked for the king. When the dispute involved the dowry of his daughter, who married Isaac Cabrit, however, he first sought the local Jewish courts in Cervera and sought the royal court only after he did not get what he wanted - ACA C 1841: 62v-63v (02/07/1389).

55 ACA C 837: 89r-v (10/11/1383).

56 Isaac Samarel hired a Isaac Cabrit from Barcelona to represent him at the royal court. The case involves a debt the aljama had with Isaac, who protested the aljama took advantage of a request for a general remission to avoid paying what it owed to him.
In all of these cases of debt, the royal court seems to have adopted a clear policy – in the suits dealing with a breach of contract, the court limited itself to enforce the contract by ordering local bailiffs to compel the defendant to fulfill his side of the agreement. In less straightforward cases, the court usually appointed an official – at times a jurisperito, at others the local bailiff – to adjudicate after hearing the parties and their witnesses.

The debt litigations that proved most complex and long lived were not those which pitted individual Jews against one another, but rather conflicts between individual Jews and their aljama. This is unsurprising given that aljama officials would have had more resources at their disposal to prosecute individual Jews. As we saw earlier, the late fourteenth century witnessed an increase in migration from the countryside into the cities, compounding for smaller communities the demographic crisis caused by the plague. This trend can also be seen among Jews who migrated from smaller communities to larger ones in search of better opportunities. During one of the intermittent bouts of plague and bad harvests of the late
fourteenth century, Sento Cocombrell, a tanner from Huesca, migrated to Zaragoza with his wife, children and younger brother since he found there was no market for a tanner in his hometown of Huesca.\textsuperscript{57} It is unclear whether Sento sought permission from his \textit{aljama} or from the king before relocating to Zaragoza as he ought to have done. \textit{Aljamas} in general did not take kindly to the loss of a tax-payer and their attempts to continue to receive contributions from former residents stirred much animosity, requiring royal intervention. Despite the fact that Sento and his brother had not left any property in Huesca, the \textit{aljama} wanted them to continue to pay taxes as if they were residents. Five months earlier the \textit{aljama} had complained to the king that “many Jews” were moving to other places in order to evade their fiscal obligations; judicial officials acting in the name of the king answered by instructing local royal officials to compel any Jew who tried to defraud the system to contribute with the \textit{aljama} of Huesca.\textsuperscript{58} In the case of Sento, however, royal judges understood that tax evasion had not been his intention when Sento moved to Zaragoza, where he presumably contributed with the local \textit{aljama}. The court then decided in his favour since royal policy was that no one could be taxed in two places at the same time and should contribute only at his or her place of residence.\textsuperscript{59} This type of migration was not uncommon among Christians during this period but for Jews, the issue of taxation made migration more problematic.

In addition to the disputes between individual Jews and \textit{aljama} officials discussed earlier, aljamas within the same \textit{collecta} would often disagree on taxes. Such conflicts were more frequent in Aragon, where a \textit{collecta} system was less fixed than in Catalonia.\textsuperscript{60} During much of first half of the 1380s, the Jews of the small community of La Almunia de Doña

\textsuperscript{57} ACA C 815: 167r-168r (21/12/1381). Despite being a sizeable town, Sento claimed that in Huesca “non poterat vivere de suo officio pelliparie.”
\textsuperscript{58} ACA 817: 122r-v (19/07/1381)
\textsuperscript{59} Ibid,167v: “nullus teneatur nec astringitur in duobus locis contribuere nec peytare maxime in locis ubi non fovet suum incolatum”
\textsuperscript{60} For the \textit{collecta} system in Aragon, see Tov Assis, \textit{Jewish Economy}, 200-04.
Godina, under the jurisdiction of the Knights Hospitallers, refused to contribute with the *aljama* of Calatayud, to whose *collecta* it belonged. In 1385 the king once more ordered the Jews of La Almunia to pay its contributions to Calatayud. Likewise, the small communities of Caspe and Maella were locked in conflict with the larger community of Alcañiz. Caspe had secured a privilege from King Pere making it a separate *aljama* and placing Maella under its fiscal jurisdiction, although traditionally both Caspe and Maella had belonged to the *collecta* of Alcañiz. Over the next few years, representatives of the two aljamas would go back and forth to the royal court while the Jews of Caspe continued to refuse to contribute with those of Alcañiz. Playing off the different courts against each other, the Jews of Alcañiz got an order of execution from the court of the *Infante* Joan, who sent his treasurer to Caspe and Maella to collect the fifty gold florins Alcañiz claimed. The Jews of Caspe, in turn, protested to King Pere against the harsh execution made against them. The king, reversing an earlier declaration confirming that Caspe should contribute with Alcañiz, ordered the justice of Caspe to go personally to Alcañiz and make execution against the Jews there if necessary to recover the money collected from the Jews of Caspe. The *aljama* of Alcañiz had earlier been in a similar conflict with the Jews of the Castellania de Amposta, in the archbishopric of Zaragoza. Similar conflicts would pit the Jews of Teruel and Albarracín against each other a few years later.

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61 ACA C 830: 133v (01/06/1383) includes a letter from 1378 that lists La Almunia de Doña Godina, alongside Ricla, Fariza, Arandiga and other communities around Calatayud as belonging to its *collecta*.
62 ACA C 945: 98r-99v (10/06/1385)
63 ACA C 855: 67v-69r (05/07/1386)
64 Ibid., “rigorosam executionem”; see also ACA C 851: 129r [01/06/1386], ACA C 945r: 100r [10/06/1385], ACA C 853: 63r-v [18/08/1386]
65 ACA C 936: 128v [26/03/1381]
66 ACA C 1839: 55v [01/03/1389]
The protracted nature of these cases serves as a powerful indication of the ability of individual Jews and smaller communities to use the courts, if not to prevent, at least to postpone court decisions against them. Much in the same way as Samuel Gracia, aljamas such as La Almunia de Doña Godina and Caspe were able to stay executions against them by simply appealing to different courts or refusing to cooperate.

These tactics were not always successful. By the end of 1389, we find Samuel Gracia in jail over the debt he owed to the aljama of Vilafranca.\(^67\) His dealings with the aljama had definitely soured over the previous year. Although initially the court had decided in favour of Samuel, since it believed that he had contributed for the property he possessed "both in Vilfranca and in the city of Barcelona to the aljama of [Barcelona],"\(^68\) the protest by the aljamas of l’Arboç and Vilafranca that Samuel had never contributed with the aljama of Barcelona was sufficient to send the case back to the bailiff of Vilafranca, who would eventually arrest Samuel Gracia.\(^69\) Samuel then claimed that the local bailiff had abused his authority by seizing more property than he owed to the aljama of Vilafranca and selling his goods for much less than they were worth as well as by keeping him in jail, despite his agreement with the aljama to pay contributions for the next three years. The king responded with an order that the case be sent back to him so that he could rule on it, summoning aljama representatives to testify.\(^70\)

Unfortunately, this is the last we hear about Samuel Gracia. We do not know whether he survived the violence that would erupt in the summer of 1391 or whether he made true his threat to seek better fortunes elsewhere.

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\(^{67}\) ACA C 1840: 167r-v (29/10/1389); other Jews in a similar situation sought conversion as a last resort out of legal and financial trouble. See chapter five.

\(^{68}\) ACA C 1833: 108v (17/04/1388); "ipse pro omnibus bonis et debitis qui habet tam in dicta villa and in Penitens quam in dicta civitatis sit de universali contribucione et contribuat cum aljama Civitatis iamdicte"

\(^{69}\) ACA C 1832: 156v-157r (10/06/1388), 1840: 167r-v (29/10/1389).

\(^{70}\) ACA C 1840: 167r-v (29/10/1389); 1845: 50v (10/03/1390)
As we have seen, Samuel Gracia was certainly not the only Jew to attempt to slow down legal procedure. Accusations of abuse of the system were not uncommon. In 1385, Ferrar Saladi, from Zaragoza, protested to the royal court that Stella, a Jewish woman from Zaragoza, was purposely slowing down (protelare) the case she initiated against him at the court of Prince Joan to cause him “maximum harm.”\(^{71}\) Stella had initiated the suit two years prior, accusing Saladi of involvement in the death of her son Cetri Gualit.\(^{72}\) The king responded by ordering the judges in charge of the case to adjudicate quickly.\(^{73}\) Likewise, the brothers Sento and Vitas Avingoyos, from Jaca, felt the burden of litigation when their brother Juce Avingoyos ignored a sentence of arbitration and continued to drag them to court in a dispute over property inherited from their father.\(^{74}\) Although Sento and Vitas had no compunction about employing a Christian arbiter initially, when the sentence of arbitration continued to be ignored by their brother Juce, they finally reminded the king of their privilege of having disputes among Jews resolved internally by the Jewish community.\(^{75}\) The king acquiesced and ordered the adelantados of the aljama of Jaca to handle their case according to the *ius commune* and Jewish law.\(^{76}\)

In some cases, the delays were not caused by plaintiff or defendant but rather by those responsible for trying the case. When Astruch Bondeni and Sericha, the widow of Saltell

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\(^{71}\) ACA C 843: 121v-122r (02/08/1385); it remains unclear why Stella would want to slow down procedure against Ferrar if he was involved with the murder of her son.\(^ {72}\) ACA C 834: 33r-v (16/10/1383)\(^ {73}\) ACA C 843: 121v-122r (02/08/1385) "faciatis... justiciam expeditam"\(^ {74}\) ACA C 811: 114v [(3/10/1380)\(^ {75}\) Ibid.\(^ {76}\) *Ius commune* was the combination of Roman and Canon law that came to dominate customary law throughout the medieval west after the twelfth-century Renaissance. For the spread of *ius commune* in the Crown of Aragon see Kelleher, *The Measure of Woman*, 20-24.
Gracia, of Barcelona, chose arbitration to solve a conflict between them, they no doubt expected a speedy resolution. Yet, according to Astruch, the continual delays and postponements caused by the arbiters (one Jew and one Christian) was not only inconvenient but also prevented him from going back to work. Astruch worked at the royal court and presumably had to travel with it and having to wait for a decision probably came between him and the discharge of his duties.

Appealing to the royal court, however, could be a double-edged sword. The cost of seeking justice at the royal courts could certainly be exorbitant. In 1386, the aljama of Lleida owed over 2,600 gold florins to Biona del Mestre for the costs and expenses incurred by Biona as its representative at the royal court. In addition to the costs of notaries, lawyers, and the various fees levied by the court, there were costs associated with traveling to the court. Even if the court was initially in the place where the specific Jews involved in a lawsuit lived, it never stayed for long and chances were that by the time the parties were summoned to hear a decision, they would have to travel some distance to the court. That it cost much time and money to have cases heard by the royal court is evident from the many cases of Jews accusing their enemies of fabricating accusations just to punish them with the burden of litigation.

Litigation had become a way of settling scores with one’s enemies. This is clear in the case of Juneç Trigo, from Zaragoza. A royal physician, Juneç complained to the king that, out of hatred for him, some Jews from Zaragoza had threatened to accuse him of crimes he had

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77 ACA C 1836: 178r-v (18/01/1389)
78 Even arbitration was not cheap - Abridziam Vita agreed to pay 100 pounds of Barcelona to Astrug Perfet to arbitrate a conflict between him and another Jew. See ACA C 835: 64r-v (23/12/1383)
79 ACA C 853: 143v-145r; compare with ACA C 847: 187r-v [26/02/1386] and ACA C 846: 7r (10/05/1385) ]
King Pere ordered his officials in Aragon (including the merino and governor) that before they admitted any charges against Juneç, they should inform the accusers that the law of retaliation applies \([stare talionis]\), that is, if they could not prove the case against Juneç, they themselves would be prosecuted. Working for the royal household no doubt helped Juneç to reach the king and guarantee a favourable outcome. Also in his favour was the fact that neither King Pere nor later King Joan took kindly to efforts to manipulate their courts. King Pere showed this understanding when a year later Salamo Abendahuet, from Calatayud, suggested that the criminal charge brought against him was motivated by revenge rather than justice. When some unnamed Jews suddenly decided to question Salamo’s administration of some houses in the \(judaria\) about five years prior, he protested that if it were true, they would have brought it up before. The court was sympathetic and the case was dismissed.

Although we tend to see the litigiousness of our contemporary society as a recent development, medieval men and women did not hesitate to go to court not only when they felt a challenge to their rights but also to seek revenge against their enemies. The Jews of the Crown of Aragon showed themselves comfortable with resorting to and adept at using Christian judicial institutions. While disputes over debt and taxation involved little religious content, thus making it less problematic for Jews to seek Christian justice to resolve them, the Jews’ recourse to Christian courts in conflicts involving families and family law were much more problematic for Jewish authorities.

**Family Matters and Jewish Autonomy**
Samuel Gracia’s litigiousness was not limited to neighbours and officials; it involved his family as well. Conflict over property led to much acrimonious fighting between Samuel and his brother Astrug, who lived in Vilafranca. As Samuel’s litigations increased and his resources no doubt dwindled, he sought to recoup some goods and jewels he had allegedly given to his brother for safekeeping. Astrug protested saying that not only had he given Samuel some money for the goods but he also had been obliged to pay for their upkeep. Samuel’s dispute with his brother would drag on for months, initially to be adjudicated by arbiters chosen by the two brothers and later forwarded to the bailiff of Vilafranca. The case would also become particularly ugly when Samuel started telling all those who would listen that should Astrug die childless, all the property he (Astrug) inherited from their father would go to him (Samuel). Considering the number of people interested in getting money from Samuel, it is not surprising the court took seriously Astrug’s complaints of Samuel’s boasting about his possible death and ordered the bailiff of Barcelona to investigate.

Like Samuel and Astrug Gracia, other Jews would take their family members to court because of disputes over property such as dowries and inheritance, or alimony. Some would also seek recourse against spousal abuse. Since family law was one area in which Christian law and Jewish law differed greatly, the interference of a Christian official in a dispute between a husband and wife, for example, would no doubt be highly problematic for Jews. Indeed, Elka Klein has suggested that under Jaume I, in the first half of the thirteenth century, few, if any, cases involving family matters appeared in the royal court. Nevertheless, by the late thirteenth century this had changed; under Pere II, cases such as inheritance disputes or divorces were

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83 ACA C 1832: 74v (17/04/1388)  
84 Ibid.  
85 In addition to ibid., see ACA C 1839: 22v-23r (15/02/1389); 1838: 120v-121r;  
86 ACA C 1841: 40r-v (01/07/1389)  
87 Ibid, 40v.
increasingly brought to the royal court.\textsuperscript{88} As Klein points out, these cases would have fallen completely outside the jurisdiction of royal courts since they dealt with matters on which Christian law differed significantly from Jewish law. Yet both Pere and Alfons consistently upheld Jewish law in the adjudication of such cases, instructing royal officials to consult Jewish scholars or appointing Jewish judges to deal with them.\textsuperscript{89} Royal policy in such cases help to explain why Jews felt increasingly comfortable with bringing such suits to the royal court.

The same pattern can be found in the late fourteenth-century Crown of Aragon. Family-related suits make up the third largest category of suits involving Jews handled by the royal court and include a range of subcategories that include cases of marriage conflict, disputes over dowries, divorce, bigamy, and conflicts over inheritance. Francine Michaud has recently associated an increase in dowry-restitution cases between 1280 and 1320 in Marseille with an economic downturn that worsened the financial situation of its citizens.\textsuperscript{90} Lacking detailed statistical evidence for the decades preceding the 1380s, it is difficult to say whether there was a similar increase in family-related conflicts among Jews (or Christians) in this period. Yet, what can be said is that Jews continued to show the same confidence in the kind of justice they could expect in royal courts as they had in the previous century.

It is difficult to generalize regarding the nature of cases involving married couples in either Aragon or Catalonia as each involved a slightly different set of circumstances. They tended to deal with all issues regarding marriage – from disputes involving pre-nuptial contracts and dowry stipulations, to disagreements over whether the husband fulfilled his role

\textsuperscript{88} Klein, Jews, Christian Society, and Royal Power, 158-60.
\textsuperscript{89} Klein, 159-160; Assis, Golden Age, 145-147; cf. Baer, II: 33, 73, 81-83.
\textsuperscript{90} Francine Michaud, \textit{Un signe des temps : accroissement des crises familiales autour du patrimoine à Marseille à la fin du XIIème siècle} (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1994).
as caregiver as well as a few cases of separation. In nearly all of these cases involving marriage, the king forwarded the case to be adjudicated by a Jewish official or by a Christian official in accordance with Jewish law. One exception in Catalonia involved Bonsenyor Natçay, a Jew from Montblanc, who went to the royal court to sue his father-in-law, Salamon Biona, originally from Agramunt but since relocated to Barcelona, over the dowry he had promised him when he married his daughter. The lack of mention of Jewish law or involvement of Jewish experts in this suit may be explained by the nature of the dispute. In this case, Bonsenyor went to court to seek enforcement of an agreement reached between him and his father-in-law. Considering that both parties lived in different jurisdictions, Bonsenyor perhaps assumed that royal officials would have more power of enforcement.

But it is in the cases of bigamy that royal respect for Jewish autonomy is more evident. The issue of polygamy has loomed large in studies of Jewish marriage and family life. By the

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91 In Catalonia, we find dowry disputes: ACA C 826: 81r-v (09/06/1382); ACA C 844: 29v-30r (17/10/1384); ACA C 847: 75r-v (4/12/1385); conflicts between wife and husband: ACA C 831: 12v-13r (22/01/1383); ACA C 843: 119r-v (31/07/1385); son-in-law: ACA C 838: 141r-v (18/07/1384); ACA C 1833: 133r-v (06/03/1388); unspecified: ACA C 839: 75r-v (28/04/1384). Marriage disputes in Aragon include: ACA C 832: 36r-37r (30/12/1383); ACA 814: 124r (16/2/1381); ACA C 1287: 24r-v (21/07/1383); ACA C 817: 118r (10/07/1381); ACA 816: 95r (16/01/1381); ACA 814: 81v (26/01/1381); ACA 816: 180r (27/01/1381); ACA 817: 30v-31r (8/05/1381); ACA C 850: 51r-v (20/11/1386); ACA C 847: 151v-152r (31/03/1386-7).

92 ACA C 826: 81r-v (09/06/1382).

twelfth century Northern European Jews had outlawed the practice of getting a second wife while the first was still alive, under penalty of banishment from the community. In the Crown of Aragon the practice persisted but, as we will see, by the late fourteenth century it had become restricted to cases of a sterile marriage, which the royal courts helped reinforce. Although in the thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries monarchs were quick to give licenses of polygamy in exchange of a hefty sum, under the assumption that the practice was indeed broadly permitted under Jewish law, by the 1370s-1380s this picture had changed.  

Since bigamy was prohibited among Christians, to protect themselves against prosecution the Jews of the Crown of Aragon had to request permission from the king when they sought to marry while the first wife was still alive. I have found a total of sixteen requests for a license in the royal registers for the 1380s, originating in every region of the Crown of Aragon. What form did these requests take? How did royal officials deal with such requests? Let us turn now to a few of these cases.

On November 22, 1380, Ahim Aborrabe came before King Pere III and declared that he had been married, unfruitfully, to a woman named Miriam for ten years and since “Jewish law allows one to marry another woman in order to procreate,” he requested a license to marry again. Pere decided in his favour but not before spelling out the rights of his first wife to continue to enjoy the same rights and privileges as always. If she wanted to leave, Ahim was to

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94 Boniuha Maçanell, a Jewish lawyer representing Abraham Messies, paid 10 flor. of gold and 4 sol. for a license in May, 1382, see ACA C 833: 16v. Assis surveys the position of Jewish authorities on the issue of polygamy and Gershom’s ban in his “The ‘Ordinance of Rabbenu Gershom’ and Polygamous Marriages in Spain,” cited above. In one of the earliest cases found, the king seems even to have ignored the Jewish opinion on the matter. In 1258, Jaume I authorized Juçef de Grasse to marry Regina, daughter of Samuel alias Brafayre, despite Juçef being already married and the assertions of Juçef Vidal, Mosse de Lunel, Durant, and Abraham d’Anduse, and other Jews who declared that bigamy was contrary to Jewish law and rites ACA C 10: 47v [Régné 113; Jacobs, #148] 20/01/1258.

95 ACA C 937: 197v [22/11/1380, Huesca]
return to her the dowry and assets she brought into the marriage. Likewise, Isaac de Faro, from the town of Fuentes in Aragon, declared in 1381 that he had been married to his wife Astruga for twenty-five years without producing heirs. Since Astruga was then sixty years old (!), his only hope of fathering a child would be by marrying a second time. The king granted the license with the usual qualification that he did so since it was in accordance with Jewish law; he also took care to ensure the rights of the first wife.96

The formula described in the cases involving Ahim Aborrabe and Isaac Faro is representative of almost every case of Jews wishing to get a second wife appearing in the royal courts between 1380 and 1391. Infertility was always specified as the principal grounds for seeking the license. The number of years a couple had been married was significant since, according to Jewish law, a couple was considered infertile if they had been married for ten years without offspring. Among Ashkenazi Jews, as Baumgarten and Grossman have shown, this would not only have constituted grounds for divorce but some saw it as part of a man’s religious obligation to initiate the divorce proceedings.97 Infertility had also been a legitimate grounds for divorce among Christians up until the tenth century, when canon law more firmly

96 ACA C 936: 121r-v [20/3/1381, Loci de Fuentes]; see also ACA C 937: 219r-v; ACA C 936: 71r-v; ACA C 939: 204r-v; ACA C 1891: 221r; ACA C 1894: 76r; ACA C 1895: 139v; ACA C 1898: 124r. Jewish women were ready to protect their rights. Beruca, wife of Mosse Falcon from Valencia, is a clear example of this – in May of 1382 she asked the king to remind her husband that if he married Genila, the widow of Salamo Curi, he could not abandon her and needed to provide for her the same as before. ACA C 939: 154r-v [10/5/1382]. For Jewish women’s use of the courts, see Elka Klein, “Public Activities of Catalan Jewish Women,” Medieval Encounters 12, no. 1 (2006): 48-61.

97 Grossman, Pious and Rebellious, 86; Baumgarten has an interesting discussion on how Jewish and Christian society dealt with infertility and what that has to tell us about medieval attitudes, whether by Christians or Jews, regarding procreation. See Mothers and Children, 30; another interesting aspect is that despite their differences in conceptualizing divorce as a regular social phenomenon, both Christians and Jews in Northern Europe revised and restricted the conditions for divorce around the same time. Baumgarten, 37.
outlawed the practice.\footnote{Baumgarten, 32.} Among the Jews of the Crown of Aragon, it seems that it constituted acceptable grounds for polygamy.

Although bigamy was not formally banned among the Jews of the Crown of Aragon, by the late fourteenth century the practice was accepted only in cases of infertility. The Jews coming before the king no longer simply justified it as a practice broadly permitted by Jewish law, as they had done earlier in the century. Pere III or Joan I, in turn, were aware of this new restriction, indeed, a court case from early 1379 shows that licenses were not granted on the spot and that the information provided by the petitioner was checked by the royal court.

On January 29, 1379, prior to conceding a license of polygamy to Isaac Avencastell, a Jew of Barcelona who had claimed that his marriage had been childless for over twelve years and that his wife was now too old to bear children, King Pere ordered the judge Castelló de Mallorques to confirm the age of Isaac’s wife.\footnote{ACA, Processos en quart, 1379A, 29/01/1379-01/02/1379.} Over a period of two days, Castelló interviewed five of Isaac Avencastell’s neighbours asking them whether they knew Isaac Avencastell and his wife, his wife’s name, her age, how long they had been married, whether they had had any children and how long the witness had lived in the call of Barcelona. They all answered that Isaac and his wife had been married for at least twelve years and that Orossol, Isaac’s wife, was either “over forty” as some put it, or “between forty or forty-five”. One witness mentioned that Orossol had actually been a widow when she married Isaac (the first marriage had lasted five years) and that she had had no children from that union either. This case indicates that the monarch would not automatically grant a license to petitioners and that some effort was made to check the information.

The king could also cancel a license, if he later received additional information that contradicted the basis of the initial request. One such case was that of Astruch Cossen, from
Girona, married to Bonafia.\textsuperscript{100} In April 1389, he brought his unusual case to King Joan. He wanted a license to marry a second time on the grounds of infertility, but in his case the issue was not the length of the marriage or the age of the wife. He claimed that he and his wife could not get along, that they hated each other to the point that they could not share a bed, and since she would not grant him a divorce, his only chance of fulfilling his obligation of having children would be for him to get a second wife. The king initially agreed but a month later he cancelled the license after he found out that Astruch “forgot” to mention that his wife was very young and they had never shared the same home, which might explain why they had not consummated their marriage. The king ordered him either to take up his wife or divorce her, freeing her to marry again.

By granting these licenses for bigamy, Pere III and Joan I were in fact adhering to a well entrenched tradition in royal policy of preserving the autonomy of their Jewish communities. As we have seen in the marriage disputes presented earlier, the monarchs respected the jurisdiction of Jewish law over the community and generally acted accordingly. Protecting Jewish law actually favoured royal interests. These licenses, for instance, can be seen as a way the king had to preserve an important source of revenue for the crown. The Jews paid dearly, through annual taxation and other extraneous contributions, for the benefit of royal protection and the guarantee of legal and administrative autonomy. When a Jew died without an heir and his goods reverted to the crown, that might mean an immediate large contribution to the royal treasury, but it also meant one less person and property that could be taxed at higher rates. In fact, the king routinely waived his right over an individual Jew’s property in order to preserve the integrity of a particular Jewish community and ensure its ability to pay taxes. During the Black Death, for instance, the king allowed the property of Jews

\textsuperscript{100} ACA C 1838: 149r-v [11/05/1389]
who had died intestate to go to their next of kin, and in cases where there were no family members left, king Pere ordered that the property should revert to the aljama.\footnote{For example, see ACA C 654: 31r-v (6/10/1348) [Lopez de Meneses, Documentos acerca de la peste negra, 319]}

Jewish women were just as likely as men to use the courts for their benefit in matters involving their marriage. When Isaac Abenafora, of Zaragoza, found himself a concubine in 1383, his wife Durana did not hesitate to go to court alleging he had signed a contract when they married vowing not to take a concubine or a second wife.\footnote{ACA C 832: 36r-37r [30/12/1383]} Goiten and Friedman have shown that it became common by the twelfth century for Mediterranean Jewish families to protect the interests of their daughters by inserting clauses such as these in marriage contracts.\footnote{S. D. Goitein, A Mediterranean Society: the Jewish Communities of the Arab World as Portrayed in the Documents of the Cairo Geniza (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1967), 3: 147, 148; Thomas Friedman, "The Monogamy Clause in Jewish Marriage Contracts," Perspectives in Jewish Learning, ed. M. A. Friedman (Chicago, 1972), 20-40} Durana did not appeal directly to the royal court, however. She initially took her grievance to aljama officials but she later claimed that they were unable to solve her problem. Perhaps Salamon de la Cavalleria, the aljama official in charge of her case, sided with her husband. The royal court then ordered the adelantados of Zaragoza to enforce the contract, reminding them that it stipulated punishment by expulsion.

In 1380, Rabbi Israel ben Israel and his wife Sol, from Zaragoza, sought Christian arbitration to solve a conflict that involved the couple and also their children. The issue involved Sol’s dowry of 14,000 sous. The couple disputed whether the dowry should be split among the couple’s four daughters or used to purchase land for other investments. Since the couple could not come to an agreement, they hired two Christian arbitrators, Domingo Palomar and Francisco Espital.\footnote{See Meritxell Blasco, and José Ramón Magdalena, eds. Fuentes para la Historia de los Judíos de la Corona de Aragón: Los Responsa de Rabí Yishaq bar Seset Perfet de Barcelona: 1368-1408} While we do not have the full decision reached by the
arbitrators, a part of it appears in the responsum of Rabbi Isaac bar Seset Perfet of Barcelona, written in aljamiado (in this case Aragonese written in Hebrew script). The arbitrators decided in Rabbi Israel’s favour, limiting the amount of goods Sol could dispose of since, according to Jewish law, the husband inherited the wife’s property should she die before him. The couple seems to have initially agreed and registered the decision with the aljama’s notary (sofer) but Sol subsequently refused to fulfill her part of the agreement. R. Israel, therefore, appealed to the royal court, where the king ordered the adelantados of the aljama of Zaragoza to ensure the sentence of arbitration was obeyed.

Sol proved hard to compel, however, and a year and a half later we find the couple back at the royal court as Sol continued to refuse to comply with the agreement. The presiding officers, realizing that Jewish officials were unable to enforce the decision, forwarded the case to the merino of Zaragoza to adjudicate. The move was countered by Sol ten days later when she protested the appointment of Egidio de Sada, the merino, as judge, declaring him to be biased (suspectus).

This was a common tactic and the king or officials acting in his name often simply forwarded the suit it to another judicial official. In this case, 

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(Barcelona: 2004), doc.207. That the couple sought Christian arbitrators is interesting in itself. It is unclear why a rabbi should seek a Christian arbitrator to solve a dispute over the disposal of marital assets but it was not uncommon. In 1268, the great rabbi Salomó Ibn Adret appeals to the royal court over a complicated inheritance case of a minor under his care. See Burns, Jews in the Notarial Culture, 55-56. Despite being King Jaume’s most prominent Jewish adviser, Ibn Adret lost the case when his opponents presented a will whose provisions were irrefutable.

Ibid. The decision stipulated that Sol should only be able to give away 4,000 sous and that the other 10,000 should be pledged in “aras.” Arras in Spanish could mean the money given by the bridegroom to the bride, also known as the countergift. Is this simply Sol’s ketubbah? The ketubbah is the money Jewish man promised their wives in case the marriage ended in her lifetime, either by divorce or his death.

ACA C 812: 58v-59r (04/05/1380)
ACA C 824: 20r-21r (18/11/1381)
ACA C 822: 135v (28/11/1381)
the suit was sent to the jurist Domenico Cerdani. The conflict effectively divided the family with the couple’s daughters and their husbands, who stood to gain should Sol be able to grant them her property, siding with Sol.

Although we do not know whether Sol was able to stand her ground, her conflict with her husband illustrates the reliance of individual Jews on the royal courts even in cases that clearly dealt with matters of Jewish law. This reliance was not without controversy. Historian Asunción Blasco Martínez has discovered a statute, issued in 1376 by King Pere III in response to a request by the *aljama* of Zaragoza, in which the king not only confirmed previous privileges authorizing the Jews of Zaragoza to elect from two to five magistrates to solve conflicts between Jews but also authorized them to elect a special magistrate who would be in charge of appeals of decisions issued by the Jewish court. Blasco Martínez sees the statute as a royal effort to “protect Jewish litigants from the hardships and high costs which they inevitably incurred when they appealed to the *merino* and other Christian courts.”

This statute went beyond merely re-iterating the *aljama*’s autonomy. To ensure the appropriate observance of the new ordinance, the king threatened a fine of 1,000 maravedís to anyone who presented a case to Christian courts. He also prohibited the governor and justice of Aragon from interfering in cases between Jews. It is perhaps worth noting that the statute

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109 ACA C 822: 135v (28/11/1381). For other cases of judges being declared “suspect” see ACA C 811: 96r-v [18/09/1380]; ACA C 835: 106v-107r [14/10/1383]; ACA C 857: 19v-20r, [11/12 1386]. Even Jewish officials were considered biased: ACA C 814: 64r (10/1/1381); ACA C 1836: 66v-67r [12/10/1388]; ACA C 836: 141v-142r (08/10/1383)

110 ACA C 826: 183r-v (25/11/1382)


112 Ibid: “evitar a los litigantes judíos las molestias y los costos elevados en los que inevitablemente se veían envueltos al recurrir al merino y a otros tribunals cristianos.”
deals solely with Zaragoza and only with civil matters, leaving aside such crimes as malshinut. The statute was confirmed by King Joan in 1393 and King Martí in 1397.113

This statute seems to have had little immediate impact on practice since Zaragozan Jews were among those who most often relied on the royal courts. Of the little over 300 royal letters dealing with conflict among Jews in the 1380s, seventy-five were from Zaragoza. Barcelona, a city with a Jewish population of a similar size, had sixty-two. Calatayud and Huesca had thirty-seven and thirty-six, respectively, while Girona, the second largest community in Catalonia, presents only thirteen cases. It seems that despite the statute protecting their community’s judicial autonomy, the members of the aljama of Zaragoza were just as likely to use Christian courts for conflict resolution as Jews elsewhere in the Crown of Aragon. The inefficacy of the 1376 statute may well have been related to the perceived lack of effectiveness of Jewish magistrates. In 1384, the adelantados of the aljama appealed to the king to complain that the berurim – as the Jewish magistrates were known - were not performing their duties. According to the aljama, although some Jews who lived in the juderia as jugglers and buffoons were causing all kinds of trouble for the community, the berurim hesitated to act against them letting them walk off unpunished.114 At the heart of disputes involving the autonomy of the community was a fundamental tension between the interests of individual Jews and those of the Jewish community. When the tailor Abraham Avenrresch successfully challenged the merino's interference in a case involving him and another Jew by citing “a privilege given to the aljama of Zaragoza,” he explained that according to this privilege, “Christian officials should not hear cases, whether criminal or civil, involving Jews if one of them decide to have the case heard by the court of the berurim.”115 This certainly

113 Ibid., 334.
114 ACA C 840: 57v-58r.
115 ACA C 1832: 98v (15/04/1388)
seems to be how the court interpreted the autonomy statutes in practice. I have not come across any evidence of Jews being fined for taking their cases to Christian courts.

What remains to be explored is whether the statute of 1376 was a response to a weakening of internal mechanisms of conflict resolution. Without further archival research, however, it is difficult to determine whether there was a definite increase in reliance on the royal courts and on Christian arbitrators for conflict resolution in this period— or even an increase in conflict in general. What seems clear is that the Jews of the Crown of Aragon were confident that the royal courts would administer justice impartially. As we have seen, even a rabbi did not shy away from bringing a marital dispute to the courts, setting an example to other Jews.

That the royal courts often employed the advice of Jewish experts and seemed careful to preserve Jewish law probably encouraged Jews to bring their suits there. When Astruch Rimoch’s wife Goig died intestate, for example, and his daughter and her husband claimed half of her mother’s property, Astruch went to Barcelona to appeal to the royal court. According to Astruch, Jewish law dictated that his late wife’s dowry should go to him rather than to her children. It is unclear where Astruch’s daughter initiated the case— all we have is the appeal and how the royal court dealt with the case. Since the case dealt with fine points of Jewish law, the court of King Pere ordered the bailiff of Lleida, where Astruch lived, to adjudicate the case with the advice of “some Jews, experts in Jewish law and not without it”. The court added that according to the information they had received in Barcelona, where the letter was issued, Goig’s property should indeed go to her husband. Astruch Rimoch, no doubt, did not see the royal court as a threat to the autonomy of his community.

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116 ACA C 812: 79v (30/05/1380) - Lleida
117 Ibid.


Conclusion

This chapter began with Samuel Gracia and his frequent appearances before the courts of King Pere III and his son Joan. The nature of the cases involving Samuel is representative of the over two hundred disputes involving Jews to come before the royal courts in the 1380s. Conflicts over fiscal jurisdiction of Jews on the move, family quarrels over inherited property and failed marriages, debt litigation, complaints against aljama officials, all form the main categories of disputes among Jews in this period. Samuel Gracia, as well as the others cited in this chapter, knew enough about the law to keep a case going for years without resolution. And even when there was a decision – whether through arbitration or adjudication by a judge – the sentence could take years to be carried out if the parties appealed or the order of execution never arrived to the local bailiff, who was often the official in charge of executing the orders issued by the royal court.

By using Christian courts to solve everyday issues with their Jewish neighbours or family members, the Jews of Catalonia and Aragon showed that they did not see Christian involvement in Jewish conflicts as an infringement on their rights and autonomy. Issues of debt, taxation, and theft, for example, involved little religious content and Catalan and Aragonese Jews approached the judicial resolution of these conflicts in much the same way as their Christian neighbours – by using the court of justice where they assumed they could expect the best outcome. In the cases where issues of Jewish law were raised, the royal courts were careful to consult Jewish experts or forward the case to be adjudicated by a preeminent local rabbi, afterward enforcing his decision in their court. As Elka Klein has recently noted for the Jews of thirteenth-century Catalonia,
"While the appeal of royal courts for the lay litigant may have most to do with their superior power of enforcement, the relative equanimity of communal leaders toward the use of royal courts testifies more broadly to how those leaders saw royal policy and the nature of the royal courts. Adret's acceptance of royal appointment of Jewish judges and his willingness in most cases to serve in such a capacity himself reflect an awareness of royal respect for Jewish autonomy and the authority of Jewish courts." 118

The same pattern is found under Pere III and Joan I nearly a century later. Prominent rabbis such as Isaac bar Sheshet Perfet and Hasdai Cresques worked with the royal courts in adjudicating issues affecting Jewish families. Even rabbis, such as R. Israel ben Israel, used Christian arbitration and appealed to royal courts, undermining the effort of Jewish officials who at times attempted to curtail this practice. Jewish consumption of Christian justice shows a remarkable degree of integration and judicial acculturation and no loss of confidence in royal justice. As Jonathan Ray has recently suggested, reliance on non-Jewish courts bound the Jews to local realities and has implications for how medieval Iberian Jews conceptualized their own identity. 119 And as Elka Klein has recently shown in a study of Jewish inheritance practices in thirteenth-century Catalonia, “[b]y the nature of medieval society, Jews lived at the nexus of overlapping cultural systems,” and although their lives were governed by Jewish law (halachah), they “also lived cheek to cheek with their neighbors; despite attempts by both Jews and Christians to reinforce the boundaries between the two groups, those boundaries were permeable, allowing for a complex process of acculturation.” 120 In that sense, this study of intra-communal conflict in Catalonia and Aragon can tells us as much about Jewish identity and communal life as it does about the administration and consumption of justice in the fourteenth-century Crown of Aragon.

118 Klein, 161.
The Jews’ frequent and “normal” resort to Christian courts in the years prior to the violence of 1391 tell us as much about Christian-Jewish relations as it does about Jewish identity. The Jews of Aragon and Catalonia would not have sought the interference of Christian magistrates so often if they did not expect to be dealt with fairly and without abuse. They expected that the same consideration would be shown to them as it was shown to their Christian neighbours and, as we will see in the next chapter, when this consideration was not shown, they did not hesitate to use the law against Christian officials.
Chapter 5 – Coping with debt: Christian-Jewish conflict in the royal courts

When the seven year-old son of Salomó Scaleta left his parents’ home in Girona on a spring day of 1387, he had no way of knowing that his life was about to change. Perhaps out to meet friends or on an errand for his family, he had the misfortune of crossing paths with a group of Christian youths. The details of what happened afterward are hopelessly vague. What we know comes from Salomó Scaleta’s tearful account to King Joan I. According to the distraught Jew, after holding the young Scaleta for a certain period of time, the young men who had kidnapped him had him baptized, forever severing the ties that united the boy to his family.

Unfortunately this dramatic case survives only in a short letter issued by King Joan in response to Salomó’s request for justice. The letter covers only eighteen lines of tight chancery script that includes a summary of the events, the names of the young men involved, and the order of King Joan to his officials to have the young men arrested and prosecuted and the young boy safely placed in the care of a Christian family. If full trial records exist in local

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1 ACA C 1828: 14v (20/04/1387): "...Presencia Salamon Scaleta iudeus dicte Civitatis nobis lacrimabiliter recitavit quod pridem filii den Castell den pingeleuder den Peralta et quidam filius bartholomei benet Civitatis predicte violenter eorum propria (...) rapueriunt quendam eius filium etatis septem annorum vel parum plus et illum absconsum per aliquos dies (...) et postea per vim ut dicitur baptizari fecerunt."

2 Although the Church often sought the conversion of Jews, councils repeatedly opposed forced conversion. The issue was particularly discussed in the Fourth Council of Toledo (633) in the wake of Visigothic efforts to forcefully convert the Jews. It was not until the Fourth Lateran Council of 1215, however, that the irreversibility of baptism was actively upheld by the Church. For the Visigoths and forced conversions see Rachel L Stocking, Bishops, councils, and consensus in the Visigothic Kingdom, 589-633 (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 2000), 118n, 125-6, 152, 154-55.
archives in Girona, they have yet to be found by any scholar. It is difficult to discern what exactly led to the forced conversion of this young child. Was the issue solely a religious one or did the conversion of young Scaleta mask a personal conflict between the young men and the boy’s father, or simply a more mundane case of mischief by a group of bored teenagers? Easter had fallen earlier in the month, on April 7th, and perhaps this case of forced conversion was connected to the anti-Jewish preaching that often preceded Easter festivities. We know that some clerics and canons attacked a guesthouse (hospicio) in the Jewish call of Girona at the beginning of April. Whatever the young men’s motivations, cases such as this are almost expected in a historiography of Christian-Jewish relations that stress the marginal status of Jews and growing religious antagonism. It would certainly fit neatly in the teleological narrative of Spanish Jewish history that culminates with the conversions of 1391 and the expulsion of 1492.

3 I found no reference to this event in the local archives in Girona. It is possible that the court case, if it actually took place, stayed in the court of the local bailiff, for which we have few records.

4 Bands of youths could be a source of problems for many urban communities. In southern France they were responsible for gang raping young women and driving them into prostitution. See Jacques Rossi, *Medieval prostitution* (Oxford; New York: Blackwell, 1988), 14, 35-37; in early modern Italy, confraternities played a role in disciplining unruly youth, see Christopher Carlsmith, “Troublesome teens: approaches to educating and disciplining youth in early modern Italy,” in *The premodern teenager: youth in society, 1150-1650*, ed. Konrad Eisenbichler (Toronto, ON: Centre for Reformation and Renaissance Studies, 2002), 151-172.

5 On Easter violence and relevant bibliography see David Nirenberg, *Communities of violence*, 200-30.

6 ACA C 1827: 87v-88v; 88v-89r; 89r (2/4/1387); it is unclear whether this attack was related to Easter or to a dispute over property in the *call*. See page XX below.

Yet, when considered alongside what took Christians and Jews to the courts of Pere III and Joan I, this story of conversion takes on a different hue. Although Salamó’s loss of his only son is moving, it is the only case of a forced conversion of a Jew that I have found in the more than 3,000 royal letters studied for this dissertation. To make it somewhat representative of Christian-Jewish relations would be a gross misreading of this body of evidence. Conversion itself was not rare and we will look at the reasons for and the effects of conversion in the following chapter. In this chapter we will see that Jewish legal acculturation, studied in the previous chapter, enabled individual Jews to curb the excesses of local officials and to engage in conflict with a Christian majority in a more equitable way. In the Crown of Aragon, law allowed not only slaves to fight their masters, women to take power away from their husbands, and peasants to sue their lords, but also gave Jews the tools to fight Christians.\(^8\) Focusing mainly on four cities, Barcelona and Girona in Catalonia, and Zaragoza and Calatayud in Aragon, which housed the two largest communities in each region, this chapter will explore the kind of issues that pit Christians and Jews against one another and how the courts of King Pere III and Joan I dealt with them.

**Laws regarding conflict between Jews and Christians and issues of due process**

As we have seen in chapter four, the Jews fell under the direct jurisdiction of the king and kings could and did show them favour through the issue of privileges exempting aljamas or individual Jews from taxes, for example, or allowing individual Jews and their families to settle in different parts of the king’s territories. The king also gave Jewish communities judicial

autonomy. Rules regulating conflict resolution involving Christians and Jews appear in the earliest law codes. The Usatges of Barcelona declared that such cases would require witnesses from both sides - i.e. a witness from the Christians and one from the Jews. The regulations specified further that "if the case is to be proved for the Christians, both witnesses should testify and the Jew swear an oath. And if it is to be proved for the Jew, likewise they should both testify and the Christian should swear an oath."\(^9\) This principle was confirmed by numerous ordinances issued by successive kings to their officials. In 1236 King Jaume I, for example, ordered that in cases between Christians and Jews, “no sentence be issued against them [the Jews] unless [the case] is proved legitimately by a Christian and a Jew.”\(^10\) This principle can be found in some of the earliest municipal law codes such as the twelfth-century Fuero of Teruel, which determined that suits between a Christian and a Jew were to be adjudicated by two alcaldes, one from each religion.\(^11\) An appeal was to be decided by four alcaldes, two Jews and two Christians.

\(^9\) The Usatges of Barcelona: The Fundamental Law of Catalonia, Middle Ages series (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1994), 92. This would become an issue when one of the parties in a conflict was a converted Jew. See chapter 5. Privileges such as these could often be ignored. In 1385 the Jews of Barcelona complained that suits against Jews were being decided without the necessary number of witnesses. See ACA C 843: 148v-149r (01/09/1385). See also for a discussion of the Jews in the Fueros of Teruel Asunción Blasco Martínez, “Jaime I y los judíos de Aragón,” in La sociedad en Aragón y Cataluña en el reinado de Jaime I, 1213-1276, ed. Esteban Sarasa Sánchez (Zaragoza: Institución Fernando el Católico, 2009), 109. Jaume Riera i Sans, “Jaime I y los judíos de Cataluña,” in La sociedad en Aragón y Cataluña en el reinado de Jaime I, 1213-1276, ed. Esteban Sarasa Sánchez (Zaragoza: Institución Fernando el Católico, 2009), 145-6 lists privileges issued to the Jews of Catalonia.

\(^10\) ACA C 12: 43v-44r (09/05/1262) [Jacobs, #210; Régné, #160]; this was confirmed by Jaume II in ACA C 89: 7r (15/09/1294) [Régné, #2538] and repeated by Pere III in ACA C 845: 11r-12r (11/08/1385): “non obtinetur in aliquo sententia contra eos nisi probratum esset legitime per christianum et per judeum.”

Such laws gave the Jews the expectation that their suits against Christians would be dealt with fairly by a court of law. After centuries of coexistence and interaction in the courts of the land, Jews shared with their Christian neighbours an understanding of how the system worked and the legal limits to the power of officials. When practice deviated from theory, as it is wont to do in law, Catalan and Aragonese Jews knew just what to do. Although we may initially assume that a Christian court would by definition be biased against a Jew in a case against a Christian, previous research has shown that this was not necessarily the case. In his study of the Muslim community of the kingdom of Valencia, Meyerson has shown that the court’s focus on due process led it to treat Muslims and Christians equitably. In the case of the Jews of Aragon and Catalonia, Assis shows that at least until the early fourteenth century officials dealt with Jews more or less equitably and respected their autonomy. As amply discussed in the previous chapter, by the late fourteenth century the Jews of the Crown of Aragon had no qualms about using Christian courts to solve internal conflicts. In their disputes with Christians, the Jews showed that they knew enough about the law to circumvent any bias against them by pointing out whenever due process was ignored or by declaring a judge "suspectus".

Roman law allowed the parties in a suit to have the case moved to the court of another judge if either party found the judge to be partial to one side. Once a judge was declared suspect - *judex suspectus* - he was completely cut off from the case. This became a tool widely employed by anyone, whether Christian or Jew, who had a reason to feel at a disadvantage in a court of law. When Abraham Cescaleta of Barcelona complained about the doctor of law Pere de Vigario, declaring him suspect to adjudicate his suit, the court promptly dismissed Pere de Vigario from any involvement and passed the case to the bailiff, adding that he was to...

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adjudicate any suit involving Abraham Cescaleta with the advice only of legists that he trusted would not be biased.\textsuperscript{14} In some cases, even the suspicion of probable bias was enough to move a suit to another court. In November of 1382 the royal court declared that all suits involving Rabbi Israel ben Israel from Zaragoza, either as plaintiff or defendant, against his daughters, their husbands, and “some Christians” were to be adjudicated by Gil de Sada, merino of Zargoza, and removed from the court of the justice of Aragon, and other courts of justice out of “probability of suspicion”.\textsuperscript{15}

Jews who felt disadvantaged because of the social position of their Christian opponents often employed such strategies. When Samuel Sadoch, Isaac de Catorze, and Isaac, son of Çalema Sadoch, all from Calatayud, had a dispute with three local noblemen of the powerful Luna family, they preemptively went to the royal court to express their concern about finding an unbiased court.\textsuperscript{16} Neither the young Isaac Sadoch nor Samuel Sadoch were strangers to the court system. A few years earlier Samuel had been taken to court by a Christian to whom he loaned money during the war with Castile over the proper use of the property the Christian left as collateral for the loan.\textsuperscript{17} Isaac’s issues were with fellow Jews, who had broken into his house and stolen some property.\textsuperscript{18} Whether as defendants or plaintiffs, both had navigated the system before.

The issue of bias would often determine the choice of court to which a plaintiff brought a suit. As we saw in chapter four, Jews would often choose to have their suits

\textsuperscript{14} ACA C 832: 45r (2/1/1383): “faciatis ac procedatis de et cum consilio alicuius doctoris vel jurispreriti predicte Civitatis de quo vobis melius bene visum fuit non suspecti...”
\textsuperscript{15} ACA C 829: 127v-128r (18/11/1382) – “ex probabilibus suspicionum causis propositis”. This seems to be the same suit – or suits – that had Rabbi Israel embroiled with his wife Sol over the use of her dowry. See pages 140-142 above. Muslims also used the same strategy to impugn judges in suits involving Christians. See Meyerson, Muslims of Valencia, 213-4.
\textsuperscript{16} ACA C 1841: 109r (20/08/1389). The noblemen in the case were Antonio de Luna, Juan Martin de Luna and Alvaro de Luna, viscount of Roda and chaplain of Emposta.
\textsuperscript{17} ACA C 828: 120v-121r [7/08/1383]
\textsuperscript{18} ACA C 818: 7r [1/03/1381]
adjudicated by the royal court or royal officials because they perceived the royal court as a more neutral court whose magistrates were removed from local Jewish politics. Looking at conflict between Christians and Jews reveals a similar pattern. The issue that often preoccupied men and women when choosing a court with which to file their complaint was whether their opponents had local connections, and this concern was shared by both groups. In Calatayud, Christians from out of town worried that local courts favoured local Jews. When Jaume Mancini, a merchant from Puigcerdà, brought a suit against Caçon Chilella, a Jew from Calatayud, over a loan, he felt he was at a disadvantage in the court of the justice of Calatayud and turned to the royal court, then in Barcelona. He claimed the local justice was biased, to his great “danger” and “damage,” and requested a more impartial judge. The arguments put forth by Jaume were formulaic but effective. A royal judge, acting in the name of the king, immediately acquiesced, appointing Miguel Santo de Alguaran, a local judge in the city of Calatayud, to deal with Jaume’s dispute with Caçon, and Garcia Muñoz de Pamplona, another local legal expert, to deal with another dispute that included Samuel Avensaprut, another Jew from Calatayud, in addition to Caçon.

It would not be difficult for parties in a lawsuit to abuse the protections enshrined in Roman law. I have found no evidence that the court would investigate the bias of an individual judge once a party declared him suspect; the common procedure was simply to move that judge aside for that particular case or from any suits involving the aggrieved party. This practice makes it difficult to say, with any certainty, under what precise grounds an individual claimed an official to be biased against him. What the case of Jaume Mancini and others like

19 ACA 1829: 75r-v (22/10/1387) "merito suspectum et pro suspectis periculosumque existat pariter et dapsnus coram suspecto judice"
20 ACA 1830: 77v-78r (22/10/1387). "possibly" because the letters are frustratingly vague about the nature of the case; while both could be referring to the same suit, it would make little sense that the court would forward the same case to two different judges on the same date. The official title of Miguel Santo de Alguaran was of licensed in decrees and Garcia Muñoz was a jurispride.
him illustrate is that the issue was often less a matter of Jew versus Christian than of local resident versus foreigner.  21

If Jaume Mancini’s concern for a bias in favour of Jews in Calatayud was legitimate, perhaps he should not have worried. Of the four main Jewish communities of Catalonia and Aragon, Calatayud’s was the one that complained the most about local officials interfering with its business. In 1381, the aljama accused local officials of executing sentences issued against local Jews that contradicted the laws of the kingdom. In its complaint, the aljama brought up a privilege confirmed by the king in 1371 guaranteeing that any suit involving the aljama or its members would be decided according to the *fueros*, uses, customs, privileges, and freedoms of the Kingdom of Aragon. 22 In another letter, the aljama complained that whenever individual Christians, Jews, or Muslims brought any dispute against the aljama of Calatayud to city officials, officials failed to summon the defendants or to evaluate their property properly when drawing up an inventory of their goods. 23 In that same year, the aljama accused city officials of interfering with internal matters of the aljama. 24 In all these cases, the royal court sided with the aljama, upholding due process, and sent strong warnings to local officials with threats of fining them upwards of 1,000 morabetis of gold, a sizeable sum, which probably did not endear the local aljama to city officials. 25

21 Christians in the countryside around Calatayud filed a similar complaint regarding their disputes with local Jews. See 1839: 125v-126r.
22 ACA C 817: 152v-153r (14/03/1381); repeated in ACA C 818: 88v-89r (14/03/1381).
23 ACA C 819: 60r-v (14/03/1381).
24 ACA C 817: 153r-154r (17/08/1381). The issue here was the election of Jewish judges by the aljama, who claimed Christian officials were interfering in the process.
25 That all these different complaints appear in the same year is noteworthy. Further research needs to be done in municipal records to understand the context of this conflict between municipal officials in Calatayud and the local aljama. It is interesting to note that although further complaints would be made in the mid 1380s, Calatayud would not suffer from the violence of 1391. Whatever grievances one side had against the other, fighting it out in the courts remained the avenue of choice.
In addition to allegations of official bias, issues of due process were commonly brought up in the royal court in disputes between Christians and Jews. Judicial procedure had become increasingly formal and complex in the High Middle Ages reaching the general format recognizable in courts throughout Europe by the early thirteenth century. The main stages of a civil lawsuit followed the practice first established in canonical courts based on Roman procedure. Litigation began when a plaintiff placed an oral or written complaint (libellus) in front of a judge, who then summoned the defendant if he decided there were grounds for a suit. The defendant had the opportunity at this point either to plead guilty or to contest the accusation, in which case he or she submitted a formal denial, listing the objections to the complaint. At this point the court would inventory the property of both parties in order to make sure they could afford the expense of litigation, demanding either a security deposit or the support of a guarantor. Replies and counter replies would follow by plaintiff and defendant as each side tried to prove its case, navigating through complex legal rules of what constituted proof. All of these steps were still at the pre-trial stage, as each party clarified the issues to be pursued. Once this was clear, each side took an oath that the suit was genuine and restated their claims. Lists of witnesses for both sides were issued, their testimonies were taken down by notaries, with written copies issued to both sides, who used the evidence in them to formulate their final arguments, submitted in oral and written form to the judge, who then issued the sentence after a period of adjournment and in the presence of the two sides. Appeals could be filed on procedural issues during the trial and regarding the decision at the

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27 For a detailed sketch of the procedure in canonical courts, on which this basic sketch is based, see Brundage, *The Medieval Origins of the Legal Profession*, 157-163; Marie A Kelleher, *The Measure of Woman*, 34-6.

28 Kelleher, 34.
end. Some variation of this complicated system existed from place to place but the common training of legal professionals guaranteed some commonality across Europe.\(^{29}\) Local statutes added to this complex system by adding exceptions or further defining procedural points. As we have seen, in the specific circumstances of a suit between Christians and Jews, the case had to be proven by both.

Much room existed in such a complex legal system for honest mistakes, inefficiencies, corruption, and blatant abuse of authority. In a litigious society such as that of Catalonia and Aragon, courts of justice were busy places. Despite rules determining how quickly suits should be brought to conclusion, the reality is that a case could linger for months or years without any progress.\(^{30}\) In 1385, for example, the Jews of Barcelona accused the local bailiff of convicting Jews when the suits had not been proved by both Jewish and Christian witnesses. Anxious to guarantee to his Jewish communities a fair hearing, King Pere admonished the bailiff to not “presume” to act against such privileges.\(^{31}\) We have already seen some of the complaints made by the Jews of Calatayud against local officials.

Complaining about judicial officials, it must be noted, was not exclusive to Jews. In 1383, Bernat Font, a Christian merchant of Perpignan, complained to the court that an official from the court of Prince Joan took fifty-four cloths of wool, which Bernat had in Barcelona, despite the fact that he had presented a guarantor (fidejussore) in a suit concerning a debt of 600 pounds of Jaca that he owed to the Jew Bonafos de la Cavalleria. The proper procedure would had been for his goods to have been inventoried and he promptly complained that the

\(^{29}\) For the training of legal professionals at universities see Brundage, *The Medieval Origins of the Legal Profession*, 248-262.

\(^{30}\) Rabbi Israel from Zaragoza had saw a suit go through several Çalmedinas. At the end of each term, he would request that the suit be kept by the new çalmedina. See ACA C 1825: 19v-20r (30/01/1387); 1829: 85v (29/10/1387).

\(^{31}\) ACA C 845: 11r-12r (11/08/1385).
action of the official went against the *costums* and constitution of Catalonia.\(^{32}\) Goods were not to be seized until a sentence was issued. The royal court upheld this principle and ordered the vicar of Barcelona to confirm what happened and let the court know. \(^{33}\) As we know, the Cavalleria family had a close connection to the monarchy and this breach of procedure may have been motivated by a bias in favour of Bonafos de la Cavalleria in Prince Joan's court of justice.

Although they can tell us much about the administration of justice at the local level, we need also to look at these complaints as legal strategies employed by plaintiffs or defendants either to stall or to prevent altogether an unfavourable decision. In chapter four we have already discussed at length how one individual Jew, Samuel Gracia, used various procedural strategies to avoid paying debts he owed to fellow Jews, including his own family and his aljama. Similar strategies were also employed in conflicts between Christians and Jews. Before we turn to a more detailed study of the nature of conflict between Christians and Jews in the 1380s, let us look a bit more closely at the dispute between Salamon Mercadell, a Jew from Girona, and Pere Lombard, a dyer from the same city.

In 1382, Salamon Mercadell and Pere Lombard got into a dispute over some accounts ("compotorum"). The actual litigation began in a friendly manner – wanting to avoid the expenses of a trial, the two parties agreed to seek more informal arbitration.\(^{34}\) Pere Lombard chose Pere Rosses, a fellow citizen of Girona, as one arbitrator while Salamon chose his coreligionist Bonet Saltell as the other. The arbitrators soon reached a decision in Salamon's favour, which Pere Lombard refused to recognize. Since the parties had previously agreed to abide by the sentence of arbitration, Pere Lombard's only way out was to challenge the legality of the sentence of arbitration. Initially, he did so by disputing the status of the

\(^{32}\) *Constitucions i altres drets de Catalunya* (Barcelona: Editorial Base, 1973).
\(^{33}\) ACA C 832: 158r-v (1/04/1383)
\(^{34}\) ACA C 832: 47v-48r (18/12/1382)
arbitrators chosen – he claimed that Pere Rosses was excommunicated and Bonet Saltell was, well, a Jew. Although this stopped execution at the local level, Salamon Mercadell appealed to King Pere, whose officials understood that according to the Catalan constitution, such a sentence of arbitration should be carried out regardless.\(^{35}\) That prompted Lombard to send his own appeal to the royal court but, interestingly enough, his main contention no longer concerned the status of the arbitrators but rather that they did not follow due process. He argued that under the influence of Salamon, “the arbitrators condemned him to pay 145 florins without due process or investigation of the truth”\(^{36}\). An affront to due process elicited a predictable reaction – the court suspended the execution of the sentence and issued a letter ordering its officials to investigate the case further.

The dispute between Pere Lombard and Salamon Mercadell went on for several more months. Two months after Lombard effectively put a hold on the case, Salamon went to the royal court again to remind it of the letter it had issued in his favour in December of 1382 and to ask for a cancellation of the letter issued in Lombard’s favour.\(^{37}\) The court agreed that execution of the sentence should not be held up because one of the arbitrators was a Jew and revoked any consideration of that made in the letter issued in favour of Lombard.\(^{38}\) This is where the trail became more complicated. Two weeks later Salamon complained yet again that the letter obtained by Lombard still held sway in the courts of the local jurists, obtaining

\(^{35}\) Ibid.

\(^{36}\) ACA C 832: 105v-106v (17/02/1383): “ipsique arbitri sive processu et inquisitione veritatis contra ius et justitiam clausis occulatis (sic) dictum supplicantem in cento quadraginta quinque flor. condemnaverit.”

\(^{37}\) ACA C 832: 172r (10/04/1383)

\(^{38}\) Ibid. Unsure here whether the court maintain portions of the second letter: dicimus et mandamus firmiter et expresse quatenus sequendo dictam primam literam eandem arbitralem sententiam exequi non differatis propter illam exceptionem quod alterius arbitrorum fuerit judeus dumtamen sententia ipsa lata fuerit per pronunciantes tanquam arbitrares et amicabiles compositores sicut in preinserta prima litera continentur de aliis autem exceptionibus in secunda litera contentis in contradictam executionem opponantur remoto ab inde dicto bernat de Baco cognoscatis legitime inter partes dicta secunda litera quam huius serie de certa scientia revocamus et penitus abolemus."
yet another letter from the royal court to enforce the earlier decisions (to uphold the sentence of arbitration).\textsuperscript{39} This did not prevent Pere Lombard, at some point in 1383, from obtaining a decision in his dispute with Salamon from the licentiate Bernat de Baco, which Salamon promptly appealed, alleging he was not informed. The court ordered the jurisperito Berengar de Deo to decide whether such an appeal should be admitted and in January of the following year Pere Lombard was summoned to the royal court to testify.\textsuperscript{40} The next move in the suit happened four months later when the licentiate Pere Vilar was appointed to adjudicate the appeal.\textsuperscript{41} Although we do not know how the suit was ultimately resolved, the last appearance of Lombard and Salamon in the royal records was over a year and a half later when Lombard went to court yet again. In this instance, he no longer disputed the money he owed to Salamon Mercadell – the issue now was a receipt owed to Pere by Francisco Jalbrit, a creditor of Salamon to whom he sold Pere’s debt.\textsuperscript{42} Unable to get the money he was owed, Salamon bartered the credit he had to pay his own debt to another Christian.

This case is symptomatic of some of the strategies employed by Christians and Jews in resolving their conflicts and the circumstances in which they sought the royal court while they had disputes pending in other courts of law. Although Pere Lombard felt that the Jewish identity of an arbitrator was a good reason to discredit him, this was not the understanding of royal judicial officials, who took more issue with the allegation that perhaps the arbitrators ignored due process.\textsuperscript{43} Let us turn now to look at the kinds of issues that shaped relations between Christians and Jews in the 1380s.

\textsuperscript{39} ACA C 832: 181r-v (26/04/1383)
\textsuperscript{40} ACA C 837: 69v-70r; 140v-141r.
\textsuperscript{41} ACA C 838: 61r.
\textsuperscript{42} ACA C 847: 82v-83r (9/12/1385)
Nature of conflict between Christians and Jews

In 1383 Mosse Xicatella and Sento Levi, Jews from Lleida, were arrested and accused of purchasing two consecrated hosts for fifty gold florins and torturing them with boiling water and hot oil. The hosts were acquired by some “bad Christians” at the church of Castelló de Farfanya, a small town about 20km north of Lleida. Another Jew implicated was Sento Cequens, also from Lleida. The case had been initiated by the Count of Urgell in his position as provincial governor but King Pere quickly took over jurisdiction of the case. In many ways, the outline of this case conforms with host desecration stories that spread throughout Europe after the end of the thirteenth century and which led to the shedding of much Jewish blood. In these stories, a Jew or a group of Jews acquires a host with the purpose of desecrating it either by attacking it with a knife or burning it in a fire. In such tales, the host always survives unblemished no matter the horrors to which it is submitted and the perfidious Jews are executed in the end.

Fortunately for Mosse Xicatella and Sento Cequens, the same attention to due process we have seen earlier was shown in this host desecration accusation, if only with one caveat – the king acted quickly to claim jurisdiction over the case before it could end up in the ecclesiastical courts. In his first letter to the bailiff of Lleida, in addition to ordering him to arrest Mosse Xicatella and investigate the matter thoroughly (exacta diligentia), he added a

44 ACA C 830: 144v-145r (07/09/1383).
45 The Christian is identified as Pere de Vilanova in ACA C 1106: 92r.
46 ACA C 1106: 91r-v.
47 The case is also detailed in Miri Rubin, *Gentile tales: the narrative assault on late medieval Jews* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1999), 114-5.
note telling him to be discreet, taking care not to send Mosse to “some ecclesiastic judge.”

To ensure cooperation, a few days later the king sent two royal auditores to take turns in keeping a close eye on the bailiff; that these men were supposed to represent the king’s interests is clear from his warning to the bailiff that he was to decide nothing without the advice of one of the two men. Four months later, the royal court requested that all documents related to the case be forwarded to the court. Despite being held in prison for three years and tortured, Mosse was finally declared not guilty by the king, who ordered his release in 1386.

King Pere’s actions are understandable when we look at an earlier case of host desecration that plagued the community of Huesca in 1377. In November of that year Prince Joan visited the city in his capacity as governor-general of Aragon. Upon arrival, he heard that a Christian thief, Ramon Rafart, had confessed selling five hosts to a Jew called Haim Andalet. Under torture, Haim said he sold the hosts to the Jewish couple Jafuda and Manases Abnabez. Prepared to believe such accusations, the Infante acted swiftly. By the time he wrote to his father to inform him of the case on December 7th, two weeks after news of the case reached him, the Infante had already ordered the execution of the Christian thief by quartering and the Jewish couple by burning. On December 11 these sentences were carried out. Before they were executed, the Jewish couple implicated three other Jews from Huesca by confessing under torture that they had sold the hosts to Salomo de Quatorze, Mosse

49 ACA C 830: 144b-145r (07/09/1383). “Et caveatis ne ipsum alicui acclesiastico judici remittatis donec a nobis aliud habueritis mandamendum.”
51 ACA C 1105: 47r (18/01/1384)
52 ACA C 1455: 17v-19r (16/07/1386). See also, Baer, 1: 91.
53 A detailed description of the case can be found in Joaquim Miret i Sans, “El procés de les hòsties contra eles jueus d’Osca de 1377,” Anuari d’Institut d’Estudis Catalans 4 (December 1911): 63-79; For a good summary in English see Rubin, Gentile Tales, 112-114. It is unclear from the documentation who ordered the torture.
54 ACA C 1723: 46r-v (11/12/1377) [Miret i Sans, 66, n.1]
Ambimax and Abraham Abolbaca. Salomo managed to flee but the other two were arrested.\(^{55}\) King Pere’s response was swift and cautious – he immediately warned his son to be careful about accusations of that nature, reminding him of an earlier case involving the Jews of Barcelona, which turned out to be unfounded.\(^{56}\) Before King Pere’s letter arrived, the Infante had ordered the arrest of friends and relatives of Salomo de Quatorze. Two weeks later, King Pere once more reminded his son to be suspicious of accusations of that type since they could be motivated by a desire to effect “the destruction of the said aljama and its individual members and our other aljamas” rather than to preserve “justice and the Catholic faith.”\(^{57}\) King Pere followed up a week later with another letter ordering his son to drop all accusations against the Jews since he considered them to be made out of “hatred and ill will.”\(^{58}\)

The Jews of Huesca tried to stop the trial by appealing to King Pere and informing him of many irregularities in the case against them, including suppression of important evidence in their favour as well as the fact that the Christian thief had recanted on his original confession, clearing the Jews from any involvement with the hosts.\(^{59}\) Not wanting to completely undermine the authority of his son, King Pere finally allowed the trial to proceed but not without sending several trustworthy officials who were advised to make sure the accused were allowed their rights to “just and legitimate defense”. After a few months of

\(^{55}\) Miret i Sans, 65-6.


\(^{57}\) ACA C 1259: 134r (31/12/1377) [Miret i Sans, 68, n.2]: “Molt car Primogenit, jassia quels fets per que procehits o fets procehir contra aljama dels juheus Doscha o alcuns singulars daquella sien enormes et leigs et contra nostra lig, empero aytambe poria esser que aquells qui aço persegueixen ho facen mes per destruir la dita aljama et singulars daquella et altres aljames nostres com per zel de justicia ne de la fe catholica et nos et vos deuem guardar que los crims que toquen nostre lig sien punitis mas que sens rao les aljames no sien mal menades.”

\(^{58}\) ACA 1262: 1 (08/01/1378) [Miret i Sans, 69, n.2].

\(^{59}\) Miret i Sans, 73-75; Rubin, *Gentile Tales*, 114.
impasse, the king finally freed the Jews who were still being held after personal emergencies had led to the Infante’s departure from Aragon.⁶⁰

King Pere’s main concern throughout this episode seems to have been clearly connected with a fear that the Jews would leave royal lands in favour of ecclesiastic or seigneurial lands. This concern was evident in his letter to Don Lope de Gurrea, a well-respected Aragonese nobleman, whom King Pere asked to advise his son that should he continue harassing the Jews, they would leave royal cities in favour of territories controlled by ecclesiastic or secular lords, causing the Crown to lose an important source of revenue.⁶¹ Interested in preserving his Jewish communities, King Pere no doubt was aware of the kind of scandal and public uproar this kind of case could elicit. In his decision against Mosse Xicatella in Lleida, he once again made allusion to the necessity of keeping it under wraps.⁶²

These host desecration cases illustrate not only how destructive such accusations could be but also King Pere’s very pragmatic attitude towards them as well as his concern for preserving the integrity of the Crown’s Jewish aljamas. King Pere’s power, however, was limited by the cooperation of local officials. In 1381, at least one of the Jews of Huesca

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⁶⁰ Prince Joan’s wife died and he became ill. See Miret i Sans, 79; Rubin, Gentile Tales, 114.
⁶¹ ACA C 1262: 10 (26/01/1378) [Miret i Sans, 70, n. 2]: “...ne vos ne los otros qui so es cerca dell non lo tirades de aquello noy fincara aljama en nuestra senyoria antes se mudaran en las tierras de los prelados, ricosombres et caualleros et faran mas mengua a nos et a ell que a nenguno de vosotros. E porque sabemos que vos amades el nuestro servicio et el suyo et que querridades su bien auenir vos escribimos daquesto quel conselledes que tales cosas no faga que vos qui ja hauedes continuado muyto con nos sabes bie que siempre hauemos tenido pratica de consentir las aljamas e assi damos vos carrega que tales feytos como aquestos tingales muyto a coraçon et quey fagades tal obra que las ditas aljamas sean conservedas, que bien podedes considerar que nos qui en tiempos de guerras et de tribulaciones que hauemos houidas en nuestros Regnos et tierras los hauemos conservedos bien los puede et los deue conservar el Duch en tiempo de paç et de benenança.”
⁶² ACA C 1455: 18v. “Cum nobis non constet te dictum Mosse Xicatella esse culpabilem in premissis contra te denunciatis et de quibus fuisti delatus et impetitus, Ideo absolvimus te dictum Mosse a petitits per partem procuratoris fiscalis et sibi et Curie nostre super predicti imponimus silencium sempiternum.”
involved in the host desecration accusations still remained behind bars and was released only after pleading to King Pere.\textsuperscript{63}

But what about other kinds of violence against Jews?

Evidence of systematic violence appear too seldom to allow for any conclusions regarding possible worsening of relations between Christians and Jews. Even Holy Week riots, described so cogently by David Nirenberg as an intrinsic element in the coexistence between Christians and Jews, are mentioned only sporadically in the sources. During the entire decade of the 1380s, direct mention of Holy Week violence appear only four times in the royal chancery records, none of which hailed from the four main aljamas of Aragon and Catalonia. Let us pause and take a look at this evidence.

Early in the decade, two formulaic orders were issued to officials in Huesca and Alagón, both in the Kingdom of Aragon, to protect local Jews during the upcoming Holy Week.\textsuperscript{64} In both, royal chancery officials made allusions to the habit of Christians to celebrate Good Friday by committing violent acts against Jews and reminded them to keep guard and protect the Jews, who should be confined to their houses on this day. The officials of Huesca were ordered to remind the population publicly on Holy Thursday that any injury to the persons or property of the Jews would be severely punished.\textsuperscript{65} We have no evidence that there was reason to believe an attack was imminent in those towns or if these orders were issued at the request of local Jews. Durán Gudiól’s study of the aljama of Huesca, unfortunately, like so many of its kind, does not discuss much late fourteenth-century evidence.\textsuperscript{66} We know from chapter three that relations among Jews in Huesca were particularly difficult during this time but that does not  

\textsuperscript{63} ACA C 814: 201v (18/03/1381). Could this Haim Abdalell be the Haim Andalet who was first accused by the thief Ramon Rafart in 1377?
\textsuperscript{64} ACA C 936: 132v (28/03/1381) [Huesca]; 820: 97v (03/04/1381) [Alagón].
\textsuperscript{65} ACA C 936: 132v.
\textsuperscript{66} Antonio Durán Gudiol, \textit{La judería de Huesca} (Zaragoza: Guara, 1984).
help us understand why they should have been concerned with a possible attack during Holy Week. It is interesting to note that the letter regarding Huesca was issued only ten days after Haim Abdalell was released from prison after being cleared of the charges of having purchased hosts. Perhaps the royal officials acting in the name of the king were acting preventively. Interestingly, while these reminders were sent to town in Aragon, it was in Catalonia that actual attacks happened.

In 1387, in the first year of the reign of Joan I, the Jews of Lleida were attacked during Holy Week, despite allegedly remaining in their homes. That this happened only a few years after Mosse Xicatella and Sento Cequens were accused of host desecration was perhaps not a coincidence. Despite King Pere’s attempt to keep the case under wraps, it would have been known in the community. Officials from King Joan’s court issued a rather formulaic letter ordering local officials to remind the citizens that anyone who “dared to presume” to cause damage to the Jews would be liable to penalties prescribed by law.67 Damage could sometimes be inflicted not through violence, but through the courts. Alarmed by what it perceived as a trend, the aljama of Lleida complained to the king in 1390 that, imbued more “by malice than by zeal for justice,” some people (aliqui) “often accused Jews of the aljama of such things that could not be proven so that they can be prosecuted by [the bailiff], vexing them with costs and expenses of litigation.”68 King Joan, following the precedents set by his father, ordered his bailiff in Lleida to dismiss any case whenever he sensed it was prompted more by malice than by justice.69

67 ACA C 1825: 96r-v (02/04/1387). This letter does not specify the punishment, which according to the previously mentioned letter, was a fine of about 1,000 morabati.
68 ACA C 1846: 21v (06/09/1390): “Quod aliqui potius tipo malicie quam zelo justicie sepius acusant et coram vobis prosequatur iniuste judeos dicte aljama de talibus dequibus nil contra ipsos possunt probare et eos vexant missionibus et expensis.”
69 Ibid.
An attack similar to the one that occurred in Lleida had occurred the year before in Girona, when some local clergy broke into the aljama. This particular incident does not seem to have been related directly to the Easter holidays since the first letter dealing with it was dated nearly three weeks before Easter, which in that year fell on April 22nd. Yet King Pere’s response was swift and strongly worded. Since clergymen were involved, he sent a very harsh letter to the bishop of Girona, ordering him to punish anyone involved in the event to ensure that it would not be repeated and threatening the bishop with harsh lawsuits (rigidos processus) should he ignore the king’s requests. This letter, issued by King Pere himself, was followed a few weeks later by a letter to local authorities in Girona making it clear to them that they should not “close their eyes” to the “pernicious affair” that it should be “punished harshly.” After ordering the bailiff and local justice to investigate the case, the court reserved for itself the authority to issue a final verdict punishing those involved. Was this a sign that laity were also involved in the attacks? Or could the court have decided that the bishop was not acting fast enough? I have found no mention of the events in the registers of the bishop of Girona for the period but it is possible that not all registers have survived. Either way, the tension in Girona seem to have had its origin in a dispute over property. In 1385, as we have seen earlier, a Jew had sold a property in the aljama to a local priest. A year after the disturbances of 1386, canons and priests attacked Jews who were in a guesthouse or dwelling (hospicio) the clergy had in the call.

The Jewish community of Girona was not the only one to be attacked in this period. In 1384 some students (escolans) decided to attack the Jewish quarter of Montblanc, near Tarragona. In this case, however, city officials acted quickly, preventing the attack and chasing...
the students away. The Jews showed their appreciation by reporting the deed to King Pere, who sent a letter to municipal officials congratulating them on the “good work” (bona obra) they had done and reminding them to keep up the good work in the upcoming holy week celebrations. The three events cited above are the only evidence I have found in the royal registers of attacks against Jews in Catalonia and Aragon during the 1380s, giving little evidence for any widespread growth of anti-Jewish violence.

Other crimes committed by Christians against Jews involved robbery and scams. These were not nearly as numerous as civil disputes and the few details we have make it difficult to interpret them as more than the random petty crime common in fourteenth-century society. In 1389, for example, Aymeric de Prats and Berengar Mulet broke into a house in l’Arboç belonging to Samuel Gracia, a Jew who then lived in Barcelona and stole some goods. We saw in the previous chapter that Samuel’s relations with local officials were not the best, and it is possible that Aymeric and Berengar simply took advantage of his long absences and Samuel’s troubled relations with local officials, Jewish and Christian alike. Break-ins were, of course, not uncommon. Responsa literature from this time period included questions regarding the kosher status of wine stored in cellars broken into by individuals who could not be identified clearly as either Christian or Jew.

Many of the crimes committed against Jews were crimes in which Jews were also implicated. Gambling, for example, was a problem among Jews and Christians alike. The aljama of Calatayud complained that some individuals of its community played so much with dice that they wasted all their goods and by extension threatened the survival of the aljama. When communities were taxed collectively, each individual member’s ruin could be a burden for the

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74 ACA C 838: 22v-23r (12/03/1384).
75 ACA C 1838: 75r-v (10/03/1389); on Samuel Gracia, see chapter three.
76 José Ramón Magdalena and Blasco, eds., Fuentes para la historia de los judíos de la Corona de Aragón: los responsa de rabí Yishaq bar Seset Perfet de Barcelona: 1368-140 (Barcelona, 2004).
77 ACA C 828: 152v-153r.
rest and, in times of growing fiscal pressure, a particular concern. In some cases, Christians and Jews appear as partners in crime. Both Christians and Jews were implicated in the defrauding of the young Jew Çaravida sa Porta, who lost money playing with fake dice in Girona in the 1370s. The unnamed tricksters also induced Çaravida to give them the rest of his money in a form of a censal and violari. In Calatayud, majority and minorities were also implicated together in a case of fraud. In 1384 Christians, Jews, and Muslims were accused of practicing the same scam – they offered themselves to mediate sales, charging the parties much more than the products were worth, often evading taxes as well.

The only other criminal complaint coming from the four main communities in Aragon and Catalonia involved a veritable corrida de toros. In 1383 several men from Calatayud, both citizens and men from the countryside, took, by force, several bulls owned by the local butchers. What made this distinct from a simple case of theft was what they did to the bulls. They simply ran them through the streets of Calatayud, exhausting them to such an extent that the Jewish butchers complained they were “unmarketable” (non... vendabilis). Whether it was illegitimate running of the bulls, the royal court ordered the local bailiff and justice to investigate the matter and punish the Christians if they were found guilty.

Most conflict between Christians and Jews did not involve religious differences but rather the more mundane disputes that arise out of daily living. Although Jews had their own quarters within city centres, they often had Christian neighbours both within and outside the cities in which they lived. The close quarters in which most people lived in the Middle Ages led to much squabbling over space and any possible infringement of that space. For example,

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78 ACA C 1495: 25r-v (16/11/1372).
79 ACA C 838: 38r (08/03/1384).
80 ACA C 828: 152v.
when Antonio Ramirez de Funes, proprietor of a vineyard in the outskirts of Calatayud, decided to do some repairs at the margins of the water source that went through his property, he inadvertently caused the flooding of his neighbour, the Jew Thedroc Aventilgua. Although the issue was adjudicated locally and Antonio was ordered to fix it and pay reparations, Thedroc wanted assurances that he would be protected in the future in the event of another flood. 81 After inspecting the damage to the Jew’s property, officials from the royal court ordered local officials that should it happen again, they should estimate the damage and collect it from Antonio Ramirez without further litigation.

Other cases involved issues of property ownership. For example, the Jew Juneç Trigo, a royal physician, possessed “openly and publicly” a vineyard, which he bought from Pedro Depila, a citizen of Zaragoza. In 1384, however, other inhabitants of the region disputed his claim to the land by saying that they had a right to the vineyard.82 The document issued by King Pere’s court is frustratingly vague about the identity of the challengers to Juneç’s ownership of the property he possessed, mentioning only “some inhabitants of that city and other places in Aragon”.83 The court issued a proclamation that any claims to the property in dispute had to be proved within 31 days.

The close quarters in the cities could often lead to some bitter disputes as well. The most interesting case involved Christian and Jewish prostitutes who shared a house in Barcelona. We know of them not from complaints of clerics or other authorities concerned for the possible sexual misconduct that could occur in such a place.84 Rather, the complaint was

81 ACA C 1840: 94r-v (20/07/1389).
82 ACA C 835: 108v-109r (16/2/1384).
84 The policing of sexual boundaries between Jews, Christians, and Muslims was of paramount importance to authorities of all three communities. See Nirenberg, Communities of violence, 127-165; idem “Conversion, sex, and segregation: Jews and Christians in medieval Spain,” The American Historical Review 107, no. 4 (October 2002): 1065-1093.
voiced by their Christian neighbour, Bartholomena, the wife of Francesc de San Clement. Sick of the noise the prostitutes would make and the bad reputation they brought to the neighbourhood, she went to the royal court to demand the eviction of the prostitutes.Officials at the royal court complied and ordered the local bailiff to move the women and their goods elsewhere but, interestingly, officials made no mention of the fact that Christians and Jews were sharing the same house. Sexual morality and public order were more of a concern than the religious identity of the prostitutes.

This was not the first time, however, that the San Clementes had trouble with Jews. A few years earlier, Bartholomena’s husband had been sent to Girona on business for the king and stayed in a guesthouse belonging to Astruch Lobell Gracia, a prominent Jew of the town. Astruch complained that Francisco de San Clemente took over his house against his will and stayed there for eleven months, during which time he had to live elsewhere. He also claimed that during his stay there Francisco did much damage to his house, destroying many of his household goods. This was not the first time a Christian had done damage to a guesthouse inside the call of Girona. As mentioned earlier, in 1387 priests and canons of the city attacked Jews who were in a guesthouse that the priests owned inside the call. Although the king quickly ordered the bailiff to investigate such “audacity”, arresting those involved and

85 ACA C 1833: 53r-v (12/03/1388). In 1381 the Franciscan monastery in Zaragoza complained about the presence of prostitutes nearby. See ACA C 822: 120r-v (28/11/1381).
86 ACA C 845: 144v-145r (11/12/1385)
87 Ibid. “Pere etc. Fideli nostro judici ordinario Civitatis Gerunde. Salutem et Graciam. Suplicacionem humilem nobis reverenter oblatam pro parte Astruch Lobell Graciani judei judarie dicte Civitatis suscepimus continentem Quod dilectus noster Franciscus de santo Clemente Miles capitaneus per nos dudum deputatus in dicta civitate ... et ultra voluntatem eiusdem suplicantis hospicium fuit in hospicio ipsius quod habet in judaria predicta per tempus .xi. mensum lapsorum proxime vel circa ob quod dictus suplicans expulsus ab eius hospicio alibi moram traxit per dictum tempus et hac de causa sustimunt plurima dampna et ipsum hospicium propter moram dicti capitanei magnam sucepit devastacionem ut affertur et res ac utensilia domus predicta et ligna combusta et alia quam plurima mala et dampna facta fuere ibidem...”
88 ACA C 1827: 87v-88v; 88v-89r; 89r (2/4/1387)
punishing them for the damage done, one wonders if at the heart of it was not a dispute over
property. Only two years earlier the king himself had confirmed the sale of a guesthouse in the
call by Jucef Falcon to the priest Pere Nernat de Canollis.89

The knight Francisco de San Clemente was certainly not the only Christian official to
stay in a Jewish guesthouse. In 1383, the issue seemed so pressing as to have led King Pere to
issue a general order to all officials and aljamás of his kingdoms prohibiting “any officials or
domestici” of the royal household or any person “of condition and preeminence” to stay in the
house of a Jew.90 Officials who did so were to be fined 1,000 morabatins of gold and should any
official show up at a Jewish guesthouse and demand to stay there, the Jews were to report
them to Jewish officials under penalty of being expelled from the aljama.91 Interestingly,
Jewish officials working for the king were similarly ordered to stay away from Christian
guesthouses.92

The issue of excessive contact between members of different religious communities
was a constant source of anxiety. It was precisely the fear of sexual intercourse that led
Christian theologians and Jewish rabbis to pay particular attention to sexual boundaries. The
Jewish scholar Maimonides warned that Jews should not eat or drink with non-Jews, even
when there was no possibility of coming into contact with forbidden foods, “lest such

89 ACA C 946: 22r (4/12/1385)
90 ACA C 942: 62v-63r (25/04/1383). “…aliquis seu aliqui officiales et domestici nostri … aut
alía quevis persona cuiusvis status conditionis et preheminencie existat amodo non audeat
seu presumat hospitari nec in hospites recipi vel admiti in domo alicuius judei seu alicuorum
judeorum quasvis aljamarum nostrarum.”
91 Ibid, 63r.
92 Ibid., 62v. King Pere wanted to protect the Jews “ab oppressionibus et vexacionibus liberare
que occasione infra contentorum eis possent de facili evenire”. He then orders that: “nullus
posaderius portarius seu aliquis alius ordinatus ad dandum pausatas audeat vel presumat sub
dicta pena dare pausatas aliquibus officialibus seu domesticis nostris aut aliiis quibusvis
personis judeis...”
commingling should lead to intermarriage.”  

Christian authorities also recognized the danger. In 1215, the Fourth Lateran Council ordered that Jews and Muslims throughout Christian Europe should “be marked off in the eyes of the public from other peoples through the character of their dress” so that Christians would not confuse them for one of their own and engage in “prohibited intercourse.” In the Iberian peninsula, King Alfonso X expressed it most clearly:

Many errors and offensive acts occur between Christian men and Jewish women and between Christian women and Jewish men as a consequence of their living together in cities and dressing alike. In order to obviate the errors and evils that might result from this situation, we consider it proper and decree that all Jewish men and women living in our kingdom wear some sort of mark upon their heads so that all may clearly discern who is a Jew or a Jewess.

Yet, despite all this concern, excessive contact between Christians and Jews seems to have drawn the attention and intervention of the royal court only when it led to other kinds of conflict. In the cases mentioned above it was the prostitutes’ business and noise, and the Christian official’s unruly behaviour at the Jewish guesthouse in Girona, that finally led to royal intervention. As David Nirenberg has shown, it would be after the mass conversions of 1391 made the boundaries between Christians and Jews much more porous that anxiety over sexual contact would reach a new high. This, of course, does not mean that there was no concern or anxiety over excessive contact between Christians and Jews.

93 Moses Maimonides, The Code of Maimonides (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1949), 2: 250 (chapter 17, 9). In the Islamic world Muslims and Jews could intermarry and at least among Sunni Muslims there was no similar fear of intimacy of Muslim men with dhimmi women (Christians and Jews). See Cohen, Under Crescent and Cross, 64.


96 Nirenberg, “Conversion, sex, and segregation,” 1078ff.
In chapter two we discussed the issue of debt and the royal practice of issuing moratoria to Jewish communities that could not meet their fiscal obligations. It is worth pausing here to look more closely at effects of debt and moratoria on relations between Christians and Jews.

In 1386, Salomó Estaleta, a Jew from Barcelona, alleged he could not pay his taxes or provide for the necessities of life and might have to live as a beggar because all of his debtors had excused themselves from paying their debts to him after obtaining moratoria from the king. A year later, it was the turn of a Christian, the merchant Miguel Dilisquia, to complain that “several Jews” were avoiding payment of what they owed to him for the sale of some merchandise because of a postponement they got from the royal court.

The cases above are illustrative the kinds of interactions between Christians and Jews in the Crown of Aragon as well as the effects on the ground of some of the royal policies to address the economic crises that began with the bad harvests of the 1330s, reached new levels with the Black Death in 1348, and were made worse by fiscal demands spurred by the wars against Castile in the 1350s and 1360s and in Sardinia. As we know, debts connecting Christians and Jews were of various kinds – from traditional loans contracts, to censal and violari contracts, to the moneys owed for the purchase of merchandise, land, or livestock. It is not surprising, therefore, that in a period of economic crisis, the most common suits involving Christians and Jews in the royal courts were debt litigations. While individually these suits may seem rather mundane, when put together they reveal the general social and economic interchange between Christians and Jews and how they coped with the economic pressures of their time.

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97 ACA C 850: 29r-v (08/11/1386)
98 ACA C 1828: 27r (08/08/1387)
99 As we saw in chapter 4, debt was also the number one issue in disputes between Jews.
By the late fourteenth century, as we have seen, most loans in the Crown of Aragon took the form of a censal. Jews were in general not very active in this particular credit market. Of the disputes involving debt in the four principal Jewish communities in Catalonia and Aragon, I found only one dispute involving the buying of censal by a Jew. In 1383, Bonsenyor Astruch Gracia, a Jew from Barcelona, alleged that Galceran de Villafranca, castellan of Montblanc, and his wife Beatrice, sold 600 sous of Barcelona in censals to him, which was dutifully registered in the court of the vicar of Barcelona, but failed to pay the pension to which they had agreed. The court predictably sided with Bonsenyor ordering that execution be made against the goods of Galceran and his wife to cover both what they owed and the salary of the court official.

Most of the suits involving debt reaching the royal court, however, were not straightforward cases of default but rather involved complaints regarding moratoria issued by the royal court, such as the case of Solomon Estaleta above. Those whose credit existed mostly in the form of censal or violari were generally better protected since they were protected against moratoria. Although some Jews received censals as payment for debts, as we saw in chapter two, most Jews still engaged in more short term, traditional loans, particularly in smaller communities and in the countryside. Jewish aljamas everywhere bitterly complained to the king whenever he issued general reprieves of debt to his subjects and

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100 ACA C 831: 23r-v (01/1/1383)
101 Constitucions i altres drets de Catalunya, tit. XXIV, II-V, pp 70-71. That did not stop individuals such as Samuel Gracia, for example, from attempting use a general moratorium to avoid paying debt from a censal. See ACA 844: 57r-v.
102 Guilleré has shown that by the fourteenth century, city folk were borrowing much less from Jews, see “Juifs et chrétiens à Géron au XIVème siècle,” in Jornades d’Història dels Jueus a Catalunya (Girona: Ajuntament de Girona, 1990), 53. On Jewish credit see also chapter 2; in Valls, all of the city’s creditors by the late fourteenth century were Christians: Jordi Morellió i Baget, Fiscalitat i deute public en dues viles del camp de Tarragona (Barcelona: Institució Milà i Fontanals, 2001), 755-6.
attempted to secure promises from the monarch that he would exempt the Jews from future moratoria.

As we know, such promises had limited effect, so Jews would often insert clauses in loan contracts in which the debtor waved his rights to make use of a moratorium. In 1381, Solomon Alatzar, a Jew from Zaragoza, went to court to complain that Miguel Didaci, Sancho Moncayo, Juan de Terma, and Garcia Salvador from the place of Pedrola, in the country near Zaragoza, did not pay back a loan of 410 sous they owed to him alleging their debt was postponed by the royal court. Solomon claimed that although it was certainly within the king’s authority to postpone payment of debts from simple loans, Solomon showed that in the contract they signed, the debtors waved their right to seek any privilege or moratoria regarding that debt. Solomon’s ability to show written evidence of that in court guaranteed that a letter was quickly sent to an official in Zaragoza to go personally to Pedrola and collect not only the debt but make the debtors pay court expenses.

Moratoria, of course, were not only applied to debt from loans. Many of the disputes between Christians and Jews involved debt from trade in which one party bought merchandise from another on the assumption they would be paid upon delivery. In these disputes, Jews were not always the unpaid vendors; the situation also happened in reverse. The Barcelona merchant Antoni Girgas had to go to court at least twice in the 1380s to get the money owed to him by individual Jews to whom he had sold flour. In 1382, the Jewish tailor Mosse Sadoc, and his coreligionists, the curtain makers Jacob Cortes and David Burgales, refused to pay Antoni alleging that each had individually obtained moratoria from the king. Antoni seems to have first brought the case to the baillif’s court but to no avail since the Jews

103 ACA C 820: 152r-v, “pretendentes per nos inde fore elongatos”
104 Solomon’s good fortune was limited by the local official’s collaboration. Four months later Solomon would complain that local officials had yet to collect the money that was owed to him. See ibid.
were able to produce the letters of moratoria.\footnote{ACA C 832: 20r (11/12/1382).} Two years later, Naçan Salamo and his wife Regina refused to pay him for the flour he had delivered to them for the same reason. In both cases the court ruled that it was unfair that the defendants should keep both the money (precium) and the thing bought; therefore the Jews should be made to pay.\footnote{Ibid and ACA C 844: 68r (05/12/1384), this last letter was issued by the king himself.}

As these few examples show, the networks of debt and obligation went both ways in Catalonia and Aragon. While Jews are often portrayed in the literature as the moneylenders and merchants, whose wealth provoked the animosity of lower classes, the majority of the cases of dispute over debt that made their way to the court of King Pere the Ceremonious and Joan I were of Jews who owed money to Christians rather than the other way around. As shown in the table below, out of twenty-seven disputes, fifteen involved Jewish debt.\footnote{This does not necessarily mean that in general Jews owed more money to Christians than Christians owed to Jews. In order to argue that, more systematic research needs to be done in notarial archives.} Of those, nearly half (seven) deal with a purchase or a service rendered. At least one case of debt points to the costly bureaucracy of the time. Salamon Brunell, for example, owed two gold florins to a public notary for services rendered.\footnote{ACA C 843: 162r (26/08/1385).}

Unfortunately, few of the cases of debt owed to Jews include information on the nature of the debt. Of the five cases in which the nature of the debt is made clear, three involved a standard loan, one was a censal, and one was money owed for merchandise sold by a Jew.\footnote{ACA C 831: 23r-v (censal); ACA C 842: 108v-109r (merchandise); ACA C 1833: 187v-188v; 816:104v-105r; 152-r-153r; 831: 182r-v; 817: 119r-v; 822: 155v-157r; 823: 153v-155r;}. Of these, three were not suits in which the Jewish creditor was trying to collect his debt but rather were disputes in which the debtor claimed his Jewish creditor either charged him more usury than was allowed by law or tried to collect more than he actually owed. In
1381, Joan Alegre, a silversmith, borrowed 80 pounds from Boniuha Gracia from Barcelona and complained that Boniuha charged him more than the 4d/per pound (20%) allowed by law.110 Usury, as we saw in chapter two, was a tightly regulated practice and although Jews could charge interest on loans to Christians, the law of the land limited the amount of interest that could be charged.111 In another suit Sancho Gondissalvo and his wife Condessa signed a contract borrowing 400 sous from Isaac Dalcala, a Jew from Calatayud. They complained Isaac wanted to collect the full 400 when he had only given them 200. 112 Solomon German, on the other hand, claimed that some Christians from Calatayud owed him money for some cloth he had woven for them.113 Cases such as these illustrate the sorts of mundane squabbles over debt that connected Christians and Jews.

These cases also illustrate another issue plaguing Jews at this time. Possible moratoria were not the only roadblock Jews encountered in collecting debt owed to them. The main roadblock was placed by local authorities or elites who refused to collect debts owed to the Jews. In 1381, the aljama of Calatayud denounced local officials for extorting money from its members whenever they tried to collect debt owed by Christians.114 In 1385 the Jews complained that the local bailiff refused to make execution on debts from loans that Jews from the aljama provided to either Christians or Muslims.115 Local officials could also be overzealous when the situation was reversed and they had to collect debt from Jews. In 1383,

110 See ACA C 817: 119r-v; The case between Joan Alegre and Boniuha Gracia would go back and forth in court since the Jew got a letter from the royal court protecting him from any investigation for a period of five years while Joan pointed out that the excess interest contravened the constitution of Catalonia. See 822: 155v-157r; 823: 153v-55r.
111 Constitucions i altres drets de Catalunya; individual aljamas often received individual regulations regarding lending to non-Jews. Fraga, for example, got such a charter in 1328. See ACA C 476: 136r-v [translated in Joaquim Salleras Clarió, “L’Aljama de jueus de Fraga,” Tamid 6 (2009): 149-151.
112 ACA C 1833: 187v-188v.
113 ACA C 842: 108v-109r.
114 ACA C 823: 44r-v (08/10/1381).
115 ACA C 842: 169r-v (15/2/1385).
the aljama of Calatayud protested that local officials collected debt that the aljama owed twice. In 1388 the Queen had to intercede on the Jews’ behalf and in 1389 King Joan issued an order to the bailiff of Calatayud not go overboard in collecting the money owed by the aljama.

The aljama’s complaints reflected the situation of individual Jews as well. Solomon German, the Jewish weaver mentioned above who sued individuals from the surrounding region for not paying him for the cloth he weaved for them, complained that the did not get justice served locally. Samuel Gracia, the serial litigator from chapter three, alleged that officials seized more than he owed and sold it for less than it was worth. Salamon Alatzar, similarly complained that when the Ĉalmedina of the city of Zaragoza auctioned the house of Guillelm de Sosca and his wife to pay a debt of 1,170 sous to him, the official tried to keep the money for the court. Salamon’s Christian procurator promptly launched a formal complaint, to which we do not know the conclusion. Although we have no way of knowing which of these claims were legitimate and which were part of a legal strategy to slow down court procedure, the distinction seems less important when once consider that they had to be believable to the royal judges to whom they were presented.

Conclusion

In a society in which Christians and Jews hired each other, engaged in business, bought and sold property, and shared the same urban space, it is not surprising that disputes involving breach of contracts, sale of merchandise, gambling disputes, the occasional prank, property

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116 ACA C 833: 79v-80r (30/03/1383).
117 ACA C 1834:22v (15/06/1388); 1837: 41v-42r (5/02/1389).
118 ACA C 842: 108v-109r (20/12/1384).
119 ACA C 1840: 167r-v (29/10/1389).
120 ACA C 819: 112v-113r (21/07/1381).
disputes, and conflict over administration of justice would bring them to court. The surprise, particularly in a period of such stresses, is to find so few examples of outright violence or the more traditional examples of anti-Jewish persecution such as host desecration or ritual murder accusations.

Most of the cases of conflict between Christians and Jews are evidence of their daily interaction. A breach of contract or a complaint of lack of payment upon delivery of merchandise stand as examples of what happened when the business relations that brought Jews and Christians together fell apart. The problems ensuing from gambling or scams give us a brief peek into the criminal world of medieval Catalonia and Aragon. But ultimately, the greatest source of tensions between Christians and Jews was related to defaulted debt – whether it be in the form of a Christian who could not pay his loan or a Jew who did not have enough to honour his obligations. In a period of growing fiscal and financial pressure, both Christians and Jews employed the same methods to survive. Both made use of periodical reprieves issued by the king or sought individual moratoria, which invariably created tensions within and outside their communities.

What this chapter suggests is that despite growing financial pressure, relations between Christians and Jews in Catalonia and Aragon remained remarkably stable. Their conflicts did not differ significantly from the kinds of issues that pitted Jews against Jews or even Christians against Christians in this period. When mistrust seeped into the system, Catalan and Aragonese Jews knew precisely what to say or whom to seek to address it. Conflicts of a religious nature were few and, by and large, Catalan and Aragonese Christians were not yet seeking a society free of Jews. Yet, the social and financial pressures of the period had a remarkable impact on the internal life of Jewish communities. The next chapter will explore an important consequence of growing debt and social conflict within Jewish
communities: the rise of voluntary conversions and its effects on the Jewish communities of Aragon and Catalonia.
On November 2nd 1385, Isaac Xam and his son Vidal, two Jews from Barcelona, sent notice to King Pere the Ceremonious that they were willing to convert to Christianity. In recognition of the Xams’ willingness to shed the darkness “of Jewish blindness” for the light of the “holy flame”, to use the formulaic language of chancery scribes, King Pere granted them a remission from any lawsuits or demands and gave guarantees over their property. The king’s generosity was timely. Isaac and Vidal had lingered in prison, as surety for the compensation they owed for having assaulted their relative Jaya Xam, a member of the king’s household. Isaac’s offer to convert seems a last resort in a family feud that had left him dispossessed with few avenues of help left. Occurring five and a half years before the violence of 1391 that resulted in the forced conversion of thousands of Jews, the Xams’ case raises many interesting questions regarding the issue of conversion, forced or voluntary, in the decade preceding 1391. Were Isaac and Vidal Xam unique in seeking conversion as a way out of prison and financial obligations? Were they assured of obtaining amnesty from the king when they offered to convert? What can cases such as these tells us about royal policy or Christian-Jewish relations in this decade? What were the motives for conversion in this period?

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2 ACA C 945: 187v (2/11/1385)
3 ACA C 847: 47v-48r (8/11/1385); in this petition, Jaya Xam reminds the king of a order issued two months prior by the Infante Joan to the bailiff of Barcelona to hold Isaac Xam in custody until Jaya Xam received the compensation owed to him.
While some scholars, like Yitzhak Baer, have explained voluntary conversion prior to the riots of 1391 as the result of a general spiritual malaise caused by the influence of Averroism or of the ambition of Jewish courtiers seeking further political advancement, this study will show that for many ordinary Jews, conversion to Christianity could be simply a way out of legal and financial troubles and a chance to start afresh. A steady stream of voluntary conversions in the 1380s led to much conflict, not only between Jews and conversos but also between Jews and the king, who, by giving privileges to the conversos at the expense of their former co-religionists, went against his own policies of actively protecting the integrity of his Jewish communities. Nevertheless, despite his support to individual converts, King Pere III abandoned the proselytizing policies of his predecessors, protecting the Jews from preaching campaigns, as we shall see.

In a society where religion was the foundation of all legal, political and social structures, conversion was not a simple matter and it would often lead to litigation. Matters of inheritance, conflicts between converts and Jews, and offers of conversion such as that of Isaac Xam, can be found in the chancery records. Nevertheless, despite their richness, the sources do not allow us to come to any conclusion on absolute - or even partial - numbers of converts from Christianity to Judaism in this period. While the number of cases increase five-fold from a similar period one hundred years earlier, it is hard to determine whether the increase in numbers is simply the result of a growth of royal bureaucracy or if it is reflective of growing tensions among Christian, Jews and converts. As we shall see, some of the issues emerging in the 1380s suggest that the period experienced a rise in the rate of conversion.

For the decade of 1380-1390 I have found 23 cases involving conversos in the registers of the royal chancery. While this number might seem low, a contrast with the previous century is readily apparent. For the period between 1250 and 1325, one finds about four cases every decade. While the increase in numbers of documents might simply result from the nature of the sources, which become much more prolific in the fourteenth century, some of the issues
Studies of medieval converts from Judaism to Christianity have for long been marked by a dichotomy between forced and voluntary conversion. Examples of the former are the well-known riots and massacres in the Rhineland in the eleventh century and in Castile and the Crown of Aragon in 1391. Voluntary converts were usually those who converted out of personal conviction and would later reject any association with their Jewish past. In the case of the Iberian peninsula specifically, much of the literature on conversos tends to focus on the period post 1391, when it is estimated that a majority of the Jews converted to save their lives during the riots of 1391, or under severe pressure by missionaries such as Vicent Ferrer in the first decade and a half of the fifteenth century. While some attention has been paid to the events of 1391 and the preaching missions of Vicent Ferrer and the Tortosa Disputation in 1413, most scholars focus on the period after 1449, when violence erupted against the conversos of Toledo and the first purity of blood laws were enacted. This literature, as Spanish history in emerging in the 1380s, as we shall see, suggest that the period experienced a rise in the rate of conversions. Further research is necessary, however, before any final conclusions can be drawn.


5 On problems of forced conversion as opposed to voluntary and its perception, see Kenneth Stow, “Conversion, apostasy, and apprehensiveness: Emicho of Flonheim and the fear of Jews in the twelfth century,” Speculum 76 (2001):911-33.; and more recently, David Malkiel, “Jews and Apostates in Medieval Europe: Boundaries Real and Imagined,” Past and Present 194, no. 1 (2007): 3-34, esp. 10-16. Regardless of distinctions in the sources, contemporaries may well have made them in fact. Yet a simple dichotomy like this is insufficient to categorize conversions properly. There is need for further refinement.

6 Two hundred and thirty Jews were killed during the riots of 1391 in Valencia, for example, while 200 escaped either conversion or death, out of an estimated population of 2,500 Jews. See figures in Meyerson, Renaissance, 22.

general, has traditionally focused on Castile, with few studies exploring the peculiarities of the Crown of Aragon. Yet, conversion had never followed a single path. A close look at conversion in the Crown of Aragon before the riots of 1391 shows that it might be best viewed along a scale of desired to forced, with many stations in between. In addition to ideological reasons for converting, the motives were also social, political, or economic. Conversion also occurred in an atmosphere of royal ambivalence. In the Crown of Aragon during the reign of Pere III and at least the first years of the reign of Joan I, Jews deciding on conversion had come to expect support from the king. Yet neither Pere III nor his son Joan systematically sponsored efforts to convert Jews. Indeed, they often sided with Jews when the latter perceived conversos as a communal threat.


8 While local Spanish scholars have traditionally focused on their regional areas they seldom place it within the larger context of Iberian history. The end of the Franco regime as well as a growing interest on multicultural and transnational questions has led to a greater interest in comparative history as well as a greater appreciation for the diverse histories of the Iberian kingdoms. This is particularly noticeable among north american scholars under the influence of the work of J.N. Hillgarth’s masterful *The Spanish Kingdoms, 1250-1516* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1976) as well as the work of Robert Burns. Historians interested on issues of cross-cultural relations have increasingly been drawn to the rich archives of the Crown of Aragon and much important work has been done in the past twenty years by Mark Meyerson, David Nirenberg, Brian Catlos, the late Elka Klein and others to redress the balance. Much yet remains to be done.

To appreciate this situation, we do well to look closely at the case of Isaac Xam and his son Vidal, with the aim of focusing on what happened before conversion. We will ask what led individual Jews to seek conversion during the decades prior to 1391 and what kind of support could Jews expect from their monarch if they made the leap. However, since such leaps were seldom smooth, it is also important to examine what happened afterward. What were the effects of conversion on Jews and their communities, which often result in heartache—between those who converted and their Jewish families, as well as between Jewish communities and conversos who used their new condition as Christians to harass former co-religionists? For various Jewish men and women of the late fourteenth-century Crown of Aragon, far from being a product of Christian violence or, alternately, of belief, the resort to conversion was frequently a strategy for responding to social and economic crisis.

**Seeking remission: Isaac and Vidal Xam**

When we last heard about them, Isaac Xam and his son Vidal were involved in an economic crisis caused by the need to repay a very large debt to a relative named Jaya Xam. Already imprisoned, Isaac and Vidal offered to convert in the hope of benefiting from royal largesse in return. And, indeed, on November 2, 1385, the king ruled in their favour. He promised them a remission and special protection with regard to claims over their property, when they converted. Jaya Xam immediately protested, and six days later, he presented the royal court with a letter issued by the Infant Joan, Pere’s heir, who gave a “guarantee” that Isaac would not be released from custody until he settled with Jaya Xam. Jaya petitioned King Pere to confirm the guarantee, to which the king acceded, canceling any letter or ordinance he might have

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10 ACA C945: 187v
issued to the contrary.\textsuperscript{11} Quite likely, Jaya Xam’s influence on the king was a result of his being a familiar in the king’s household (“domestici nostri”); no information has surfaced about the Xam family to suggest its members were part of the Jewish elite. Yet what happened to Vidal and Isaac? Had they converted before the king cancelled his offer of remission? We do not know. However, their story does not end there.

Six months later, a recent convert called Pere Despla (“novellament convertit”), sent a petition to the king pleading his case. He had been held in prison as surety for his debts to Jaya Xam of Barcelona. Should the king release him from prison, Pere Despla offered to travel to Mallorca to convert his wife and children, and the king responded with a six-month probation, during which he was to complete the journey.\textsuperscript{12} Pere Despla is never referred to by his Jewish name, but a subsequent appearance in the registers does link him to the Xams. In October of 1387, Jaya Xam appealed to the royal court regarding his suit between him and a Pere Despla and Pere’s son Joan Alimuig; Pere is identified as Jaya’s brother. Surely, this was the old litigation that had set Pere’s conversion into motion, Pere being the newly converted Isaac Xam.\textsuperscript{13} Alas, we have no further details to pursue, except that the king forwarded the case to one of his counselors for adjudication.

Pere Despla’s legal battles with his Jewish family were not solved quickly, and he would appear several more times in the documentation in the late 1380s and early 1390. In 1388, he was involved in a case against Provinciala, the widow of Boniuha Xam, and in another one as the target of an appeal made by Astruguette, the wife of Jaya Xam, in her name and in the name of

\textsuperscript{11} ACA C 847: 47v-48r (8/11/1385)
\textsuperscript{12} ACA C 852: 17v-18r (26/06/1386)
\textsuperscript{13} ACA C 1829: 99r-v (26/10/1387): “…cause appellationis ad nostri consistorium per en Jaya fratrem petri des pla conversi…”
her husband and their daughter.\(^\text{14}\) In 1390 Jaya Xam lay claim over family property which Pere Despla held in his possession as procurator for their mother.\(^\text{15}\) Nothing more is known about either the family or Pere, but the glimpse we get of him through the formulas and haze of the royal registers suggests not only the sort of strategies used by some Jews and *conversos* in their family feuding, but also that conversion did not always buy immunity. Still we do well to ask what led the Xams to expect a different outcome and, more importantly, to what extent was their experience unique?

**The path to conversion: royal charity and Jewish conflict**

For years prior to Isaac and Vidal Xam’s decision to convert, the king had demonstrated his generosity towards the *conversos*. In 1381, the *converso* Jaume Romeu, sentenced to a penalty of lashes for an unknown crime, had his punishment remitted by the king following his conversion from Judaism to Christianity, along with his wife and five children.\(^\text{16}\) The following year, King Pere placed the *conversa* Caterina and her children under his special protection, giving her a safe conduct and the right to receive alms to support herself and her children while her husband was being held captive in North Africa.\(^\text{17}\) Similarly, the year after, he granted another *conversa*, Leonor Muniz, a royal license to collect alms and other pious offerings anywhere in his realms.\(^\text{18}\) In all of these cases, the king justified his decision, in letters signed by his own hand, by considering converts to be deserving of special Christian charity: “in reverence

\(^{14}\) ACA C 1832: 88r (28/04/1388); ACA C 1832: 102r (12/05/1388); An earlier document - ACA C 812: 181r-v [30/07/1380] – identifies Provinciala and Boniuha Xam as Isaac Xam’s parents. While the documents give no details, this earlier text suggests that perhaps a dispute over parental inheritance might lie at the root of Isaac Xam’s conflict with his family.

\(^{15}\) ACA C 1845 (26/03/1390), 76r-v.

\(^{16}\) ACA C 938: 70r (16/08/1381)

\(^{17}\) ACA C 939: 155v-156r (12/05/1382)

\(^{18}\) ACA C 941: 104r-v (28/05/1383)
of the Lord” and “through the work of charity … through which… we freely become faithful in Christ.” The duty to help converts is more explicitly stated in a letter regarding Jaume Romeu dictated by the Queen and revised by King Pere in which the Queen stresses that since Romeu brought “his wife and five children with him to the true light of the Christian faith, … [he] deserves to be treated charitably and benignly and comforted with favours by us and other faithful in Christ.”\(^{19}\) Shut off from the normal avenues of help within the Jewish community and perhaps not yet integrated into Christian society, these conversos were not shy in appealing to the king asking for special favours or for his intercession with local authorities.

King Pere’s support for apostates was in line with official Church policy, based in part on the fear that converts would revert to Judaism. Although not ignored in earlier councils, the issue of apostasy would become more pressing after the conversions in the wake of the massacres of 1096.\(^{20}\) In 1169, Pope Alexander III admonished that converts "despaired easily" and should be helped lest they return to Judaism “like the dog to his vomit” because of “indigence and the lack of assistance.”\(^{21}\) Innocent III reiterated the message in 1199 about the

\(^{19}\) ACA C 938: 70r: “…ex quo Jacobus Romei a gente judayca origine trahens ad christiane fidei una cum eius uxore et quinque filiis reidiit veram lucem divino famine inspiratus meretur a nobis et alis christi fidelibus tractari caritative et benigne ac favoribus confoveri…”


importance of supporting converts, lest "the shame of poverty, which they are not accustomed
to bear easily, force them to look back to the abandoned Jewish perfidy." These papal
directives received conciliar support at the Council at Tours in 1236, which warned Christians to
be generous to recent converts lest they revert back to their religion out of disappointment.

King Pere certainly shared the concern of the Church as he repeatedly gave alms to
Jewish converts throughout his reign and as the registers of royal alms kept by the monastery of
Poblet illustrate. In 1378, King Pere gave 50 sous to support the wedding of Caterina, orphan of
the converso Andreu Contigoch, as well as smaller amounts to other individual converts, some
of whom came from as far away as Lisbon. In a society where foreigners were often looked
upon with suspicion, foreign converts were no doubt particularly vulnerable. Nonetheless,
many of the alms given through the Almoina reial went to such converts. Guillem Levi, his wife
Maria, and their children, all from St Denis, received 2 florins from the king in 1384, while the
Castilian Pere Mir appealed to the king more than once in 1382. The indigence alluded to by
Pope Alexander III is hard to ignore in the sources. Converts were regularly granted a minimum
amount of money to allow the “sustenance of [their] life,” while those who were lucky
enough to have the king as their godparent, such as Caterina de París or Joan de Xátiva,
received a daily allowance for life. The king also gave money to those in his royal household
who provided charity to converts, whether from Judaism or Islam.

23 Grayzel, 326-329, doc. 31.
25 AHN, Codex 99B, 61v, [Altisent, 230]; AHN, Codex 97B, 26r, 46r [Altisent, 121, 144].
26 For example, see AHN, Codex 97B, 26r and 48r [Altisent, 121, 146]
27 Caterina received 4d daily as well as some extra help once in a while such as an extra 3 florins
for a trip to Barcelona or extra money when she got sick, see AHN, Codex 97B, 27r, 47r; AHN,
codex 98B, 1383, 13r) [Altisent, 122, 145, 159]. Joan de Xátiva got 12d daily, which he received
Royal charity and support were not without their ambiguities. Even in this pre-1391 period, distinctions were made between *conversos* and Christians. This is shown clearly in the rules for judicial procedures involving the former. In 1381, the Jewish community of Barcelona wanted clarification regarding a privilege, first issued by Jaume I in 1236 and later reissued by Jaume II in 1292, which stipulated that in lawsuits involving Christians and Jews, the Jews should provide Jewish witnesses, Christians the testimony of Christian fellows. The *aljama* wanted to know whether Jews converted to Christianity were exempted from providing Jewish witnesses. King Pere ruled that they were not; *conversos* still needed the corroboration of Jews. Baptism had not, as Christian teaching says, made of the convert truly a “new man,” even in the king’s own perception, not to mention that of his legal advisors. *Conversos*, regardless of what the king or others might say about the Christian duty to accept them as equals, were not being integrated fully into Christian society.

Yet litigation involving *conversos* was surely not new, and one would presume that the *conversos*’ legal status would have been decided long before the 1380s, over a century and a half after the privilege issued by Jaume I. Perhaps Pere I was only ratifying what had been accepted practice. Or had *conversos* profited up till this time from being able to choose between which of the two options served their interests better, emphasizing once again the lack of complete integration, which would have eliminated any possibility of choice? On the other hand, that Jews had petitioned the king for clarification suggests that there was an increase in the number of disputes between Jews and *conversos*, hence, requiring greater procedural definition, but also suggesting that the actual number of converts was growing. Conflict itself,
one example of which we have already seen, may have been a motive for augmenting converso ranks. Joseph Shatzmiller has recently made just this argument for the fourteenth century.

Conflicts ending in a conversion were between family members, as in the case of Isaac Xam, or individual Jews, or Jewish families, and their leaders. Shatzmiller points, too, to the story told by the fourteenth-century Castilian Rabbi Yom Tov Ishbili of a mother and four children who converted to Christianity following their excommunication, the Jewish community's most powerful sanction. Shatzmiller cites a case in Xativa in the Crown of Aragon about 1383, of a family whose members threatened to convert if punished by excommunication or prison. In 1375, the family of an Aragonese Jew who broke a formal promise to his wife never to take a concubine pleaded with the rabbis not to excommunicate him, lest he convert to Christianity.

Conflict certainly marked relations among Jews in the decade prior to 1391. A survey I have made of 2,379 cases brought by Jews before the royal courts between 1380 and 1391 has yielded at least 353 intra-Jewish conflict. These represent only a fraction of cases involving Jews, of course, since most, no doubt, would have been adjudicated by the Jewish community internally. Like the cases mentioned above, most of the 353 Jewish cases concern debt, taxation, taxation,

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30 Shatzmiller, 306.
31 In the responsa of the period, we find excommunication applied to the most varied crimes, including playing dice, sexual harassment or failure to fulfill a marriage contract. Meritxell Blasco Orellana and José Ramón Magdalena Nom de Déu, eds, Fuentes para la historia de los judíos de la Corona de Aragón: los responsa de rabí Yishaq bar Seset Perfet de Barcelona: 1368-1408 (Barcelona, 2004), doc. 171, 198, 216, 220, 249, 265, 432.
32 Shatzmiller, 306.
33 Ibid. For women, conversion could be a way out of an abusive relationship. As Robert Stacey has highlighted recently, tensions between spouses could often lead to conversion. He found numerous examples in the royal registers of Henry III of England of cases of a husband or wife leaving their spouse to convert. While it is difficult to establish whether the conflicts Stacey highlights were a cause or a result of conversion, some do suggest pre-existing tension such as the case of the wife of a Jew from Winchester who physically left her husband in order to convert to Christianity. See Stacey, 271.
petty crime, and family disputes.\textsuperscript{34} For at least some of these Jews, whose position within their communities and/or their families were already compromised, conversion might have been seen as the only viable choice.

Conflict among Jews took place against the background of the social and economic difficulties—the product of epidemics of plague, bad harvests, and successive wars, in particular, the protracted war with Castile between 1356 and 1366—that affected Christian and Jew alike in Catalonia and Aragon during the late fourteenth century. Throughout the 1380s King Pere and King Joan declared moratoria on debt payments to Christians, Jews, aljamas, and municipalities alike. In August of 1381, King Pere granted a moratorium to the aljamas of Barcelona and Perpignan; the Aragonese aljamas of Teruel and Zaragoza received similar relief in 1382.\textsuperscript{35} The king also granted numerous moratoria to individual Jews.\textsuperscript{36}

While the crisis affected all the inhabitants of the Crown of Aragon, many Jews were particularly vulnerable thanks to their involvement in lending. Christians unable to pay their debts might appeal to the king, who responded by granting moratoria on debts owed to Jews, contravening earlier royal promises not to extend such leniencies. King Pere also attempted to compensate for the revenues he would have collected from his percentage of the profits on Jewish loans by overtaxing Jews, Muslims and municipalities. The financial burdens of the war with Castile at mid-century were also enormous, which Christians, Jews, and Muslims alike were expected to alleviate by contributing both human and financial resources. The Muslim aljamas, for example, saw their annual taxes rise from an average of 7,000 sous before the war to 22,342

\textsuperscript{34} The cases are too numerous to cite, but for a few examples see ACA C 812: 58r-v; 813: 33r-v; 817: 30v-31r; 936: 113v-114r; 938: 192v-193v.
\textsuperscript{35} ACA C 938: 62v; 939: 111v-112r 940: 109v-110v.
\textsuperscript{36} For examples, see ACA C 808: 159r-v; 855: 5r-v; 856: 155v-156r.
sous between 1355-1360 and 14,011 sous between 1361-1366. The Jewish aljama of Zaragoza alone contributed 10,000 sous for the war. In February 1359, King Pere realized that his excessive tax demands had caused the depopulation of the Jewish aljama of Morvedre in the kingdom of Valencia, prompting him to lower taxes in order to encourage members who had fled to return. At the same time, the king repeatedly pleaded for more funds from the Catalan Corts, which eventually acquiesced in the form of a hearth tax that would be levied on Catalan communities. Increasing demands for taxes placed the city of Manresa in dire straits in 1358 and 1359.

The snare was that taxes were collected internally. The higher demand for taxes led to increased tensions within Jewish communities. Jews quibbled over the proper distribution of taxes within their aljamas, but they also paid close attention to those who attempted to evade taxes or had acquired exemptions from contributing. In this climate, marginal Jews, whose precariousness was only worsened by economic crisis and over-taxation, may easily have considered conversion, for at least they would thereby be able to place food on the table. Excessive taxation in thirteenth century England, as Robert Stacey has shown, generated enmity, if not a full breakdown of relationships within Jewish communities. Fiscal burdens also hampered the community's ability to take care of those in need. For some, as Stacey points out, "...orphans, widows, and parents who had lost a spouse [and who] must often have found

39 Meyerson, Jews in an Iberian Frontier Kingdom: Society, Economy, and Politics in Morvedre, 1248-1391 (Boston: Brill, 2004), 231-7, see also 98-173, 274-276
41 For example, see ACA C 815: 127r-v; 140r-v.
42 Stacey, 269.
themselves an insupportable burden on their relatives’ charity, conversion could literally be, in such cases, the only solution.”

**After conversion: family, property, and *converso* harassment of Jews**

Many converts were certainly in need of Christian charity and royal protection, as conversion no doubt caused much friction within nuclear families and communities. In 1382, the *converso* Juan Martin de Malvenda, from Calatayud, brought to the king a case against his father, the Jew Lucef, whom Juan accused of squandering, “out of hatred,” the inheritance left by his late mother, an inheritance Juan claimed was rightfully his. While the documents do not recount the circumstances of Juan Martin de Malvenda’s conversion, it is likely that this act brought about the estrangement from his father.

Family conflict, whether between parents and their children or husband and wife, was a recurrent motive for conversion. A Muslim writer noted in twelfth-century Norman Sicily that “[s]hould a man show anger to his son or his wife, or a woman to her daughter, the one who is the object of displeasure may perversely throw himself into a church, and there be baptised and turn Christian. Then there will be for the father no way of approaching his son, or the mother

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44 ACA C 824: 189v; this would not be the only case in the registers. In 1311, a Jew was disowned by his parents for having converted to Christianity. See ACA C 207: 239v-240v [Régné, 2919]. See the solution the Church found for such cases in Rome, in Kenneth Stow, “Neoﬁti and Their Families: or, Perhaps, the Good of the State,” Leo Baeck Yearbook 47 (London, 2002), 105-113.

45 See Luciano Allegra on conﬂicts resulting from dowries in which daughters received the bulk of a parental estate, leaving sons with little. This was done in early modern Turin to protect the estate, since the dowry was considered untouchable in the case of a bankruptcy; “A model of Jewish devolution: Turin in the eighteenth century,” *Jewish History* 7.2 (1993): 29-58.
Jacob Katz has found cases of what he calls “iniquitous sons” in the rabbinical sources of thirteenth-century Germany. Was Juan Martín de Malvenda one of those sons who threatened to convert, if they did not have their way? William Jordan has argued recently, that young Jewish men might have sought conversion to free themselves from communal and parental control. Considering the animosity between Juan Martín and his father – the word “hatred” is infrequent in the chancery records – it is also possible that conflict pre-dated his conversion.

Juan’s may have been a case of blackmail as well. Threatening conversion was a form of blackmail not unknown in the Spanish kingdoms. The fourteenth-century Castilian Rabbi Yom Tov Ishbili records a case of a man who threatened to convert to Christianity, if the rabbis prevented him from marrying the woman of his choice. Yet if the attempt at blackmail became known, it was as though the blackmailer had reneged on a promise to convert, which might have landed him in an Inquisitional court and forced the actual, irrevocable, conversion.

Juan Martín’s case points to issues of property and inheritance as factors in conversions. Many of the royal letters dealing with conversos in this period deal with inheritance disputes between them and Jews. Another example is that of Juan Alberto de Urrea, formerly know as Isaac Benvenist, who sued his father, Samuel Benvenist of the Zaragoza branch of this influential Jewish family over the goods left by his mother. As with Juan Martín and his dispute with his father, the documentation does not reveal whether Alberto/Isaac had

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48 Jordan, 80-81.
49 Shatzmiller, 306.
50 See notes 45 and 46 above.
51 ACA C 819: 144r-v
received a bequest from his mother before he converted or whether he had siblings. Yom Tov Assis, Robert Burns, and more recently the late Elka Klein have all shown that Jewish women had some control over their resources—whether gifts from their husbands or relatives, personal inheritance or their own dowries—and that they routinely willed them to their children. 52

Conversion often had a deep impact on property rights. Despite the papacy’s continuous defense of the property of converts, secular law for much of the Middle Ages had required the confiscation of a convert’s property. 53 By contrast, in the Crown of Aragon, Jaume I issued a decree in 1243 protecting conversos’ rights:

He shall not, on this account, lose aught of the real or chattel property which was his before, but, on the contrary, shall have it and hold it wholly, securely, and freely, and shall, by our authority, possess himself of his patrimony and of property due to the convert by right of kinship. Moreover, the children and relatives of the said convert shall be able to claim nothing of his property while he is alive, and after his death only that which they would have been able to claim reasonably if he had died a Jew or a pagan. 54

Converts were not only to retain property but not to lose their right to inherit from Jewish relatives. Jaume II, who was an even more avid proselytizer, renewed this decree in 1296. 55

Nevertheless, prescriptive law and actual practice were not the same. In particular, ecclesiastical statutes calling on kings to avoid confiscations were being observed in the breach.

53 In a letter to two apostates from Judaism in 1236, Gregory IX guaranteed that they “may retain... whatever possessions [they] had legally acquired while [they] were Jews”. See Grayzel, 223-225, doc. 85. For confiscation see p. 19 and notes 36 and 37; see again n. 45.
54 This statute of James I, dated 12 March 1243 was issued during an ecclesiastical council in Lleida. It is published in Cortes de los antiguos reinos de Aragón y de Valencia y Principado de Cataluña (Madrid: 1896), 217-219, this passage in 217-218; the full text is also available in a letter by Innocent IV to the Archbishop of Tarragona published in Grayzel, 254-257, doc. 105.
55 ACA C 104: 62r (27/08/1296) [Antoni Rubió i Lluch, Documents per l’Història de la Cultura Catalana Migeval (Barcelona: 1921), 2: 9-11, doc. 12]
When Benvenist Barzelay, a Jew from Tarragona, converted to Christianity sometime before 1314, all his goods were confiscated, leaving his widow and children to appeal to King Jaume II, who returned to his earlier decision and restored Benvenist’s goods. In 1389, when Isaac Golluf proposed to convert to Christianity, he first sought, and received, protection from King Joan I for his rights to his existing property and eventual inheritance.

Baer uses Isaac Golluf’s case as evidence that the “old law, providing that a convert forfeits his inheritance rights or that they pass to the king, was still in force.” Yet challenges to the convert’s right of inheritance also came from within the Jewish community itself, especially the family, not only the king. Isaac Golluff’s conversion effectively tore his famiy apart, leading to bitter disputes between him and his brother, mother, and wife. No doubt, he turned to the king for protection from them. The case of Alienor de Palau, a conversa from Zaragoza, is similar. Alienor had converted while still a young maiden. Yet with the death of her parents and siblings, as the only direct heir, Alienor claimed her family’s estate, citing royal ordinances favoring her claim. Alienor’s more distant Jewish relatives, however, refused to acknowledge her rights and would not return the goods (part of the estate) which they already held in their possession. Alienor appealed to King Pere, who forcefully confirmed her claim and forwarded the case to the merino of Zaragoza, instructing him to adjudicate in accordance with the cited ordinances.

56 ACA C 211: 291; Cited in Shatzmiller, 311.
57 ACA C 1897: 136v; cited also in Shatzmiller, 311, and Baer, 93.
58 Baer, History, 93.
59 ACA C 832: 86r-v: “Supplicavit nobis humiliter mulier neophita vocata Alienor de Palau et baptizata in pupillari etate que fuit filia Abrahe Ferre judei quodam Cesarauguste...”
60 Ibid, 86v: “…Et ordinationes nostras et antecessorum nostrorum Regum Aragonis continenant in effectu quod neophiti seu baptizati succedere possint iure legitime falcidie et alia trebellianice ac ab intestato in hereditate parentum suorum et proximorum judeorum et in omnibus bonis et iuribus suis…” See notes 58 and 59 above.
As might be imagined, royal efforts to protect the inheritances of *conversos* would at times bring kings like Pere and his son Joan into conflict with the Jewish communities under their rule. In 1383, the Infant Joan guaranteed the *conversos* of Calatayud that all the goods owned by Jewish relatives and over which they might eventually have a claim could not be disposed of, alienated, moved, given away, or sold.\(^\text{61}\) Perhaps these *conversos* were prompted to see this guarantee by the example of the father of Juan de Malvenda, who squandered his son’s inheritance. The Jews of Calatayud responded that such acts violated their property rights and did not conform to “justice and reason”. King Pere agreed, moved by his concern to protect the property of Jews and Muslims; and he revoked the Infant’s promise.

Conflict between Jews and *conversos* was also generated by the matter of contact. Jews who converted during the thirteenth century, perhaps persuaded by mendicant missionary campaigns, sometimes engaged in preaching and disputations with their former co-religionists, most notably, at the famous disputation of 1263 in Barcelona, whose protagonist was the *converso* Pau Cristià.\(^\text{62}\) Mendicant preaching has left no trace in the late fourteenth-century Crown of Aragon. However, the registers of Pere the Ceremonious and Joan I suggest that some *conversos* took it upon themselves to attempt the conversion of other Jews. Their protestations often were exploitative, arousing a strong reaction on the part of the leaders of the Jewish

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\(^{61}\) ACA C 833: 80r–v (20/03/1383)

aljamas of the Crown of Aragon, who often deplored the preaching, but especially what they deemed excessive contact between conversos and Jews. The sense of shared roots that characterized much of Jewish-converso relations post-1391 is absent in the 1380s. Jewish leaders saw the continuous presence of converts in their midst as a threat to the integrity of their communities, already weakened by plague, wars and economic uncertainty.\footnote{For a good example of the complex relations between Jews and conversos in a community of the Crown of Aragon during the fifteenth century see Mark D. Meyerson, “Converts and Kinsfolk”, in A Jewish Renaissance in Fifteenth-Century Spain (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004), 184–224.}

In 1383 the Jewish aljama of Mallorca sent to Pere the Ceremonious a list of grievances, one of which was converso proselytizing:

Since several conversos often come to carry on their affairs within the Jewish call, making them [the Jews] come to their disputations or sermons and in other ways, so that... Jewish men and women pay them off, a state of affairs which has resulted in great damage to the said Jews and in the derision of Christianity, you, Lord, should order and have announced through the present that no convert in the island of Mallorca shall enter in the call or dwelling of a Jew to converse with Jews, under penalty of 100 solidos to your treasure or 100 days in prison, or that he/she be exiled from the island for two years without possibility of remission, and that no official shall force any Jew to attend a disputation or sermon of the said conversos under penalty of 100 golden reyls for each time that the opposite happens or each time your provision is not respected.\footnote{ACA C 1446: 38-41v [Baer, Regesten, I: 539-540]: “Item com diverses converses moltes vegades vengem contractar dins lo call dels juheus, requeren los, que vingen a lurs disputes o sermons e en altra manera, per ço quels dits juheus o juhies se haien a reembre a ells, les quals coses tornen en gran dan dels dits juheus e en derrisio de cristiandat, que vos, senyor, ab lo present capitol ordonats, que negun convers en la illa de Mallorques, encara ques fahes saig, no gos entrar en call ne alberch de juheu per aturar o conversas ab juheus o juhies, sots pena de cent sol. als vostres cfres aplicadors o de estar C dies en la preso, o que sia exillat de tota la illa a II anys sens nenguna remissio, e que negun official no puxa forcar negun juheu de anar a disputa ne a sermo del dit conver sots pena de C reyls dor aplicadors als vostres cofres per cascuna vegada, que faes lo contrari, e que letra o provisio per vos o per altre en contrari feta no fos observada.”}

King Pere reacted strongly by issuing an ordinance on behalf of all the main aljamas of his kingdoms, including Mallorca, Xativa, Perpignan, Calatayud, Zaragoza, Barcelona, Lleida, Valencia, Alcañiz, Barbastro, Exea, and Huesca. Going beyond the Jews’ original request, he...
ordered that no *converso* should enter a *call* or *juderia* for the purpose of lingering and interacting with Jews.\(^{65}\) Additionally, Pere reversed the order first issued by Jaume I, and warned officials that no Jew should be compelled to listen to the preaching and disputations of *conversos*.\(^{66}\) *Conversos* who infringed this ordinance were to be arrested and publicly whipped, as an example to others.\(^{67}\)

This strongly worded decree reveals both Pere the Ceremonious's awareness of the pressure *conversos* were applying, including, it seems, the resort to extortion, as well as a clear diffidence about supporting proselytizing campaigns, or at the least, an ambivalence toward them.\(^{68}\) On the one hand, Pere furnished converts with preaching licenses, but he then

\(^{65}\) ACA C 942: 42r: "quia sepe contigit plures conversos... conversare cum judeis nostri dominii et in eorum aliamis moram trahere et convesci, unde plura inconvenientia consequuntur et pluribus datur propterea continua conversatione occasio vaciandi et alia incoveniencia perpetrandi; talibus igitur obviare volentes, tenore presentis providemus... quod nullus conversus audeat... intrare die noctuve aliquid callum seu judariam regnorum et terarum nostrarum causa conversandi seu moram trahendi aut convescendi cum eis."

\(^{66}\) Ibid, 42r-v: "...statuimus et ordinamus quod officiales nostri... non compellant aliquem seu aliquos judeos ad interessendum predicacioni aut disputationi ipsorum conversorum..."Jaume I's statute compelling Jews and Muslims to congregate and listen to sermons whenever a preacher visits their town can be found in Grayzel, 254-257, doc. 105. See note 58 above. Until 1584 even the most proselytizing popes showed a very ambivalent attitude towards forcing Jews (or Muslims) to listen to sermons, a practice too dangerously close to forced conversions. When Innocent IV writes in support of Jaume I's statute he agrees with the royal protection of converts' property but says nothing about Jaume's clause requiring Jews and Muslims to listen to preachers. Likewise, Nicholas III's bull *Vineam sorec* (1278) to promote missionary work stopped short of compelling Jews to attend the preaching of missionaries. See S. Grayzel, *The Church and the Jews in the XIIIth Century: 1254-1314* (New York: Wayne State University Press, 1989), 142-145, doc. 42; see discussion of *Vineam sorec* in Kenneth Stow, *Alienated Minority: The Jews of Medieval Latin Europe* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1992), 265-267.

\(^{67}\) The issue of *conversos* haranguing Jews had been ongoing in the 13th century. In 1297, the Jews of Zaragoza complained to Jaume II that *conversos* were inciting people against them (ACA 253: 43; Régné, 2650), yet the king continued to give licenses to converts to preach (ACA 204-205: 174; Régné, 2862). The latter is also cited in Kayserling, “Raymond Lulle convertisseur de Juifs” *Revue des Études Juives* 27 (1893): 148.

\(^{68}\) This practice was not new. In 1328, King Alfons ordered that the bailiff and 6-8 *prohoms* should be present during preaching to Jews. The reason behind this particular order is that the king was aware that some conversos who entered the Jewish *aljama* under the excuse of preaching, did so to harrass the Jews in exchange for money to leave them alone: "cum ipsi
minimized these licenses’ effectiveness by issuing privileges to various aljamas that greatly limited the preachings’ scope. In 1343, the Jews of Manresa, in Catalonia, obtained a royal guarantee that no converso would be allowed in the synagogue or the residences of Jews and that Jews would not be compelled to listen to their preaching. And in 1376, The aljama of Teruel succeeded in having the king declare that regardless of his license, which the conversos had to possess, they could preach to Jews only once a year. With regard to exploitation, the aljama of Girona complained in 1351 that conversos “tried to cause riots so they can extort money from them [the Jews].”

This converso harassment of Jewish communities, whether through preaching or otherwise, was not new. Voluntary—especially believing—converts were always keen to prove their allegiance to their new religion through antagonism toward former co-religionists; we point again to Pau Cristià. What was perhaps different in the later fourteenth century was a change in royal policy. In his influential work on the Jews of the Crown of Aragon, Yom Tov Assis charts increasing royal support for missions among Jews in the early fourteenth century. Jaume II not only re-issued the conversionary statute first issued by Jaume I in 1243, he also cancelled privileges conceded to Jews freeing them from attending sermons. By contrast, Pere the Ceremonious may have supported individual converts, but he seems not to have pursued avidly conversion on a large scale.


70 Ibid.

71 Ibid.

72 Yom Tov Assis, 54-56; Riera i Sans, “Les llicèncias”: 117-118.

73 This tendency is the result of reading medieval Spanish Jewish history back from the expulsion of 1492. In this general chronology, there is a golden age in the expansive Christian kingdoms of the 12th and 13th centuries as Jews played an important role as settlers of areas conquered from the Muslims, followed by a grimmer period in which the position of Jews steadily deteriorate until the riots of 1391 and the expulsion of 1492. This pattern is most
Another sign of a reduced conversionary program is that extensive knowledge available from chancery records, which has allowed Jaume Riera to show that preaching to Jews and Muslims in the Crown of Aragon during the fourteenth century, shifted from the hands of Franciscan, Dominicans or other missionaries, members of religious orders, to those of individual lay preachers, all converts.\textsuperscript{74}

The issue of conversion looms large in the master narrative of Iberian Jewish history. In this narrative, the mass conversions of 1391 stand as irrefutable proof of the steady erosion and decline of Jewish life in the Spanish kingdoms, the result of increasing pressure by mendicant missionaries, anti-Jewish rhetoric from many fronts, and royal policies encouraging Jewish conversion. But this narrative of decline more closely approximates the situation in Castile. There, as it has been amply demonstrated, the anti-Jewish rhetoric of Castilian political elites and the harangues of clerical zealots were intimately connected with the eruption of violence in that fateful summer of 1391.\textsuperscript{75}

The Crown of Aragon, however, was not Castile. It is clear that Jewish conversion during the decade of 1380-1391 did not result from either effective preaching or coercion. If anything, as was demonstrated in this article, the documentation reveals that Pere the Ceremonious did not follow the proselytizing policies of Jaume I or Jaume II. He showed some sympathy for Jews who converted to Christianity and offered his protection, but he would not let this support interfere with, or jeopardize, the integrity and prosperity of his Jewish communities. Royal attitudes towards Jews remained on the whole pragmatic.

\textsuperscript{74} Riera i Sans, cited in note 67, above. While Riera does not venture any reasons for this change, his article is extremely useful for listing not only all the licenses given to individual converts during the 14th century but also for outlining the limits imposed on their preaching as well as revocations of licenses when it was shown that the convert contravened privileges given to Jewish communities or harassed them for money.

\textsuperscript{75} See note 4, above
A closer look at Jewish conversion to Christianity in the Crown of Aragon in the years prior to 1391 reveals a complicated story of Jews trying to chart a path through difficult times. Conversion was often less the product of theological argumentation or coercion than a consequence of social and economic forces. As is well known, the second half of the fourteenth century was marked by great economic, social, and political upheaval, thanks in no small part to the demographic impact on the Crown of Aragon of successive visits of the plague in 1348, 1362, 1371, and 1384, which disrupted local economies and administration. Jews, Christians and Muslims were all affected by this late-fourteenth-century crisis, which was no doubt exacerbated by increased royal taxation. Jewish communities, which often had to bear the brunt of financing the king’s wars, were especially burdened. In these circumstances, poor Jews who possessed less of a support-network may have felt their inhibitions against conversion weakened. Additionally, Jews such as Isaac Xam who were penalized and marginalized for their anti-social conduct viewed conversion as a way to avoid punishment or disgrace. With Christian animosity and violence played down as conversionary factors, it is worth considering whether relatively peaceful relations between Christians and Jews were. Escape from legal and economic woes via conversion was perhaps a less forbidding option for Jews who lived quietly with their Christian neighbours. Jews, in other words, may well have been drawn to the


77 This was a pattern which, as recent research has shown, recurred in the fifteenth century. Marginalized Jews were among the groups most likely to choose conversion at the time of expulsion in 1492. See Meyerson, “Aragonese and Catalan Jewish Converts at the Time of the Expulsion” Jewish History 6, no. 1-2 (1992): 135; ibid., Jewish Renaissance, 193-195. Natalie Oeltjen, at the University of Toronto, is completing a dissertation on the conversos of Mallorca in the early fifteenth century, which shows that this use of conversion to erase debt or legal obligations continued long past 1391.
baptismal font by the benefits entering Christian society bestowed rather than being pushed there by Christian zealots.\textsuperscript{78}

\textsuperscript{78} According to Robert Stacey, the number of conversions among English Jews peaked in the 1240s and 1250s, but this number decreased sharply as relations between Christians and Jews deteriorated and Jews became increasingly isolated from Christian society: “the increasingly confrontational nature of the conversion effort under Edward I widened the gap between Christian and Jew so much that it actually became psychologically harder to cross over from one camp into the other than it had been before.” See Stacey, “The Conversion,” 273. In the Crown of Aragon, by distinction, we see no similar polarization of Christian-Jewish relations in the years prior to 1391.
Conclusion

By 1390, debt had become endemic in the Crown of Aragon. The lives of Baruch Alentenç, Samuel Gracia, and Isaac Xam illustrate the different ways fiscal and economic problems affected the lives of Catalan and Aragonese Jews. The growing fiscal pressure exerted by an expanding monarchy had its effects on both Christians and Jews. Within Jewish communities it led to growing conflict as the case of Baruch illustrated. Individual Jews employed various strategies to deal with their financial problems from petitioning the king for reprieves, to litigation as a way of postponing payment of debt. The more desperate either relocated as Samuel Gracia did so many times or converted as a way of accessing new avenues of charity as we have seen with the case of Isaac Xam. Being an important source of revenue for the Crown, the Jews felt directly the Crown’s growing need for cash to finance wars. This experience of fiscal oppression, however, was one shared by all royal subjects in this period. King Pere and his son after him exerted the same pressure on cities whose governments had then to turn to local citizens who had to pay more and more taxes during a period marked by a slow down of the economy.

This story is a familiar one across the European continent. Being powerless to resist growing demands made upon them, people all over Europe began to exert pressure for increased participation in communal organizations. In England it led to the uprising of 1381 and in Italy to the Ciompi revolt of 1378.¹ In Catalonia, the nobility chose the easiest solution to address their loss of income after the Black Death - exploitation of their peasants by tying

¹ T. H Aston and R. H Hilton, The English rising of 1381 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984); Samuel Kline Cohn, Lust for liberty: the politics of social revolt in medieval Europe, 1200-1425: Italy, France, and Flanders (Harvard University Press, 2006), esp 220ff places the conflicts of the late 1370s and 1380s in England, France, Flanders, and Italy in the context of decades of protests against ever increasing taxes.
them more firmly to the land and increasing taxes (remensa and malos usos). ² Signs of unrest were clear by the 1380s. In 1380 and 1390 peasant rebellions flared up in the countryside over property rights and malos usos. The lower classes in the cities were also feeling the pinch.³ When Castilian sailors brought news of the attacks against the Jewish communities in their kingdom, those feeling frustrated found a way to express their dissatisfaction. In many ways, the violence of 1391 was a symptom of larger social and economic factors rather than a conflict of civilizations.

Recent, more focused studies of individual communities have suggested as much. Philippe Wolff’s study of the 1391 violence in Barcelona has uncovered the social and political tensions that lay behind the attacks.⁴ Although anti-Jewish sentiment among certain individuals cannot be discounted, the demands made by the attackers suggest a different motivation for the attacks than those the animated the crowds in Seville. Studies of other Catalan cities have supported Wolff’s early findings.⁵ Looking at it from the vantage point of a comparative study of Catalonia and Aragon confirms and nuances these findings. It also helps us understand why certain Jewish communities were able to recover and prosper in the fifteenth century.

In other words, a closer look at the 1380s in Catalonia and Aragon shows the effects of some of social and economic changes on the lives of Christians and Jews. As shown in the previous chapters, increasing debt stressed social relations both inside and outside Jewish communities. A look at conflict among Jews and between Jews and Christians show that legal acculturation and knowledge of Christian institutions allowed Jews to use their connections with the king and/or the law in order to soften the effects of crisis. Royal attitudes, in general terms, had not changed much from the early fourteenth century. King Pere was pragmatic when dealing with his Jewish communities and his officials saw the preservation of the integrity of such communities as part of their job in promoting the king’s interests. Even Joan I, who as prince was not very friendly towards the Jews, once king, followed the pragmatic policies of his predecessors. A degree of legal acculturation also allowed individuals such as Samuel Gracia, for example, to manipulate the system and evade honouring his debts to individual Christians, Jews, and to his own community.

The period saw the introduction and popularization of new credit mechanisms, such as the censal and violari, which offered advantages such as lower interest rates and the ability to postpone payment of the principal indefinitely. Although the censal offered many advantages to lenders and borrowers, in times of crisis it could have unforeseen consequences: it cut out of the possibility of reprieves from the king, hitherto a common way of coping with hard times, many people were no doubt pushed into a tight corner. Even if Jews did not play a prominent role in the censal credit market, they were nevertheless affected if their Christian clients had to prioritize the debt they incurred from censals.

The role of credit and trust in premodern society cannot be overstated. Fernand Braudel went as far as to affirm that "from the small shopkeeper to the businessman, from the artisan to the manufacturer, everyone lived on credit" and a generation of historians influenced by anthropology and cultural studies followed suit studying the role of credit in
creating and preserving relationships in medieval and early modern society.6 In his study of Florence, Thomas Kuehn found that its social and economic life ran "on credit and trust."7 Furthermore, these relationships "necessarily rested on affection at some level. They were built on recurring transactions of patronage and clientage; they arose between kin, neighbors, and friends."8 In such an environment, still following Kuehn's arguments, "[r]ecovery of debts rested on personal calculations and not just financial rationales. And recovery was difficult as a result, especially in instances in which fixed terms of repayment did not exist."9 The implications of these ideas for Christian-Jewish relations have only recently begun to be explored. Traditionally, the credit relationship between a Jewish moneylender and a Christian borrower has been seen as a source of mistrust and conflict. Recent research that looks more closely at the real life of Jews and Christians on the ground has begun to question that assumption or at least make it more clearly the product of a generation of scholars who were excessively influenced by the anti-usury proclamations of religious authorities.10

Trust was also crucial for the proper functioning of courts of law and the adjudication of conflict. Both Christians and Jews – perhaps Jews even more than Christians – trusted that the courts would serve them justice, or at least, they trusted it would adhere to due process. In the litigious society of the Crown of Aragon, Jews and Christians sought the courts of law of the land to solve their conflicts. As Robert Burns once said, in the royal courts “the Jew had full

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8 Ibid., 5.
9 Ibid.
10 Although criticized for perhaps portraying too rosy a picture of Christian-Jewish relations, Shatzmiller’s evidence from the courts of Marseille force us to consider the relationship of trust that also existed between Jewish moneylenders and their clients. See Shylock Reconsidered: Jews, Moneylending, and Medieval Society (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990).
standing as a person, unlike his situation in ecclesiastical courts and law. And he knew it. The courts of law, then, was a space in which Christians and Jews found means of coping with social and economic conflict in ways that did not bring into question Jewish identity or existence. Miri Rubin has recently pointed out that even conflicts based on religious bigotry, which elsewhere led to mass violence and hysteria, in the Crown of Aragon were “highly controlled show trials” that remained confined to the courts in which they were adjudicated.

One of the central themes of this dissertation – and perhaps one of its central arguments – is how acculturation in Aragon and Catalonia allowed Jews to exercise a high degree of agency in their dealings with Christians and the more powerful within their own communities. Jews participated fully in the legal culture of Aragon and Catalonia and had no qualms about hiring Christian arbitrators even to deal with sensitive issues involving Jewish law. The Christians, as outsiders, could act as unbiased adjudicators in these cases. The trust went both ways. Christians too had no trouble in trusting Jews to broker deals or act as procurators. This does not mean, however, going back to a romantic convivencia but rather recognition that the complex – even if at times contradictory – relationships between Christians and Jews need to be understood outside of a discourse of a conflict of civilizations.

Trust and relationships did break down. We have seen many cases of Jews unable to honour their agreements with their Christian suppliers and how both Christians and Jews used whatever means at their disposal to avoid paying each other. These conflicts, however, were limited to the courts of law rather than to the streets. Life was not easy in the 1380s or the decades leading to it. And the degree of acculturation of Jews is further illustrated by a growing number of individual Jews chosing conversion as a means of coping with social and

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12 Miri Rubin, Gentile tales: the narrative assault on late medieval Jews (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1999), 115.
financial distress. Whether these pragmatic conversions in the 1380s smoothed the way for more Jews to choose conversion when news of mass conversions in Castile and Christian mobs reached the Crown of Aragon remains to be demonstrated.

The dissertation, however, raises the question of whether the mass conversions of 1391 can be seen as a way of coping with changes afflicting Catalonia and Aragon (as well as Valencia and Mallorca). Case studies in the Crown of Aragon have demonstrated clearly the social and economic motivations of the perpetrators of the violence in cities such as Barcelona, Girona, or Valencia. Local context played a crucial role in the attacks. Recent research on economic changes in Aragon, for example, shows that the less sophisticated nature of the Aragonese economy, which was predominantly rural, allowed it to respond more effectively and recover faster from the economic crisis that followed the Black Death. While the bankruptcy of several of the biggest bankers in Barcelona in the 1380s locked Catalonia into a serious decline, Zulaica Palacios argues that the kingdom of Aragon was forced by the crisis to re-adjust its economy and turn its agricultural production from subsistence to the production of export crops such as saffron, wheat, olive oil, and wool. More importantly for us, he suggests that Aragonese Jews played an important role in this economic growth, which helps to explain some differences between the experiences of Catalan and Aragonese Jews in this period. While Catalan Jews sent record numbers of pleas for moratoria on their debt and complained about the threat of depopulation, aljamas such as that of Zaragoza seem to have been in much less distress, which may explain why news of violence in Castile in 1391 did not find the same traction there as it did in Catalonia.


When the violence did happen, however, it might also have been a way of coping with the crises that affected Catalan society. We know well that attacking the Jews was one way the powerless within Christian society could attack their rulers. Being so closely associated with the king, Jews were often caught in the crossfire of disputes with the Crown. There is no doubt that the violence of 1391 was ultimately a turning point for the Jews across the Iberian Peninsula. The resultant *converso* minority led to a blurring of the line between Christians and Jews and would ultimately lead to the creation of the Spanish Inquisition out of concern over Judaizing, and eventually to the expulsion of the Jews.¹⁵ In the Crown of Aragon, however, the fact that the violence was rooted in social and economic tensions meant that relations could improve alongside the economy. While we know well that such was the case in at least one Jewish community of the kingdom of Valencia, we need more local studies of individual Catalan and Aragonese communities, particularly during the first half of the fifteenth century. Such studies, however, need to see the Jews less as victims and more as agents possessing complex and multi-faceted identities.

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<td>Bartomeu Bemet, draper</td>
<td>7lb, 4s, 7d</td>
<td>From a violaris of 14lb, 8s, 8d annually, ceded by Abraham Ravaya, from Girona, procurator of Boniuha Bonafós, from Barcelona</td>
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<td>6lb, 5s</td>
<td>From a censal &amp; violaris worth 22lb, 10s yearly ceded by Ramon Dalmau, from Torroella de Montgrí as procurator of his wife Esclarmonda</td>
<td>AHCG, Llibres d'àpoques, lligall núm. 6 (1376-1381), vol. 1380, fol. 108r-v [Escribà, #584]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21/11/1380</td>
<td>Jurats</td>
<td>3s, 9d</td>
<td>For bookbinding</td>
<td>AHCG, Comptes del Clavari, lligall núm. 1 (1353-1385), vol. 1380, fol. 108v [Escribà, #585]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14/07/1381</td>
<td>Bonanat Cerir, city treasurer</td>
<td>125s</td>
<td>From a censal ceded by Ramon Dalmau, from Torroella de Montgrí as procurator of his wife Esclarmonda</td>
<td>AHCG, Llibres d'àpoques, lligall núm. 6 (1376-1381), vol. 1381-1382, fol. 45v [Escribà, #588]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10/09/1381</td>
<td>Bonanat Cerir, city treasurer</td>
<td>25lb</td>
<td>From a censal of 50lb ceded by Ramon de Boxols, citizen of Girona</td>
<td>AHCG, Llibres d’àpoques, lligall núm. 6 (1376-1381), vol. 1381-1382, fol. 57r [Escribà, #589]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24/09/1381</td>
<td>Narcís de Gornall, city treasurer</td>
<td>30lb</td>
<td>Payment of the loan given to Guillem Sunyer, Ramon de Boxols, Ramon Madir, &amp; Nicolau de Vilosa, when they were jurats in 30/12/1378</td>
<td>AHCG, Llibres d’àpoques, lligall núm. 6 (1376-1381), vol. 1381-1382, fol. 54v-55r [Escribà, #590]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31/10/1381</td>
<td>Bonanat Cerir, city treasurer</td>
<td>14lb, 9s, 4d</td>
<td>From a censal &amp; violaris worth 28lb, 18s, 8d, ceded by Bernat de Santmiquel, donzell</td>
<td>AHCG, Llibres d’àpoques, lligall núm. 6 (1376-1381), vol. 1381-1382, fol. 80r [Escribà, #591]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>09/11/1381</td>
<td>Bonanat Cerir, city treasurer</td>
<td>26 sous</td>
<td>From a censal worth 52 sous annually, ceded by Berenguer Cerdà, draper; paid to the representatives of the Almoina of the Aljama of Girona</td>
<td>AHCG, Llibres d’àpoques, lligall núm. 6 (1376-1381), vol. 1381-1382, fol. 85v [Escribà, #592]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11/1381</td>
<td>Bonanat Cerir, city treasurer</td>
<td>25lb</td>
<td>From a censal of 1,000 sous ceded by Ramon de Boxols, citizen of Girona</td>
<td>AHCG, Llibres d’àpoques, lligall núm. 6 (1376-1381), vol. 1381-1382, fol. 119r [Escribà, #593]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19/12/1381</td>
<td>Bonanat Cerir, city treasurer</td>
<td>125 sous</td>
<td>From a censal ceded by Ramon Dalmau, from Torroella de Montgrí as procurator of his wife Esclarmonda</td>
<td>AHCG, Llibres d’àpoques, lligall núm. 6 (1376-1381), vol. 1381-1382, fol. 106v-107r [Escribà, #594]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Date</td>
<td>Number</td>
<td>Name(s)</td>
<td>Amount</td>
<td>Source</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>21/01/1382</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>Bonanat Cerir, city treasurer</td>
<td>Abraham Ravaya, 37 sous &amp; 6d</td>
<td>From a censual worth 75 sous annually, ceded by Pere Net</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1383</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>Jurats</td>
<td>Isaac Bonastruch, 13lb, 3 sous</td>
<td>From a censual of 26 lb &amp; 7 sous yearly, ceded by Arnau Ferrer, priest of the church of Santa Maria d’Argelaguer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1383</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>Jurats</td>
<td>Mestre Mossé des Portal, 5lb</td>
<td>From a censual of 10 lb annually, ceded by Bertran de Ferreres</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1383</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>Jurats</td>
<td>Francesca, widow of Berenguer Eimeric, silversmith and Levi Jasquell, 14, 5 sous, 9d</td>
<td>From a censual worth 28 lb and 6 sous annually, ceded by Joan de Vinyoles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1383</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>Jurats</td>
<td>Jucef Abraham, 13lb, 17 sous, 6 d</td>
<td>From a censual, ceded by Joan Sarriera</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1383</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>Jurats</td>
<td>Mossé des Portal, 5lb</td>
<td>From a censual worth 10lb annually, ceded by Bertrain de Ferreres (Santa Coloma)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1383</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>Jurats</td>
<td>Levi Jasquell and Astruch Lobell Gracia, 27lb, 2 sous</td>
<td>From a censual of 54lb, 4 sous annually, ceded by Joan Sarriera</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1383</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>Jurats</td>
<td>Benet Bellshom and Ferrer Bonanasch, 1lb and 6 sous</td>
<td>Froma censual worth 52 sous annually; paid to representatives of the Almoina of the aljama</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1383</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>Jurats</td>
<td>Vidal Lobell, 4lb, 15 sous</td>
<td>From a censual of 7lb and 10 sous, ceded by Ramon de Boxols</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1383</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>Jurats</td>
<td>Bonjuha Maymó and Jacó Abraham, 25 lb</td>
<td>From a census ceded by Ramon de Boxols; Bonjuha and Jacó represent Rovén Samuel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1383</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>Jurats</td>
<td>Jucef Falcó, 6lb, 5s</td>
<td>From a censual of 12lb, 10s, ceded by Jaume Verges (Banyoles)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13/10/1383</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>Joan Marcó &amp; Berenguer Hospital, city treasurers</td>
<td>Isaac Rovén &amp; Jucef Nacim, 35lb, 4 sous</td>
<td>From a loan of 76lb, 16 sous that the Jews had lent to Ramon de Boxols, Ramon de la Vía, Narcís de Casanoves and Guillem Arnau, jurats of the city</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23/11/1383</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>Bonanat Cerir, city treasurer</td>
<td>Astruch Lobell Gracia &amp; Levi Jasquell, 27lb, 2 sous</td>
<td>From a censual of 54lb, 4 sous annually, ceded by Joan Sarriera</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No.</td>
<td>Date</td>
<td>Name</td>
<td>Amount</td>
<td>Description</td>
</tr>
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<tr>
<td>36</td>
<td>24/12/1383</td>
<td>Bonanat Cerir, city treasurer</td>
<td>Vidal Lobell</td>
<td>75 sous From a censal worth 150 sous annually, ceded by Ramon de Boxols</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>37</td>
<td>08/02/1384</td>
<td>Bonanat Cerir, city treasurer</td>
<td>Bonjuha Maymó and Jacó Abraham</td>
<td>25 lb From a censal ceded by Ramon de Boxols; Bonjuha and Jacó represent Rovén Samuel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>38</td>
<td>14/08/1384</td>
<td>Francesc Pellicer, taxfarmer</td>
<td>Caravida sa Porta</td>
<td>9 lb, 12 s, 10 d From a censal &amp; violari worth 19 lb 5 s 8 d annually, ceded by Astruch Cresques</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>39</td>
<td>30/08/1384</td>
<td>Francesc Pellicer, taxfarmer</td>
<td>Jucef Falcó</td>
<td>6 lb, 5 s From a censal &amp; violari worth 12 lb 10 s annually, ceded by the deceased Jaume Verges (Banyoles)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40</td>
<td>1385</td>
<td>Jurats</td>
<td>Astruch and Abraham Ravaya</td>
<td>50 lb From a censal ceded by Pere Berenguer Estrús, his wife Margarida, Antonia, wife of Bernat Saragossana, and Joan Sabina</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>41</td>
<td>1385</td>
<td>Jurats</td>
<td>Rovén Nacim, rep. of Almoina of Jews</td>
<td>3 lb, 18 s From a censal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>42</td>
<td>1385</td>
<td>Jurats</td>
<td>Astruch Benet</td>
<td>6 lb, 17 s, 6 d From a censal ceded by Francesc Adroher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>43</td>
<td>1385</td>
<td>Jurats</td>
<td>Astruch Benet &amp; Astruch Lobell Gracia</td>
<td>12 lb From a censal ceded by Francesc Adroher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>44</td>
<td>1385</td>
<td>Jurats</td>
<td>Benet Saltell, rep. of Almoina of the Jews</td>
<td>2 lb, 12 s From a censal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45</td>
<td>1385</td>
<td>Jurats</td>
<td>Bellshom Falcó, rep. of Almoina of Jews</td>
<td>2 lb, 12 s From a censal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>46</td>
<td>1385</td>
<td>Jurats</td>
<td>Astruch Lobell Gracia, rep. of Almoina of Jews</td>
<td>2 lb, 12 s From a censal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>47</td>
<td>1385</td>
<td>Jurats</td>
<td>Benet Saltell, rep. of Almoina of the Jews</td>
<td>2 lb, 12 s From a censal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#</td>
<td>Year</td>
<td>Jurats</td>
<td>Details</td>
<td>Source</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>48</td>
<td>1385</td>
<td>Jurats</td>
<td>Benet Saltell, rep. 1lb, 6s of Almoina of the Jews</td>
<td>From a censal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>49</td>
<td>1385</td>
<td>Jurats</td>
<td>Pere &amp; Berenguer Cerda, drapers, and Astruch Rovén</td>
<td>From a censal ceded by Bertran de Farners</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50</td>
<td>1385</td>
<td>Jurats</td>
<td>Almoina of the Jews</td>
<td>52 sous</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>51</td>
<td>1385</td>
<td>Jurats</td>
<td>Bartomeu Benet and Jucef Falcó</td>
<td>7lb, 14s, 9d</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>52</td>
<td>1385</td>
<td>Jurats</td>
<td>Jucef Falcó and Issach Rovén</td>
<td>10lb, 4s, 9d</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>53</td>
<td>1385</td>
<td>Jurats</td>
<td>Jucef Falcó</td>
<td>7lb, 14s, 9d</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>54</td>
<td>1385</td>
<td>Francesc Pellicer, taxfarmer</td>
<td>Jucef Falcó</td>
<td>6lb, 5s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>55</td>
<td>3/01/1386</td>
<td>Francesc Estanyol, bosser (J) and Astruch Badós (J)</td>
<td>Nassanell Cerç and Astruch Lobell Gracia, rep. of Almoina of Jews</td>
<td>20lb, 6s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>56</td>
<td>11/05/1386</td>
<td>Jaume Beuda, clavari</td>
<td>Levi Jasquell</td>
<td>6lb</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>57</td>
<td>27/06/1386</td>
<td>Jaume Beuda, clavari</td>
<td>Astruch Lobell Gracia, rep. of Almoina of Jews</td>
<td>26s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>58</td>
<td>03/08/1386</td>
<td>Jaume Beuda, clavari</td>
<td>Salamó sa Porta</td>
<td>10lb, 2s, 2d</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>59</td>
<td>17/08/1386</td>
<td>Jaume Beuda, clavari</td>
<td>Isaac Bonastruch (Besalú)</td>
<td>13lb, 3s, 6d</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Date</td>
<td>Name, Role</td>
<td>Amount</td>
<td>Description</td>
<td>Source</td>
</tr>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>15/11/1386</td>
<td>Jaume Beuda, clavari</td>
<td>Astruch Lobell Gracia et al, rep. of Almoina of Jews</td>
<td>From a censal worth 52 sous annually; paid to the representatives of the Almoina of the Aljama of Girona (including Benet Bellshom and Abraham Ravaya)</td>
<td>AHCG, Llibres d’àpoques, lligall núm. 8 (1386), vol. 1386, fol. 73r [Escribà, #654]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20/11/1386</td>
<td>Bonanat Serra, clavari</td>
<td>Bellshom Mossè Falcó</td>
<td>65 florins of gold Pay back of loan made to Francesc Santceloni, Guilem Domenge, doctor in law, Bonanat Serra, Bernat Serra, Miguel Serra, Pere Serra, jurats of the city as described in public instrument of 20/07/1386</td>
<td>AHCG, Llibres d’àpoques, lligall núm. 8 (1386), vol. 1386, fol. 171v [Escribà, #655]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30/01/1388</td>
<td>Jaume Beuda, clavari</td>
<td>Levi Jasquell</td>
<td>12lb, 2d Censal of 24lb, 4d annually, ceded by Galceran Casselles, jurist, citizen of Barcelona</td>
<td>AHCG, Llibres d’àpoques, lligall núm. 9 (1387-1389), vol. 1387-1388, fol. 88r-v [Escribà, #657]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11/02/1388</td>
<td>Jaume Beuda, clavari</td>
<td>Astruch Lobell Gracia</td>
<td>12lb Censal of 24lb annually</td>
<td>AHCG, Llibres d’àpoques, lligall núm. 9 (1387-1389), vol. 1387-1388, fol. 86v [Escribà, #658]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>04/04/1388</td>
<td>Jaume Beuda, clavari</td>
<td>Astruch Lobell Gracia</td>
<td>52s, 6d From a censal of 105s, ceded by Lluís Astruc, citizen of Girona</td>
<td>AHCG, Llibres d’àpoques, lligall núm. 9 (1387-1389), vol. 1388-1389, fol. 29r [Escribà, #659]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>07/04/1388</td>
<td>Jaume Beuda, clavari</td>
<td>Astruch Lobell Gracia</td>
<td>12lb [does not specify]</td>
<td>AHCG, Llibres d’àpoques, lligall núm. 9 (1387-1389), vol. 1387-1388, fol. 86v [Escribà, #660]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25/05/1388</td>
<td>Jaume Beuda, clavari</td>
<td>Benet Saltell et al, rep. of Almoina of the Jews</td>
<td>26s From a censal worth 52 sous annually; paid to the representatives of the Almoina of the Aljama of Girona (including Bellshom Benet and Issach Rovén)</td>
<td>AHCG, Llibres d’àpoques, lligall núm. 9 (1387-1389), vol. 1388-1389, fol. 35v [Escribà, #661]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11/06/1388</td>
<td>Jaume Beuda, clavari</td>
<td>Astruch Benet</td>
<td>6lb, 7s, 6d; and 6lb From a censal worth 13lb, 15s and another worth 12lb, ceded by Francesc Adroher, citizen of Girona</td>
<td>AHCG, Llibres d’àpoques, lligall núm. 9 (1387-1389), vol. 1388-1389, fol. 46v [Escribà, #662]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30/10/1388</td>
<td>Jaume Beuda, clavari</td>
<td>Astruch Ravaya</td>
<td>16lb From a censal worth 32lb, ceded by Pere Lunyà Astruch, citizen of Girona, in his name and that of his wife Margarida [interesting name, could he be a converso?]</td>
<td>AHCG, Llibres d’àpoques, lligall núm. 9 (1387-1389), vol. 1388-1389, fol. 30r [Escribà, #664]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>04/12/1388</td>
<td>Jaume Beuda, clavari</td>
<td>Astruch Lobell Gracia</td>
<td>61s, 11d From a censal worth 123s, 11d, ceded by Lluis Astruc, citizen of Girona</td>
<td>AHCG, Llibres d’àpoques, lligall núm. 9 (1387-1389), vol. 1388-1389, fol. 29r [Escribà, #665]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11/12/1388</td>
<td>Jaume Beuda, clavari</td>
<td>Astruch Lobell Gracia</td>
<td>6lb From a censal worth 12lb, ceded by Francesc Adroher, citizen of Girona, in his name and that of his son Antoni</td>
<td>AHCG, Llibres d’àpoques, lligall núm. 9 (1387-1389), vol. 1388-1389, fol. 46v [Escribà, #666]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12/02/1389</td>
<td>Jaume Beuda, clavari</td>
<td>Astruch Lobell Gracia &amp; Jucef Falcó</td>
<td>11lb, 5 s From a censal worth 22lb, ceded by Guillem Vengut, citizen of Girona</td>
<td>AHCG, Llibres d’àpoques, lligall núm. 9 (1387-1389), vol. 1388-1389, fol. 69v-70r [Escribà, #667]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Date</td>
<td>Clavari</td>
<td>Recipient</td>
<td>Amount</td>
<td>Description</td>
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<tr>
<td>12/02/1389</td>
<td>Jaume Beuda, clavari</td>
<td>Issach Rovén</td>
<td>75s</td>
<td>From a censal worth 150s annually, ceded by Francesca, wife of Lluís Astruc from Girona</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12/02/1389</td>
<td>Jaume Beuda, clavari</td>
<td>Astruch Lobell Gracia &amp; Jucef Falcó</td>
<td>13s</td>
<td>From a censal worth 105s annually, ceded by Caterina, wife of Ramon Tortosa, citizen of Girona</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21/05/1389</td>
<td>Jaume Beuda, clavari</td>
<td>Benet Saltell &amp; Rovém Nacim, rep. of Almoina of the aljama</td>
<td>26s</td>
<td>From a censal worth 52sous [ref. to month of April/1389]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21/05/1389</td>
<td>Jaume Beuda, clavari</td>
<td>Astruch Lobell Gracia</td>
<td>6lb</td>
<td>From a censal worth 12lb, ceded by Francesc Adroher [one of the sindics of the city], citizen of Girona, in his name and that of his son Antoni</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21/05/1389</td>
<td>Jaume Beuda, clavari</td>
<td>Benet Saltell &amp; Rovém Nacim, rep. of Almoina of the aljama</td>
<td>26s</td>
<td>From a censal worth 52sous [ref. to month of Oct/1388]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10/06/1389</td>
<td>Miquel de Santa Cecília, clavari</td>
<td>Benvenist Vidal, Jew of Peralada</td>
<td>14lb, 14s, 7d</td>
<td>From a censal &amp; violaris worth 29lb, 9s, 3d; Benevenist acted as procurator for Bernat Rossell, from castle of Monells, citizen of Peralada</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18/06/1389</td>
<td>Jaume Beuda, clavari</td>
<td>Astruch Ravaya</td>
<td>14lb, 10s</td>
<td>From a censal worth 32lb, ceded by Pere Berenguer Estrús, citizen of Girona, in his name and that of his wife Margarida [same person as in doc from 30/10/1388?]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19/07/1389</td>
<td>Jaume Beuda, clavari</td>
<td>Issach Rovén</td>
<td>100s</td>
<td>From a censal of 200s annually, ceded by Bertran de Farners, donzell</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>04/12/1389</td>
<td>Jaume Beuda, clavari</td>
<td>Abraham Ravaya</td>
<td>14lb, 10s</td>
<td>From a censal worth 32lb, ceded by Pere Berenguer Estrús, citizen of Girona, in his name and that of his wife Margarida [same person as in doc from 30/10/1388?]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13/01/1390</td>
<td>Jaume Beuda, clavari</td>
<td>Bonastruch des Mestre</td>
<td>18lb, 10s</td>
<td>From a censal worth 1,000s annually, ceded by Constança, wife of Ramon de Boxols, citizen of Girona (and sindic); Bonastruc represented Astruga, widow of Bonjuha Astruch</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Date</td>
<td>Person(s)</td>
<td>Description</td>
<td>Source</td>
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<td>---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>17/05/1390</td>
<td>Jaume Beuda, clavari</td>
<td>From a censal worth 32lb, ceded by Pere Berenguer Estrús, citizen of Girona, in his name and that of his wife Margarida.</td>
<td>AHCG, Llibres d’àpoques, lligall núm. 10 (1390-1392), vol. 1390-1391, fol. 37r [Escribà, #679]</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10/06/1390</td>
<td>Jaume Beuda, clavari</td>
<td>From a censal worth 25lb annually, ceded by Bernat de Sitjar; Bonastruc represented Astruga, widow of Bonjuha Astruch.</td>
<td>AHCG, Llibres d’àpoques, lligall núm. 10 (1390-1392), vol. 1390-1391, fol. 43r [Escribà, #680]</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28/06/1390</td>
<td>Pere Guillem Sunyer, sindic</td>
<td>Salary for his brokerage of a sale of a censal of 1,000s annually to Guillem de Vilà and his son Bernat, from Banyoles.</td>
<td>AHCG, Manuals d’Acords, number 21 (1390), for. 24r [Escribà, #681]</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>06/09/1390</td>
<td>Jaume Beuda, clavari</td>
<td>From a censal worth 52sous (ref. to the month of april past)</td>
<td>AHCG, Llibres d’àpoques, lligall núm. 9 (1387-1389), vol. 1389-1390, fol. 36v [Escribà, #682]</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>06/09/1390</td>
<td>Jaume Beuda, clavari</td>
<td>From a censal worth 52sous, ceded by Berengar Cerdà, draper</td>
<td>AHCG, Llibres d’àpoques, lligall núm. 10 (1390-1392), vol. 1390-1391, fol. 51v [Escribà, #683]</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>08/05/1391</td>
<td>Bonanat Cerir, clavari</td>
<td>From a censal worth 25lb annually, ceded by Bernat de Sitjar; Bonastruc represented Astruga, widow of Bonjuha Astruch.</td>
<td>AHCG, Llibres d’àpoques, lligall núm. 10 (1390-1392), vol. 1391-1392, fol. 50r [Escribà, #684]</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>07/06/1391</td>
<td>Bonanat Cerir, clavari</td>
<td>From a censal worth 52sous [ref. to month of october past]</td>
<td>AHCG, Llibres d’àpoques, lligall núm. 10 (1390-1392), vol. 1390-1391, fol. 51v [Escribà, #686]</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14/07/1391</td>
<td>Bonanat Cerir, clavari</td>
<td>From a censal worth 52s [two days after the king wrote to the city with provisions to defend the Jews and one day before news of the attacks of Valencia]</td>
<td>AHCG, Llibres d’àpoques, lligall núm. 10 (1390-1392), vol. 1391-1392, fol. 68v [Escribà, #690]</td>
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<tr>
<td>Date</td>
<td>Payment from</td>
<td>To</td>
<td>Amount</td>
<td>Obs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------</td>
<td>-----------------------</td>
<td>---------------</td>
<td>--------</td>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16/05/1380</td>
<td>secretaris of</td>
<td>Narcís de Gornall</td>
<td>10lb</td>
<td>Part of tax that aljama pays annually to city; paid Benet Bellshom, Bondia Falcó and Benet Saltell</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16/05/1380</td>
<td>secretaris of</td>
<td>Jurats</td>
<td>20lb</td>
<td>Part of tax that aljama pays annually to city; paid Benet Bellshom, Bondia Falcó and Benet Saltell; 10lb left to be paid</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1386</td>
<td>Bonet Abraham</td>
<td>Jurats</td>
<td>5s</td>
<td>tax (imposició) for the sale of a violari of 30lb made by Bernat Ferrer, broker (corredor)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1386</td>
<td>Abraham Ravaya</td>
<td>Jurats</td>
<td>4s, 8d</td>
<td>tax (imposició) for the sale of a violari of 28lb made to Joan Albert</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1386</td>
<td>Abraham Ravaya</td>
<td>Jurats</td>
<td>1s 11d</td>
<td>tax (imposició) for the sale of a violari of 9lb made to Arrufat de Fornells</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1386</td>
<td>Abraham Ravaya</td>
<td>Jurats</td>
<td>1s 11d</td>
<td>tax (imposició) for the sale of a violari of 9lb made to Iu Descamps</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1386</td>
<td>Abraham Ravaya</td>
<td>Jurats</td>
<td>7s, 6d</td>
<td>tax (imposició) for the sale of a violari of 30lb made to Pere Camós</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1386</td>
<td>Astruch Ravaya, gendre de</td>
<td>Jurats</td>
<td>7s, 6d</td>
<td>tax (imposició) for the sale of a violari of 30lb 2s for (per a) Guillem de Montagut</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1386</td>
<td>Salamó and Caravida sa Porta</td>
<td>Jurats</td>
<td>4lb, 13s, 9d</td>
<td>tax (imposició) for the sale of a violari of 375lb by Salamó to Caravida</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1386</td>
<td>Jucef Falcó</td>
<td>Jurats</td>
<td>10d</td>
<td>tax (imposició) for the sale of a violari of 150s to Goig, wife of mestre Bonet, Jew</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1386</td>
<td>Jucef Falcó</td>
<td>Jurats</td>
<td>5s, 10d</td>
<td>tax (imposició) for the sale of a violari of 28lb to Joan des Castells</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1386</td>
<td>Jucef Falcó</td>
<td>Jurats</td>
<td>4s</td>
<td>tax (imposició) for the sale of a censal of 22lb</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year</td>
<td>Name of the Jew</td>
<td>Jurats</td>
<td>Tax Amount</td>
<td>Description</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------</td>
<td>----------------</td>
<td>--------</td>
<td>------------</td>
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<tr>
<td>1386</td>
<td>Salomó sa Porta Jurats</td>
<td>1s, 6d</td>
<td>tax (imposició) for the sale of a violari of 8lb 15s to Bernat Ferrer, broker</td>
<td>AHCG, Comptes de l’Administració Municipal, Lligall núm. 3 (1386-1388), fol. 27v [Escribà, #641]</td>
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<tr>
<td>1386</td>
<td>Benet Bellshom and Bellshom Benet Jurats</td>
<td>1lb</td>
<td>tax (imposició) for the sale of a house that belonged to Jucef Astruch, Jew from Narbonne, for the price of 250lb. Paid by Astruch Lobell Gracià in their name.</td>
<td>AHCG, Comptes de l’Administració Municipal, Lligall núm. 3 (1386-1388), fol. 27v [Escribà, #642]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1386</td>
<td>Jucef Falcó Jurats</td>
<td>3s</td>
<td>tax (imposició) for the sale of a censal of 12lb to En Longuany, from Santa Llogaia</td>
<td>AHCG, Comptes de l’Administració Municipal, Lligall núm. 3 (1386-1388), fol. 28r [Escribà, #643]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1386</td>
<td>Abraham Ravaya Jurats</td>
<td>5d</td>
<td>tax (imposició) for the sale of a violari of 100s to Arnau Olivera, priest</td>
<td>AHCG, Comptes de l’Administració Municipal, Lligall núm. 3 (1386-1388), fol. 27r [Escribà, #644]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1386</td>
<td>Jucef Astruch Benet (Narbonne) Jurats</td>
<td>1lb, 11s, 3d</td>
<td>tax (imposició) for the sale of a house that Benet Bellshom and Bellshom Benet have sold for 250lb. Paid by Jucef Falcó in his name.</td>
<td>AHCG, Comptes de l’Administració Municipal, Lligall núm. 3 (1386-1388), fol. 27v [Escribà, #645]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1386</td>
<td>Bonet Abraham Jurats</td>
<td>3lb, 6s</td>
<td>tax (imposició) for the sale of two censals of 280lb to Francesc Pellicer</td>
<td>AHCG, Comptes de l’Administració Municipal, Lligall núm. 3 (1386-1388), fol. 24r [Escribà, #646]</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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- **Comune Sigilli Secreti:** 1867 (1387); 1869 (1388); 1876 (1390-1392); 1877 (1390-1392)
- **Gratiarum:** 936-937 (1380-1381); 938 (1381-1382); 940 (1382-1383); 941 (1383); 942-943 (1383-1384); 944 (1384-1385); 945 (1385); 946 (1385-1386); 947 (1386); 947 (1386); 948 (1386-1387); 1890-1891 (1387); 1892-1893 (1387-1388); 1894-1895 (1388-1389); 1896-1897 (1389-1390); 1898-1899 (1390-1391); 1900 (1391-1392)
- **Oficialium:** 976 (1381-1383); 977 (1383-1385); 978 (1385-1386)
- **Diversonum:** 988 (1381-1386);
- **Venditionum:** 1001 (1381-1382); 1005 (1386)
- **Curiae:** 1366; 1100 (1380); 1101 (1381); 1102 (1381-1382); 1103 (1382-1383); 1104 (1383); 1105 (1383-1384); 1106-1107 (1384-1385); 1108-1109 (1385-1386); 1110 (1386); 1945 (1387-1396)
- **Curiae Sigilli Secreti:** 1955 (1388-1389); 1962 (1391-1392)
- **Sigiilli Secreti:** 1266 (1379-1384); 1268 (1380); 1269-1270 (1380-1381); 1271-1272 (1381); 1273-1274 (1381-1382); 1275 (1381-1383); 1276-1277 (1381-1384); 1278 (1381-1386); 1279 (1382-1383); 1280-1281 (1382-1384); 1282-1285 (1383-1384); 1286-1287 (1384); 1288-1291 (1385-1386); 1292 (1386);
- **Secretum:** 1294 (1376-1386)
- **Peccuniae:** 1365 (1380-1381); 1366 (1380-1382); 1367 (1381-1382); 1368 (1381-1383); 1369 (1380-1383); 1370 (1383-1384); 1371 (1384-1385); 1372-1375 (1385-1386); 1376 (1386-1389);
• *Armatae*: 1405 (1379-1386)
• *Sententiarum*: 1453 (1380-1382); 1454 (1382-1386); 1455 (1386-1387)
• *Inquisitionum*: 1495 (1371-1384); 1496 (1384-1386)

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• *Caixa 55, 56, 57, 58,*

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• 1372-1374
• 1372

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• 71 (1379-1381); 73 (1385); 80 (1391)

*Pia Almoina, Speculum de la notari y scrivania de la almoyna del pa de la Seu de Gerona reconidas dins lo antich armari de dos claus, una per lo notari, altra per lo senyor paborde*

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• *Lligal 9:* 1387-1388, 1388-1389 (1387-1389)
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- *Lligall 2*: dates – 1384-1390
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