İSTANBUL MEDENİYET ÜNİVERSİTESİ
LİSANSÜSTÜ EĞİTİM ENSTİTÜSÜ
TARİH ANABİLİM DALI

Building Medieval Kingship: The Self Representation of King James I of Aragon in the *Llibre dels Fets*

Yüksek Lisans Tezi

Ebrar Büyükkapucu

Temmuz 2025

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Danışman

Prof. Dr. Fatih Durgun

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Ebrar Büyükkapucu tarafından hazırlanan "Building Medieval Kingship: The Self Representation of King James I of Aragon in the *Llibre dels Fets*" başlıklı bu Yüksek Lisans Tezi, Tarih Anabilim Dalı'nda hazırlanmış ve jürimiz tarafından kabul edilmiştir.

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İmza

Ebrar Büyükkapucu

ÖZET

Building Medieval Kingship: The Self Representation of King James I of Aragon in *the Llibre dels Fets*

Büyükkapucu, Ebrar

Yüksek Lisans Tezi, Tarih Anabilim Dalı

Danışman: Prof. Dr. Fatih Durgun

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1213-1276 yılları arasında Aragon Krallığında hüküm süren Kral I. James'in (Jaume el Conqueridor) dikte ettirerek kaleme aldırdığı *Llibre dels Fets*, Orta Çağ Avrupası otobiyografik tarih geleneği içinde önemli bir yere sahiptir. *Llibre*, sadece bir kralın yaşam öyküsünü kayda geçirmekle kalmaz; aynı zamanda onun kamusal, hanedanî ve bireysel kimliğini, birincil kaynak statüsünde doğrudan kendi sesiyle yansıtarak, Orta Çağ tarih yazımı içerisinde nadiren rastlanan bir ego-document (ben-anlatısı) niteliği kazanır. Bu bağlamda *Llibre dels Fets*, hem bir Orta Çağ kralının öz anlatımını taşıyan ilk otobiyografik belgelerden biri olarak değerlidir hem de idealleştirilen kraliyet kimliği ile insanî yönler arasında kurulan dinamik ilişki açısından incelenmeye değerdir. Bu tezde, *Llibre dels Fets* temelinde Kral James'in 'ideal kral' tipini nasıl kurguladığı ve aynı zamanda metin boyunca kendi iç dünyasına ait insani yönlerini nasıl yansıttığı analiz edilmiştir. Kral James'in eserde hem ideal ve güçlü bir kral hem de duygularına yer veren bir birey olarak çizdiği portre, Orta Çağ monarşisinin genel temsil kalıplarının ötesine geçmektedir. Söz konusu metin olan *Llibre*, yalnızca kralın fetih anlatıları ya da hanedan tarihçesi değildir; aynı zamanda kralın öznel deneyimlerini, korkularını, sevinçlerini, hayal kırıklıklarını ve hatta ağlama anlarını içeren bir ben anlatısı olarak biçimlenmiştir. Tezin ilk bölümünde, Kral James'in bir hanedan reisi olarak eşleri ve çocukları ile kurduğu ilişkiler incelenmiştir. Orta Çağ kraliyet yazınında genellikle tali figürler olarak görülen eş ve çocuklar, *Llibre dels Fets'te* dikkate değer ölçüde görünür kılınmıştır. Kral James'in belirli çocuklarına yönelik açık övgüleri ya da eleştirileri, bir kralın babalık duygularına dair nadir ipuçları sunmaktadır.

Aynı şekilde eşlerine ilişkin olumlu ve olumsuz ifadelendirmeler de kralın hem politik hem duygusal bağlamda eşlerine nasıl yaklaştığını gözler önüne sermekle beraber bir ortaçağ kralı için ideal kraliçenin nasıl olduğun hakkında da malumat sunar. İkinci bölümde ise Kral James'in kamusal alandaki ideal kral imajı ortaya konmuştur. Bu bölümde, Kral James'in soyluları ve tebaası arasındaki adalet dağıtımı, üzerinden ideal kral paradigmasını nasıl oluşturduğu tartışılmıştır. Bu noktada kralın ceza ile merhamet arasında kurduğu denge, halkı ve ileri gelenleriyle olan ilişkilerinde izlenebilmektedir. Kral James'in kamusal alanda gösterdiği hâkimiyet, Tanrısal takdirle örtüşen bir hükümdarlık iddiasını da beraberinde getirmektedir. Üçüncü bölümde ise, Kral James'in metin boyunca sergilediği duygular değerlendirilmiştir. Orta Çağ'daki hakim anlayışa göre hükümdarların duygularını bastırması beklenirken, Kral James zaman zaman öfke, keder ve sevinç gibi duygularını açıkça beyan eder. Duygular her ne kadar insani olsa da kralın *Llibre'de* gösterdiği duyguların ideal kral olma portresine ne derece uyduğu da incelenmiştir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Kral James, Aragon, ego-document, otobiyografi, ben anlatısı, *Llibre dels Fets*

ABSTRACT

Building Medieval Kingship: The Self-Representation of King James I of Aragon in the *Llibre dels Fets*

Büyükkapucu, Ebrar

Master's Thesis, Department of History

Advisor: Prof. Dr. Fatih Durgun

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The *Llibre dels Fets*, dictated by King James I of Aragon (Jaume el Conqueridor), who reigned between 1213 and 1276, holds a significant place within the autobiographical historiographical tradition of medieval Europe. The *Llibre* does not merely record the life story of a king; it also reflects his public, dynastic, and personal identity through his own voice as a primary source, thereby attaining the rare quality of an ego-document within medieval historiography. In this respect, the *Llibre dels Fets* is not only one of the earliest autobiographical texts to carry the personal narrative of a medieval monarch, but also a work that deserves scrutiny for the dynamic interplay it presents between the idealized royal persona and the human dimension of *kingship*. This thesis analyzes how King James constructs the figure of the "ideal king" throughout the *Llibre dels Fets*, while simultaneously revealing his own inner, emotional self. The portrait James draws of himself—both as an ideal, powerful sovereign and as an individual who expresses personal emotions—surpasses the conventional representational patterns of medieval monarchy. Far from being limited to conquest narratives or dynastic chronicle, the *Llibre* emerges as a self-narrative interwoven with the king's subjective experiences, fears, joys, disappointments, and even moments of weeping. The first chapter of the thesis explores King James's relationships with his wives and children in his role as the head of a dynasty. While royal consorts and offspring are typically treated as secondary figures in medieval courtly literature, the *Llibre dels Fets* grants them notable visibility. James's open praise or criticism of specific children provides rare insight into the emotional dimensions of royal fatherhood. Similarly, his favorable or unfavorable comments about his wives shed light on

both his political and personal perspectives, while also offering valuable clues as to what constituted an "ideal queen" in the eyes of a medieval king. The second chapter focuses on King James's public image as an ideal ruler. This section discusses how James constructs the paradigm of ideal kingship, especially through the lens of justice and his relations with nobles and subjects. His balance between punishment and mercy can be observed in his interactions with both the aristocracy and the general populace. Moreover, the authority he exhibits in public life aligns with his claim to a divinely sanctioned kingship. The third chapter evaluates the emotional expressions displayed by King James throughout the text. Although the dominant expectation in the medieval period was for rulers to suppress their emotions, James frequently conveys his anger, grief, and joy with striking openness. While such emotions are inherently human, the thesis also investigates how these emotional expressions align or conflict with the portrait of an ideal king as constructed in the *Llibre*.

Keywords: King James, Aragon, ego-document, autobiography, self-narrative, *Llibre dels Fets*

PROLOUGE

Autobiographical works from the Middle Ages are remarkably rare. The majority of those that do exist were written by clerics or composed for religious purposes. In this context, the Llibre dels Fets, dictated by King James in the 13th century, offers a distinct perspective on medieval historiography by presenting the voice of a king. As one of the few royal autobiographies of the medieval period, the Llibre enables us to interpret a king's relationship with his family, the public, and his emotional life from a unique vantage point. Throughout this thesis, I have aimed to explore and evaluate these dimensions through the lens of this exceptional source.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

ÖZET iv
ABSTRACT vi
PROLOUGE viii
TABLE OF CONTENTS ix
INTRODUCTION 1
1.1. Historical Background 4
1.2. *The Llibre dels Fets* As the Primary Source 11
1.3. The *Llibre dels Fets* as an Ego-document 15
1.4. Main Theme and Methodology of the Thesis 17
CHAPTER I 19
King James's Formation of His Ideal Royal Identity as Head of the Dynasty 19
2.1. King James of Aragon's Marriages and His Relationships with His Wives 19
2.2 Royal Fatherhood: King James's Attitude Toward His Children 30
2.2.1. The Relationship Between King James of Aragon and His Sons 31
2.2.2. Dynastic Strategies and Affection: King James of Aragon's Relationships with His Daughters and Grandchildren 38
CHAPTER II 44
King James I and the Construction of Public Kingship in the *Llibre dels Fets* 44
3.1. King James I, the Nobility and the Projection of Authority 44
3.2. Relationship of King James I with the Subjects as a Reflection of His Authority and Kingship 53
CHAPTER III 64
Reflections of King James's Inner World in the *Llibre Dels Fets* 64
4.1. The Nature and Meaning of Kingly Anger in the *Llibre dels Fets* 65
4.2. Shedding Tears and Laughing in the *Llibre Dels Fets* 68
4.3. Causes of Fear in the *Llibre Dels Fets* 73
CONCLUSION 76
BIBLIOGRAPHY 81

INTRODUCTION

The Middle Ages was an era in which the deeds of great men occupied center stage. Historical memory from this period largely revolves around the actions of kings, princes, and other leading figures. Yet their voices reach us primarily through chronicles, royal decrees, and, occasionally, court records. A medieval king, however, cannot be understood solely in terms of the wars he fought, the treaties he negotiated, or the laws he issued; he was also a human being. Most medieval chronicles present idealized portraits of rulers, transmitting an exemplary image to their audiences. By contrast, works in which kings narrate their own lives are exceptionally rare. It is precisely in this respect that King James of Aragon's *Llibre dels Fets* stands out: as a rare autobiographical account, it allows us to hear the king's voice directly, offering unique insights into how he constructed his own identity and sought to shape his legacy for posterity.[1]

One of the most important examples of the autobiographical genre, the *Llibre dels Fets*, was dictated by King James I of Aragon.

James recounts the events of his life from birth to death. What made King James particularly remarkable was not solely the autobiographical chronicle he authored or dictated. His reign, which began in 1213 when he was only five years old, lasted until his death in 1276, spanning an impressive 63 years. This duration on the throne far exceeded the average length of a royal reign in the medieval period, making his kingship one of the most enduring of his time.[2] King James of Aragon may have been conscious of the extraordinary length of his reign and thus felt compelled to leave behind an autobiographical account for posterity. Although the precise motivation behind the composition of the *Llibre dels Fets* remains uncertain, the prologue of the text offers some insight into the king's intentions:

[1] There are very few writings authored by kings in the Middle Ages. Apart from King James of Aragon's *Llibre Dels Fets*, Holy Roman Emperor Charles IV. (d. 1378), who lived in the 14th century, authored a similar self-narrative work called *Vita Caroli*. Additionally, King James' great-grandson, King Peter IV of Aragon (b. 1387), also authored an autobiographical work inspired by his great-grandfather.

[2] King James of Aragon had a reign that lasted significantly longer than the average four-year rule identified in a recent study. See.Dr. Bilal Wajid, Waseem Ahmad Chishti, Imran Wajid, and Dr. Tugba Karabulut, Be Careful, for You Shall Rule but for a Little – *Data Analysis of 4000 Rulers Reveal That One Has a Short Reign Period, Usually Ending in One's Death, with One's Son Most Likely Taking over the Rule*, (September 9, 2023), SSRN, https://ssrn.com/abstract=4626711 or http://dx.doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.4626711.

> "My lord Saint James relates that faith without good works is dead. Our Lord wished this saying to be confirmed in our deeds; for though it is true that faith without works is worthless, when the two are combined they bear fruit, a fruit that God wishes to receive in his mansion. So, although the circumstances of our birth were good, there was a need for improvement in our actions. This was not because we did not have the faith in us to believe in Our Creator and His works, nor through lack of prayers to His mother to intercede for us to her Beloved Son that He might pardon the wrongs we had done Him. Rather, it was that through that very faith, He might lead us to the true salvation. Our Lord Jesus Christ, who knows all things, knew that our life would be so very long that we would be able to do a great deal of good works with the faith we had within us. Because of this, He showed us such grace and mercy that despite our many sins, both mortal and venial, He did not wish that we should receive any dishonor or harm which could shame us in the court or in any other place. Neither did He wish that we should die before we had completed these works."[3]

King James opens the *Llibre dels Fets* with a prologue that adheres to the conventional structure of medieval chronicles, beginning with an invocation of God and Christ. As a model Christian monarch, he attributes all his accomplishments and deeds to divine grace. In the ongoing parts, he explains broadly why he narrates those deeds in his work.

The similar prologue can be seen also in the autobiography of Emperor Charles IV of Holy Roman Empire. The autobiography of Emperor Charles IV which named as *Vita Caroli* written in 14th century.[4] This autobiographical work has some similarities with the *Llibre dels Fets* of King James of Aragon. A similar type of prologue can also be found in the autobiography of Emperor Charles IV of the Holy Roman Empire.[5] His *Vita Caroli*, written in the fourteenth century, shares notable parallels with King James of Aragon's *Llibre dels Fets*. In both works, the monarchs explain why they wished to set

[3]James I of Aragon, *The Book of Deeds of James I of Aragon: A Translation of the Medieval Catalan Llibre dels Fets*, trans. Damian Smith and Helena Buffery (Abingdon, UK: Routledge, 2016), 15.
[4] *Autobiography of Emperor Charles IV and His Legend of St. Wenceslas*, ed. Balázs Nagy and Frank Schaer (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2001), xiii–xviii.
[5] In the prologue of *Vita Caroli* Emperor Charles IV gives why he wanted to write his autobiography with those words: "*When you, however, reign after me, adorned with the crown of kings, remember that I also ruled before you, and have been reduced to dust and the mire of worms. In the same way you will sink, passing like a shadow and as a flower of the field.*" In a manner similar to Emperor Charles IV, King James aimed to preserve his voice for the benefit of future generations. See. *Autobiography of Charles IV and His Legend of St. Wenceslas*, ed. Balázs Nagy and Frank Schaer, 13-17.

down the story of their own lives. Much like the example provided in the *Llibre dels Fets*, Charles IV—who lived nearly a century after King James—acknowledged a comparable motivation in composing his autobiography. The fact that these two royal autobiographies, written independently of one another in different regions and times, begin with such similar introductions may be taken as evidence that this literary form was already developing recognizable conventions. While the prologue of Charles IV's *Vita Caroli* places greater emphasis on virtues and moral exhortation[6], the opening of King James's *Llibre*—though it also acknowledges his devotion to God—turns more directly toward the king's own person. In this sense similarities found in the prologues of both autobiographies may suggest a feature characteristic of the genre; yet their differences provide valuable insight into the individual character of each ruler. Whereas James composed the *Llibre* primarily to highlight his own self, the central purpose of Emperor Charles IV's autobiography was to offer admonitions to future generations, particularly stressing the importance of living as a good Christian.

> "Knowing this to be the truth and all else lies, we wished to offer our works and our thoughts and to direct and shape them to the commandments of Our Saviour. Thus, we abandoned the vanities of this world in order to obtain His kingdom. For as He tells us in the Gospel: *Qui vult venire post me, abneget semetipsum et tollat crucem suam, et sequatur me*, which means, in Catalan, that he who wishes to follow Him, should abandon his own will for that of the Lord. Recalling, moreover, the great mercies that He has done us many times in our life and, above all, towards the end of our days, we have decided to submit our will to Him. And so that all men may recognize and know, when we have passed from this mortal life, the deeds that we have done with the help of the powerful Lord, in Whom is true Trinity, we leave this book as a record for those who might wish to hear of the mercies that Our Lord has shown us, and to give an example to all the other men of this world so that they should do as we have done and place their faith in this Lord Who is so powerful."[7]

[6] In the prologue of *Vita Caroli*, Emperor Charles IV gives examples from the *Old Testament*, and he also warns his future generations about evils of seven deadly sins which are pride, greed, wrath, envy, lust, gluttony, and sloth. See. *Autobiography of Charles IV and His Legend of St. Wenceslas*, ed. Balázs Nagy and Frank Schaer, 13-17.

[7] James I of Aragon, *The Book of Deeds of James I of Aragon*, 16-17.

One of King James's primary intentions in the prologue of the *Llibre dels Fets* is for his work to serve as a moral and political example to others. The *Llibre* is not directed solely toward future kings or rulers but to a broader audience. While King James may have conceived of all as denoting those who would succeed him in positions of authority, particularly his descendants, it can be probable that he could intend the *Llibre dels Fets* to serve as his broader legacy for his subjects and the kingdom. Furthermore, the prologue of the *Llibre* reveals his expressed ambition with remembrance beyond his lifetime. Having exercised authority over an extended reign, King James appears to have been preoccupied with the possibility that his achievements might fade from collective memory.

With the *Llibre dels Fets*, King James sought to ensure that his deeds would endure in his own words, allowing future generations of his dynasty to hear his voice directly rather than through the accounts of court historians. In this sense, the *Llibre* provides not only as a record of political and military deeds but also as a conscious act of self-representing, through which King James shaped how he wished to be remembered by future generations. Beyond its overtly autobiographical character, however, the *Llibre* also provides an invaluable door into the inner world of a medieval monarch. Through his personal reflections on specific events himself, the narration of intimate experiences, and the revelation of his emotions, King James enables us to perceive dimensions of kingship that are typically concealed behind the formality of official documents or the stylization of chronicles. The text thus bridges the gap between royal *persona* and private self, offering reader a different perspective on how a king perceived his own life, actions and emotions. Despite its autobiographical style, the *Llibre* possesses a highly stratified structure. Its blend of literary expression and historical documentation presents the distinctive character of the work, positioning it as a singular source in medieval historiography.

1.1. Historical Background

Aragon, a kingdom of the Iberian Peninsula, originated as a county around the Pyrenees and developed into a kingdom in the 11th century King Ramiro I.[8] (d.1063) had ruled the county on behalf of his father, Sancho *el Mayor* (d.1035), since 1015 and served as a petty king. He accepted the supremacy of his brother in Navarre but was allowed to expand Aragon's borders into areas previously fortified by Navarre. This strategy ensured

[8] Ramiro was accepted as the first king of Aragon.

Aragon's permanent growth and increased the original county's area sixfold. In 1044, King Ramiro annexed *Sobrarbe* and *Ribagorza*, which his father had conquered to protect Christian settlements. Although he did not officially use the title of king, he assumed a leadership role in the struggle against the Muslims, preferring to be referred to as "king-like." His son Sancho Ramírez (d.1094) placed Aragon under the protection of the Pope Urbanus II; this relationship evolved into a kind of feudal agreement in 1089.[9]

A decisive turning point for the Kingdom of Aragon came with its dynastic alliance to the neighboring County of Barcelona. The marriage of Petronilla of Aragon (d. 1173), daughter of King Ramiro II, to Count Ramon Berenguer IV of Barcelona (d. 1162) united the two principal powers of the region. The marriage of Petronilla of Aragon and Count Ramon Berenguer IV of Barcelona should not be understood merely as the union of two thrones, but rather as the convergence of two distinct political entities situated in the eastern part of the Iberian Peninsula. As a result of this union, the Catalan territories and the Kingdom of Aragon—each with its own separate history and culture—were brought together. According to Adam Kosto, the marriage of Petronilla and Ramon Berenguer made possible the creation of the composite monarchy later known as the Crown of Aragon.[10] This union laid the foundation for the Crown of Aragon, which would become one of the most influential political entities in medieval Europe. Their son, Alfonso II (d. 1196), was the first monarch to inherit both Aragon and Catalonia under a single crown, transforming the kingdom from a minor Pyrenean polity into a major Mediterranean power on the border of France and Spain.

King Alfonso II of Aragon, as king of Aragon and Catalonia, turned his attention to the small counties of southern France. Thanks to the fragmented structure of southern France, he formed new alliances and shifted his expansion policy toward southern France. Ernest E. Jenkins claimed that at that time the political sphere of Barcelona was more effective than Paris itself in the southern France.[11] In response, the local nobility in southern France sought to establish alliances in order to compete effectively for social, political and commercial influence. This development rendered the region appealing to other rulers, who perceived it as a chance to fortify and extend their own political and

[9] Thomas N. Bisson, *The Medieval Crown of Aragon: A Short History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986), 11 - 12.
[10] Adam J. Kosto, "Aragon and the Catalan Counties before the Union," in *The Crown of Aragon: A Singular Mediterranean Empire*, ed. Flocel Sabaté (Leiden: Brill, 2017), 70–71.
[11] Ernest E. Jenkins, *The Mediterranean World of Alfonso II and Peter II of Aragon (1162–1213)* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 48.

social networks. The establishment of close ties between the rulers of the House of Barcelona and the nobility of Southern France commenced in the eleventh century. However, during the twelfth century, alliances between Barcelona and Toulouse caused social and political instability in the region.[12] Jerkins also highlights the policy of King Alfonso II, the first king of Barcelona from the House of Aragon, as follows: his authority in southern France and curbing the power held by Count Raymond V of Toulouse. King Alfonso II used the longstanding rivalry between his dynasty and the House of Toulouse to bolster Catalan and Aragonese engagement in southern France throughout the twelfth century. The effectiveness of these efforts allowed Alfonso II to establish a cohesive regional network that spanned both sides of the Pyrenees during the latter half of the century.[13]

One of the important developments that would increase King Alfonso II's influence in southern France was his decision to marry his heir Peter, who would later become Peter II (d. 1213) and succeed his father as King of Aragon, to Maria, Countess of Montpellier (d. 1213). According to Jerkins, this marriage united two important commercial cities of the Middle Ages. It also allowed the Kingdom of Aragon to gain more influence in southern France.[14]The marriage of Prince Peter and Marie de Montpellier occupies an important place in the *Libre*. This is because they were the parents of King James. King James described this marriage in the *Llibre* in a way that was very different from the political situation claimed by Jerkins:

> "It is certainly true that our grandfather, King Don Alfonso, negotiated marriage terms with the emperor of Constantinople[15], asking for his daughter as a wife. However, although both parties, that is to say our grandfather and the emperor, negotiated and agreed the terms, our grandfather then married Queen Sancha, who was the daughter of the emperor of Castile. The emperor of Constantinople, unaware that the marriage had taken place, sent his daughter to King Don Alfonso of Aragon, who was the count of Barcelona and marquis of Provence. And, on arriving at Montpellier, a bishop and two nobles, who had come with her, discovered that King Don Alfonso, our grandfather, had married

[12]Jenkins, *The Mediterranean World*, 49-50.
[13] *Ibid*, 49-50.
[14] *Ibid*, 49-50.
[15] Although the emperor was Manuel Comnenus, it was not his daughter but his niece who was sent to Montpellier.

> Queen Dona Sancha, daughter of the emperor of Castile. And they were greatly perplexed and worried as to what they should do, since Alfonso had taken another wife."[16]

According to King James' account, his mother's mother was the daughter of the Byzantine emperor whose name is Manuel Comnenus. However, his grandfather King Alfonso II's marriage to Princess Sancha of Castile prevented this marriage from taking place. King James' decision to begin his account with his grandmother may have been motivated by his desire to trace his lineage back to the Roman emperors.

"In this manner, William of Montpellier, on the advice of his nobles and his council, agreed to the terms and contracted the marriage. And that lady bore William of Montpellier a daughter called Maria."[17]

King James described his birth in this way, referring to his mother's lineage. Although it was contradictory, attributing his mother's lineage to the emperor was the first step in King James's efforts to create an image that would be seen in many parts of the *Llibre*:

> "Much later, a marriage was negotiated between King Don Peter, our father, and the daughter of William of Montpellier (who was lady of Montpellier and of all its territories). And she agreed that she would give her body and Montpellier with all its appurtenances. So the marriage took place and so increased her renown, for now she had the name Queen Maria.Now this William of Montpellier, who was the eldest son of William of Montpellier, fought to be lord of Montpellier, because he was the male heir. And because the dispute came before the pope, our mother, Queen Maria, went to the court of Rome to defend her rights, so that we, who were her heir, would be lord of Montpellier…And they so defended their cause before the pope that he gave them a sentence (and there was a decretal written of the sentence of the pope), judging that the children of William of Montpellier and Agnes were not children of a legal marriage (for they were begotten in adultery, William already having another wife). And the pope judged that Montpellier belonged to Queen Maria and to us, as we were her son."[18]

[16] James I of Aragon, *The Book of Deeds of James I of Aragon*,17.
[17] James I of Aragon, *The Book of Deeds of James I of Arago*n,18.
[18] *Ibid*, 18.

In the *Llibre dels Fets*, King James recounts the marriage of his parents without explicitly presenting it as a component of Aragonese royal policy. However, his mother's legal struggle in Rome to secure her rights over Montpellier can be interpreted as a subtle expression of Aragon's broader political influence in southern France. Although King James refrains from stating many of these political intentions outright, his narrative indirectly reflects the strategic posture and ambitions of both his kingdom and his dynasty. King James did not mention directly the political alliance between his parents' marriage in the *Llibre*. However, Bernat Desclot (d.?.), a court historian considered to be a contemporary of King James, directly referred to the alliance between Peter II and Marie de Montpellier with the following words:

> "Then their envoys prepared themselves and were sent to the King of Aragon. They spoke with him and made him understand that Montpellier was a noble place, the head of its territory, and that there he could hold the frontier against his enemies. The king understood their words and liked Montpellier, so he took the lady as his wife. But not long after, he left her—he did not want to be with her, nor did he wish to see her in any place where he was. For he regretted having taken her as his wife, since he was one of the highest kings in the world. And he said that he had greatly lowered himself by marrying her, for he had taken her only for the sake of Montpellier; and besides, she was not the daughter of a king. Yet this lady was of very good conduct, virtuous, and pleasing to both God and the world."[19]

In addition to the Montpellier and Aragon alliance, King Peter II, who ascended the throne after the death of his father, King Alfonso II in 1196, took his interest in southern France to a much higher level. The spread of the religious heresy of Catharism[20] in southern France allowed the northern lords of France to attack the southern lands. The Albigensian Crusade, launched under the leadership of Pope Innocent III, began to limit the dominion and political power of the Kingdom of Aragon in southern France. The

[19] Bernat Desclot, *Crònica del rey en Pere e dels seus antecessors passats*, with a preface on Catalan chroniclers by Josep Coroleu (Barcelona: Imprenta La Renaixensa, 1885), chap. IV.
[20] Catharism, a religious heresy that emerged in the 12th century, established itself in southern France and threatened France, one of the most important kingdoms of Catholic Europe, and in a way, the Church. This religious heresy also provided an opportunity for Catholic northern lords to expand southward. For more information on Catharism and the Albigensian Crusade, See.Barber, Malcolm. *The Cathars: Dualist Heretics in Languedoc in the High Middle Ages*. United Kingdom: Taylor & Francis, 2014.

crusade against southern France was led by Simon de Montfort[21] (d.1218), a northern lord in France.

In the spring of 1210, during the Albigensian Crusade in Occitanie, Simon de Montfort launched a fierce campaign to subdue the rugged and strategically vital Corbières region in the eastern Pyrenees. He captured key fortresses such as Bram, Minerve, and Termes, employing some of the most brutal methods of medieval warfare. In order to terrorize defenders, he ordered the mutilation of hundreds of prisoners and had their dismembered bodies hurled against the fortress walls as a grim warning. During the siege of Minerve, Montfort deployed a massive siege engine known as *Malevoisine*, meaning "the Damned," to destroy the stronghold's water supplies, ultimately forcing the defenders to surrender from thirst.[22] Simon de Monfort's brutal actions in the south eventually led to a confrontation between King Peter II and Simon de Montfort. On September 12, 1213, the southern nobles led by the King of Aragon and the northern crusader army led by Simon de Montfort faced each other at Muret. King Peter II died on the battlefield at the end of the Battle of Muret. In the *Llibre* King James did not fail to mention how his father entered the war with Simon de Montfort and the Battle of Muret and his father. King James was five years old during the Battle of Muret in 1203. He probably learned about the battle from the nobles who were with his father.

> "Sometimes after our birth, Simon de Montfort, who held the lands of Carcassonne and Beziers and, in Toulouse, the land that the king of France had won, wished to be friends with our father. So, he asked him to deliver us to him, that he might raise us. And our father trusted so much in him and in his love that he delivered us to be raised by him. While we were in his power, the people of those lands that we have mentioned came to our father, and they said to him that he could be lord of those lands if he wished to take them and protect them. Now, King Peter, our father, was sincere and compassionate, and because of the compassion that he felt for them, he said that he would protect them. However, they tricked him with pretty phrases. And with the one hand they gave their word, and with the other they took it away by their deeds. Those people said to him, Lord, see our

[21]He was a French noble who was the commander of the Albigensian Crusade and was the winner of the Battle of Muret. See; Elaine Graham-Leigh, *The Southern French Nobility and the Albigensian Crusade*, (United Kingdom: Boydell Press, 2005),45-48.
[22] David González Ruiz, *Breve Historia de la Corona de Aragón* (Madrid: Ediciones Nowtilus, 2012), 94–96.

> castles and our towns: take them under your protection and place your bailiffs in them. Yet when he wished to occupy them, they said to him, Lord, what are you doing turning our wives out of our houses? Both we and they are yours and will do your will. And in this way, they did not do any of the things they had promised to him. And they presented to him their wives and their daughters and their kinswomen, the most beautiful they could find, and, as they knew he was a ladies' man, they took away his better judgement and bent him to their will."[23]

In the *Llibre*, King James recounts his father's path to the Battle of Muret and its disastrous outcome with these words. In his account in the *Llibre,* it is clear that King James directly criticizes his father's policy in southern France. In fact, he also implies that his father's character was responsible for the events leading up to Muret. According to King James, his father was a man who was easily swayed by flattery and had a weakness for women. It is assumed that the Battle of Muret in 1203 was a major trauma for King James:

> "Simon de Montfort was at Muret with a good eight hundred to a thousand knights, and our father came upon him near the place where he was. With him from Aragon, there were Don Miguel de Luesia, and Don Blasco de Alagon, Don Rodrigo Lizana, Don Ladron, Don Gomez de Luna, Don Miguel de Rada, Don Guillermo de Pueyo, Don Aznar Pardo, and many others of his household…And the day that he went into battle he had lain with a lady. For we later heard his steward, who was called Gil, and was to become a brother of the Hospital, and was present there, along with others, who saw it with their own eyes, say that even at the Gospel he was unable to stand on his feet, so he sat in his seat while it was read. And before the battle Simon de Montfort wished to place himself in the king's power to do his will and wished to be reconciled with him. But our father did not wish to accept the offer. On seeing that, Count Simon and those who were inside the town confessed themselves and received the body of Jesus Christ, saying they would rather die on the battlefield than inside the town. And, with that resolve, all as one, they went out to fight. However, those on the king's side knew neither how to place order in the lines nor how to move in formation, and each noble fought for himself, and broke

[23] James I of Aragon, *The Book of Deeds of James I of Aragon*,18.

> with the rules of arms. And because of their disorder and the sin that was in them, and because they had not shown mercy to those who were inside, the battle had to be lost. And our father died there, since it has always been the custom of our line, in the battles they have fought and in which we shall fight, that either we must win or die."[24]

In the *Llibre's* account of the Battle of Muret by King James, Muret's trauma is clearly evident. King James, who mentioned that his father was with a woman before the Battle of Muret and was not spiritually prepared for war, also conveyed that the army was not prepared, just like his father. In the later sections of the *Libre,* King James emphasizes his religious feelings as he prepares for battle, stating that he is ready for battle no matter what. Although it is not clear whether King Peter was in the same situation before the battle, King James explains the outcome of the Battle of Muret through his father's failures and sins.

1.2. *The Llibre dels Fets* As the Primary Source

The *Llibre dels Fets,* dictated by King James I of Aragon in the 13th century, translates to the *Book of Deeds* in English. Far from being merely a historical chronicle, this work is regarded as a unique autobiographical account that offers direct insight into the thoughts, emotions, and political strategies of a medieval monarch.

Damian Smith and Helena Buffery, whose English translation I drew totally on in my thesis, have argued that the *Llibre* is a unique narrative of its time and how King James conveys his own voice to us in the work. This narrative work, dictated primarily in the first-person plural with occasional shifts into the first-person singular, particularly during moments of direct speech, details King James's crucial military campaigns and selected political events. Originally composed in Catalan, and only later translated into Latin by Pere Marsili[25] in 1313, the *Llibre dels Fets* can be seen as not only a cornerstone of medieval Catalan literature but also a unique historical record. Its singularity lies in the fact that its author was the king himself.[26]

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[24]James I of Aragon, *The Book of Deeds of James I of Aragon*,19-20.
[25]In 1313, James II ordered the Dominican Pere Marsili to produce a Latin translation of the *Llibre dels Fets* that would also be adapted to the style of the early XIV century. See. *Changes of Monarchical Rule in the Late Middle Ages / Monarchische Herrschaftswechsel des Spätmittelalters: Negotiations – Actors – Ambivalences / Aushandlungen – Akteure – Ambivalenzen* (Germany: *De Gruyter*, 2024).
[26] James I of Aragon, *The Book of Deeds of James I of Aragon*,5-6.

In his book *Authoring the Past: History, Autobiography, and Politics in Medieval Catalonia*, Jaume Aurell proposes that the *Llibre dels Fets* introduced a unique tradition within Catalan historiography. As one of the *Quatre Grans Cròniques*[27] ('Four Great Chronicles') produced during the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, the *Llibre* distinguishes itself through its exceptional authorship. Unlike many court-sponsored chronicles, Aurell emphasizes that this text was shaped directly by the hand of a king, in terms of both content and voice. Referring to the work as a form of royal autobiography, Aurell highlights King James's dual role as narrator and central figure within the text. He further contends that, through this autobiographical narrative, King James sought to legitimize his dynasty by fusing political authority with literary expression.[28]

The *Llibre Dels Fets* is not merely a royal autobiography. It has also been suggested that *Llibre* is one of the medieval chivalric works. The Arthurian romances that emerged in the twelfth century constituted a significant part of the medieval literary tradition. Shaped around themes such as loyalty, courage, sacrifice, and love, as found in the Arthurian legend, this tradition of romance later gave rise to its own versions across various European kingdoms.[29]

King James's *Llibre dels Fets* likewise bears certain parallels to an Arthurian romance constructed around the figure of the king himself. The heroic spirit displayed during his campaigns, together with the treatment of chivalric themes such as bravery and loyalty, situates the work within in this regard. Lourdes Soriano Robles and Nahir I. Otaño Gracia also categorize the *Llibre* as a medieval romance example. According to Robles, the first Arthurian-type romance in Aragon is King James's *Llibre dels Fets*. The reason behind Robles's interpretation lies in the similarities between the *Llibre* and the Arthurian romance tradition. In Arthurian romances, the narrative often revolves around the deeds and trials of the ideal king, which serves as a useful parallel here. Likewise, in the *Llibre*, King James seizes every opportunity to portray himself as a king constantly moving from one campaign to the next, waging battle against the evils within his realm.

Robles also emphasizes that the *Llibre* has an important place in Catalan secular historiography and adds that it served as a mirror *(speculum*) for princes and nobles.

[27] The remaining authors of the Four Great Catalan Chronicles, the first of which was produced by King James with *Llibre dels Fets*, were Bernat Desclot, Ramon Muntaner, and Peter IV of Aragon. The *Llibre* was composed in 13th century whereas others were composed in 14th century.
[28] Jaume Aurell, *Authoring the Past: History, Autobiography, and Politics in Medieval Catalonia* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2012), 46.
[29] *Handbook of Arthurian Romance: King Arthur's Court in Medieval European Literature*, ed. Ad Putter, Johnny McFadyen, Keith Busby, and Leah Tether (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2017), 20.

Robles also claims that, unlike Arthurian English works, the *Llibre* is based not on myth but on divine providence.[30] King James's the *Llibre dels Fets* is particularly significant when examined through the lens of the distinction between myth and divine providence that characterizes Arthurian romances. Whereas Arthurian narratives frequently integrate mythic elements—such as magical objects, supernatural figures, — King James's *Llibre* consistently privileges the framework of divine providence. Throughout the *Llibre*, every event that befalls the king is interpreted as part of God's overarching plan.

Although the central protagonist of the narrative is King James himself, he carefully highlights his role not as that of a hero driven by himself, but rather as an instrument carrying out the commands of the supreme power, the God. An event occurring shortly after his birth may serve as a particularly illustrative example for understanding this providential dimension of the work, underscoring how James frames his life not as a legendary tale, but as a divinely ordained mission:"And later, while we were lying in the cradle, someone threw a rock down on us through a trapdoor, and it fell near the cradle, but God wished to protect us so that we should not die."[31] The fact that God intervened to prevent grave misfortune from befalling James during infancy—precisely the stage of life when he was at his most vulnerable—serves as the most compelling proof that the king was to remain under divine providence throughout the entirety of his life.

Gracia, like Robles, argues that the *Llibre dels Fets* should be read as a work of chivalry. In his view, the text deliberately contrasts King James' reign with that of his father, situating his rule within a broader Mediterranean framework of conquest and celebrating the ideals of Catalan knighthood. It is generally accepted that Jaume dictated most of the *Llibre* at a time when his realms and courts were emerging as important political and cultural centers. The narrative strongly emphasizes the values and prestige of knighthood, aligning itself with the crusading ethos that dominated the early thirteenth century. Furthermore, the accounts of King James' conception and naming are carefully constructed to present him as a divinely chosen ruler, destined to achieve renown as a knight.[32]

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[30]Lourdes Soriano Robles, "The Matière de Bretagne in the Corona de Aragón," in *The Arthur of the Iberians: The Arthurian Legend in the Spanish and Portuguese Worlds*, ed. David Hook (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2015),165.

[31] James I of Aragon, *The Book of Deeds of James I of Aragon*,21.

[32]Nahir I. Otaño Gracia, "The Past and Future Margins of Catalonia: Language Politics and Catalan Imperial Ambitions in Guillem de Torroella's La Faula," *in Rethinking Medieval Margins and Marginality*, ed. Ann E. Zimo, Tiffany D. Vann Sprecher, Kathryn Reyerson, and Debra Blumenthal (Abingdon, UK: Routledge, 2020), 132.

On the other hand, Antonella Liuzzo Scorpo interprets the *Llibre dels Fets* as a secular form of medieval autobiography. While most autobiographical narratives from the Middle Ages were typically composed by religious figures, Scorpo argues that King James's *Llibre* can be evaluated as a rare example of a secular autobiographical narrative example. The *Llibre* depicted characteristics commonly associated with ego-documents in medieval historiography. The voice of King James is distinctly present throughout the narrative, and the king demonstrates a clear awareness of his own *persona* and authority. As Scorpo further observes, the *Llibre* is not merely a chronicle of military campaigns; it also provides insights into King James's emotional experiences, familial relationships, and even personal affections.[33]

Consequently, *Llibre dels Fets* by King James cannot be classified within a single literary or historical genre. The *Libre* can be considered as a central text in the evolution of Catalan historiography, while simultaneously reflecting the influence of twelfth-century Iberian chivalric narratives. Due to its introspective tone and emphasis on personal experience, the *Llibre* can also be regarded as both an ego-document and a hybrid chronicle. The classification of the *Llibre dels Fets* as a hybrid chronicle is closely tied to definition and characteristics of a chronicle. David Dumville,in his essasy titled, *What is Chronicle?*, characterizes the chronicle primarily as a form of historical writing organized around a specific chronological framework. He further observes that chronicles can also seek to a certain degree of universality, situating particular events within a broader period.[34] On the other hand, the *Llibre* can be defined as a hybrid chronicle because it is narrated in the first person by a king himself —an aspect that radically departs from the conventions of impersonal chronicle writing.

Yet the *Llibre* also bears the features of a chronicle, most notably in its sustained emphasis on military campaigns and political affairs, which dominate the narrative and lend it the appearance of a chronicle. At the same time, the Llibre functions as an ego-document, since it enables the reader to see King James's own selfhood. Unlike chronicles, which tend to record events without revealing the inner life of their protagonists, King James

[33] Antonella Liuzzo Scorpo, "*Emotional Memory and Medieval Autobiography: King James I of Aragon (r. 1213–76)'s Llibre dels fets,*" Journal of Medieval Iberian Studies (2016): 4-6 https://doi.org/10.1080/17546559.2016.1239832.

[34] David Dumville, "What Is a Chronicle?" *The Medieval Chronicle 2* (2002): 1–27, http://www.jstor.org/stable/45374151.

interprets the military and political episodes of his reign through the lens of his personal identity and emotions.

Whereas in a chronicle the reader would rarely, if ever, learn what a king thought after losing a battle, the *Llibre* offers precisely this insight. Its multi-layered narrative structure enables us to explore a wide range of themes, including kingship, memory, and emotional expression. Furthermore, the literary qualities of the *Llibre* in terms of its rhetorical style and narrative construction have made it an object of sustained interest within the field of literature.

1.3. The *Llibre dels Fets* as an Ego-document

One of the most distinctive features that sets the *Llibre dels Fets* apart from other works of historiography is its character as a self-narrative. Unlike the vast majority of medieval chronicles, which were composed by external authors or monastic historians recounting the deeds of kings from a third-person perspective, the *Llibre* speaks in the voice of King James himself. This first-person mode of narration changes the work into far more than a classical record of royal deeds; it becomes an autobiographical testimony in which the king consciously constructs the memory of his reign and his life.Through this autobiographical lens, the *Llibre* is able to convey not only the factual sequence of political and military events but also James's personal reflections, subjective interpretations, and emotional responses to those events.

The *Llibre dels Fets* can be approached as an autobiographical text in which King James positions himself as the central 'ego' and constructs a distinct narrative voice. Yet the concept of autobiography in the medieval period differs markedly from its modern counterpart. As John V. Fleming has argued in "*Medieval European Autobiography*, the modern genre is deeply shaped by individualism and the pursuit of uniqueness, whereas medieval self-narratives were grounded in the ideal of exemplarity. Rather than asserting a singular identity, they sought to present the self as a model for others. In this context, although King James frequently articulates personal thoughts and emotions in the *Llibre dels Fets*, the overarching purpose of the text is not the cultivation of individuality but the projection of an idealized image of kingship, achieved by demonstrating how he embodied the virtues expected of a ruler.[35] Besides, Sonja Glauch draws attention to the

[35] John V. Fleming, "Medieval European Autobiography," *in The Cambridge Companion to Autobiography*, ed. Maria DiBattista and Emily O. Wittman (Cambridge: *Cambridge University Press*, 2014), 35.

hybrid nature of medieval autobiography in her definition of the genre. According to Glauch, it is inevitable that in medieval autobiographical writing there may be discrepancies between a person's self-perception and self-representation on the one hand, and historical reality on the other. From this perspective, one may argue that although a medieval autobiography often contains a constructed or fictionalized dimension of the self, it nonetheless attests to the existence of a self. While Glauch cautions against equating medieval autobiography with the modern understanding of the genre, she nevertheless emphasizes that such works possess a distinctive spirit of their own.[36]

Llibre dels Fets can be classified as an ego-document. Ego-document was a concept that entered historical writing in the 1950s. Rudolf Dekker states that the concept of ego-document was introduced by historian Jacques Presser. Presser evaluates letters, autobiographies and diaries as unique historical sources because those kinds of primary sources have their own narrative style, and they show the owner of the document in a detailed way.[37] In Presser's description of ego-documents, the primary condition is that the self must be present within the source. Yet the presence of the subject does not necessarily require the explicit use of the pronoun "I." What matters, according to Presser, is that the existence of the self reveals itself in some form throughout the text."[38] In this respect, the *Llibre dels Fets* may be regarded as fitting Presser's concept of the ego-document. Throughout the *Llibre* itself, King James most often refers to himself not in the first-person singular, but rather in the first-person plural, using "we" as the narrative voice.

In accordance with Presser's delineation of the concept of an 'ego-document', it can be deduced that King James's *Llibre* exhibits characteristics consistent with the definition of an ego-document. Because, in the *Llibre*, the subject of the literary work is King James, who presents his own self, albeit idealized way. Accordingly, readers are able to construct an opinion regarding King James's self-perception, as evidenced by the *Llibre*.

[36] Sonja Glauch, "'Medieval Autobiography'?" in *Handbook of Autobiography/Autofiction, Volume I: Theory and Concepts*, ed. Martina Wagner-Egelhaaf (Boston: De Gruyter, 2018), 710-714.
[37] According to Rudolf Dekker's article, "*Jacques Presser's Heritage: Ego-Documents in the Study of History*," P. Spigt noted that Presser first introduced the concept of ego-documents in a bachelor's course he taught during the 1956–1957 academic year. See. Rudolf Dekker, "Jacques Presser's Heritage: Ego-Documents in the Study of History," trans. Diederik van Werven, *Memoria y Civilización* 5 (2002): 13–37.
[38]Rudolf Dekker, ed., *Egodocuments and History: Autobiographical Writing in Its Social Context Since the Middle Ages* (*Hilversum*: Verloren, 2002), 7–8.

1.4. Main Theme and Methodology of the Thesis

The *Llibre dels Fets*, an exemplary work of medieval autobiography, has been examined throughout this thesis with particular emphasis on as an ego-document. The main theme of the thesis is to depict how King James, through the *Llibre*, sought both to present his human side and to construct the image of ideal medieval kingship. By examining him simultaneously as the head of a dynasty, as a king in the public sphere, and as an individual capable of emotional expression, the thesis argues that the text operates on multiple levels of self-representation.Selections from the *Llibre dels Fets* have been chosen and analyzed in accordance with themes of thesis, with these episodes contextualized and supported by relevant secondary works. In this way, the narrative moments that King James himself chose to recount are not treated in isolation but are interpreted as deliberate elements in the broader project of shaping royal identity.

In doing so, the thesis tries to show the dual nature of *the Llibre dels Fets*: it is at once a record of rulership intended to legitimize King James's kingly authority and a deeply personal narrative that exposes the tensions and aspirations of a medieval monarch reflecting on his own life.

The first chapter of this thesis examines King James I's relationship with his dynasty, with a particular focus on the representation of familial dynamics in the *Libre dels Fets*. Particular attention is given to the narrative treatment of his two wives, assessing the extent to which the king's portrayal reflects contemporary ideals of queenship and royal marriage. The role of the queen within the framework of medieval kingship is also examined in this chapter, along with how James perceived and represented it. Alongside his wives, the chapter also examines James's interactions with his children and extended family, considering both the frequency of their appearances and the attitudes he adopts toward them. Equally significant are the silences in the narrative—children neglected or scarcely mentioned—which may reflect the king's priorities or political calculations. Through a close reading of these familial representations, the section seeks to illuminate the personal, dynastic, and symbolic functions of kinship in James's self-narrative.

The second chapter examines how King James fashioned his royal identity in the public sphere through the *Llibre dels Fets*. Beyond its autobiographical dimension, the text is treated as a medium for projecting an idealized image of kingship. The chapter begins with an analysis of James's relationship with the nobility, focusing on how he asserted authority and legitimacy through selected narrative episodes. It then turns to his

depiction of interactions with ordinary subjects, considering the foundations of royal–subject relations as presented in the *Llibre*. Particular attention is devoted to the interplay between punitive justice and royal mercy, which emerges as a defining theme in James's public self-representation.

The third chapter explores the role of emotion in the *Llibre dels Fets,* analyzing how King James articulated his feelings through concrete actions. It further considers which emotions receive the greatest emphasis and investigates the narrative purposes underlying their prominence.

Particular attention is given to the theme of royal anger (*ira regis*) examining the contexts in which this emotion was invoked and its role in establishing authority. The chapter also evaluates how acts of weeping and laughter functioned both as personal expressions and as performative instruments for constructing royal identity. Through an analysis of these emotional displays, this study seeks to illuminate the dynamics of King James's emotional self-representation.

CHAPTER I

King James's Formation of His Ideal Royal Identity as Head of the Dynasty

2.1. King James of Aragon's Marriages and His Relationships with His Wives

Llibre dels Fets can also be evaluated as a good source on how a medieval king perceived his wife. The presence of the queen was of vital importance for the continuity of the dynasty and the formation of alliances. Whom a king married could directly determine the future of his dynasty. A king's marriage was directly related to the political purpose of the dynasty. Accounts about royal marriages in chronicles are mostly given in a standardized way, unless marked by scandal.[39] Queens are typically portrayed only as bearers of heirs, with little insight into the king's feelings toward them. The *Llibre*, however, is unique—it reveals a king's personal view of his wives in his inner world.

King James of Aragon had two wives and numerous mistresses throughout his life. In the *Llibre dels Fets,* King James of Aragon tried to avoid giving many details about his lovers or mistresses. His first wife, Eleanor of Castile (d. 1244), is mentioned in the *Llibre dels Fets* during King James's first period after his accession to the throne. In *Llibre dels Fets*, King Jaime gives the most detailed information about his beloved wife Yolande (d.1251), daughter of King Andrew II of Hungary.

King James included his relationships with his wives in his attempt to describe the ideal through dualities, as he did in many parts of the *Llibre*. Before discussing King James' relationships with his wives in depth, it is worth examining what queenship meant in the medieval period. Susan Earenfight emphasizes how medieval queenship is complex compared to medieval kingship. She assert that queenship is somehow a combination of many roles and queens were consorts of kings, or some of them were

[39] Scandals and conflicts between kings and queens could be seen in chronicles. One of the most well-known examples is Eleanor of Aquitaine (d. 1024), who was first queen of France and later queen of England. Married to King Louis VII of France, Eleanor's desire for divorce and her subsequent marriage to King Henry II of England were narrated by contemporary chronicles. See. Aude Defurne and Anke Gilleir, *Strategic Imaginations: Women and the Gender of Sovereignty in European Culture* (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2020), 159–180, https://dx.doi.org/10.1353/book.80817.

regnant or regent. Also, queens could be native or foreigner.[40] Robert Bartlett emphasizes the main role of the medieval queen as producing heirs and continuing the king's or dynasty's lineage.[41]

At first glance, the role of queenship in the Middle Ages appears primarily tied to dynastic continuity—through the production of male heirs and the forging of political alliances. Yet King James's *Llibre dels Fets* offers a rare perspective on how a medieval king perceived and represented his wife.

In the first chapters of *Llibre dels Fets,* King James narrates how he decided to marry his first wife, Eleanor of Castile:

> "A year and a half after we had gone from that place, Queen Doña Berenguela, mother of King Don Ferdinand, proposed a marriage between us and her sister who was called Doña Eleanor. Both of them were children of Don Alfonso. And these were the sons and daughters of King Don Alfonso: Queen Doña Blanca, who was the wife of King Louis of France, son of King Philip; and another daughter was Doña Berenguela, the wife of the king of León, who was called Alfonso, and was the father of King Ferdinand; and another was Doña Urraca, who was queen of Portugal, and the other was Doña Eleanor, whom we took as our wife."[42]

In this part, King James of Aragon directly told why he had to have a wife. In spite of his young age, he was aware that without having an heir, he could not sustain his lineage and a situation that could endanger his life could cause the kingdom to fall into uncertainty. King James's marriage to the Castilian princess does not appear to differ significantly from a conventional dynastic union. In particular, within the Iberian Peninsula, it was quite customary for royal marriage policies to involve the exchange of brides among neighboring dynasties. Besides, the decision of King James to marry at a rather young age may have been influenced by the condition of his parents.

King James of Aragon's parents were King Peter (d.1213) and Marie de Montpellier (d. 1213). King James was the sole child of the royal couple.

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[40] Theresa Earenfight, *Medieval Queenship* (Seattle: Seattle University, 2017).
[41] Robert Bartlett, *Blood Royal: Dynastic Politics in Medieval Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020), 8.
[42] James I of Aragon, *The Book of Deeds of James I of Aragon*,56-57.

As mentioned before, the marriage of King Peter II and Marie de Montpellier was a totally political move in terms of the Kingdom of Aragon and the County of Montpellier. King Peter's ambition was to expand his sphere to southern France, while Marie de Montpellier wanted to secure her fragile position in the tumultuous situation of southern France. However, this political marriage would be interrupted two years later by King Peter's wish to divorce his wife. According to Ernest E. Jerkins' argument, King Peter's changing policies in southern France were aimed at ending his alliance with Montpellier through divorce. On the other hand, Queen Marie de Montpellier wanted to continue her marriage to Aragon in order to counter powerful realms such as Toulouse.[43] In the *Llibre dels Fets*, King James downplays the political context of his parents' marriage, instead attributing the discord between King Peter and Queen Marie of Montpellier to his father's attachment to a mistress. He further links their troubled union to the account of his own miraculous birth, presenting it as part of a providential narrative. As elsewhere in the text, James underscores that he was brought into the world under seemingly impossible circumstances, portraying himself as 'special' in the eyes of God.

> "Now we will relate the manner of our conception and our birth. Firstly, the manner of our conception: Our father, King Don Peter, did not wish to see the queen, our mother. And it happened that one time the king, our father, was at Lattes, and the queen, our mother, was at Mireval. But a noble by the name of Guillermo de Alcalá came to the king and besought him so insistently that he persuaded him to go to Mireval, where the queen, our mother, was staying. That night when they were both at Mireval, Our Lord willed that we should be conceived. When the queen, our mother, found out that she was pregnant, she went to Montpellier. And here Our Lord willed us to be born in the house of the Tornamira, on the eve of Our Lady Saint Mary of Candlemas."[44]

The miraculous birth of King James of Aragon, together with the circumstances surrounding his parents' union and the counsel of his nobles, may be regarded as key

[43] Jenkins, *The Mediterranean World*, 152-153.
[44] James I of Aragon, *The Book of Deeds of James I of Aragon*,44-45. Apart from *Llibre dels Fets*, this story was also narrated by later chronicles in the Kingdom of Aragon. Bernat Desclot's Cronica gave us a more detailed version of this story.

factors contributing to his early marriage to Princess Eleanor of Castile. King James was also aware of his early marriage. Surprisingly, he gave very private details about the early stage of his marriage:

"We must then have been at least twelve and were entering upon our thirteenth year, so we were a full year with her without being able to do what men should do with their wives, because we were not old enough."[45]

This interesting and private detail about the life of King James in *Llibre dels Fets* can be seen as the sincerity of King James or the complex way of memorizing the past. However, this detail can also be seen as evidence that King James listened to the advice of his nobles and made efforts to ensure the continuation of his dynasty, even though he was unable to produce an heir. At the same time, King James may have also implicitly states that even if he were married at this point, he did not yet have the ability to produce an heir, which posed a threat to the dynasty.

The marriage between Eleanor and James was also a political move for the Kingdom of Castile. Castilian Queen Berengaria of Castile was one of the early examples of queen regnant in the Middle Ages. "His brother King Enrique's tragic end"[46] made her queen of Castile. Queen Berengaria was the wife of King Alfonso IX of Leon (d.1230), and their son Ferdinand (d. 1252) would unite two thrones. Queen Berengaria tried to consolidate her power and her son's power by arranging a marriage between her sister Eleanor and King James of Aragon. According to H. Salvador Martinez, the marriage between Princess Eleanor and King James of Aragon was not popular among Castilian nobility and clergy. He also emphasizes that Castilian bishops did not attend the wedding ceremony of King James and Princess Eleanor of Castile. Because both King James and Princess Eleanor were the descendants of King Alfonso VIII of Castile (d. 1214).[47] This consanguinity between them would give reason to King James divorce Eleanor eight years later after their marriage.

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[45]James I of Aragon, *The Book of Deeds of James I of Aragon*,58.

[46]In *Llibre dels Fets*, King James narrated the death story of his late brother-in-law: "Of the sons that King Don Alfonso had, one was called Prince Don Ferdinand, and the other was called Henry, who was afterwards king of Castile. Prince Don Ferdinand died before his father, King Don Alfonso. Later, when King Don Alfonso died, Henry was made king. Yet, whilst playing a game with some youths, whom he himself had divided into two teams, one of those playing in that game threw a tile at his head. And he had positioned himself with his team against their opponents on a hill, which represented a castle, and he was wounded there, and he died from that blow. So, the kingdom remained in the hands of Dona Berenguela, whose son was Don Ferdinand, King of Castile. See James I of Aragon, *The Book of Deeds of James I of Aragon*,59.

[47]H. Salvador Martínez, *Berenguela the Great and Her Times (1180–1246)*, trans. Odile Cisneros, abridged ed., The Medieval and Early Modern Iberian World, vol. 81 (Leiden: Brill, 2021),451.

The divorce of King James of Aragon and Queen Eleanor of Castile took place in 1229. The divorce of the king and the queen was not a common phenomenon in the Middle Ages. Marriage as an institution is divine and the bond between husband and wife should not be separated. In Christianity, it is stated many times in the New Testament that the marriage bond is made before God and cannot be annulled.

> "The Creator made them male and female and said, 'For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh. So, they are no longer two, but one flesh. Therefore, what God has joined together, let no one separate."[48]

This quotation from "*Matthew*" explains how Christianity perceives the marriage bond. Despite the Catholic Church's firm opposition to the annulment of marriage, medieval monarchs often sought papal dispensation by presenting a range of justifications to legitimize the annulment of their unions. In the Middle Ages, kings had two primary avenues through which they could seek the dissolution of their marriages. One of the most commonly invoked exceptions was consanguinity, which allowed kings to claim that their union violated canonical prohibitions against marrying close kin. Given the dense network of intermarriages among European noble houses, such claims were often feasible, as dynasties were frequently bonded by blood within a few degrees of kinship. Bartlett argues that while the Church was the sole authority regulating the institution of marriage, its regulations were also exceedingly restrictive. Especially after the late eleventh century, as the Church's power expanded, the issue of consanguinity extended well beyond first cousins. Under the strict rules of consanguinity imposed by the Church, even second, third, and fourth cousins were prohibited from marrying. [49] The series of rules laid on by the Church to restrict cousin marriage inevitably complicated the dynamics of dynastic marriages. At the same time, these rules about consanguinity often provided kings with a means of dissolving unwanted marriages. King James himself made use of this opportunity in order to repudiate his first wife.

The annulment of marriage between King James and Queen Eleanor was because of this consanguinity. Sara McDougall, also in her work *Royal Bastards,* claimed that the annulment reason for the marriage between King James and Queen

[48] *The Holy Bible*, New International Version (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2011), Matthew 19:4–5.
[49] Bartlett, *Blood Royal*, 44.

Leonor was consanguinity.[50] By 1229, another case of consanguineous marriage had emerged between James I of Aragon and Eleanor of Castile, who were both descended from their common great-grandfather, Alfonso VII of Castile. This marriage was annulled by Pope Gregory IX in 1230, but only after it had lasted for a decade. The annulment of the marriage appears to have been initiated by King James himself, as there is no evidence of earlier papal attempts to dissolve the marriage or of any dispensation being requested prior to their union. In fact, the marriage appears to have remained unchallenged until James actively sought and secured its annulment.

Surprisingly, in the *Llibre dels Fets* King James makes no mention of the annulment of his marriage to Queen Eleanor of Castile. Nevertheless, the text suggests that his decision to dissolve the union was not based solely on consanguinity. An anecdote concerning his first wife provides possible insight into more personal motives. In the winter of 1224, shortly after their marriage, King James and Queen Eleanor faced a rebellion led by the nobility. King James recounts in detail how the rebels besieged him at *Alagón* and the intense anger he felt as a result. During the assault, King James and Queen Eleanor, together with a group of loyal nobles, devised an escape plan to avoid capture. This episode, as narrated in the *Llibre dels Fets*, hints at the complex interplay of political crisis, personal experience, and marital relations that may have shaped James's later decision to annul the marriage:

> "We went to see the queen, and we said to her well do we recognize and observe the harm and shame that you and we have received, and although we may be a child, we will avenge us both, if you wish. And we continued: In this chamber there is a trap door. We shall take two ropes, and we will set you on a board and we will lower you down from there. And on the night, we are going to do it we shall send word to Don Artal that he should come here with his men, and when we know that he is here, you will go out through the gate and Don Artal will go with you, and I will remain here at Zaragoza. For I dare do nothing now in case they mistreat you, but as soon you have left from here, I will seek to have words with Don Ferdinand, or Guillem de Montcada, or Don Pedro Ahones, and I will say to them that what they have done against us was treason; and I will mount a horse and take up

[50]Sara McDougall, *Royal Bastards: The Birth of Illegitimacy, 800–1230* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 267. See especially the chapter titled "*Saint Fernando III: The Bastard King of León.*"

> arms; and I will do it in such a manner that they will be unable to avoid me killing one of them. And we do not believe that they will catch us; since we reckon we shall have such a good horse that we need have no fear of them pursuing us for long."[51]

King James's response to the rebellion, as reflected in multiple parts of the *Llibre dels Fets*, reveals a tone of vengeance and a firm resolve to subdue his enemies, even if force is required. Despite his determination to escape and retaliate, Queen Eleanor opposed his plan, suggesting a divergence in their approaches to the crisis. In the *Llibre dels Fets* King James narrated the Queen's response to King James with those words; "...you must know that not for anything in the world would I be lowered from here with a rope and a board."[52]

The queen's refusal to support King James's escape plan ultimately caused his strategy against the rebellious nobles to collapse. It is plausible that King James's recollection of Eleanor in the *Llibre dels Fets* reflects the personal tensions that contributed to the dissolution of their marriage. The detailed narration of this episode, juxtaposed with the silence surrounding the annulment elsewhere in the chronicle, may reveal King James's lingering resentment or disappointment toward his first wife. As Emma Snowden has observed in her work "*Women as Frontier-Makers in the Llibre dels Fets of James I of Aragon*," Queen Eleanor of Castile ultimately proved an ill-suited consort, since her conduct during a decisive moment of crisis appeared to weaken rather than reinforce King James's authority. She also gave the same example, and she also argues that this case occurring between King James and Queen Eleanor paved the way for the annulment of their marriage.[53]

Ultimately, the marriage between King James and Queen Eleanor functioned as a conventional dynastic alliance, but it lacked the personal and political compatibility that King James evidently desired. In his eyes, Eleanor did not embody the qualities of the "ideal wife". Even queen Eleanor fulfilled one of the principal duties of queenship—the securing of dynastic continuity—by giving birth to Prince Alfonso in 1222. Yet King James's expectations of his consort may be regarded as extending well beyond the mere provision of an heir. For a monarch as ambitious and self-conscious as

[51]James I of Aragon, *The Book of Deeds of James I of Aragon*,38-39.
[52]*Ibid*, 39-39.
[53]Emma Snowden, "Women as Frontier Makers in the *Llibre dels Fets* of James of Aragon," *Journal of Medieval Iberian Studies* 8, no. 1 (2016): 2–3. https://doi.org/10.1080/17546559.2015.1111460.

King James himself, she emerges in the *Llibre dels Fets* less as a partner rather than as a source of disappointment and constraint. Such sentiments likely informed his decision to dissolve the marriage, even as he invoked consanguinity as the formal canonical justification.

After annulment of his marriage, King James of Aragon married again. In the *Llibre dels Fets* King James also gave details how he chose his new bride:

> "And we said, Now then, do you want us to say how we think we can take it? We did not have a wife, and they spoke to us of marriage with the daughter of the king of Hungary and with the daughter of the duke of Austria, and the pope sought to arrange it. Yet we have taken for a wife the daughter of one of the most honored kings of the world; for, though they wished to give us the daughter of the duke of Austria, we would not take her for all her riches, because we preferred the daughter of the king of Hungary. If we were given the daughter of the King of Castile Don Alfonso, when we were not so powerful, surely it is only right that, being even more powerful now, we should take as a wife the daughter of a king."[54]

The new bride was the Yolande of Hungary (d. 1251).[55] King James of Aragon and Princess Yolande of Hungary married in 1235. Queen Yolande is the most frequently mentioned woman in King James's autobiographical account, her presence and involvement recurring across a wide range of episodes. This repeated emphasis suggests a relationship that exceeded the conventional expectations of queenship. Far from functioning solely as a dynastic consort whose primary duty was the production of heirs, Queen Yolande emerges as an active and influential figure in King James's life. A supportive queen, as King James portrays her, constituted an integral element of his broader strategy of conquest. Indeed, shortly after their marriage, he began bringing her along to newly subdued territories, underscoring both her symbolic and practical role in consolidating royal authority. In the *Llibre dels Fets*, he narrates bringing Queen Yolande with him during the capture of Borriana in the Majorcan campaign in 1230,

[54]James I of Aragon, *The Book of Deeds of James I of Aragon*,139.

[55]Through the mediation of Pope Gregory IX, Don Jaime was betrothed to Yolanda, known in Spanish sources as Violante, the daughter of King Andrew II of Hungary and granddaughter of Peter of Courtenay, Latin Emperor of Constantinople. The dowry of Yolande consisted of 10,000 silver marks and her claims to territories in France and Namur, although these territorial claims were never realized. See. Francis Darwin Swift, *Vida y La Época de Jaime El Conquistador* (Madrid: Tipografía de la Revista de Archivos, 1891), 112.

interpreting her presence not merely as symbolic, but as a demonstration of his resolve and legitimacy in the eyes of both his followers and his enemies.

> "When we have taken Borriana, we will have the queen, our wife goes there, so that the people understand that we are determined to stay there. And those castles that are beyond, such as Peniscola, Cervera, Xivert, Polpis, les Coves de Vinroma, Alcalaten, Morella, Culla and Ares, which depend on the provisions of the fields of Borriana, and will stand between us and the land of the Christians, all of them will have to surrender."[56]

King James's memoirs in the *Llibre* make no mention of the number of children borne by Queen Yolande, nor do they allude to any conflicts between the royal couple. Instead, in the *Llibre dels Fets,* King James gave us an idealized image of Queen Yolande, portraying her not merely as a queen consort but as a trusted advisor and a key figure in King James's broader strategy of conquest. Her consistent presence in the *Llibre dels Fets* presents her symbolic and practical importance within the framework of royal authority and political stability. Marta VanLandingham also notes that the image of Queen Yolande was model-queenship for a king and the Queen herself was the chief advisor for King James.[57]Queen Yolande's consistent presence alongside King James during his military campaigns and political affairs marks a significant contrast with his first wife, Eleanor of Castile. Whereas the *Llibre dels Fets* frequently conveys King James's dissatisfaction with Eleanor, it also highlights his appreciation for Queen Yolande's companionship and support. This distinction is further emphasized through language: while Queen Eleanor is typically referred to in formal terms as "the queen," Yolande is more intimately described as "my wife," suggesting a closer personal and political bond between the king and his second consort. Queen Yolande's evident political acumen likely played a central role in earning King James's enduring trust.

Queen Yolande's influence extended beyond that of a traditional consort offering counsel; she actively intervened in moments of political tension and helped

[56]James I of Aragon, *The Book of Deeds of James I of Aragon,*140.
[57]Martha VanLandingham explores the evolving portrayal of Queen Yolande, the wife of King James I, in later Catalan chronicles. While Bernat Desclot and Ramon Muntaner emphasize Yolande's beauty and virtuous character, presenting her as an idealized queenly figure, the depiction in King James's own Llibre dels Fets is notably different. There, Yolande emerges not merely as a consort but as a trusted political companion, whose unwavering presence during military campaigns and internal conflicts underscores her role as a key advisor. See also: Martha VanLandingham, *Queenship in Medieval and Early Modern Spain*, Royal Portraits: Representations of Queenship in Thirteenth Century Catalan Chronicles.109-110.

steer the king through periods of instability. One of the most notable instances of Yolande's diplomatic involvement was her mediation during the conflict between King James and his son-in-law, King Alfonso X of Castile (d. 1284), who had married their daughter, Princess Violant (d. 1301). The land dispute between King Alfonso X of Castile and King James I of Aragon can be seen as a unique example of Queen Yolande's role as a mediator between her husband and son-in-law. The dispute intensified following King Alfonso's seizure of the town of *Xàtiva*, which provoked considerable anger on King James's part. Amid this tension, Yolande intervened diplomatically to ease hostilities, exemplifying her capacity to manage inter-dynastic conflicts and preserve political alliances within the dynasty.[58] Following the occupation of Xàtiva by Alfonso, who at that time had not yet ascended to the Castilian throne, a meeting took place between him and King James.

In the *Llibre dels Fets*, Queen Yolande is portrayed as making repeated efforts to mediate the dispute, engaging in multiple conversations with her son-in-law in an attempt to ease tensions. However, as the conflict remained unresolved and negotiations stalled, Queen Yolande adopted another strategy. In *Llibre dels Fets* King James narrated this situation:

> "Thereupon I ordered my horses to be saddled and the mules to be loaded; the Queen took to weeping and said, In an evil hour was I born, since I came here to make it up between my husband and my son-in-law, and I see them separate on such bad terms! The Infante was told that I meant to go away and had ordered me to saddle. When I had saddled, there came the Master of Uclés and Don Diego de Vizcaya and said to me, King of Aragon, is it for your good to rage so greatly? I answered, There is no man in the world, however temperate, but you would put in a rage; you do everything with such haughtiness and pride; you imagine that everything you wish for should be immediately granted. They said to the Queen: Lady, do you speak to your husband and tell him not to depart while he is in passion; we will go to Don

[58]King James narrated this dispute with those words and he also emphasizes the kinship between King Alfonso X and himself; "...month after this news was brought to me, that Enguera and Muxent had surrendered to the Infante Don Alfonso; at which I wondered greatly that he should take anything in the dominion of Xativa, the conquest of which belonged by right to me; the more so that we were already related and that my daughter was his wife.See. James I of Aragon:*The Book of Deeds of James I of Aragon*,160.

> Alfonso, and the separation shall not be as it is now.The Queen, weeping, prayed for me to consider and not take to horse; she would go to Don Alfonso, and they would arrange matters to my satisfaction and his."[59]

Queen Yolande also functioned as an active participant in the king's military endeavors. Her presence alongside James during the Valencian campaign in 1238 and his expressed unwillingness to make strategic decisions without first consulting her display the significance of her role.

According to King James's own account, Yolande was not a passive consort but an essential partner in his strategy of conquest and an active presence during his campaigns. In the *Llibre dels Fets,* he recounts in epic fashion how he urgently summoned her to join him in the field and how she awaited his arrival on the ramparts, a scene that display her symbolic and emotional significance within his narrative of kingship:

> "Meanwhile, we sent two knights to the queen, telling her that she should come quickly, as Our Lord had shown us such grace and mercy that he had given us the castle of Almenara, and she would be better off and more comfortable there than at Borriana. When the message reached her, she had already prepared to eat, so she said that she would come after she had eaten. And it was in Lent. But the knights said, The king orders you to come, as he has dinner prepared, and you will dine better and more merrily there with him than you would do here. When she heard that, she left her meal. And we waited there until she arrived, then we went out to the slopes at the foot of the castle, and we and she entered the castle happily and ate with great joy."[60]

King James generally considers his political agenda when expressing his emotions in the *Llibre.* However, the fact that he expresses his desire to be with his wife in such a sincere manner can be interpreted as a reflection of King James' trust and affection for his queen, Yolande. As Emma Snowden argues, Queen Yolande played an active role in King James's military campaigns and was, in fact, the only individual upon whom the king could place complete trust. Queen Yolande's form of co-rulership

[59]James I of Aragon, *The Book of Deeds of James I of Aragon,* 161-162. As in this part of *Llibre* , King James may be implicitly presenting an idealized model of royal conduct. The king is portrayed as a figure who asserts authority and expresses righteous anger in the face of provocation, while the queen's role is framed as one of mediation and emotional restraint.

[60]James I of Aragon, *The Book of Deeds of James I of Aragon*,213.

differed significantly from the model later adopted by queens-lieutenant. Instead of governing in the king's absence from the royal court, she actively reinforced his authority in newly conquered regions, transforming military encampments into extensions of royal power. In this way, Queen Yolande embodied and asserted royal presence in contested territories, playing a crucial role in consolidating King James's sovereignty over former Islamic lands.[61]

Queen Yolande died in 1251. There is no mention in *Llibre* of the queen's death or of any grief expressed by King James. Why King James did not include any mention of his beloved wife in his *Llibre* remains an open question.

2.2 Royal Fatherhood: King James's Attitude Toward His Children

A king's foremost duty to his dynasty was to guarantee its continuation, and the birth of a male heir was a crucial measure of dynastic stability. For a medieval king, the existence of his children was equal to power of king's political strength. Both royal sons and daughters can be considered as a protection of dynastic power. Consequently, the alignment of each child's role with the king's broader political objectives is not a matter of chance but an essential concern. The fatherhood of a king extended far beyond the private sphere of family life; it preserves a fundamental pillar of kingship itself, intertwining dynastic fatherhood with the strategic imperatives of governance. Understanding a king's true feelings toward his children is usually difficult. Official letters may hint at his views, but their rigid style seldom reflects genuine emotion. In contrast, King James's the *Llibre dels Fets* offers remarkable and vivid insight into how a medieval ruler perceives his children, revealing an unusually personal side of royal fatherhood.

King James's first marriage, to Queen Eleanor of Castile, reflects his early awareness of this imperative. As recounted in the *Llibre dels Fets*, the union was primarily strategic: through Eleanor, James sought to secure the legitimacy of his rule and ensure the future succession of his line.[62]

For a medieval king, children fulfilled multiple dynastic and political functions. The production of offspring—especially male heirs—was of paramount importance to both the dynasty and the realm. The birth of healthy sons not only secured succession but also enhanced the queen's standing at court, binding her identity more firmly to her

[61]Snowden, "*Women as Frontier Makers*," 3.
[62]James I of Aragon, *The Book of Deeds of James I of Aragon*,56-57.

husband's kingdom rather than to her natal lineage. While sons ensured the continuity of the dynasty, daughters played an equally vital role in shaping future alliance policies through strategic marriages.

King James I of Aragon fathered numerous children, both within and outside of wedlock, though the precise number remains uncertain. This ambiguity is largely due to his numerous extramarital relationships, which produced a significant number of illegitimate offspring. The lack of comprehensive contemporary records further complicates efforts to determine an exact count. Francisco Saulo Rodríguez Lajusticia's study, "*La relación de Jaime I de Aragón con sus hijos en los registros de cancillería (1257–1276),"* provides one of the most detailed accounts of James's children[63], compiling a thorough list of both his legitimate and illegitimate sons and daughters based on chancellery records. However, King James does not unfortunately offer detailed accounts of each in the *Llibre dels Fets*. In fact, several of his children are not mentioned at all, while some are referenced only briefly or in passing. The reasons for this selective representation remain unclear, raising questions about the criteria King James employed in choosing which of his offspring to acknowledge more prominently in his narrative.

2.2.1. The Relationship Between King James of Aragon and His Sons

King James considered it appropriate to mention his legitimate sons often in the *Llibre*. When his heirs, Prince Peter and Prince James, came of age, they were in contact with the king during his military campaigns and other administrative matters. However, Prince Alfonso (b. 1260), the son of the king's first wife, Queen Eleanor, was mentioned only briefly in the *Llibre* despite being the first heir until his death. One of the most immediate explanations for King James's omission of his son from his first marriage in the *Llibre dels Fets* may be the dissolution of his union with Queen Eleanor of Castile. Notably, upon their separation, Queen Eleanor returned to Castile and took their son, Prince Alfonso, with her. This act may have contributed to a sense of political and personal distance that influenced James's decision to exclude or minimize references to

[63] According to the records compiled by Francisco Saulo Rodríguez Lajusticia, King James I's legitimate children include the following: by Queen Eleanor of Castile: Alfonso (d. 1260); by Yolande of Hungary: Violant (d. 1301), Constanza (d. 1269), Pedro (d. 1285), Jaime (d. 1311), Fernando (d. 1250), Sancha (d. 1262/75?), María (d. 1267), Isabel (d. 1271), and Sancho (d. 1275); and by Teresa Gil de Vidaure: Jaime de Jérica (d. 1288) and Pedro de Ayerbe (d. 1318). His known illegitimate children include by Blanca de Antillón: Fernando Sánchez de Castro (d. 1275); and by Berenguela Fernández: Pedro Fernández de Híjar (d. 1297). See. Francisco Saulo Rodríguez Lajusticia, *La relación de Jaime I de Aragón con sus hijos en los registros de cancillería* (1257–1276) (Zaragoza: Institución Fernando el Católico, 2005).29.

Prince Alfonso in the *Llibre*. In the *Llibre dels Fets*, King James of Aragon mentioned his son when he was meeting with King Sancho VII of Navarre (d. 1234) for a treaty. According to the treaty between King James and King Sancho VII:

> "He stated that he would accept this agreement. He would consider my son and me as a single entity, meaning that if he were to die before me, his kingdom and all his lands would pass to me; but if both my son Don Alfonso and I were to die, then my kingdom and lands would pass to him (King Sancho). He also declared that his men would swear loyalty to me, and mine would do the same to him, thereby ensuring the validity and enforcement of the agreement and its related documents."[64]

We can assume that King James recognized his son Alfonso as his legal heir in this agreement with King Sancho. However, there is no evidence that Crown Prince Alfonso participated in any of King James' military campaigns. Like his mother, Queen Eleanor, Prince Alfonso had fallen out of favor with King James and was excluded from the king's memories but in the chancellery documents of Aragon, it could be seen that the inheritance rights of Prince Alfonso were secured by his father King James of Aragon.

> "To Lord Alfonso, Infante of Aragon:
>
> We have written to the nobles, knights, alcaldes, citizens of Valencia, and to all the people of the castles and towns throughout the Kingdom of Valencia, instructing them to swear loyalty and do homage to you, that after our death they should hold you and your heirs as their king and natural lord. We have absolved them from the oath and homage which, by our order, they had previously sworn to Infante James, our son, and for this absolution we have had a legal instrument drawn up and sealed with our great seal. Therefore, we ask, declare, and firmly command you to swear to them in return that you will uphold their fueros (privileges), customs, and current coinage, in accordance with the document we issued to that effect, and that you will recognize all grants and sales made to them by us or by anyone else up to now or in the future."[65]

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[64] James I of Aragon, *The Book of Deeds of James I of Aragon*,91.
[65]James I of Aragon, Registros de Cancillería, reg. 9, fol. 31 (August 29, 1257), ACA. Published by Antonio Huici Miranda, Colección diplomática de Jaime I de Aragón, vol. III (Zaragoza: Anubar, 1967),

This passage depicts that King James of Aragon granted his eldest son newly conquered Valencia and even though the prince lived far from his father, King James showed his son his gratitude. The death of Prince Alfonso in 1260 changed the succession decision of King James of Aragon because after the death of Prince Alfonso, Prince Peter became crown prince.

In the *Llibre dels Fets*, King James never narrated about when they were born and never gave any information about their personal lives. One of the most notable instances in which King James directly addressed his sons, Prince Peter and Prince James, occurred during the Murcia campaign in 1265. At this stage, both royal princes participated as adult members of the royal army. In the *Llibre dels Fets*, King James recounts delivering a brief yet powerful speech to his sons, reminding them of their lineage and the expectations placed upon them:

> "Sons, you know whence you come and who your father is; do behave in arms this day so that all the world may say who you are and of whom you come; if not, I declare before God that I will take away what I gave you. In response, both Don Pedro and Don Jaime pledged to act in a manner worthy of their father and their royal heritage, affirming that they would not merit such punishment."[66]

This passage from the *Llibre dels Fets* illustrates that King James viewed his sons primarily as characters within his broader military and political strategy. In his address, he adopts a stern paternal tone, reinforcing the notion that their status and possessions were conditional upon their obedience to his authority and expectations. This commanding and disciplinary stance toward his sons recurs throughout the *Llibre*, reflecting King James's conception of kingship and dynastic leadership as grounded in loyalty, duty, and hierarchical control.

Prince Sancho (d. 1275), who held the position of Archbishop of Toledo since 1266, is the subject of one of the few personal recollections King James shares concerning his sons. According to the *Llibre dels Fets*, Sancho wrote a respectful and insistent letter to his father, inviting him to attend the Christmas Mass he was to celebrate. James notes that although Sancho wished to come to him in person, he was

240; and Robert I. Burns, *Diplomatarium of the Crusader Kingdom of Valencia*, vol. II (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1985), 21.

[66]James I of Aragon, *The Book of Deeds of James I of Aragon*, 57.

unable to do so as he was preparing to receive the king with due ceremony. James agreed to the request, justifying his decision by emphasizing Sancho's status as his son and the deference he had shown. Notably, this is the only moment in the chronicle where James recalls a personal exchange with one of his sons in such detail, an exchange centered on Sancho, who had been excluded from the royal succession.[67]Lajusticia also claims that his youngest son, Prince Sancho, had a better relationship with his father compared to his elder brothers. The strength of King James's relationship with his youngest son may be attributed to the fact that this son had been excluded from the line of inheritance.[68] It was impossible for royal princes who chose the church to request territorial endowments from their fathers. Moreover, the appointment of a member of the king's immediate family to a prominent position within the Church was often regarded as politically and socially advantageous for the dynasty. Because Prince Sancho did not claim the throne, King James may have considered him his only son free from succession conflicts, which might explain why he spoke positively of him.

The *Llibre dels Fets* also preserves the counsel of an aging and ailing king to his heir. Near the end of his life, James addressed Prince Peter in a lengthy monologue of advice. Through this discourse, together with his last will and testament, he sought to extend his authority beyond death and to shape the conduct of his successors:

> "Having done all that and seeing ourselves weakened by reason of the said malady, we sent a message to Prince Peter, our son, saying that he should come personally to us at Alzira. And he, having asked what state we were in, came rapidly to Xativa to fulfill our will. He came to us, and on the evening he arrived, he came immediately to our presence. And we received him, and he gave reverence to us, as a good son ought to do towards his father… When the next day came, this very son remained with us, and we heard our Mass. And having heard Mass, we, in his presence and that of the nobles, the knights and the citizens, said the following words. Firstly, we spoke of the manner in which Our Lord had honoured us in this world, especially over our enemies. Then we spoke of how Our Lord had made us reign in His service for more than sixty years, more than any other king who had

[67]James I of Aragon, *The Book of Deeds of James I of Aragon*, 57.
[68] Rodríguez Lajusticia, *La relación de Jaime I con sus hijos*, 40.

> loved the Church had reigned in the memory of man from the time of David and Solomon to these times. And we told how we had been the general object of love and devotion on the part of all our people, and how we were honoured by that. After that we ordered him and we besought him that he should love and honour Prince James, our son, who was his brother on both the father's and the mother's side, and to whom we had given a guaranteed inheritance, so that he would have no motive to contend with him. And since we were giving to him the greater inheritance and all the honour, he should be satisfied. And he might well be so, because this would be easier for him to do. Equally, Prince James, our son, should love him and obey him in what he ought, as one should an elder brother...Giving him our blessing, just as a father ought to give his son, we said many other words to him (concerning the good conduct of his person) which would take a long time to tell."[69]

This final exchange between King James and his heir, delivered shortly before the king's death, may be read as both a paternal admonition to his son and a broader message to future successors. At the same time, it can be interpreted as a last attempt by the dying monarch to influence the imminent holder of the throne and to avert potential conflict among his heirs. That the conversation takes place on King James's deathbed underscores his awareness of old age and waning strength. It also suggests his desire to secure an acceptable division of the lands he had expanded and to elicit from his eldest son a promise of protection toward his younger brother. Bartlett noted that King James's policy of dividing lands among his sons was an effective method of preventing fratricidal wars among medieval dynasties. The aim was to increase the dynasty's influence by granting newly conquered lands to the second and third sons. Additionally, the ancestral lands remained with the eldest son, ensuring the strength of the central authority. One of the examples Bartlett provided for this situation was King James's

[69]James I of Aragon, *The Book of Deeds of James I of Aragon*, 378-379.

land division.[70] Of course, this method was not particularly popular with the eldest son, but it was quite helpful in preventing civil wars.[71]

It is not very likely to find records of King James's illegitimate children in the *Llibre*. However, the case of Fernando Sánchez de Castro (d. 1275),[72] one of these illegitimate children, demonstrates how ruthless and cruel King James could be towards a son who rebelled and plotted against him. King James had granted various lands to his illegitimate sons, just as he had to his legitimate sons. Fernando Sanchez de Castro had been given a town called Pomar.[73] However, King James's decision to entrust his eldest illegitimate son, Fernando Sánchez de Castro, with an important diplomatic mission suggests a more nuanced perspective on illegitimacy and royal service. In 1261, Fernando was sent by his father to negotiate the Andrej marriage of his half-brother, Crown Prince Peter, to Princess Constance of Sicily and to escort the bride to the Kingdom of Aragon. According to Soriano, Fernando may have drawn inspiration from the example of Manfred, the illegitimate son of the King of Sicily (d. 1266), whose rise to power could have led Fernando Sanchez de Castro to believe that an illegitimate son might also aspire to the throne.[74]

An episode recorded in the *Llibre dels Fets* appears to support Soriano's claim regarding Fernando Sánchez de Castro's political aspirations. The tension between Crown Prince Peter and Fernando reached a critical point, as vividly recounted by King James:

> "I came to Murviedro, and Fernan Sánchez de Castro sent me a letter through one of his own men. In the letter, he claimed that Infante Peter had come to Burriana with the intention of killing him; that the prince's men, with swords drawn, had searched the entire house, even under the bed, believing he was there. And if he had not escaped in time with his

[70] In medieval kingdoms, dividing lands was a common feature of succession system. In Iberian Peninsula, kings tended to distribute newly conquered lands among their sons, thought the eldest son usually received the largest part. See. Andrej Kokkonen, Jørgen Møller, and Anders Sundell, *The Politics of Succession: Forging Stable Monarchies in Europe, AD 1000–1800* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2022), 75–76.
[71] Bartlett, *Blood Royal*, 44.
[72] During the pregnancy and postpartum period in which Queen Yolande gave birth to her first son, the future King Peter, King James had a relationship with Blanca de Antillón, the daughter of the nobleman Sancho de Antillón, which resulted in the birth of Fernando Sánchez de Castro. See. Cingolani, *Monarcas infieles: amantes e hijos ilegítimos en la Corona de Aragón, desde Ramón Berenguer IV a Jaime II (1131-1327)*, 269.
[73] Jaime Elipe Soriano, *Fernando Sánchez de Castro desde la Cronística* (Zaragoza: Diputación General de Aragón, 1992), 173.
[74] Soriano, *Fernando Sánchez de Castro*, 174-176.

> wife, they would surely have found and murdered him. When I heard this, I was deeply troubled, and I said I would willingly give a thousand marks of silver for the entire matter to remain a secret between myself, the Infante, and Fernando de Castro."[75]

This passage reveals both the intensity of the rivalry between the half-brothers and King James's concern over the political consequences of such hostility becoming public. In the *Llibre dels Fets*, James portrays himself as mediator, striving to preserve dynastic unity by directly confronting Prince Peter about his alleged attempt to kill his half-brother, Fernando Sánchez de Castro. He admonishes Prince Peter to respect the bonds of kinship and to set aside personal grievances. Yet the narrative also makes clear that this paternal counsel was poorly received. James ultimately reasserted his authority by declaring that any harm to Fernando would be considered a personal affront to the king himself. Nevertheless, this protection proved short-lived: Fernando eventually rebelled against James with the support of the nobility, and the conflict culminated in his execution at the hands of Prince Peter.[76]

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[75]James I of Aragon, *The Book of Deeds of James I of Aragon*, 351.

[76]"I then departed for Aragon and summoned the Infante, along with the other barons, to a Cortes in Lleida, to be held in the middle of Lent. I arrived there at the appointed time, as did the Infante and the barons of Catalonia and Aragon. Taking the Infante aside, and in the presence of both my own confidants and his, I accused him of attempting, by night, to attack and kill Fernán Sánchez. He denied any intention of murder. However, I replied that it was evident he had acted with such intent, as he and his men had entered the room where Fernán and his wife were lying, and with drawn swords had searched beneath the bed and among the hemp stored there. My companions and I found his defense inadequate, and I subsequently revoked the authority he held to act in my name. Following this, I returned to the Kingdom of Valencia. The Infante had preceded me, and upon learning of my approach, went to Burriana and came out to receive me. Together we entered the town while hunting, in high spirits. From there, I proceeded to Murviedro and then to Valencia. I remained in Valencia for fifteen days… I again addressed Infante and urged him not to act with such cruelty toward Fernán Sánchez, reminding him that Fernán was his own brother. I assured him that I would see to it that justice was done regarding any accusations he might bring. I commanded and implored him to submit the matter to royal judgment, asserting that when a man is willing to accept the king's judgment especially when such close kinship exists…I further made clear that I was prepared to protect Fernán Sánchez, since he was ready to act rightly. If that protection was not to be respected, anyone who harmed him would answer to me directly, not merely to Fernán. Prince Peter responded that he would consider the matter and provide an answer. I asked when, and he replied that he would give his answer the next day. I told him, Very well; the longer you reflect on the matter, the better you will know what to do. The following day, I awaited his response, but it did not come. On the third or fourth day, I was informed that the Infante had left the city by horseback with two or three knights. He was wearing a quilted coat, a mail shirt, an iron cap, and was fully armed. I was greatly surprised, for two reasons: first, that he refused to submit to my judgment; and second, that he had chosen to depart Valencia by night, which was unnecessary. Even if he had rejected my authority, I had no intention of harming him so long as he did not take action against Fernán Sánchez or his possessions at that time. A few days after Prince Peter's departure, Fernán Sánchez arrived in Valencia. He expressed his gratitude for my intervention and support in speaking on his behalf. After staying with me for eight days, he departed and returned to his own lands." See. James I of Aragon, *The Book of Deeds of James I of Aragon* , 351-352.

In the *Llibre dels Fets*, King James expresses a surprising reaction to the execution of his illegitimate son, Fernando Sánchez de Castro, whom he had previously defended against Prince Peter's alleged assassination attempt. Upon learning that Prince Peter had besieged one of Fernando's castles, captured him, and ordered him drowned, James records his response: "I was glad to hear of this, for it was a very hard thing that he, being my son, should have risen against me, who had done so much for him, and given him so honorable an heritage."[77]

At first sight, King James's apparent satisfaction at the death of a son he had once defended may resemble the stern composure of a father witnessing the just punishment of a defiant child. Yet in the *Llibre dels Fets*, it becomes clear that King James either avoids expressing his emotions directly or frames them in politically calculated terms. As Soriano argues, his reaction to the execution of Fernando Sánchez de Castro was less a sincere expression of approval than a constrained statement shaped by the growing dominance of Prince Peter.[78] While this interpretation is compelling, it cannot be accepted without reservation, since James's well-documented intolerance of treason and tendency toward harsh retribution suggest that his response may also have been consistent with his broader political principles.

2.2.2. Dynastic Strategies and Affection: King James of Aragon's Relationships with His Daughters and Grandchildren

Whereas King James's relationships with his sons were varied and frequently recounted, the *Llibre dels Fets* provides far less information about his daughters. In some cases, their names are not even mentioned. This omission reflects broader medieval perceptions of princesses primarily as instruments of dynastic policy. Their influence was generally expected to manifest not in their natal realms but in the courts into which they married. Princess Isabel (d. 1271), for example, who became the wife of King Philip III of France (d. 1285), receives no mention in the *Llibre*, despite her position as queen of such a prominent kingdom. Her omission from thre text may be attributable to her early death, which curtailed any lasting political role and thus reduced her significance in James's self-representation. Princess Isabel fell from a horse at a very young age and was forced to give birth prematurely, losing her life.[79]Another

[77]*Ibid* , 351-352.
[78] Soriano, *Fernando Sánchez de Castro,* 51.
[79]Justine Firnhaber-Baker, *House of Lilies: The Dynasty That Made Medieval France* (United Kingdom: *Basic Books*, 2024), 225.

possible reason for King James's omission of his daughter Isabel in the *Llibre dels Fets* may lie in his political rivalry with Charles of Anjou, King of Sicily, who was the uncle of Philip III of France. Prince Peter's wife, Constance of Sicily, asserted a claim to the Sicilian throne, and Charles de Anjou's occupation of that throne sparked a major conflict between the kingdoms of Aragon and France.[80] In this context, the exclusion of Princess Isabel who had marital or dynastic ties that could complicate this rivalry may have been a deliberate choice reflecting the tense between two kingdoms. The absence of Princess Isabel's personal mention in the *Llibre* may well derive from the fact that she brought no tangible political advantage to her father's reign. Within the framework of dynastic politics, daughters were often highlighted in royal narratives only when their marriages or alliances produced measurable benefits for the crown. In princess Isabel's case, such utility seems to have been lacking. For King James, the wider political situation in France had already come to represent a bitter disappointment following Charles of Anjou's seizure of Sicily—an event that profoundly undermined his prestige and curtailed his ambitions in the region. It is therefore not unreasonable to suggest that there exists a direct connection between James's suppression of his failures in the *Llibre dels Fets* and his silence regarding Princess Isabel. Both omissions appear to belong to the same strategy of selective memory of the work, a deliberate crafting of narrative in which what did not serve the king's image or political legacy was quietly excluded.

However, there was a daughter who was often mentioned in the *Llibre*: Violant, the eldest child of King James and Queen Yolande, was married to King Alfonso X of Castile. Princess Violant, who was mentioned by King James in many parts of the *Llibre,* played an important role in the political events of Iberia, just like her mother, Queen Yolande. Lajusticia also reveals that the relationship between King James and Princess Violant was quite strong unlike any kind of royal father and daughter. Contact between the king and princess was much more frequent due to various political issues in the Iberian Peninsula.[81] For this reason, it is likely that King James mentioned Princess Violant more often in the *Llibre*.

One striking aspect of King James's account of Princess Violant in the *Llibre dels Fets* is her appeal to him as both daughter and queen, requesting aid on behalf of

[80]For more info on the uprising in Sicily in 1282, see Steven Runciman, *The Sicilian Vespers: A History of the Mediterranean World in the Later Thirteenth Century* (Cambridge: *Cambridge University Press*, 1958).
[81]Rodríguez Lajusticia, *La relación de Jaime I con sus hijos*, 29.

her husband and children. In 1264, during the *Mudéjar* uprising in the recently conquered territories of Murcia and Andalusia, Violant sought her father's support at a moment when King Alfonso X faced a serious threat to his authority. King James's intervention proved crucial in restoring order. Although some of his own nobles resisted the campaign, he agreed to act, prompted not only by his daughter's plea but also by the strategic imperative of preventing these contested lands from returning to Muslim control.[82]

King James recounted his daughter's assistance request in the *Llibre* with the following words:

> "The king of Castile has used my daughter in this way, for because of the wrongs he has done to me, he does not dare ask for my help and tries to obtain it through her. And if he finds, through our letters to her, that we wish to help him, other requests will follow for us to help him…because this is something that I cannot refuse to do for three reasons: one is that I cannot fail my daughter and my grandchildren, now that people wish to dispossess them…"[83]

Although King James had his own conflicts with King Alfonso of Castile, his decision to support his son-in-law, daughter, and grandchildren should not be interpreted merely as a gesture of familial affection. Rather, it is plausible that James sought to shape a political narrative within the *Llibre dels Fets*. By portraying himself as the protector of his extended royal family, he elevated his image as the patriarch of Spain[84] by using his daughter's appeal as an opportunity to assert both familial authority and regional dominance. Besides, the children of Queen Violante, King James's only daughter mentioned in the *Llibre*, may also be his only grandchildren. King James, who does not mention the birth of his heir's children, recounts a conversation with Violante's sons in the *Llibre*. King James attended the knighting ceremonies of King Alfonso of Castile and his daughter Queen Violante's children and recounted the following conversation he had with his grandchildren:

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[82]María Jesús Fuente Pérez, "*Tres Violantes: Las mujeres de una familia en el poder a lo largo del siglo XIII," Anuario de Estudios Medievales 46*, no. 1 (June 2025): 154. https://doi.org/10.3989/aem.2016.46.1.04.

[83]James I of Aragon, *The Book of Deeds of James I of Aragon*, 287.

[84]The reason I use the term Spain instead of Iberia here is because King Jaime refers to this piece of land, which includes all the kingdoms, as Spain in the *Llibre*. See.James I of Aragon, *The Book of Deeds of James I of Aragon*, 21,58,149.

> "Then we went to Burgos. And his nobles went with us too, that is to say, his uncle Don Alfonso de Molina, and his brother Don Felipe, Don Nuno Gonzalez de Lara, and all the other bishops and nobles of Castile…And there, Don Ferdinand[85] took the daughter of the king of France as his wife. And the king of Castile made him a knight, and Don Ferdinand made his brothers knights but not Prince Sancho[86], because we asked him that he would make his other brothers knights but not him. And the king of Castile said to us that he and the other brothers wanted that, and that if they wanted it, he ought to be able to make them knights. And we said, before Don Felipe and Don Nuno and his nobles, that he who had advised Don Ferdinand to make his brothers knights had given him bad advice…And we said that it would sow discord and anger amongst them, and that forever more, when they did not act well, he would reproach them saying that he had made them knights, and the others would feel annoyance and anger. And we asked them if they wanted that, and they said that they did. And Don Sancho was near us, and we whispered into his ear that he should do no such thing. And he said that he would do what we advised him. Then we asked Don Sancho in front of everybody: "Do you wish to be made a knight by Don Ferdinand?" And he said: "Grandfather, what you want, I want. ...And we said: Then we want this: that you receive knighthood from your father and from no other man." And the king made Don Ferdinand a knight, and Don Ferdinand made his brothers knights, except for Don Sancho."[87]

In this incident involving King James' grandchildren, King James presents himself as the head of the family. Considering that Fernando de la Cerda married a French princess in 1268, it can be assumed that King James was 60 years old at the time.[88] With the maturity that came with his age, King James, a patriarch in his large family, represented himself as the one who resolved family issues and guided his family. However, the conversation or event between King James and his grandson

[85]Fernando de la Cerda (d.1275) was the heir of King Alfonso X of Castile, but he died before his father.
[86]He is IV. Sancho of Castile (d.1295).
[87]James I of Aragon, *The Book of Deeds of James I of Aragon*, 346.
[88] *Chronicle of Alfonso X*, trans. Shelby Thacker and José Escobar, with an introduction by Joseph F. O'Callaghan (Lexington: *University Press of Kentucky*, 2002), 67-69.

Sancho is portrayed quite differently in the chronicle that recounts the reign of Alfonso X. While the Chronicle of Alfonso X describes a dispute among the princes regarding the conferring of knighthood, it does not mention any mediating role, as narrated by King James in the *Llibre dels Fets.* In the *chronicle of Alfonso X*, the incident narrated as follows:

> "Before the wedding, King Alfonso knighted his nephew Edward, who was later King of England. Also, Edward knighted counts, dukes, and other high-born men who had come with him from the kingdom of England and the Duchy of Guyenne. On the day that Prince Fernando was to be wed, Princes Juan and Pedro, Fernando's brothers, along with many other nobles and knights of Castile and Leon, counts and dukes from France, and other gentlefolk of that and who had come there, received knighthood from him. After they were knighted, Princes Juan and Pedro knighted others. King Alfonso wanted Prince Sancho to receive knighthood from his brother Fernando that day, but Sancho, as soon as he learned of this, refused to wait in the king's house and went to the house of Prince Pedro of Aragon, his uncle."[89]

In the *Llibre dels Fets*, King James rarely referred to his children, and when he did, it was typically within the context of specific events. He showed a clear preference for discussing his sons, who were actively involved in his affairs, while his daughters, except for Queen Violant of Castile, were not even named. This selective portrayal of his children likely reflects the intended purpose of the *Llibre*, which served as a record of King James's political and military achievements. Personal or familial details were included only when they were directly relevant to these narratives. A notable example of this approach is the complete omission of Queen Isabel of France's name. This stands in contrast to the repeated mention of King Alfonso X's wife Violant, whose role held strategic significance.

In the *Llibre*, where King James refers to his daughters, the theme of affection is nearly absent. Rather than offering glimpses of paternal affection or emotional intimacy, the narrative instead reflects a rigidly political lens about the status of their children. Within King James's account, those who advanced his ambitions or served his broader agenda were granted space and recognition, while those who failed to exert influence

[89] *Ibid,* 67-69.

over his political trajectory—including his own daughters—were effectively erased from the record. This silence in the *Llibre* is telling, for it shows the degree to which the *Llibre* functions less as a chronicle of personal sentiment than as a carefully constructed testament to power, utility, and royal self-fashioning.

CHAPTER II

King James I and the Construction of Public Kingship in the *Llibre dels Fets*

3.1. King James I, the Nobility and the Projection of Authority

King James devotes a substantial portion of the *Llibre dels Fets* to his dealings with the nobility. Dialogues, disputes, rebellions, and shifting allegiances with the aristocracy occupy a central place in the narrative, offering valuable insight into the model of kingship he sought to project. From his early accession to the throne, James's political life was inextricably tied to the power and influence of his nobles, making their cooperation and opposition a defining feature of his reign. The premature deaths of both his mother and father[90] left him without immediate parental guidance during his formative years. Consequently, the kingdom's nobles likely played a more prominent and influential role in his upbringing and political development than might typically be expected. Bernat Desclot's *Crònica*[91] which was completed around 1288, stands as one of the principal sources for understanding King James's early relationship with the nobility. While this chronicle primarily narrates the reign of his son, King Peter III, it also contains valuable passages that shed light on key moments from King James's own life, particularly those that illustrate his formative interactions with the nobles.

Following the death of King Peter II at the Battle of Muret on 12 September 1213[92], his son, the young James, had been held hostage by his father's adversary, Simon de Montfort.[93] Although Peter II and Montfort had previously arranged a marriage alliance between their children, this agreement had been annulled prior to the battle. Despite this, after King Peter's death at Muret, Montfort refused to return the six-

[90]King James's mother Marie de Montpellier and his father King Peter II died in 1213 when James was only five years old. King James was on the side of his father's enemy Simon de Monfort during the Battle of Muret, where his father died. See. James I of Aragon, *The Book of Deeds of James I of Aragon*, 22-23.
[91]For an overview of Bernat Desclot's Crònica, including its structure and focus on King James I's reign, see Jaume Aurell, *Authoring the Past*, 74–75.
[92] The Battle of Muret took place on September 12, 1213, between the forces of King Peter II of Aragon and Simon de Montfort. For further discussion of the battle and its context, see Walter L. Wakefield, *Heresy, Crusade, and Inquisition in Southern France, 1100–1250* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2023); and Brian Todd Carey, Joshua B. Allfree, and John Cairns, *Warfare in the Age of Crusades: Europe* (Barnsley: Pen and Sword Military, 2024).
[93]William of Puylaurens recounts how in 1210 King Peter II of Aragon handed over his young son James to Simon de Montfort as a hostage to secure peace, noting that the child was held at Carcassonne. See. William of Puylaurens, *The Chronicle of William of Puylaurens: The Albigensian Crusade and Its Aftermath*, trans. W. A. Sibyl and M. D. Sibyl (Woodbridge, UK: Boydell Press, 2003), chap. 16, 33.

year-old king to the Aragonese crown, effectively detaining him and preventing his immediate succession.

King James clearly describes his captivity alongside Monfort in the *Llibre* and how he was subsequently handed over to the Kingdom of Aragon:

> "Later on, after that had happened, our subjects, that is to say, Don Nuno Sanxes, Guillem de Montcada, and Guillem de Cardona, father of Ramon Folc, demanded our return and they went to war against the Franks and against the lands held by them. As well as the war that they waged at Narbonne and other places, they sent envoys to the pope, Innocent III, asking him to resolve to threaten Simon de Montfort, through excommunication or by other means, so that they might recover us. For we were their natural lord, since our father had left no legitimate son except us. And this holy father, Innocent III, was the best pope, so much so that from the time that we compose this book going back a hundred years there has not been so good a pope in the church of Rome. For he was very learned in the matters that it pertains for a pope to know, and he had natural wisdom, and knew a great amount about the secular sciences. And he sent such forceful letters and such forceful envoys to Count Simon that he had to agree to return us to our people."[94]

Although King James mentioned in the *Llibre* that the nobles wanted him back from Monfort, he mainly praised Pope Innocent III (d. 1216). The fact that King James emphasized the Pope's efforts to rescue him from Monfort's captivity may be an example of his suspicious attitude towards the nobles in his kingdom. Damian Smith also argued that nobles of Aragon demanded the Child King from Simon de Montfort, but their request was denied by him.

Shortly after the Battle of Muret, an Aragonese delegation sent to Simon de Montfort to request the release of young James proved unsuccessful. Fearing that Montfort might harm or even kill the child, the nobles saw no alternative but to appeal to Pope Innocent III. Envoys were dispatched to Rome, including Bishop Hispan of Segorbe-Albarracín, who undertook the journey at his own expense. By taking this step, the Crown implicitly acknowledged Pope Innocent's authority as the guardian of the

[94]James I of Aragon, *The Book of Deeds of James I of Aragon*, 25.

young king and his legitimate role in overseeing the governance of the realm during James's minority.[95]

King James's surrender to the Aragonese nobles by Pope Innocent III marked the beginning of King James's regency. Throughout his childhood, King James was kept under guard at the headquarters of the Knights Templar in Monzon.[96]

King James described how his kingdom was governed during his stay in Monzon in the *Llibre*. While King James was under the supervision of the Knights Templar in Monzon, his realm was governed by the council of nobles on his behalf. King James described the situation of the nobles during his regency as follows:

> "And they took another decision: that in our name and with the new seal that they had minted for us, we should convoke the Cortes of the Catalans and the Aragonese at Lleida. The archbishop, the bishops, the abbots, and the nobles of each of the kingdoms would attend the Cortes, and from each city, there would be ten men, with the authority of the other men, who would fulfil whatever was decided there. All of them came on the day of the Cortes, except Don Ferdinand[97] and Count Don Sancho[98], because both of them hoped to be king. And there they all swore to us that they would defend our body and our members and our land, and that they would defend us in all things and above all things."[99]

As King James recounts in the *Llibre Dels Fets*, the governance of the Kingdom of Aragon during his minority appears to have been overseen by a council composed of various factions. In this part of the *Llibre*, James also reflected on the disorder that gripped the kingdom after the Battle of Muret. Notably, his depiction of his uncle and great-uncle reveals an early perception of them as political adversaries and rebellious

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[95] Damian Smith, "Pope Innocent III and the Minority of James I," *Anuario de Estudios Medievales 30* (2000): 23, https://doi.org/10.3989/aem.2000.v30.i1.494.

[96] Upon his arrival in Catalonia, it was decided that the young King James would be raised by the Templars. All parties agreed that Guillem de Montrodon, master of the Temple in Aragon and Catalonia and a native of Osona, would take on this responsibility at the Templar stronghold in Monzón. For details on this decision, See. Damian Smith, "Pope Innocent III and the Minority of James I," *Anuario de Estudios Medievales* 30 (2000): 26. On the early establishment of the Templars at Monzón and their privileges granted by Count Raymond Berengar IV of Barcelona who had been a lay associate of the Order since 1131.See. Timothy Venning and Peter Frankopan, *A Chronology of the Crusades* (United Kingdom: Taylor & Francis, 2015), 113.

[97] Don Fernando was the uncle of King James of Aragon.

[98] Count Don Sancho was the great uncle of King James of Aragon.

[99]James I of Aragon, *The Book of Deeds of James I of Aragon*, 26.

figures, suggesting that even in his youth, King James interpreted their actions through the lens of rivalry and dissent.

King James, especially during the regency period, mentioned in the *Llibre* that the nobles in his country were divided and the country was in turmoil. After remaining in Monzon for more than two years, King James joined forces with the nobles who remained loyal to him and found himself during internal strife. In the first chapters of the *Llibre* King James attributed his inability to end the war between the nobles to his young age.[100] As has been mentioned in the previous section, when King James married his first wife Eleanor, he faced a rebellion by the nobles who opposed her. However, because of the Queen's refusal to approve his escape plan, King James fell into the hands of the rebellious nobles.

Having witnessed repeated waves of rebellion among his nobles from an early age, King James later adopted an increasingly uncompromising stance toward the aristocracy. In the aftermath of the Battle of Muret, he faced the challenge of restoring cohesion to a kingdom fractured by factionalism. One of his strategies was to redirect noble energies toward a common external enemy, thereby consolidating their support around a shared cause. By initiating campaigns against the Moors, James sought not only to reinforce his legitimacy as a Christian ruler but also to unify his realm under a renewed sense of collective purpose. David H. Abulafia claimed that King James's initial crusading effort at Peniscola (1225–26) failed and alienated Aragonese nobles at the beginning. However, the failed campaign revealed that any military success against the Moors could restore the royal authority of King James.[101]

The *Llibre dels Fets* provides a detailed account of how King James decided to launch his campaign against Majorca. King James's plan was to unite the fragmented nobility into a single military force and mobilize them for a common purpose. King James narrated how he and his nobles decided to attack Mayorca with those words:

> "Moreover, we know full well that you know we are your natural lord, and that we are an only child, our father having left us no brother or sister born of our mother. We came among you when very young, only six and a half years old, and we found Aragon and Catalonia in turmoil, with everyone taking up arms against each other. Indeed, there

[100]James I of Aragon, *The Book of Deeds of James I of Aragon*, 31-32.
[101] David Abulafia, *The Western Mediterranean Kingdoms: The Struggle for Dominion, 1200–1500* (London: Taylor & Francis, 2016), 39.

> was no agreement on anything, since what some wanted the others did not want; and you had an evil reputation throughout the world for the things that happened. We can give no remedy for this evil except in two ways: first, through the will of God guiding us in our business; and second, because you and we may undertake such enterprises as will be pleasing to God, and that the enterprise may be so important and good that the bad reputation that you have may be erased, since the light of good works overcomes the dark. So, we strongly beseech you for two reasons, that is to say for God and the natural lordship we hold over you, that you give advice and help in three things: first, that we may establish peace in our land; second, that we may be able to serve Our Lord in this voyage that we wish to make to the kingdom of Majorca and the other islands that pertain to it; and third, that we may accomplish this action to the honor of God."[102]

The speech that King James delivered to his nobles to secure their support for the Majorca campaign, as recorded in the *Llibre dels Fets*, reveals his clear intention to unify the aristocracy around a common purpose. In the aftermath of the Battle of Muret, this initiative can be understood as part of his broader effort to restore cohesion within a fractured realm by fostering internal peace and redirecting aristocratic aggression toward an external enemy. But King James had to face off problems of his nobles during his campaigns to Moors. One of the campaigns when his nobles wanted to leave battleground, he expressed his emotions and anger with those words:

> "...Though it was then January, and very cold, I turned more than a hundred times from one side of the bed to the other, and I sweated as if in a hot bath. After a great deal of thinking I at last went to sleep, worn out with fatigue and the want of rest. Between midnight and dawn I awoke and returned to my anxious cares, and taught me of what bad people I had to deal with, for in the world there are no people so arrogant as knights are..."[103]

King James's attitude toward the nobility was narrated with notable candor in the *Llibre dels Fets*. While resistance from nobles to royal authority and political ambitions was a common challenge faced by many medieval European monarchs, what

[102]James I of Aragon, *The Book of Deeds of James I of Aragon*,71.
[103]James I of Aragon, *The Book of Deeds of James I of Aragon*, 206.

distinguishes the *Llibre* is its unique insight into such clashes from the perspective of a king himself. Through this autobiographical account, readers gain access not only to the events but also to the personal reflections and emotional responses of a medieval King grappling with aristocratic opposition.

However, King James' struggle with the nobility would continue throughout his life. Salvador Claramunt also describes King James struggle with his nobles as follows: According to Salvador Claramunt, the internal conflict between King James and his nobles persisted throughout his long reign. In the early years of his life, James struggled against his uncles, the elder members of his family, while in later years he even witnessed some of his sons collaborating with nobles who opposed him. Claramunt argues that this relentless struggle subsided only temporarily during the campaigns of Majorca, Valencia, and Murcia.[104] But he also argued that the charisma and stand firm characteristics of King James helped him to control his rebellious nobles during his long reign.[105]

Although King James himself frequently voices his displeasure at being forced into these confrontations with his nobles, a different perspective has been given by Vincent Royo Pérez. According to Pérez, the king's continuous clashes with his nobles were not merely the product of political necessity or personal grievance; rather, they were instrumental in shaping the image of a kingship who was just, powerful, and capable of subduing his nobles.[106] For King James, the narrative required the presence of an adversarial figure in order to show his authority.

One example of this narrative strategy in the *Llibre* is found in the king's account of his dispute with Don Belasco de Alagón[107]. Pérez argues that King James's deliberate construction of a "villainous" character against whom the king could assert

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[104] Salvador Claramunt, *La nobleza aragonesa en la Edad Media: Poder y mentalidad política* (Zaragoza: Institución Fernando el Católico, 1991), 226.
[105] *Ibid*, 69.
[106] Royo Pérez, V. "Power, Monarchy and Nobility on the Frontiers of the Crown of Aragón: The Dispute between James I and Blasco de Alagón for the Town of Morella (1231–1239)." *Imago Temporis* 15 (2021). https://doi.org/10.21001/itma.2021.15.15.
[107] Don Blasco de Alagón was a powerful Aragonese noble during the reigns of King Peter II and King James I of Aragon. The land dispute between him and King James arose after Blasco conquered the town of Morella in 1232. When King James sought to claim *Morella* for the Crown, tensions escalated into open conflict between the two; yet in the end, the king ceded the town to Blasco. See. Amanda Blanco Sancho, *La formación de la gran nobleza medieval en la Corona de Aragón en el transcurso del siglo XIII: el caso ejemplar del linaje de los Alagón* (Facultad de Filosofía y Letras, Universidad de Zaragoza, 30 de noviembre de 2016), directed by Carlos Laliena Corbera.

his dominance.[108]By portraying himself as the king who could overcome opposition of his nobles, he actively fashioned the *persona* of a sovereign whose legitimacy derived from his ability to discipline and control even the most recalcitrant members of his nobility.

Another notable part in the *Llibre dels Fets* is King James's detailed defense of Countess Aurembiaix of Urgell's rights to her inherited lands. Aurembiaix of Urgell was the sole child and heir of count Ermengol VIII of Urgell (d.1208). When the count Ermengol VIII of Urgell died his relatives took the county from the hands of Aurembiaix of Urgell. When her relatives took her right the countess went to King James in order to retake her lands. The account which is about the case of countess of Urgell provides a compelling depiction of the complex relationship between a King James and his female vassal. The narrative not only presents King James's political intervention on behalf of the countess but also reveals the personal dimension of their connection.

Before mentioning about the relationship between King James and Countess Aurembiaix of Urgell, it can be assessed what vassalage means. The work of Susan Reynolds explains what vassal and vassalage are as follows:

> "Historians use the words vassalage, vassalitf, Vasallitiit, vassallaggio, et cetera to denote the relation between a lord and his free or noble follower his vassal. Because the vassal was a free man they see the relation, although unequal, as having had a voluntary and reciprocal quality that distinguished it significantly from that of a lord with his peasant tenants or subjects."[109]

In this feudal relationship, which was structured around reciprocal obligations between a superior and a subordinate, the suzerain was traditionally expected to safeguard the rights and interests of the vassal. On the surface, the bond between King James and Countess Aurembiaix of Urgell conformed to this model, with the monarch acting as protector of her legal claims. However, as time progressed, their relationship evolved beyond the conventional parameters of feudal duty, assuming a more complex and personal dimension.

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[109] Reynolds, Susan. *Fiefs and Vassals: The Medieval Evidence Reinterpreted*. United Kingdom: *Clarendon Press*, 1996,32.

In the *Llibre dels Fets*, King James narrated the situation of Countess Aurembiaix of Urgell with details:

> "That she had come to ask a favour of me, in as much as she knew, and so people said, that she would find justice and grace in me; she had come to Lerida because she suffered great wrong; all the land knew that she was the daughter of the Count of Urgell, En Ermengol, and that the county belonged to her rather than to any other, because of her being the Count's daughter, and of there being no son nor daughter but she; and that she called on me for love and grace to do justice to her, since from no man in the world could she get the same, save from me."[110]

King James explicitly stated that Countess Aurembiaix's lands had been unjustly seized and that it fell within his royal authority to restore both her titles and her rightful holdings. At first glance, her case may seem like a typical feudal dispute over land, not uncommon among medieval vassals. However, the rhetorical choices James employs in recounting the countess's appeal are particularly revealing. King James stresses his exclusive role as the supreme arbiter of justice in his realm, reinforcing the hierarchical structure in which the king stands above all others. Yet it is the concluding remark that stands out most strikingly when King James, speaking through the voice of the countess, declares that "from no man in the world could she get the same, save from me." This phrasing not only affirms royal authority but also frames the case in terms of chivalric virtue, suggesting that James sought to cast himself as both a just ruler and a noble protector. Jan Rüdiger argues that the relationship between King James I of Aragon and Countess Aurembiaix of Urgell was a form of concubinage, noting that James had not divorced his wife Eleanor at the time. While an emotional bond may have existed, Rüdiger emphasizes that such arrangements were rare in continental Europe and views their connection more as a feudal contract than a romantic alliance.[111]

Miriam Shadis, on the other hand, argues that the relationship between King James and Countess Aurembiaix of Urgell was not romantic but rather a formal feudal contract. She interprets their arrangement as a type of *convenientia*, a legal and political agreement rooted in feudal customs. Moreover, she identifies their legal status as

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[110]James I of Aragon, *The Book of Deeds of James I of Aragon*,39.
[111] Jan Rüdiger, *All the King's Women: Polygyny and Politics in Europe, 900–1250*, trans. Tim Barnwell (Leiden: *Brill*, 2020), 355–360.

barraganía[112] which is a time-limited, contractual union common in medieval Iberia between individuals who either could not or would not marry.[113]

Stefano Cingolani does not agree that the relationship between King James and the Countess can be definitively described as an emotional bond. Although King James had many documented mistresses, he did not include Aurembiaix de Urgell among them.[114]

Emma Snowden, however, offers an alternative interpretation of the relationship between King James and Countess Aurembiaix of Urgell. Rather than viewing it strictly through the lens of a traditional feudal bond between suzerain and vassal, Snowden characterizes their connection as a strategic alliance. According to her analysis, Aurembiaix played a key role in facilitating James's efforts to consolidate territorial control. In contrast to his first wife, Eleanor of Castile, Aurembiaix is portrayed as a politically astute partner who actively collaborated with the king in advancing his political ambitions.[115]

The relationship between King James and Countess Aurembiaix, as portrayed in the *Llibre dels Fets*, offers a rare opportunity to glimpse the lived dynamics of *barraganía*, a form of informal union rooted in medieval Iberian custom, through the voice of a contemporary monarch. In his account, King James casts this legal and political arrangement between suzerain and vassal in elevated, almost epic terms, highlighting his own generosity and sense of justice toward a noblewoman seeking his protection. Although the precise nature of their romantic involvement remains uncertain, it is evident that James strategically shaped the narrative as a form of self-glorifying propaganda, emphasizing his authority, virtue, and central role in restoring order.

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[112] "a long-term answer stable agreement…informal union deeply rooted in Hispanic culture and accepted to a degree in *Siete Partidas*. This socio-cultural landscape that permitted the tempered allowance of informal relationships like barragania also tolerated other forms of approximation. An unmarried couple could not offer legitimate birth to their children…" See. Danielle Terrazas Williams, *The Capital of Free Women: Race, Legitimacy, and Liberty in Colonial Mexico* (United Kingdom: *Yale University Press,* 2022), 71.

[113] Miriam Shadis, "*Received as a Woman":* Rethinking the Concubinage of Aurembiaix of Urgell*," Journal of Medieval Iberian Studies* 8, no. 1 (2016): 38–54, https://doi.org/10.1080/17546559.2015.1103888.

[114] Stefano M. Cingolani, "*Monarcas infieles: amantes e hijos ilegítimos en la Corona de Aragón, desde Ramón Berenguer IV a Jaime II (1131–1327)*," En la España Medieval 44 (2021): 263, https://dx.doi.org/10.5209/elem.81445.

[115]Snowden, "*Women as Frontier-Makers* (2023)," 3–4.

3.2. Relationship of King James I with the Subjects as a Reflection of His Authority and Kingship

In the *Llibre dels Fets*, King James does not confine his narrative to nobles, foreign rulers, or members of his dynasty. His subjects—those bound by allegiance and obedience to the medieval monarch—also appear, often indirectly but with significant meaning. Although mediated through the king's own voice and perspective, these representations offer a rare glimpse into the place of ordinary people within a royal chronicle, providing valuable insight into their perceived roles and expectations in an age when such voices were typically absent from accounts of kings and great deeds. This aspect of the *Llibre* can be assumed particularly valuable as it reveals how King James of Aragon chose to portray his interactions with the broader population of his realm. He emphasized royal power not only through military success or political dominance but also by emphasizing the dual pillars of kingship: mercy and punishment. These two principles form the foundation of his relationship with his subjects as depicted in the narrative, reinforcing both his authority and his moral claim to rule.However, before examining the relationship between a medieval king and his subjects as described in the *Llibre dels Fets*, it is necessary to consider what the king meant to his subjects.

Jean-Paul Roux contends that the evolving portrayal of the medieval kingship was significantly influenced by society's perception of Christianity. He emphasizes that the phrase "*redde Caesari quae sunt Caesaris*"(*Render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's*)[116] has been subject to numerous interpretations throughout history. In its most basic sense, the expression affirms a dual principle: while subjects are obliged to obey the authority of the prince in temporal matters, spiritual freedom and religious conscience must remain inviolate.[117] However, during the medieval period, divine favor was not the sole source of kingship and legitimacy in the eyes of the subjects. Although divine favor was the source of kings' power, reducing the legitimacy of a medieval king to this context alone would lead to an insufficient understanding of the issue.

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[116] "*Render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's*" This passage from the Gospel of Matthew draws a clear distinction between earthly and spiritual authority. As in every age, it addresses how individuals and nations must determine their place between God and Caesar, between the Kingdom of Heaven and the kingdoms of this world. See. George Johnson, "Render unto Caesar; Render Also unto God," *Religious Education 32*, no. 3 (1937): 202–6, https://doi.org/10.1080/0034408370320311.

[117] Jean-Paul Roux, Kral: *Mitler ve Simgeler*, trans. Nuri Fudayl Kıcıroğlu (İstanbul: Dergâh Yayınları, 2020), 303–304. Originally published as *Le roi: Mythes et Symboles* (Paris: Librairie Arthème Fayard, 1995),38.

Whilst it can be accurate to assert that royal authority was frequently attributed to divine will, reducing a medieval king's legitimacy to this spiritual dimension alone risks oversimplifying a far more complex construct. John Lowden advances the argument that royal representation is also inherently visual. Ceremonies, rituals, architectural monuments and coinage functioned as primary symbols of royal power. These served to shape how kingship was perceived, understood and legitimized by subjects. King James narrates a story in the *Llibre* that validates Lowden's claim about visual representation methods of the King. King James's harsh response to cases of money forgery, and the severity of the punishments he imposed, were not merely judicial measures but statements of royal authority. While intended to protect the image of royal power and the stability of the realm.

> "Having done that, we went to Tarazona, where, in four or five places, they forged gold coins, of ours and of the king of Castile. And when we were in Tarazona the matter of the money forged there was notorious. And we conducted an inquisition in two parts of the town, having them brought to our house under the power of a judge, who was called Master Humbert, and travelled with us, as well as one other, and conducted the inquisition on them. And we said that when they had taken it down that they should show it to us. And they struggled a good four days without being able to find out anything about those coins. And we would come in from hunting and Master Humbert would say to us: "Sire, what do you want us to do? For we cannot find out anything of the truth about the money, either of who forged it or where it was forged. "And we said: "How can it be that we cannot find the truth when the matter of the forging of the money is so notorious? This is a great marvel, as the bushes, if they knew how to speak, would be able to tell it. For they must forge it among the bushes and the streams when they cannot find a house in which to do it."[118]

Counterfeiting was widely regarded as an act that directly undermined royal authority. It is likely that King James included this episode in the *Llibre dels Fets* to stress the gravity of offenses committed against his sovereign power. Throughout the Middle Ages, kings imposed harsh penalties to combat the threat of false coinage,

[118]James I of Aragon, *The Book of Deeds of James I of Aragon*,39.

viewing it not merely as a criminal act but as a challenge to the legitimacy of their rule.[119] King James's remark that nearly the entire town was aware of the illicit activity and that counterfeit coins were being produced in bushes and along riverbanks suggests that such incidents were not isolated. His detailed account indicates that counterfeiting may have been a recurring issue during his reign and one that demanded a firm royal response.

In the *Llibre dels Fets* King James also narrated the demise of counterfeiters after trials with those words:

> "…Moreover, it was proved that the sacristan, brother of Pedro Perez, had forged false maravedis of copper, and they had covered them with gold leaf. And we found that they passed through the hands of Pedro Ramirez, at Santolalla, and that they were also forged at Tortoles, at the town of Tarazona, and in many other places. Therefore, in that matter we visited justice on Don Pedro Ramirez and his son, and his wife Elfa de Tortoles, and we had them drowned."And we did justice to others as was fitting, and we took their goods, as the goods of men who had dared to try and forge coins in our land and that of the king of Castile. And as the sacristan was a cleric, we delivered him to the bishop, and he put him in prison, and he died in that prison. And when we had done that, that is to say, punished the very great evil and great harm that the peoples of the land had received, we left there…"[120]

In the *Llibre dels Fets*, King James places significant emphasis on the severe punishment of offenders, particularly those whose actions posed a threat to royal authority. Any act that could potentially compromise the monarchy's authority was met with severe consequences, reflecting the necessity of maintaining strict control and order within the kingdom.

King James did not communicate with his subjects solely through acts of punishment. Mercy formed a complementary theme in his relationship with them, serving as a key element of his royal image. The concept of mercy appears repeatedly

[119] Rory Naismith emphasizes that kings closely guarded their control over coinage, with forgery punished by fines, mutilation, or even death. Importantly, penalties also targeted those who refused to accept legitimate coin, showing that money and royal authority were mutually reinforcing, tied to both its production and its use. See.Rory Naismith, *Introduction to Money and Coinage in the Middle Ages*, ed. Rory Naismith (Boston: Brill, 2018), 7.

[120] Rory Naismith, *Introduction to Money and Coinage in the Middle Ages*, 7.

throughout the *Llibre dels Fets*, where the king portrays himself as a king capable of forgiveness.

W. Mark Ormrod described the meaning of mercy in the Middle Ages as follows: "Mercy was a core element of kingly office in the Middle Ages, and the subject has numerous ramifications for constitutional, legal, and cultural history."[121] Ormrod also touches on the relationship between mercy and justice, defining the king's mercy as follows: "Royal mercy, as the supreme act of discretion exercised by the highest human authority in the land, was thus seen to play a vital part in upholding divine favor, legitimate authority, right justice, and good governance."[122]

King James refers also mercy in the *Llibre dels Fets*. He tried to express a willingness to show mercy to newly conquered populations, provided they submitted peacefully to his authority. However, one of the most striking examples emphasizing King James's own sense of mercy does not concern his subjects at all, but an animal instead.

When King James was at Borrianna at campaign he narrated the story about his tent and mother swallow:

> "Thus, we went to Borriana. And when the moment had arrived when we wished to raise camp, a swallow had made her nest on the pole of our tent; and we ordered our men not to take down the tent until she and her little ones had gone, since she had trusted us."[123]

It is not known for certain whether a mother swallow built a nest in King James' tent. However, it can be said with certainty that King James had a purpose in narrating this. Antonella Liuzzo Scorpo evaluates the mother swallow as King James' selective memory and his mercy. The use of birds as symbols of memory recall originates from Platonic thought[124] and is echoed in Psalm 84. "*Even the sparrow has found a home,*

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[121] W. Mark Ormrod, "*Pardon, Parliament and Political Performance in Later Medieval England*," in Prowess, Piety, and Public Order in Medieval Society: Studies in Honor of Richard W. Kaeuper, ed. Craig M. Nakashian and Daniel P. Franke (Leiden: *Brill*, 2017), 303.

[122] Pat McCune, "*Justice, Mercy and Late Medieval Governance*," Michigan Law Review 89 (1991): 161–78, cited in Ormrod, "Pardon, Parliament and Political Performance," 304.

[123]James I of Aragon, *The Book of Deeds of James I of Aragon*,192.

[124] The avian metaphor in Platonic thought appears in the *Theaetetus*, the dialogue in which Plato addresses the question of what constitutes knowledge. In this analogy, the aviary represents the mind, while the birds symbolize the pieces of knowledge and ideas that are acquired by it. Initially, the cage is empty, and it becomes filled as the individual gradually captures the birds, thereby assimilating knowledge into the mind. See. Emanuele Maffi, "The Soul as an Aviary: A Metaphorical and Metaphysical Reading of *Theaetetus*," in *New Explorations in Plato's Theaetetus: Belief, Knowledge, Ontology, Reception*, ed. Diego Zucca (Boston: Brill, 2022), 217–19.

and the swallow a nest for herself, where she may lay her young—a place near your altar, Lord Almighty, my King and my God." This verse, found in Psalm 84 of the Old Testament, employs the imagery of the sparrow and the swallow to symbolize security and belonging in the presence of God. That such a poetic image appears in the narrative of King James I's heroic actions is, in itself, quite revealing. As Scorpo has argued, King James's act of showing mercy by protecting a small creature can be directly linked to the imagery of Psalm 84. The phrase "…and the swallow a nest for herself" represents the believer who, in the presence of God, finds a secure dwelling place and a sense of safety. In a similar manner, King James may be seen as echoing this biblical narrative when he offers a safe refuge to a swallow, thereby positioning himself as a ruler who not only dispenses justice but also embodies divine compassion through care for even the smallest of beings. This case also displays the king's moral character, portraying him as a just and reliable ruler, even when his actions involved violence.

On a deeper level, the scene suggests that these harsh measures were legitimized by his dedication to upholding both divine and earthly justice.[125] Scorpo's argument can be seen as persuasive. King James utilized symbolic imagery to establish a meaningful association between his mercy and the protection of a small, vulnerable bird that had built its nest in his tent amid a military campaign. In doing so, the king conveyed that even the most powerless and seemingly insignificant among his subjects were deserving of his justice and compassion. This example functions not only as a reflection of King James's personal virtue but also as a broader statement about the moral responsibilities of rulership.

However, Emma Snowden offers a different perspective on the swallow and King James metaphor. Donald Karay and many historians have chosen to explain this event with the concept of chivalry. According to Snowden, this event cannot be explained by ignoring gender and regional roles.[126] Snowden does not consider it sufficient to explain the nesting swallow in King James's Llibre merely through the themes of chivalric virtue and mercy of the King. For Snowden, the mother swallow building her nest symbolizes "the acquisition of a new home and the permanence of settlement in that home." She further suggests a connection between Queen Yolande—who accompanied the king on his campaigns—and the figure of the mother swallow.[127]

[125] Liuzzo Scorpo, "*Emotional Memory*," 18.
[126] Snowden, "*Women as Frontier-Makers*," 9.
[127] *Ibid*, 9.

From the perspectives of Snowden and other historians, King James's account of the swallow admits multiple interpretations. Snowden's distinctive contribution is her argument that this episode signifies more than conventional chivalric mercy: the image of the mother swallow introduces themes of maternal care and the symbolism of establishing a home in a newly conquered land. Yet a more straightforward reading suggests that the nesting bird primarily functions as a metaphor for chivalric mercy, projecting the king's compassion and benevolence even in the midst of war.

On the other hand, a particularly significant dimension of King James's relationship with his subjects appears in his treatment of religious minorities. For the Christian kingdoms of Iberia, it was quite common to rule over non-Christian subjects. Throughout the Middle Ages, Castile, Aragon, and Portugal all governed sizable Muslim populations. This was especially the case during the period of the *Reconquista*, when Christian monarchs acquired Muslim communities in the newly conquered territories. The relationship between Muslim subjects and their Christian kings has been interpreted from different perspectives. Within the framework of the concept of *convivencia*[128], this relationship has often been described as one in which Muslim subjects were able to live with a certain degree of security and relative freedom under Christian kings. Yet historians such as Darío Fernández-Morera have taken a far more skeptical stance toward the *convivencia*. In his work titled, *The Myth of the Andalusian Paradise: Muslims, Christians, and Jews under Islamic Rule in Medieval Spain*, Fernández-Morera rejects the term *convivencia* altogether, not only under Muslim rulers but also under Christian kings.[129]

The *Llibre dels Fets* provides first-hand evidence for assessing these debates by illustrating King James's interactions with his Muslim subjects. The *Llibre* demonstrates that King James neither offered his Muslim subjects the tolerance and

[128] The term *convivencia* was introduced by the historian Américo Castro Quesada to describe the relative peace that prevailed in Spain during the period of the *Reconquista*, spanning from the eighth century to the end of the sixteenth century. According to Castro's thesis, medieval Spain was divided among three religions, which coexisted in a state of relative harmony and peace. See.Américo Castro Quesada, *España en Su Historia: Cristianos, Moros y Judíos* (Buenos Aires: Editorial Losada, 1948).

[129]Darío Fernández-Morera claims that Muslim "tolerance" in al-Andalus was largely illusory. Christian subjects living under Muslim rule were classified as *dhimmīs*, a status that signified legal and social inferiority for Christians. Although the enforcement of Islamic law could vary depending on circumstances, its fundamental effect was to impose restrictive and often humiliating conditions on Christian communities in order to preserve Muslim dominance. See. Darío Fernández-Morera, *The Myth of the Andalusian Paradise: Muslims, Christians, and Jews under Islamic Rule in Medieval Spain* (Wilmington, DE: ISI Books, 2016), 209-210.

cultural freedom implied by the thesis of *convivencia*, nor did he exercise the kind of systematic persecution suggested by Fernández-Morera. Rather, the *Llibre* tries to depict that the relationship between the king and his Muslim subjects was framed above principle of allegiance. Those who declared their loyalty to the king were guaranteed the protection of their lives and property, while those who resisted or rebelled faced punishment and expulsion.

During the campaigns in Majorca and Valencia, King James repeatedly emphasized that communities which surrendered would be granted protection under his rule, while those who resisted or rebelled would suffer severe consequences. His *Llibre dels Fets* emphasizes this principle, but it is also corroborated by contemporary chancellery records. One notable example is a royal charter of 1259, in which James granted legal protection to the Muslim community of Zaragoza. Such evidence demonstrates how his autobiographical narrative was reinforced—and at times supplemented—by the official documentation of his reign.

> *"*We, for ourselves and our successors, grant and bestow upon you and upon all and each of our Saracens of Zaragoza, both present and future, in perpetuity, that none of our officials, nor any individual or group of them, may compel you or presume to compel you, for any causes or complaints that may arise among you, except according to your own açuna, and not otherwise, for any reason whatsoever. Nor may they compel you to give testimony regarding any matters that arise among you, except according to your own açuna. We command the bailiffs, zavalmedins, justices, jurors, and all other officials not to act against this grant of ours, nor to allow anyone else to do so in any way or for any reason. Given at Lleida, on the twelfth day before the Kalends of September, in the year of Our Lord 1259."[130]

[130] *Per nos et nostros concedimus et donamus vobis et universis et singulis sarracenis nostris Cesarauguste, presentibus et futuris, imperpetuum, quod aliquis velaliqui officiales nostri non compellant vos nec possint vel audeant compellere pro aliquibus causis vel querimoniis que inter vos vertentur, nisi tantum secundum vestram açunam et non aliter aliqua racione nec ad faciendum super aliquibus causis que inter vos vertentur testimonium, nisi secundum vestram açunam. Mandantes baiulis, zavalmedinis, iusticie, iuratis et universis aliis officialibus quod contra hanc concessionem nostram non veniant nec aliquem venire permitant aliquo modo vel aliqua racione. Datum Ilerde, XII kalendas septembris anno Domini M. CC. L. nono.* See. ACA, Cancillería, Registro 10, f. 138r. Quoted in María de los Desamparados Cabanes Pecourt, *Documentos de Jaime I relacionados con Aragón* (Zaragoza: Institución «Fernando el Católico» (C.S.I.C.), 2009), 148.

This document affirms the right of the aforementioned communities to be judged exclusively according to their own laws, known as *açuna*[131]. In doing so, it illustrates King James's broader policy of legal and religious tolerance toward the non-Christian populations living within his dominions. Such a policy was by no means arbitrary. After the conquest of Valencia, the region remained predominantly Muslim for at least two centuries, and its demographic and cultural composition made accommodation a political necessity rather than a mere gesture of goodwill.

In order to ensure prolonged stability and consolidate his authority, King James granted his Muslim subjects' generous terms of surrender, allowing them to preserve their religious practices, maintain their legal traditions, and retain a degree of communal autonomy. This pragmatic approach reveals James not only as a conqueror but also as a ruler attentive to the complexities of governing a diverse population. By respecting existing structures of law and belief, he was able to secure the loyalty—or at least the acquiescence—of his new subjects, thus strengthening the foundations of his reign in a newly incorporated territory.

Consequently, the generation that submitted to Christian authority in the thirteenth century was able to maintain many aspects of their traditional way of life. The Muslim subjects which are called *Mudejars*, maintained their religious practices with minimal external interference, preserving their Shari'a-based legal institutions and remaining under the jurisdiction of their own qadis and customs.[132]

In contrast to the formal tone of chancellery documents, King James's the *Llibre dels Fets* narrates a more detailed and personal account of his interactions with his Muslim subjects. One notable episode concerns the negotiation over the allocation of a mosque in the city of Murcia, following its conquest. The dispute between the king and the Muslim residents who had remained in the city under his rule regarding the conversion of a prominent mosque into a Christian church, serves as a unique example of King James's pragmatic yet measured approach toward religious coexistence. His response, recorded in the *Llibre*, illustrates not only his concern for Christian needs but also his willingness to respect the religious practices of his new subjects within certain boundaries.

[131] *Açuna* is used in the text as a word meaning local custom.
[132] Vernon O. Egger, *A History of the Muslim World since 1260: The Making of a Global Community*, 2nd ed. (New York: *Routledge*, 2018), 128.

> "And in the morning, after we had heard Mass, we went up to the fortress, and the governor with us, with five of the best Saracens of the city of Murcia. And they said that we should divide the town just as had been agreed between them and us. And we said that from the mosque that was near the fortress down to the gate where the camp was should be of the Christians, and that that mosque should be included in our part. They said that that had not been agreed and their documents said that they would keep their mosques and that they would have them as they had them in the time of the Saracens. And we said to them that it had been agreed in that manner, but that they had not understood it. Because we wished that they should conserve the mosques but, "What would the Christians do without a church that they could go into? And that church shall be at the gate of the fortress. And that from there "Alàlosabba"[133] should be cried near to my head when I am sleeping, which, as you can well understand, is not fitting. Now, you have some ten mosques in the town. Make your prayers in those and leave this one to us."[134]

Although King James accepted the traditions of his Muslim subjects, there was, of course, a limit to this. This passage from the *Llibre* shows how knowledgeable a Christian king could be about the customs and traditions of his Muslim subjects. However, tolerance towards Muslim subjects could suddenly give way to severe cruelty. At the siege of Cullera, King James planned to position the *fenevòls*, which is a siege machine so that if a stone missed the castle, it would strike where the women and children had taken refuge. His normal tactic in war was to devastate the land and reduce the Muslim population to famine. The king insisted, we must conquer a town such as Valencia through famine.[135]

King James sought to engage with his subjects on multiple levels throughout the *Llibre dels Fets*. As a warrior-king who spent much of his life on campaign, he gained direct experience of both his long-established dominions and the territories newly brought

[133] Damian J. Smith suggests that the phrase may mean "[ḥayya] 'alā 'ṣ-ṣalāt" or "[come] to prayer," but also notes an alternative reading of the Catalan text as *lo sabaçala*, which could refer to the muezzin himself. See: James I of Aragon, *The Book of Deeds of James I of Aragon*,319.
[134] James I of Aragon, *The Book of Deeds of James I of Aragon*, 319.
[135] David Thomas and Alex Mallett, eds., *Christian-Muslim Relations: A Bibliographical History*, Volume 4 (1200–1350), with Juan Pedro Monferrer Sala, Johannes Pahlitzsch, Mark Swanson, Herman Teule, and John Tolan (Leiden: *Brill*, 2012), 555.

under his authority. In places such as Valencia and Majorca, where Muslim populations remained significant, James extended certain privileges to these communities. Such measures were not acts of benevolence alone but strategic attempts to secure their loyalty and integrate them into the framework of the Crown.

Apart from themes of mercy and punishment, King James also shows how he communicate with his subjects. What ordinary people thought of their kings, and how they behaved when confronted with them, is rarely conveyed in the chronicles. *The Llibre dels Fets*, however, stands out in this respect, offering one of the most intimate portrayals of a king's interaction with his subjects. King James's visit in 1239 to Montpellier, inherited from his mother, provides a vivid example of such direct contact with his people during the preparations for the Valencian campaign. When King James arrived in Montpellier, the city's bailiff, Atbrand, was on the verge of being lynched by the other local consul members of Montpellier. The king met not only with Atbrand himself but also with the nobles who opposed him.[136] However, when Atbrand urged King James to hear the complaints of the townspeople—the peasants, potters, and tanners—before making a decision, the king thus came into direct contact with his subjects. Each day he devoted himself to listening to a different group. His exchange with the tanners unfolded as follows:

> *"When they had gone, the tanners came and there were some two hundred*
> *of them, with torches with candles. And they said that we were as welcome as*
> the beautiful day of Easter, and that they had come before us to accept and do our will; because the tanners had never deserted the lord of Montpellier, and that now they had one who was more honorable than any they had ever had, it was with good reason that they should serve us. And then Atbrand said: Mylord, through your favor, I hold your place in this town when you are not here, both inside and outside, and I can greatly recommend to you the tanners, as you can count on them for help and advice whenever I ask them. And you should know that they are very much yours, for you to order and command, and they

[136] James I of Aragon, *The Book of Deeds of James I of Aragon*, 238-240.

> have come to declare this to you, so that you may better believe it of them."[137]

King James explicitly depicts that he greatly enjoyed the ceremony in which the tanners came before him and pledged their loyalty. The case of Montpellier thus can be considered as a explicit example of how the king valued the devotion he received from ordinary subjects. Moreover, the fact that King James chose to hold Atbrand in office and punish the nobles who opposed him illustrates the weight he attached to the allegiance of common people, whose loyalty could decisively shape his political judgments.

As a whole, *the Llibre dels Fets* stands as a vital primary source, offering an unparalleled firsthand account of the evolving relationship between a medieval monarch and his subjects. King James presents his rule as one balanced between the stern enforcement of justice and the deliberate exercise of mercy. Time and again, the narrative highlights episodes in which he underscored the severity of punishments to affirm his authority, while equally portraying acts of clemency as indispensable virtues of kingship. This duality of justice and mercy not only shaped his self-representation but also reflected broader ideals of medieval rulership.

[137] James I of Aragon, *The Book of Deeds of James I of Aragon*,319-320.

CHAPTER III

Reflections of King James's Inner World in the *Llibre Dels Fets*

One of the unique aspects of the *Llibre dels Fets* is that it allows us to delve into the inner feelings of a king. Throughout the work, King James not only narrates many events, but also expresses his feelings in response to the events he encounters, enabling the reader to explore his inner world. However, King James does not choose to clearly or honestly display every emotion that a person can feel. The themes of sadness, anger, joy, and fear are main emotional themes King James uses to express himself in the *Llibre*. Of course, King James may have concealed his true feelings about an event he experienced in his narration in the *Llibre*, but even this fictional aspect of the work offers us the opportunity to detect his inner world of a medieval king.

"Reading texts and studying images from across the long thousand years of the Middle Ages, a historian would have to possess a heart of stone not to be moved by the life behind them. That life was not solely one of hierarchies, means of production, and taxes. It was also full of desires, tensions, sudden gasps, and endless sighs."[138]As Damien Boquet and Piroska Nagy observe in this quotation, the Middle Ages are primarily remembered for their legal agreements, taxation systems, and administrative data. Emotions, by contrast, have often been relegated to the background in scholarly approaches to the period. The emotional lives of medieval individuals are notoriously difficult to reconstruct, largely due to the scarcity of personal sources. This challenge is especially pronounced in the case of ordinary people, whose inner experiences rarely left tangible traces in the historical record.

Johan Huizinga, in *The Autumn of the Middle Ages,* broadly characterized the medieval period as an age of intense and childish emotion. He argued that historians risk overlooking a vital dimension of the past if they fail to grasp the emotional world of medieval people. In daily life, he observed, there existed an unlimited capacity for passion and imagination: "Our medieval historians who prefer to rely as much as possible on official documents because the chronicles are unreliable fall thereby victim to an occasionally dangerous error. The documents tell us little about the difference in tone that separates us from those times; they let us forget the fervent pathos of medieval

[138] Damien Boquet and Piroska Nagy, *Medieval Emotions*, trans. Robert Shaw (Cambridge, UK: *Polity Press*, 2018), xii.

life."[139] Huizinga also claims that the medieval world was a place where emotions were highly visible but neglected.[140]

In this sense, the *Llibre dels Fets* has been a unique source that reveals substantial light on King James's reign. It is possible to see King James's relationship with his nobles and subjects as has been discussed in the thesis. However, the *Llibre* also allows us to discover King James's human and emotional side. The emotions in *Llibre* not only reveal King James's human nature but also prevent the work from becoming a monotonous court chronicle. It would be more accurate to say that King James's references to his emotions throughout the work are not merely an attempt to share his emotional state. As is the case throughout *Llibre*, the reasons behind King James's sharing of his emotions are also part of his quest for perfection.

4.1. The Nature and Meaning of Kingly Anger in the *Llibre dels Fets*

Anger emerges as one of the principal emotions articulated by King James in the *Llibre dels Fets*. His outbursts were directed variously against nobles, members of his own family, and adverse political or military circumstances. The recurrent presence of anger in the narrative is far from accidental, reflecting both a central theme in King James's self-representation and a broader medieval conception of royal authority.

The question of when anger was legitimate for a king, and when it was not, remain a subject of debate. Anger arising from jealousy or mere wrath was regarded as a negative quality in a ruler. Just as a king was expected to be prudent, pious, merciful, forgiving, and just, he was also required to command obedience and respect. In this context, *ira regis*, which can be assessed as "legitimate anger," functioned as an instrument for maintaining order. The very nature of a king's anger determined its legitimacy, and for this reason interpretations of *ira regis* were diverse and often contested.

In the context of medieval emotions, the display of royal anger was not merely a personal reaction but a performative element of kingship. In his article "*Ira Regis: Prolegomena to a History of Royal Anger*," Gerd Althoff identifies royal anger as an important practice of rulership. While the image of the merciful king was, in theory, a

[139] Johan Huizinga, *The Autumn of the Middle Ages*, trans. Rodney J. Payton and Ulrich Mammitzsch (Chicago: *University of Chicago Press*, 1996), 23.
[140] *Ibid*, 23.

virtue expected of a ruler, in practice the figure of the angry king could serve as a crucial means of securing authority in certain situations.[141]

According to Althoff, *ira regis* is not accepted in theory as a royal virtue. While the prevailing view maintained that anger should not be considered a virtue, in practice the *ira regis* was interpreted as an integral aspect of kingship. Although King James strove in the *Llibre dels Fets* to emphasize the qualities of the idealized monarch, he nonetheless gave greater weight to the theme of anger as a practical necessity of rule. The prominence of anger in the *Llibre* may therefore be understood as King James's recognition of its value as a powerful instrument for securing royal authority and suppressing opposition.

Damien Boquet and Piroska Nagy also have defined *ira regis* as the legitimate anger of the king. Referring to the framework of medieval political thought that regarded *ira regis* as a manifestation of divine wrath, Boquet and Nagy argue that any act or situation that undermined the will or authority (*potestas*) of the prince was liable to provoke this form of justified royal anger.[142]

As it comes to King James, the concept of "anger" in the *Llibre* was more related to establishing order from a human perspective. In medieval Spain, as in the rest of Europe, the practice of *regis ira* continued as a kingly institution. François Soyer has pointed out that *regis ira* was used in medieval Spain to threaten rebellious nobles. Moreover, the concept of *regis ira* represented the king's personal anger, which contrasted with his paternal love for his subjects, and the institutional expression of royal authority against those who broke their oath of allegiance and opposed royal authority.[143]

When King James requested the nobles' support for his military campaigns and his request was denied, he could not hide his anger. The king's anger usually revealed itself when his requests were rejected. In the *Llibre* when he asked the nobles for support to help the King of Castile, he expressed his feelings in response to their answers as follows:

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[141] Gerd Althoff, "*Ira Regis: Prolegomena to a History of Royal Anger," in Anger's Past: The Social Uses of an Emotion in the Middle Ages*, ed. Barbara H. Rosenwein (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1998), 59.
[142] Boquet and Nagy, *Medieval Emotions*,161.
[143] François Soyer, "*Ritualized Public Performance, Emotional Narratives and the Enactment of Power: The Public Baptism of a Muslim in Eighteenth-Century Barcelona*," in Emotion, Ritual and Power in Europe,1200–1920: Family, State and Church, ed. Merridee L. Bailey and Katie Barclay (Cham: *Palgrave Macmillan,* 2017), 105.

> "Then we left there, and we went to Catalonia. And firstly, we convoked our Cort at Barcelona. And when the Cort of the nobles, citizens, and clergy had assembled, we asked them that just as they and their lineages had always helped us in our affairs, and especially in that of Majorca, so it was necessary that they should help us in this, because the need was great. We should repair some wrongs which, according to what they said, we had done him, and that if we spoke privately with him at once, they would give us such a response that we would remain satisfied… And we said that anybody of our land who had a complaint of us should come to us and we would repair it. When we saw how badly they behaved, we said to them that they had not sufficiently understood what could happen afterwards, because if the king of Castile lost his land, we would have more difficulty, we and they, in holding our land than we had now. And we said to the clergy: What will you gain if the churches where Our Lord and His mother are worshipped are lost through ill fortune, and Mahomet is worshipped there? And if what belongs to, we kings are lost, you can well understand that what is yours will not be restored. And I never thought that it would happen that you would respond to me in so wicked and villainous a manner; that convoking the Cort of the Catalans I would not obtain a fitting response…And we got up and we did not wish to hear any reply from them, and we went to our house. And they insistently besought us that we should not be angry, for they would deliberate again, and they would respond to us."[144]

As seen in this extract from the *Llibre,* King James probably aimed to win over the nobles and other members of the *cortes* who opposed his wishes by showing his anger. In this and other examples, King James used his anger manipulatively to influence the members of the *cortes*.

McGrath has pointed out that *regis ira* was not only necessary for kings themselves, but also for chroniclers to portray the king's wrath. *Ira regis* was not only an crucial way through which a king exercised his legitimate authority (*potestas*), but also a necessary theme within chronicle writing. This presents a certain paradox,

[144]James I of Aragon, *The Book of Deeds of James I of Aragon*,288-289.

particularly when one considers the extent to which medieval historiography was shaped by the influence of the Church. While the Church regarded anger as a sin and therefore denied it the status of a royal virtue, ira regis—understood as legitimate or valid anger—was nonetheless vital for the maintenance of order. The king's ability to display such anger in the right circumstances functioned as a crucial means of securing stability. In King James's *Llibre dels Fets*, too, the representation of anger largely adheres to this framework.[145]

For King James, anger was not simply a spontaneous outburst of feeling but rather a carefully instrument of kingship. In the *Llibre dels Fets*, his expressions of anger cannot be reduced to mere emotional reactions, for they served a broader political and symbolic function. Anger, in this context of the *Llibre*, became part of the performance of medieval kingship—an essential element of the ruler's identity that reinforced his *potestas* and authority within the medieval political order. By channeling and displaying anger in calculated ways, King James could assert dominance, command obedience, and remind his subjects of the sanctity and weight of royal power. In this sense, his anger can be evaluated as less about personal sentiment and more about the strategic construction of expressing his authority, a deliberate embodiment of what it meant to be a king.

4.2. Shedding Tears and Laughing in the *Llibre Dels Fets*

In the *Llibre dels Fets*, King James frequently recounts moments of both laughter and tears in connection with the events of his life. At times he specifies the circumstances that provoked his laughter or weeping, while on other occasions he simply notes that he reacted with one or the other, without elaborating on the cause. In the *Llibre*, King James is described as shedding tears on many occasions. The king sometimes cried in front of his nobles, and sometimes alone. However, the crying or weeping of King James cannot be explained just as a political tool or constructing a royal image. King James expressed his anger, sadness, joy, and disappointment through shedding his tears and all of those tears were not politically motivated.

Elina Gertsman has shown that in the Middle Ages tears carried a wide range of meanings. It is a well-established fact that the act of weeping was never a neutral

[145] Kate McGrath, Royal Rage and the Construction of Anglo-Norman Authority, c. 1000–1250, *Palgrave Studies in the History of Emotions* (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019), chap. "Righteous Royal Rage," 111–12, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-11223-3.

gesture but one deeply embedded in social and spiritual codes. To shed tears in public was closely associated with sanctity, while their display also served as a marker of sincerity. Crying was regarded as a sacred act, and public expressions of grief or devotion were an integral part of daily religious and communal life. In this sense, tears functioned simultaneously as signs of holiness, emotional authenticity, and as potent symbols of spirituality and the transcendent.[146]

In line with Gertzman's definition, it is quite clear that crying meant sincerity for medieval people. It may not be a coincidence that King James expressed his tears in different manners. King James' display of crying or weeping, like his display of anger, may have been motivated by political concerns but his weeping cannot be explained as fictional.

King James used to cry to express his sadness, anger, and joy. Examples of him crying out of sadness in *Llibre* when he had to say farewell to someone who loves:

> "When we were nine years old, neither we nor the count of Provence could be held any longer at Monzon, so greatly did we desire to leave there. And since it was necessary for the land, the master and the others took the decision that they would allow us to depart from that place. About seven months before we left there, a message came for the count of Provence from the nobles of his land, saying that on a fixed day they would come with a galley to Salou. They would take him secretly from the castle of Monzon, and they would go with him to Provence. And it was carried out just as was planned. When he was about to leave, he said that he wished to speak with us, and he revealed his secret to us. Then, weeping, he said farewell to us, as did those who had come for him. And we wept with him for our sadness at his parting but were greatly pleased for him that he was able to leave."[147]

It is quite likely that the parting from his cousin, the Count of Provence, saddened James as a child. However, it may seem remarkable that James, even after becoming king, showed his emotions of sadness at separations and deaths as an adult.

For example, King James received news of the deaths of two of his nobles during the Majorca expedition, his reaction was noteworthy:

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[146] Elina Gertsman, "*Going They Went and Wept: Tears in Medieval Discourse*," in Crying in the Middle Ages: Tears of History, ed. Elina Gertsman (New York: Routledge, 2012), xi-xii.
[147] King James, *The Book of Deeds of James I of Aragon*,28.

> "And when we had ridden a mile, the bishop of Barcelona came to us and said: Lord, for the love of God, do not hurry so.Why not, bishop, if it is better so? And he said: I wish to speak to you. So we left the road, and he said: Ah, my Lord. You have lost more than you realize, as Guillem de Montcada and Ramon are dead.What! Dead? We said, and we began to cry. Afterwards we said to the bishop: Let us not cry, as now is not the time for weeping, but let us take their bodies from the field, since they are dead. Let us do so, he said. Go and wait for us, for we shall do it, we said."[148]

On the other hand, in the *Llibre dels Fets*, King James expressed his sorrow by shedding his tears over the loss of his loyal companions who had fallen in battle through tears. However, knowing that he was still at war, he controlled his emotions and stopped crying. This moment reveals the king's belief that overt displays of grief could compromise his focus and resolve in the midst of conflict. By choosing self-restraint, King James reaffirms the ideal of the emotionally disciplined ruler who subordinates personal sorrow to the demands of leadership and military duty. Scorpo argues that King James's shedding of tears in the face of grief served as a means of emotional relief. Thus, it can be suggested that King James, who was particularly prone to tears on the battlefield, used this act as a way to restore his mental state.[149] Scorpo also notes that tears were not merely the result of certain emotional states, but also functioned as a means of overcoming pain and sorrow. King James's weeping in moments of grief can be understood in parallel with this view.

Alexandru Ștefan Ança argues that the kings of Aragon employed weeping as a political weapon. The king's act of shedding tears in public was driven by an entirely political purpose. When the medieval association of tears with sincerity and spirituality is taken into account, it becomes evident that the use of weeping by kings as a public instrument was a natural and effective strategy.[150] There are many points in the *Llibre* that prove Ança's argument. King James' crying, especially in front of the nobles, may be an example of this. The reason for his crying on the battlefield may also be an example of gaining political advantage through the king' emotions.

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[148]King James, *The Book of Deeds of James I of Aragon*,91.
[149] Scorpo, "*Emotional Memory and Medieval Autobiography*," 8-9.
[150] Alexandru Ștefan Ança, *When the King Shed Tears: Political Behaviour in the Crown of Aragon, in The Emotional Expression of Authority and Power in the Middle Ages* (Leiden: *Brill*, 2025), 97.

He described how King James' speech in the church before the conquest of Valencia, accompanied by tears, affected the crowd as follows:

> "But when it was between midnight and dawn, we woke up and returned to our thoughts, and we considered that we must be dealing with evil people…these, when we had gone, would not feel any shame in fleeing by day or night and going to Borriana, which was only seven leagues away. And they, the few or many who wished to go, would travel across the land that we had already conquered, since they need have no fear to do so. And we considered how with the help of God and His mother, we had conquered from Tortosa to Borriana, but that, if that place was abandoned and lost, so those other places which we had won would be lost. For which reason, we decided to go to the church of Santa Maria the next morning and to convoke the knights and all the others… Thus, when they were all assembled before us, we said to them: Men, we know only too well, and believe that you and all those who are in Spain know, too, the great grace that Our Lord has done us, in our youth, in the deed of Majorca and the other islands, and in conquering from Tortosa to here; and you are assembled here to serve God and us. Now, Brother Pere of Lleida spoke with us last night and told us that the majority of you wish to leave here if we leave; and we were amazed by that, because we thought to make our departure for your profit and to achieve that conquest. But since we see that our departure troubles you (we stood up now to speak these words), we promise here before God and this altar of His holy mother, that we shall not go beyond Teruel nor the river of Ulldecona until we have taken Valencia. And we shall send for our wife the queen, and our daughter, for them to come, so that you may appreciate the great determination we have to remain here and to conquer this kingdom, in the service of God. When they heard my words, there was nobody in the church who did not begin to weep, and we wept with them. And we said to them, "Now then, take heart, for we shall not go from here until

> we have taken the city of Valencia. And they all went away, happy and content with the good nourishment of the words we had spoken."[151]

During King James' campaign in Valencia, he gave an impressive speech to prevent his nobles from abandoning him and used tears as a political weapon to make his speech more effective. In this case, by revealing his emotions, King James consolidated his nobles and found the strength he needed to continue the campaign through shedding his tears.

King James also expressed joy and happiness through weeping. As Kim Bergqvist observes, the tears of medieval people must be interpreted with nuance, since their meaning depended heavily on context. Weeping could signal pleasure as well as devastation, making it an inherently ambiguous act. For this reason, it must be read as a gesture open to multiple interpretations by medieval contemporaries and requiring equally careful analysis by modern scholars.[152]

In his narration of the Murcian Campaign, King James depicted his joyfulness with tears through those words:

> "And our men delayed a long time in going up there and we prayed to Santa Maria for what we desired, that there she might be adored and believed in, and that we might bring the enterprise to a happy conclusion and that she would pray for that to her beloved Son. And we were greatly afraid that they might have been captured, since they delayed so long. However, after a long while we saw our banner up on the fortress and the towers well manned with our men and crossbowmen. And we got down on to the ground from our horse and we thanked Our Lord God for the grace he had done us, and we knelt, crying and kissing the ground. Then we returned from there to our quarters."[153]

In the *Llibre dels Fets,* King James provides a vivid description of a scene in which the joy of victory is expressed through tears of joy rather than laughter. The *Llibre's* recurring motif of weeping offers valuable insight into the king's emotional

[151] King James, *The Book of Deeds of James I of Aragon*,206-207.
[152] Kim Bergqvist, "Tears of Weakness, Tears of Love: Kings as Fathers and Sons in Medieval Spanish Prose," in *Tears, Sighs and Laughter: Expressions of Emotions in the Middle Ages*, ed. Per Förnegård, Erika Kihlman, Mia Åkestam, and Gunnel Engwall (Stockholm: Kungl. Vitterhets Historie och Antikvitets Akademien, 2017), 78.
[153] King James, *The Book of Deeds of James I of Aragon*, 318.

state as expressed through his actions. For King James, tears served as both a genuine expression of inner sentiment and a calculated emotional tool. He employed weeping to communicate sincerity and vulnerability to those around him and as a strategic device to influence his companions during moments of crisis. Thus, crying emerges in the chronicle as both a personal and political act, simultaneously heartfelt and performative.

Laughing also served as a means for King James to express his joy and satisfaction. In the *Llibre dels Fets*, he recounts specific cases that provoked laughter, thereby offering further insight into his emotional situation. The theme of laughing in the *Llibre* can be seen as scarce compared to anger and sadness. During the battle, an arrow injured King James, but his response was laughing at the situation instead of showing his pain or anger:

> "As we returned from there with the men, we turned our head to the town to keep an eye on the Saracens, as there was a great company outside; and a crossbowman fired at us, and running through the brim of the helmet and the hood of mail, the arrow hit us, near our forehead. By the will of God, the arrow did not go right through our head, but the point drove halfway into my forehead. And we, because of the anger that we felt, gave such a blow to the arrow that we broke it; and the blood was running down our face. Yet we wiped the blood off, with the silk cloak that we were wearing, and we went along laughing so that the army would not be alarmed."[154]

The death or injury of a king in battle can change the course of the war. In this case described in the *Llibre*, King James chooses to laugh in order to maintain the morale of his army. Just as his crying and anger serve a specific purpose in *Llibre*, so does his laughter.

4.3. Causes of Fear in the *Llibre Dels Fets*

Fear may also be counted among the central emotions expressed in the *Llibre dels Fets*. King James did not hesitate to acknowledge moments of fear, particularly in the early chapters where he recounts his childhood, though such expressions appear less frequently in later parts of the narrative. Like modern individuals, medieval people experienced fear in many forms—terror at threats to the body, anxiety in moments of

[154] King James, *The Book of Deeds of James I of Aragon*, 221.

uncertainty, and concern for the safety of loved ones—and King James's testimony reflects this common human condition. One striking example is his recollection of being on the battlefield at the age of nine. For a ruler who would spend much of his life in warfare, this early experience of combat seems to have left a lasting impression of fear.

> "We were then no more than nine years old, and fearing the battle that we expected to wage, a knight, whose name we do not recall, gave us a light coat of mail to wear. And so began the first deed of arms that we undertook. That day we went to Berbegal, finding no resistance on the road, and the next day we entered Huesca. Then we went to Zaragoza."[155]

Having witnessed the battlefield at a very young age, King James refrained from fully interpreting or analyzing fear in detail in the *Llibre dels Fets*. However, it is entirely natural for anyone, even a king, to fear war. This account in the *Llibre dels Fets* can be seen as one of those special, strikingly honest moments where King James reveals his emotions with unusual clearness. In those moments like this, he depicts his more human, less like a distant monarch, and more like a man whose emotions reaches the reader. Such glimpses of sincerity can be also considered precious, since medieval rulers usually crafted careful images of power and authority, rarely leaving space for raw feeling or vulnerability.

The *Llibre dels Fets* certainly provides valuable information about King James' inner world and emotional state. Even if the emotions of the king James transmitted in the *Llibre* can be fictional in some parts, it can still be possible to draw conclusions about the king's emotional state from even using those fictional or intentional emotional situations. Whether fictional or real, these feelings were transmitted by the king in some way. Unlike the feelings or emotions of kings described in chronicles in the form of a catalog, in the *Llibre* King James offers the opportunity to discover emotions through his own voice. But Scorpo points out how King James controls his emotions in private and public. According to Scorpo's argument, "King James I's autobiography already showed awareness of the differences between emotional values and emotional experiences, as well as of the idea that emotional reactions belonged to the biological sphere, although they originated from and therefore could be managed by a balanced interaction between body and mind."[156]

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[155]King James, The Book of Deeds of James I of Aragon, 29.
[156] Scorpo, "*Emotional Memory and Medieval Autobiography*," 15.

In particular, the intensity of emotions such as sorrow and joy is depicted in the *Llibre* according to context itself. King James tended to display the sincerity of his emotional situation most openly in the setting of battlefield. At court or public sphere, he sought to present his feelings more sparingly and with restraint, whereas on the battlefield he expressed them in a more direct and unguarded manner. Kim Bergqvist has interpreted this contrast as stemming from the fact that public life and the battlefield constituted two distinct social spheres.[157]

Bergqvist's assessment aligns closely with James's narrative in the *Llibre*. For instance, the act of laughter—entirely absent elsewhere in the text—appears only in the context of war. Similarly, the omission of any reference to grief over the death of his wife, Queen Yolande, who could otherwise be considered one of the central figures of the chronicle, contrasts sharply with his vivid account of the sorrow and tears he felt at the death of his uncle during a military campaign. These examples strongly support the thesis that King James's expression of emotion was shaped by the differing social environments in which he found himself.

[157] Kim Bergqvist, "*Tears of Weakness, Tears of Love*", 89-90.

CONCLUSION

King James of Aragon (1208–1276) allowed the voice of a medieval ruler to be heard through his literary work, the *Llibre dels Fets*. The aim of this thesis has been to evaluate the *Llibre* through a range of thematic perspectives. Its centrality lies in the fact that it belongs to the category of ego-documents. Such texts, by offering insight into the self, enable historians to probe the individual dimension of the past in greater depth. Accordingly, this study has sought to uncover as fully as possible the 'I' of the text in order to shed light on King James's personal world. At the same time, it remains essential to recognize that medieval autobiographies emphasized the idealized self far more than the subjective self. In this sense, the *Llibre dels Fets* must be understood less as a spontaneous self-revelation than as the construction of an idealized portrait of King James as a ruler.

King James was acutely aware of the way he fashioned his self-image. His purpose in doing so was clear: to present himself to future generations as both an exemplar and an idealized figure, embodying the prototype of kingship that he had carefully constructed out of his own identity. Throughout this thesis, the aim has been not only to examine the ideal image of kingship that King James sought to project, but also to uncover the more human dimensions of his *persona*. In this respect, the purpose of this study is to make a modest contribution to the field of self-narratives, a branch of modern historiography that still remains relatively new. Although the narratives of "great men" have not always been highly esteemed within historiographical traditions, the attempt to trace their human side and to allow their voices to be heard directly represents another important aspect of this work.

Accordingly, this thesis has sought to analyze the elements in the *Llibre dels Fets* that contribute to the construction of an ideal kingship, while at the same time paying close attention to those subtle passages and scattered hints through which King James inadvertently reveals his more personal side. By emphazising the traces of emotion embedded in the text, this study aims to shed light on the king's humanity—an aspect that complicates, and in many ways enriches, the carefully fashioned image of the ideal monarch.

Throughout the analysis, each section conveyed King James's goal of establishing an ideal kingdom while also referring to his emotional and human side. In

examining the subject matter of the thesis in its entirety, it is evident that there is a paucity of chronological examination of King James's the *Llibre.* As the analyses in the thesis are based on themes, a linear historical narrative is not evident in this sense. Throughout the thesis, wars and political events have been kept in the background, while passages in the *Llibre* that parallel the themes in the thesis have been examined and interpreted in the foreground.

The first chapter of the thesis is built around the question of how King James presents himself as the head of the dynasty in his work. First, his marriages to Eleanor of Castile and Queen Yolande of Hungary were examined comparatively. This analysis indicates that King James articulated ideals of both kingship and queenship, employing the contrasts between his wives as a means of definition. In narrating his relationships with them, however, he did not limit himself to prescribing normative models but also exposed the tensions and imperfections inherent in these representations. He provided a primary source account of the relationship between a medieval king and his queen, and the thesis offers a narrative on the relationship between kings and queens in the Middle Ages through the *Llibre*. In the second part of the first chapter, King James's relationship with his children was examined within the framework of royal parenthood. The purpose of this section is to demonstrate that the relationships between kings and their children cannot be reduced merely to genealogical charts. Based on the *Llibre*, attention was given to the ways in which King James referred to his children, assessing which of his legitimate and illegitimate offspring he mentioned and which he entirely ignored. While the king allowed the voices of some of his children to appear in the *Llibre*, others were omitted or silenced altogether. This omission appears to be closely tied to the extent to which each child contributed to the king's political agenda itself. Another finding of this chapter is that King James scarcely depicted father–child relationships in a personal sense. According to the *Llibre dels Fets*, he represented himself above all as an authoritarian and distant father, one who took pleasure in having his commands obeyed by sons and daughters alike. The validity of this characterization is supported by the narratives in the text. Yet in the passages concerning Violant of Castile, his first child by Queen Yolande of Hungary, a more affectionate and human dimension of fatherhood can be discerned. Even here, however, the tenderness expressed toward Queen Violant must be understood in connection with her status as Queen of Castile.

It is particularly telling that King James made no mention of the children of his sons, while he did refer to the offspring of Violant, Queen of Castile. This attention to grandchildren was not framed as an ordinary expression of familial intimacy, but rather as an anecdote shaped by political purpose. The findings of this chapter therefore indicate that King James's relationships with his wives and children, as represented in the *Llibre*, were not ends in themselves but were consistently portrayed according to the political significance they held for the king.

In the second chapter, King James's exercise of public authority, as conveyed through the *Llibre dels Fets*, is examined by distinguishing between his relations with the nobility and with the common people. The first part of the chapter focuses on his interactions with the nobility, with whom he was in closest and most frequent contact. Particular attention is given to the king's expressions of anger and frustration but his justice towards his nobles. Having ascended the throne at an early age, King James was immediately exposed to power struggles and factional rivalries. In the *Llibre*, he presents himself as a king who sought to end these disputes and redirect the energy of the aristocracy toward a single purpose: conquest. The *Llibre* also highlights how King James attempted to assert and extend his public authority (*potestas*) over the nobility through two principal strategies: punishment and the display of mercy and justice. These dual modes of governance served both to enforce discipline and to legitimize his power by embodying the ideals of justice and clemency. King James's portrayal of his relationship with the nobility thus simultaneously projects the image of the idealized monarch—firm, authoritative, and commanding respect—while also revealing the emotional vulnerability of a medieval king who, when abandoned by his nobles, could describe himself as feeling deserted and betrayed.

The second part of the second chapter examines King James's relationship with his ordinary subjects, focusing on the ways he conveyed public authority. As with his dealings with the nobility, he asserted his *potestas* through both mercy and punishment—expressing wrath toward those who defied his rule while extending grace to the loyal. This section thus offers not only the image of an ideal ruler but also a rare first-hand account of a medieval king's interaction with his people.

The third chapter of the thesis focuses on an examination of King James's emotional map and his feelings on certain situations. Unlike other mainstream medieval chronicles, the *Llibre dels Fets* thus presents the emotional states of a king in his own words. By including emotions in the narrative, the *Llibre* enables access to the inner

world of a medieval individual. However, King James was fully aware of the power and importance of showing ideal emotions and, as in many other parts of the text, portrayed his emotions in an idealized manner. The motivations behind the king's expression of emotions are analyzed in four ways.

This chapter first examines the theme of anger, the emotion most frequently mentioned by James in the *Llibre.* In the medieval context, anger was regarded as a distinctly royal virtue, embodied in the concept of *ira regis*, which framed it as an essential element of kingship. Alongside anger, King James also expressed sadness and joy, though with differing emphases. Sorrow in the *Llibre* reflects both his genuine emotional responses and his strategic use of tears as a persuasive tool to bend his nobles to his will. Weeping, in fact, served as a medium through which King James conveyed both sorrow and joy. By contrast, joy and laughter occupy a far less prominent place in the text. The sole instance in which he explicitly records laughter occurs when, wounded by an arrow in battle, he sought to boost the morale of his troops and prevent their dispersal. In this chapter of the thesis devoted to King James's emotions as represented in the *Llibre dels Fets*, each section examines why King James deliberately manipulated his emotions and for what purpose he did so. Particular attention is also given to the question of context—that is, which public sphere provided the motivation for James to display his emotions and how this shaped his self-representation.

The thesis deliberately refrained from approaching the *Llibre dels Fets* as a chivalric narration. While it is certainly possible to interpret the *Llibre* through the view of chivalric romance—an approach that underlines themes of valor, adventure, and courtly ideals—such a reading has been intentionally set aside. The purpose in the thesis is to emphasize its structure as an ego-document, a text in which King James constructs and communicates his own image, thereby offering a unique form of self-representation. Nevertheless, the potential for viewing the *Llibre* as a chivalric narrative is fully acknowledged.

Similarly, the religious view of King James—particularly his understanding of, and relationship with, the God—is not mentioned within this thesis. King James and the God may need a rich and complex area of inquiry that would require an independent and more extensive research. Accordingly, it lies beyond the immediate scope of the thesis. Instead, the

analysis here has focused on aspects that illuminate the king's construction of both public authority and private selfhood. Special attention has been given to his

interactions with family members, his relationship with subjects and vassals, and the personal emotions.

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