

*AL QUAL DONÀ AMPLE E BASTANT PODER  
A TOTS LOS ACTES FAEDORS EN LES DITES CORTS.  
POWER AND MUNICIPAL REPRESENTATION OF  
LLEIDA IN THE CATALAN CORTS (1416-1458)*

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**ABSTRACT**

Municipal representation in the assemblies of the Catalan *Corts* ("Parliament") is a particularly interesting argument to observe, especially from the point of view of the municipality, the main problems of the city and the intricacies of political and economic power between the city, the monarchy and the other estates. Therefore, analysing the power that the *Consell General* ("General Council") of the royal towns and cities of the Crown of Aragon granted its procurators in the *Corts* enables us to more precisely explain the systems used by the municipality to control their representatives and be better informed of what was happening in the Royal Estate in particular as well as in the general assembly. Lleida will be used as a case study, given its importance and the interesting documentation in its municipal archives during the period of Alfonso the Magnanimous.<sup>1</sup>

**KEYWORDS**

Power, Procurators, Parliament (*Corts*), Lleida, Alfonso the Magnanimous.

**CAPITALIA VERBA**

Potestas, Procuratores, Cortes, Ilerda, Alphonsus Magnanimus.

## 1. Introduction

Municipal representation in the assemblies of the Catalan Parliament or *Corts* is a particularly interesting argument to observe, especially from the point of view of the municipality, the main problems of the city and the intricacies of political and economic power between the city, the monarchy and the other estates.

Therefore, analysing the power that the General Council granted its procurators, and how they used it according to the occasion, enables us to more precisely explain the systems used by the municipality to control their representatives and be better informed of what was happening in the Royal Estate in particular as well as in the general assembly.

Thus, within the complex parliamentary system, the figure of the procurator allows us to penetrate the structure of the assemblies, offering us from a privileged point of view —halfway between the procurator's city and the Royal Estate— a vision of the relationships of power amongst the municipal government, the monarchy and the kingdom. Thus, the figure of the syndic within the assemblies of the *Corts* had a vital role, given that a number of responsibilities were conferred to this important person that would allow his city to have an effective communication channel with the upper echelons of decision in the Crown of Aragon.

Recent studies have helped to provide more information on this essential figure in late medieval parliaments, on his functions, his *cursus honorum* and his social status.<sup>2</sup> In Catalonia, similar to the other territories of the Crown of Aragon, the syndics corresponded to citizens belonging to the oligarchy that controlled the city government and used assemblies as an ideal place to protect and increase their

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1. This publication was possible thanks to the project *Auctoritas. Iglesia, Cultura y Poder (siglos XII-XV)* (HAR2012-31484), funded by the Ministry of Economy and Competitiveness of the Government of Spain. Used Abbreviations: AML, Arxiu Municipal de Lleida.

2. Among the main contributions, we must highlight the works of: Palacios, Bonifacio. "La representación municipal en Cortes. Estudio de la figura del Procurador de Zaragoza a mediados del siglo XV". *En la España medieval*, 7 (1985): 1241-1270; Sarasa, Esteban. "Monarquía, cortes y ciudades en la Corona de Aragón", *Monarquía, cortes y ciudades en la Corona de Aragón: siglo XV. La Península Ibérica en la Era de los Descubrimientos (1391-1492)*. *Actas III Jornadas Hispano-Portuguesas de Historia Medieval (Sevilla, 25-30 de noviembre de 1991)*, Manuel González Jiménez, Isabel Montes, Antonio María Claret, eds. Sevilla: Consejería de Cultura de la Junta de Andalucía, 1997: I, 611-626; Sánchez Aragonés, Luisa María. *Cortes, Monarquía y ciudades en Aragón (1416-1458)*. Saragossa: Institución Fernando el Católico, 1994; Muñoz, María Rosa. "Autonomía ciudadana y poder regio en las Cortes valencianas bajomedievales". *Archivio Storico Sardo*, 2 (2001): 81-108; Turull, Max. "Síndicos a Cortes. Perfil social, político e institucional de los representantes ciudadanos a Cortes y Parlamentos en Cataluña (1333-1393)". *El món urbà a la Corona d'Aragó del 1137 als decrets de Nova Planta. Actes del XVII Congrés d'Història de la Corona d'Aragó/Congreso de Historia de la Corona de Aragón (7 al 12 de desembre de 2000)*, Salvador Claramunt, ed. Barcelona: Universitat de Barcelona, 2003: III, 989-1012; Martí, Esther. *Lleida a les Corts. Els síndics municipals a l'època d'Alfons el Magnànim*. Lleida: Universitat de Lleida, 2005; Barrio, Juan Antonio. "Los procuradores del Brazo Real en las Cortes medievales del Reino de Valencia". *Aragón en la Edad Media*, 21 (2009): 59-98. Similarly, we must point out the general works of: Hébert, Michel. *Parlementer: assemblées représentatives et échange politique en Europe occidentale à la fin du Moyen Âge*. Paris: Éditions de Boccard, 2014.



own group interests.<sup>3</sup> In addition, they normally belonged to notable families, citizens who exercised a prominent role inside and outside the city thanks to the fortunes made with their businesses. Also, a high percentage of syndics reached this important position thanks to university education, usually in laws, and could thus legally defend their city in the *Corts*.<sup>4</sup> However, how did this proxy work? Did procurators have full or partial autonomy of decision? How and when should they be accountable to their city?

Moreover, within the city government different committees that acted during the assemblies are detected, occupying a very important role in the election, subsequent control and counsel from the procurators sent by the *Corts*. An analysis of this counsel, seen as working groups, is particularly interesting to better understand the management of the political and economic power of the city and its relationship with the rest of the Royal Estate and the monarchy.

On the other hand, we can say that the view offered by the municipal documentation is very interesting because it gives us a complete view of the processes of the *Corts*, giving a different and innovative perspective. Power struggles between the monarchy and urban governance, in relation to the *Corts*, are now seen from the city.

Thus, *Cort* assemblies from the 15<sup>th</sup> century are taken into account and particular attention is given to the period of Alfonso the Magnanimous.<sup>5</sup> Similarly, given

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3. Oliva, Anna Maria; Schena, Olivetta. "Autonomie cittadine e potere regio negli atti dei Parlamenti del Regno di Sardegna nel Quattrocento". *Archivio Sardo: rivista di studi storici e locali*, 2 (2001): 73.

4. Martí, Esther. *Lleida a les Corts...*: 103-104.

5. For an overview of relations of power between the monarchy and its cities, see, among others: Ladero, Miguel Ángel. "El ejercicio del poder real en la Corona de Aragón". *En la España Medieval*, 17 (1994): 31-93; Sabaté, Flocel. "Municipio y monarquía en la Cataluña bajomedieval". *Anales de la Universidad de Alicante. Historia Medieval*, 13 (2000-2002): 255-282; Batlle, Carme. *La crisis social y económica de Barcelona a mediados del siglo XV*. Barcelona: Universitat de Barcelona, 1973; Guinot, Enric. "Sobre la génesis del modelo político de la Corona de Aragón en el siglo XIII: Pactismo, Corona y Municipios". *Res Publica*, 17 (2007): 151-155; Narbona, Rafael. "El rey y la ciudad. Sinergia entre el Magnánimo y Valencia", *eHumanista/IVITRA*, 7 (2015): 193-210 (<<http://www.ehumanista.ucsb.edu/ivitra/volumes/7>>); Péquignot, Stéphane. "Pouvoir royal et sociétés dans la couronne d'Aragon. Un essai de lecture historiographique (1990-2006)". *En la España Medieval*, 30 (2007): 381-432; Earenfight, Theresa. "The Political Dynamic between the Aragonese Monarchy and the Consell de Cent of Barcelona during the Lieutenancy of Maria of Castile (1440-1458)", *El món urbà a la Corona d'Aragó del 1137 als decrets de Nova Planta. Actes del XVII Congrés d'Història de la Corona d'Aragó/Congreso de Historia de la Corona de Aragón (7 al 12 de desembre de 2000)*, Salvador Claramunt, ed. Barcelona: Universitat de Barcelona, 2003: III, 245-264; Sobrequés, Jaume. *El pactisme a Catalunya: una praxi política en la història del país*. Barcelona: Edicions 62, 1982; Montagut, Tomás de. "Pactisme o absolutisme a Catalunya: les grans institucions de govern (s. XV-XVI)". *Anuario de Estudios Medievales*, 19 (1989): 669-680. Concerning urban oligarchies, please see, among others: Asenjo, María, ed. *Urban Elites and Aristocratic Behaviour in the Spanish Kingdoms at the End of the Middle Ages*. Turnhout: Brepols, 2013; more in particular: Sabaté, Flocel. "Ejes vertebradores de la oligarquía urbana de Cataluña". *Revista d'Història Medieval*, 9 (1998): 127-150; Bertran, Prim. "Oligarquías y familias en Cataluña", *La sociedad en Aragón y Cataluña en el reinado de Jaime I: 1213-1276*, Esteban Sarasa, ed. Saragossa: Institución Fernando el Católico, 2009: 53-80; Narbona, Rafael. "Algunas reflexiones sobre la participación vecinal en el gobierno de las ciudades". *Res Publica*, 17 (2007): 121, 135-136; Narbona, Rafael. "Cultura política y comunidad urbana: Valencia, siglos XIV-XV". *Edad Media: Revista de Historia*, 14, (2013): 171-211; Bernabeu, Sandra. "L'oligarquia municipal de la ciutat de València durant el regnat



the large amount of documentation that the city of Lleida has in its possession concerning this argument, this documentation will be used as a case study.<sup>6</sup>

## 2. The subtle thread of power: urban government and the municipal procurator in the *Corts*

Once the *Corts* were convened by the monarch to the General Council of the city of Lleida, the *paers* “mayor” proceeded to the election of the syndics to attend the representative assemblies. Then, a reduced commission was set up, as we shall see, which was responsible for monitoring everything that happened in the *Corts* and advise the syndics on the proposals and responses they had to give both within the Royal Estate as well as in the heart of the assembly, and before the monarch or, in his absence, before his lieutenant. The instructions that these procurators had to develop were also brought to the *Corts*.

Therefore, what autonomy did these syndics have? It is interesting to ask ourselves about the real degree of independence of these procurators and the degree of action, negotiation and freedom that they enjoyed concerning the General Council, given that this prestigious commission was accompanied by a large responsibility. Thus, the power that the city gave its procurator or procurators to make decisions, speak on behalf of the city, present grievances or negotiate the donation to the Crown during assemblies was usually ample and sufficient.<sup>7</sup>

We must point out that the degree of freedom in decision-making varied substantially depending on the time period and the city of which we speak. Thus, we know that, although their room for manoeuvring seems high to us and the procurators possessed certain autonomy of decision, the control of the Lleidan government was always present, with procurators having to be accountable and consult the *paers* or commissions created explicitly to help during parliamentary sessions, as we shall see. This control was performed either through continuous letters that the municipality wrote to them, containing all the instructions on

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d'Alfons el Magnànim i Joan II (1416-1479)”, *Identidades urbanas. Corona de Aragón-Italia. Redes económicas, estructuras institucionales, funciones políticas (siglos XIV-XV)*, Paulino Iradiel, Germán Navarro, David Igual, Concepción Villanueva, eds. Saragossa: Universidad de Zaragoza, 2016: 93-114.

6. In particular, the *Cort* assemblies from the Parliament of 1416 to the *Corts* of Barcelona from 1454-1458 will be taken into account. Udina, Antonio. “El braç reial a les *Corts* catalanes durant el regnat del Magnànim”, *El món urbà a la Corona d'Aragó del 1137 als decrets de Nova Planta. Actes del XVII Congrés d'Història de la Corona d'Aragó/Congreso de Historia de la Corona de Aragón (7 al 12 de desembre de 2000)*, Salvador Claramunt, ed. Barcelona: Universitat de Barcelona, 2003: III, 1013-1022.

7. *E publicats los dits vots, encomitent lo present consell constrituhí síndic e missatger a les dites corts lo dit honorable micer Jacme Navarra, al qual donà ample e bastant poder a tots los actes faedors en les dites Corts, fermant-li sindicat ample e bastant, segons a semblants síndichs e missatgers és acostumat fermar* (“And published said votes, this council, as a group, has chosen as syndic and messenger Jaume Navarra, to whom the council gives ample and sufficient power in all the acts of said *Corts*, giving him ample and sufficient power of attorney, as is usually given these syndics and messengers”). AML. reg. 412, ff. 59v-63v.



the tasks to be developed, or through memorials that the citizen representatives brought to the *Corts*. Other forms of control were an oath on the Gospels and the supervision of a commission with advisory functions, the *Consell de Prohoms* de les *Corts*. Also, the fact that normally there were two Lleidan procurators for each assembly of the *Corts* (very often a *ciutadà honrat* [“honourable citizen”] and a legal expert), beyond responding to the will of better representing the city and being a question of honour —since the more syndics that a city could present to the *Corts*, the greater its prestige— it was another way to avoid counter-productive behaviour of one of them.

### 3. The instruments to control the procurator

The power of the procurator granted by the General Council of the city had very precise limits imposed by the latter. And these limits were applied by means of an efficient control that the city would implement with different instruments.

#### 3.1 The Memorials

The memorials, authentic instructions that royal cities developed as a guideline for their representatives to defend their interests, and that the procurators bring to their parties in the assemblies, which in the case of Catalonia are usually very complete and explicit, which gives us a broad view not only of the problems and grievances that the city had to face in the *Corts*, but also the behaviour and protocol that the citizen representatives had to follow. Thus, every royal city discussed within its Estate through its syndics the grievances that it wanted to resolve, and decide whether to submit them jointly or separately before the sovereign.<sup>8</sup>

We can say that, apart from the studies of Joan Lluís Palos on the 16<sup>th</sup> century<sup>9</sup> and Bonifacio Palacios on Aragón,<sup>10</sup> we have very few that are more or less recent that make explicit reference to this issue. Thus, we must highlight the works of Tomás

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8. Martí, Esther. “Els memorials o instruccions per als síndics a Corts de la ciutat de Lleida durant el regnat d’Alfons el Magnànim”, *Proceedings of the 53rd Conference of the International Commission for the History of Representative and Parliamentary Institutions (Barcelona, 3-6 September, 2003)*, Jaume Sobrequés, Jon Agirreazkuenaga, Mercè Morales, Mikel Urquijo, Mamés Cisneros, eds. Barcelona: Publicacions del Parlament de Catalunya, 2005: II, 1633-1641.

9. Palos, Joan Lluís. “Un sector específico de diputados: los síndicos municipales y capitulares”, *Les Corts a Catalunya. Actes del Congrés d’Història Institucional*. Barcelona: Generalitat de Catalunya, 1991: 394-401.

10. Palacios, Bonifacio. “La representación municipal en Cortes...”: 1241-1267.



Puñal on Castile;<sup>11</sup> of José Antonio Alabau and María Rosa Muñoz concerning the Kingdom of Valencia,<sup>12</sup> and of Esther Martí on Catalonia.<sup>13</sup>

When news reached the city of Lleida of the convening of the *Corts*, its General Council elected the syndics in the assembly hall. Once chosen, usually before leaving for the meeting, the *paers* and the General Council elaborated the memorials, which contained all the provisions and elements that the syndics should have in mind throughout the *Corts*.

These instructions varied depending on the municipality that drafted them. Thus, we can find memorials with very general guidelines, which leave plenty of leeway for the procurators, and others in which the instructions are very precise and detailed, leaving little room for ingenuity or personal action. The latter was the case with the syndics of Lleida, at least judging by the documentation that was studied, which specifies the place the municipal representatives must occupy (following the rigid rules of protocol) to an endless collection of issues to address in Parliament, often numbered and expressly detailed, referring to both municipal management as well as protocol issues.

By means of some memorials given to the syndics of Barcelona, which were subsequently included in the processes of the *Corts*, we can also see the high degree of control that the city oligarchy exercised over the syndics, since the city oligarchy determined how the syndics had to present themselves before Queen Mary and even the control that they should apply over the other syndics to prevent participation in the *Corts* by someone who had no authorization to do so. They also had to ensure that the only scrivener of the Royal Estate was from Barcelona —to the chagrin of Lleidan syndics, who, on more than one occasion, as in the *Corts* of Monzon of 1435, would try to impose their will.<sup>14</sup> In addition, these instructions made it clear that the syndics would not take any decision without prior consultation with their city.<sup>15</sup>

However it was quite common, especially when the city government had hastily assembled, that the instructions were basically a compilation of grievances that the city wanted to present to the monarchy. Regarding Lleida, this is the case of the memorial written for the *missers* Simó Sunyer and Antoni Cardona, syndics of the city in the *Corts* of Monzon of 1436.<sup>16</sup>

The themes that are repeated the most in these formulations of grievances, and also in the broader memorials are especially complaints against royal officials,

11. Puñal, Tomás. “El memorial medieval de cortes”. *Norba. Revista de Historia*, 17 (2004): 187-203.

12. Alabau, José Antonio. “‘Per tot be avenir de la nostra vila’. El sistema representativo de las villas reales en las Cortes valencianas durante la Baja Edad Media. Alcoy en las Cortes de 1443-1446”, *Proceedings of the 53rd Conference of the International Commission for the History of Representative and Parliamentary Institutions (Barcelona, 3-6 September, 2003)*, Jaume Sobrequés, Jon Agirreazkuenaga, Mercè Morales, Mikel Urquijo, Mamés Cisneros, eds. Barcelona: Publicacions del Parlament de Catalunya, 2005: I, 537-553.

13. Martí, Esther. “Els memorials o instruccions...”: 1073-1091.

14. AML. reg. 742, f. 7r.

15. *Cortes de los Antiguos Reinos de Aragón y de Valencia y Principado de Cataluña*. Madrid: Real Academia de la Historia, 1912: XXI, 134-137.

16. AML. reg. 742, ff. 4v-7v.



including the vicar (*veguer*), often due to the poor management of issues related to prisoners. There are also many complaints against the officers of justice, due to bad actions or continuing in their office beyond the established term, blaming the king for the mismanagement of their local officers, which ended up becoming, in many cases, a cause of public disorder. The economic needs of the Crown converted the sovereign into a fast issuer of licenses, privileges and favours, with the ultimate aim of obtaining immediate economic benefit to the detriment of the public.<sup>17</sup>

Another recurring issue that we find written down in these memorials, as well as correspondence regularly exchanged by the syndics and *paers* are complaints presented by the city in the *Corts* on the failure to comply, by royal officials, with some very special privileges for the city, the election of its advisers, especially as we progress through the reign of Magnanimous and after his attempts to apply a random method so-called *sach i sort*.<sup>18</sup>

There were also an abundance of complaints due to breaches of the Constitutions of Catalonia<sup>19</sup> or the privileges of the city, how to make towns pay contributions that were considered residents of Lleida, such as Almacelles, or paying other taxes of which the city was exempt. More than once complaints were manifested concerning mismanagement by the General Council, and the monarchy was urged to intervene so that the city of Lleida would be better represented.<sup>20</sup>

In connection with the above, in the memorials we also found a large number of petitions related to the lamentable state of city finances.<sup>21</sup> Thus, in the consulted documentation there is the repeated demand to the Crown to return substantial amounts of money that the city of Lleida loaned to meet expenses caused by the war, to face other types of debts and also for holding *Corts* in the city.<sup>22</sup>

17. Sabaté, Flocel. "Municipio y monarquía...": 266.

18. Sobrequés, Santiago. *Régimen municipal gerundense en la baja edad media. La 'insaculación'*. Girona: Instituto de Estudios Gerundenses, 1955: 40.

19. AML. reg. 844, ff. 87r-88v.

20. AML. reg. 742, f. 65r.

21. On city taxation in Catalonia, see, among others: Sánchez Martínez, Manuel, ed. *Fiscalidad real y finanzas urbanas en la Cataluña medieval*. Barcelona: Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas, 1999; Sánchez Martínez, Manuel. "La monarquía y las ciudades desde el observatorio de la fiscalidad", *La Corona de Aragón en el centro de su historia, 1208-1458: la monarquía aragonesa y los reinos de la Corona*, J. Ángel Sesma, ed. Saragossa: Universidad de Zaragoza, 2010: 45-66; Kùchler, Winfried. *Les finances de la Corona d'Aragó al segle XV (regnats d'Alfons V i Joan II)*. Valencia: Edicions Alfons el Magnànim-Institució Valenciana d'Estudis i Investigació, 1997; Turull, Max; Verdés, Pere. "Gobierno municipal y fiscalidad en Cataluña durante la Baja Edad Media". *Anuario de Historia del Derecho Español*, 76 (2006): 507-530; Turull, Max. *El gobierno de la ciudad medieval. Administración y finanzas en las ciudades medievales catalanas*. Barcelona: Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas, 2009; Turull, Max. *La configuració jurídica del municipi baix medieval: règim municipal i fiscalitat a Cervera entre 1182-1430*. Barcelona: Fundació Noguera, 1990; Morelló, Jordi. "Las villas del Camp de Tarragona ante la presión fiscal de la Corona durante la Baja Edad Media", *Fiscalidad de Estado y fiscalidad municipal en los reinos hispánicos medievales*, Manuel Sánchez Martínez, Denis Menjot, eds. Madrid: Casa de Velázquez, 2006: 357-376.

22. *E axí mateix la dita Ciutat prestàs a la dita Senyora Mil liures jaqueses ara darrerament quant la dita Senyora celebrà corts en la dita Ciutat de Leyda, de les quals feu debitori e promès tornar a la dita Ciutat aquelles de les primeres pecunies que-l Principat de Cathalunya en Corts o en parlament li donàs, que supliquem sa Senyora sie sa mercè tornar les dites quantitats a la dita Ciutat si en la dita Cort li es feta subvenció o donatiu com la dita Ciutat sie*



In the memorials we also find several references to issues and problems related to censuses.<sup>23</sup> Often these complaints, which make reference to unpaid censuses, must relate to the lamentable state of city finance as of the 14<sup>th</sup> century, which would be further complicated over the next century, when it is impossible to separate public debt from municipal finances, with the serious problems that this entails.<sup>24</sup>

These memorials also include some complaints to the monarchy due to various issues affecting individual citizens, also often related to the census or any imprisonment that the local authorities believe to be unfair.<sup>25</sup> On other occasions, memorials provided information about social unrest in the city. Thus, it highlights the appeal of the city to the monarchy to sort out the fights between the sides trying to control the officials.<sup>26</sup>

Just as notable and interesting are the indications for the procurators as to how they should behave in the *Corts*: they were asked to do nothing that could be detrimental to the General Council and to inform about everything that went on at the assemblies so that the urban government could write up further instructions in later letters on specific or more delicate matters. The procurators also had to bring the city a copy of

*en gran necessitate* ("Similarly, the city lent the Lady Queen a thousand pounds when she held *Corts* in the city of Lleida, who promised to return to the city with the money obtained in the *Corts* or in Parliament. Therefore, we beg your lady to return said amount to the city if in said *Corts* a grant or donation has been obtained, as the city is experiencing great need"). AML. reg. 742, f. 43r. Concerning donations, see: Sánchez Martínez, Manuel; Ortí, Pere. *Corts, Parlaments i fiscalitat a Catalunya: els capítols del Donatiu (1288-1384)*. Barcelona: Generalitat de Catalunya, 1997.

23. AML. reg. 742, ff. 42v-42r.

24. Verdés, Pere. "Car les talles són difícils de fer e pijors de exigir": a propósito del discurso fiscal en las ciudades catalanas". *Studia Historica. Historia Medieval*, 30 (2012): 129-153; Verdés, Pere. "Per tal que no calgués a logre manlevar": el endeudamiento a largo plazo de un municipio catalán durante la Baja Edad Media (Cervera, 1333-1387)", *La deuda pública en la Cataluña bajomedieval*, Manuel Sánchez Martínez, ed. Barcelona: Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas. Institució Milà i Fontanals, 2009: 21-99. For an overview of public debt in the Crown of Aragon, see: Sánchez Martínez, Manuel, ed. *La deuda pública en la Cataluña bajomedieval*. Barcelona: Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas. Institució Milà i Fontanals, 2009; Furió, Antoni. "Deuda pública e intereses privados. Finanzas y fiscalidad municipales en la Corona de Aragón". *Edad Media: Revista de Historia*, 2 (1999): 35-80. Equally interesting are the contributions of: García Marsilla, Juan Vicente. "Avalando al rey: Préstamos a la Corona y finanzas municipales en la Valencia del siglo XV", *Fiscalidad de Estado y fiscalidad municipal en los reinos hispánicos medievales*, Manuel Sánchez Martínez, Denis Menjot, eds. Madrid: Casa de Velázquez, 2006: 377-389.

25. In 1443, in the memorial that the city of Lleida gave its procurators in the *Corts* of Tortosa, there appears an appeal to Queen Mary to order her officers to release Esperanza from prison, the wife of Francesc Torà. AML. reg. 742, ff. 42-45v.

26. *Ítem supliquen la dita Senyora Reyna que sie de sa mercè voler fer alguna deguda provisió en les suspites que quiscum any les partides dels bandositats donen en les eleccions dels officis de la Ciutat, com se'n segueixque gran dan a la cosa pública* ("Similarly, we beseech Your Lady if her Majesty sees fit to intervene to prevent clashes between factions in the elections of the offices of the city, because it causes great damage to the public good"). AML. reg. 742, f. 45r. On the fighting sides in the Principality of Catalonia, see the classic works of: Batlle, Carme. "Return a la Busca i la Biga, els dos partits de la Barcelona medieval". *Acta Historica et Archaeologica Mediaevalia*, 3 (1982): 229-234; Sabaté, Flocel. "Els bàndols com a solidaritat en la societat urbana baixmedieval". *Afers: fulls de recerca i pensament*, 13/30 (1998): 457-472. On the urban unrest, see also: Asenjo, María; Zorzi, Andrea. "Conflicto y discordia en ciudades bajomedievales. Italia y reinos hispánicos". *Hispania*, 75/250 (2015): 323-330; Narbona, Rafael. "La conflictividad social en las ciudades", *Conflicto, violencia y criminalidad en Europa y América*, J. Antonio Munita, ed. Vitoria-Gasteiz: Publicaciones de la Universidad del País Vasco, 2004: 79-104.



all the documents and processes derived from the assembly so that the city could use them in any future controversy.<sup>27</sup>

With respect to the delicate negotiations, with great economic importance for the city, such as donations or concessions of any amount of any other nature, the instructions the procurators received were exhaustive. Bartomeu Maull and Joan Riambau, syndics of Lleida in the *Corts* of Perpignan, were informed by means of a memorial, which they had to take to the assembly, that they must not consent to any donation, either to the king or to any other person or association, without having previously consulted with the city. The syndics were not allowed to dare to use their power to prejudice any citizen or any possession of the city and, above all, they were not allowed to dedicate their time to any matter that did not have to do with the *Corts*, in view of the great harm they could cause the city and the waste of time that this would mean for the *Corts*.<sup>28</sup>

The fact that the procurators dedicated themselves to other things that were not exclusively their functions must not have been an isolated case, particularly if we consider that it was a reason for a mention in the memorials. Therefore, a certain relaxation between the representatives in the assemblies was fairly frequent.<sup>29</sup> In fact, sometimes the Lleida syndics were encouraged by the *paers* to take care of the matters for which they had been sent to the *Corts*, and at times they were called to return to the city and were threatened that they would not be sent any more money.<sup>30</sup>

It should be said that at other times, these memorials simply did not exist as such, but were compiled as matters dealt with in the General Council, coinciding with the arrival of the syndics or at least of one of them, whether for personal matters, because the *Corts* had been suspended, or due to an important holiday, such as Christmas. Under these circumstances, the greatest possible number of members of the General Council was called together and the procurators were invited to explain what had happened in the *Corts* in great detail, at the same time as receiving, by word of mouth or in writing, the new dispositions that were to mark their behaviour at the following assembly.

One further point of the control that the General Council had over the Lleida syndics, as can be seen in some memorials, was the type of material that the procurators were asked to take with them to the *Corts*, to be the object of consultation if required. Thus, the urban representatives in the popular assemblies took various

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27. *Ítem que ls dits missatgers a la fi del parlament o de les corts haien e sien tenguts portar e liurar a la Ciutat dins la Casa de la Paeria lo jorn que faran la relació, treslat se fahent capítols e tots actes que sien fets en la dita cort o parlament, com lo notari del braç real l'age donar ffranch e quiti a la dita Ciutat* ("Similarly, the syndics at the end of the parliament or the *Corts*, the day that they must relate their activity, must deliver to the city a copy of all proposals and decisions that have been made in said *Corts* or parliament, since the notary of the Royal Estate is bound to give it to the city"). AML. reg. 742, f. 45r.

28. AML. reg. 742, f. 73v.

29. Along these lines, this state of certain turmoil is perfectly illustrated in the following fragment *E no ontrestant açò ses seguit que los dos Braços aquesta nit són trobats fort poch en los Braços, que ja les més gents se-n eren anats pe-les festes* ("It has happened that tonight we have found very few members of the two classes, as most had left for the festivals"). *Cortes de los Antiguos Reinos de Aragón...*: XXIII, 376.

30. AML. reg. 405, ff. 1v-2r.



kinds of documents: the King or Queen's letters, as a credential, documents related to non-payment of censuses and taxation that could be a cause of controversy, and finally all types of documents that referred to rulings, donations and *maridatges* (a tax from royal weddings)<sup>31</sup> among others, that could have been considered important to develop the demands and grievances of the city at the *Corts* in a coherent way.<sup>32</sup>

In the instructions that the city conferred on its procurators, the procedures that the syndics had to carry out once they reach the place of the assembly were noteworthy, as this confirmed the degree of precision and care of the indications given by the General Council. Thus, the syndics first presented themselves before the monarch or his or her representative and then, once they had accredited themselves, they presented themselves before the Royal Estate. They were also indicated the exact place where they should sit—in the case of the representatives from Lleida, to the right-hand side of the Barcelona syndics—which caused more than one conflict between the cities that attended the assemblies, as it was a feature of protocol and an honour, as well as being the tradition, to occupy a given seat and not just anyone.<sup>33</sup>

### 3.2 Taking the oath over the Gospels

Another interesting feature with respect to the control over the representatives of the city in the *Corts* by the General Council was the act of taking an oath that had to be completed before heading off towards the assembly. Although it was basically a solemn event, following the lines of the customs of the period, it was also the way to ratify the public commitment of the syndics to defend the interests of the city. There are several examples in the case of Lleida:

*Ítem encomitent, davant los dits honorables senyors e pahers, prohòmens e advocats, comparegueren los dits honorables [...] síndichs a corts e procuradors qui demunt prestaren lo sacrament e homenatge segons les instruccions a ells donadores demunt contengudes [...], lo qual sacrament e homenatge prestaren en poder del dit honorable Bernat Graylla, paher.*<sup>34</sup>

31. AML. reg. 328, f. 51v.

32. AML. reg. 328, ff. 49v-49r.

33. *Ítem après se presentarà en les corts, ço és al braç real, informant-se tantost com sie en la sglésia de Framenós, hon se tenen les corts, en quin apartament se ajuste lo braç real, e presentant-se als qui allí seran justats en lo dit braç real donarà la letra que se'n porte de Ciutat, sient- se allí entre ells, al costat dels síndichs de Barçalona, e allí mà dreta, segons que ells mateix li daran son loch* ("He will present himself in the *Corts*, that is to say in the Royal Estate, and he will inform when he arrives in the Church where the *Corts* take place, where the Royal Estate meets. Then he will present himself to its members and the letter that will be taken from Lleida will be given, sitting among them, to the right of those from Barcelona, as they themselves will indicate"). AML. reg. 742, f. 100 v-r.

34. "In front of the *paers*, counsellors and lawyers appeared the honourable procurators in the *Corts*, giving sacrament and honour, as stated in the instructions that had been given, before the honourable Bernat Gralla, *paer*". AML. reg. 742, ff. 76r-77v.



On other occasions, the documentation provides even more information about the type of sworn oath that the syndics had to make at the Corts. Jaume Navarra, as was usual, swore on the Gospels saying: *Yo jur que no vendré contra l'erbatge, ordinacions, ne privilegis de la Ciutat, e tot ço que-ls altres síndichs han jurat*.<sup>35</sup> This oath was usually made in the presence of all or most of the General Council and the *paers*,<sup>36</sup> and they also promised to respect the instructions received to go to the *Corts*.<sup>37</sup>

Once the oath had been taken, the syndics could go to the assembly, taking their memorial to remind them at all times of what they had to defend in their own estate, but also before other political establishments, as well as before the monarchy. In fact, the importance of taking an oath on the Gospels was considerable, not only as a symbolic act, but also as a guarantee, and if the syndics left quickly and did not have time to take their oath, a person who was trusted by the General Council was sent to where they were so they could do so:

*[...] que en nom de Déu sie tramés als dits misagés lo discret n'Arnau de la Pardina, notari, lo qual s'enport lo dit sindicat e greuges. Emperò que lo sindicat no-ls sie liurat fins haie los dits misatgés jurat als Sants IIII Evangelis que bé e lealment se hauran en corts los affés qui-s faran li-s trametran en les dites corts. E axí mateix que no procehiran en neguns affés en les dites corts preposados ulta los fets que dats los són o seran en memorial, sens consultació e consentiment de la Ciutat, lo qual sacrament present e haien a prestar en poder del dit Arnau de la Pardina, notari desús dit, rebent aquell en nom dels dits pahers e Ciutat.*

It was also mentioned that: *E per ço com los dits misagés no prestaren lo sacrament damunt dit abans que sench partiren, axí com deuen que als dits misages no-ls hi aie corregut lo salari fins haie prestat lo dit sacrament*.<sup>38</sup>

35. "I swear I will not ignore the ordinations, privileges and taxes of the city and other provisions that the other procurators have sworn". AML. reg. 416, ff. 7v-10r.

36. AML. reg. 742, f. 61r.

37. Bartolomeu Maull and Joan Riambau, before setting off for the *Corts* of Perpignan in 1449: *[p]restaren lo sacrament e homenatge segons les instruccions a ells donadores demunt contengudes volen e atés segons que es acostumat, lo qual sacrament e homenatge prestaren en poder del dit honorable Bernat Graylla, paher* ("They gave sacrament and honour, as set out in the instructions they had received, and as is the tradition, before the honourable Bernat Gralla, *paer*"). AML. reg. 742, ff. 76r-77v. Also in 1544, other municipal procurators took the oath before leaving for the *Corts* of Barcelona: *Lo dit honorable en Pere Cardona, síndich desús dit, presta sacrament e homenatge en presència del honorable en Bernat Navarra, paher en cap, present lo dit honorable mossen Johan Quintana, paher, en virtut dels quals promés haver sabre clarament en la dita misatgeria e regir en aquella segons les instruccions a ell donades e desús inscrites, e altres instruccions aconsellat per los altres síndichs* ("Pere Cardona, procurator, provides sacrament and honour before the honourable Bernat Navarra, *paer*, and in the presence of the honourable Monsignor Johan Quintana, senior adviser, and promises to govern said procuration according to the instructions he has been given, as well as seek advice from other procurators"). AML. reg. 742, f. 137r.

38. "Send to these procurators Arnau de la Padina, notary, and he must bring said syndic and the grievances. Do not deliver this syndic to the procurators until they have sworn upon the IV Gospels that they will follow up with conscience and loyalty the aspects to be addressed in the *Corts*. Likewise they will swear that they will not address other aspects proposed in the *Corts* beyond those mentioned in the memorial, without consultation and with approval from the city to deal with these aspects. They will give sacrament before Arnau de la Pardina, on behalf of the *paers* of the city"; "And as the procurators before



### 3.3 *The epistolary control over the procurators*

The control of Lleida's urban government over its representatives in the *Corts* is also clear, going beyond the memorials, in the virtually constant epistolary exchange. This can be seen, in a letter that the *paers* of Lleida sent to their procurators in the *Corts* of Tortosa in 1443, encouraging them to write continuously, informing them about everything that took place in the assemblies, because this was the only way that it was possible to assess them and advise them correctly, alleging that this was the custom applied in all the cities.<sup>39</sup> That same year, the *paers* of Lleida wrote to their representatives at the popular assembly answering a letter from them which explained some problems of division in the Royal Estate. In this missive, the *paers* urged their syndics to explain what was happening in the *Corts*, telling them—they said—how it was normal that the representatives of Barcelona did so in their city, and they were also informed that the General Council had created a group of distinguished men to assess them.<sup>40</sup>

Thanks to this virtually continuous epistolary contact, the urban government managed to discuss and come to a conclusion about what happened in the *Corts* and be able to give instructions to their procurators about how to act in certain cases:

*Molt honorables e savis senyors, dues letres vostres havem rebudes [...] al pres dinar havem fet justar los prohòmens destinats als Actes de corts, als quals primerament per nosaltres e ells e los scrivans de la casa, prestat sacrament de tenir secrets aquests actes, són estades legides e publicades les dues letres. Als molt honorables e savis senyors los síndichs e misatgers de la Ciutat de Leyda, residents en les corts qui huy se celebren en la vila de Perpinyà. Los pahers e prohòmens de la Ciutat de Leyda appellats a vostra honor e plaer.<sup>41</sup>*

The documents allow us to see how in cases of nonadherence to the rules by the procurators with respect to their obligation to have the city periodically informed, the *paers* of Lleida immediately called them to order. This happened, for example, in 1421, when the *paers* reprimanded Jaume Navarra, procurator in the *Corts* de

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his departure did not give the said sacrament, no salary will be given until they make the sacrament". AML. reg. 412, ff. 32v-33r.

39. [...] *Més avant senyors vos preguam que de açí avant vos plàcie continuadament avisar hi scriurens de tots los proceyments hi manteniment de la Cort de aquelles coses que us seran hoïdes scrivir, [...] com los de Barchinona, hi de les Ciutats axí ho facen [...] car per consellar a vosaltres en tots los actes faedors en la dita Cort per maior descàrrech vist lo consell general prop celebrat Via/ diputades e assignades algunes notables persones ab tant poder com ha lo \diti/ consell* ("[...] We ask you from now on that you have the habit of warning and writing about all aspects dealt with in the *Corts*, as is done by the representatives of Barcelona and other cities [...]. Additionally, to be able to advise you better, the General Council has chosen some notable people that hold the same power as the Council"). AML. reg. 742, ff. 51v-51r.

40. AML. reg. 742, ff. 5v-51r.

41. "Very honourable and wise gentlemen, we have received two letters from you [...], and after eating we met with the outstanding men for the acts of the *Corts*, who have made an oath to keep these acts in secret, and only after we have read the two letters. To the honourable and wise procurators of Lleida, residents in the *Corts* held in the municipality of Perpignan, *paers* and outstanding men of the city of Lleida". AML. reg. 742, ff. 78v- 78r.



Tortosa, for not having written or informed them about everything that happened in the assembly.<sup>42</sup>

### 3.4 The commissions as instruments to control the procurator

Once the city received the call to a representative assembly from the sovereign, the General Council and the *paers* often created a commission. This would be given various names, judging by the documents consulted, depending on the city or the number of members. In Lleida, it was frequently known as the *Prohoms de les Corts*.

All these commissions had the common function of assessing the General Council and, above all, the procurators in the *Corts* about the matters dealt with or to be dealt with at these meetings and about other themes related to them. However, did these commissions only serve to simply assess or did their decision-making capacity or influence go further, being able to limit or directly condition the decision-making capacity of the procurator in the *Corts*?

The importance of these commissions can also be deduced from the kind of people of whom they were made up: most of them had notable experience in managing the municipality, as they had held or continued to hold various relevant positions. The notable number in the *Consell de Prohoms de les Corts* of the procurators of the city in the popular assemblies should not be forgotten as they added an extra measure of experience and also legal training—which explains the presence of many jurists—and of contacts with the rest of the estate, with the other estates and representatives of the sovereign.<sup>43</sup>

Thus, many of the members of these commissions had been or were procurators in the *Corts*, or belonged to a family that had held this important position. With respect to the city of Lleida, during the period analysed, only three procurators of the *Corts* had not been part of this kind of advisory board. The others appeared on them with greater or lesser assiduity.<sup>44</sup>

In the same way, we see that most of the people that made up these commissions belonged to families in the urban oligarchy, with a large number belonging to the

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42. *Ítem nos maravellam molt e tant que no podem pus com tant vos és en embalbira la mà de no scriurens dels fets de les corts o almenys de dar recapte en les coses que.us són informades [...] sens gran dan a la ciutat [...] e moltes altres coses a vós donades en memorial [...] com per letres nostres, per que.us plàcie provehir e servir [...]. E així plàcieus [...] treballar-hi mills que ço sus ara no és fet* (“We are very amazed, because we believe that must have paralysed your hand due to not writing about what happens in the *Corts*, or at least explain things of which we have informed [...], because all of this creates great damage to the city [...], not respecting all that was pointed out in the memorial [...], and other letters we have sent you [...]. Therefore we invite you to work better than what has been done until now”). AML. reg. 844, f. 10v-r.

43. For a general view of these commissions, see: Martí, Esther. “Procuradores y consejos asesores de las ciudades reales en las Cortes catalanas y en los parlamentos sardos del siglo XV”, *¿Órganos técnicos o instrumentos políticos? Las comisiones de trabajo de las instituciones parlamentarias y representativas*, Maria Betlem Castellà, Esther Martí, eds. Cagliari: Consiglio Nazionale delle Ricerche-Istituto di Storia dell’Europa Mediterranea, 2014: 53-85.

44. Martí, Esther. “Procuradores y consejos...”: 76-77.



*mà major* (a powerful, upper social class) although one should not underestimate the apparently increasing role of the *mà mitjana* (a social class consisting of traders and liberal professionals). The main function of these commissions was that of advising—and thereby controlling—the procurators of the city in the *Corts*. These procurators, as previously mentioned, had to regularly inform their city about everything that took place in the assemblies and had to consult any decision that was to be made and that was not contemplated in the comprehensive memorials which, in the form of instructions, their city gave them before they set out to the place of the meeting.<sup>45</sup> This is where these commissions were so important, when the General Council and the *paers* created them—or called on them if they were already operational—to deal with or deliberate on a specific aspect explained in the letters that the procurators sent from the *Corts*.<sup>46</sup>

Without a doubt, another arduous task was that of putting together the instructions or memorials that the General Council had to provide to the syndics sent to the *Corts*. Very often, the *paers* benefitted from the experience and legal knowledge of many of the members of the *Consells de Prohoms de les Corts*, who acted as a group that was highly familiar, and with sufficient experience, in the grievances that the city had to deal with in the *Corts*.<sup>47</sup> Thus, in 1434,

*[...] acorda lo present conseyl general que les coses damunt [...] pahers preposades sien remeses [...] als pahers e ses prohòmens per els elegidós, los quals amb la major part de aquells tracten, enanten e acordaren sobre la manera dels dits affers [...]. Així emperò que çò que parlar e tractar hauran tornen al conseyl general per o que lavós lo dit conseyl general hi pux deliberar.*<sup>48</sup>

Other times, these commissions could last between one session of the *Corts* and the following ones, to continue dealing with matters derived from them.<sup>49</sup>

45. AML. reg. 412, ff. 32r-33r.

46. *Dimecres XVIII de Agost any demunt dit, los honorables misser Jachme Riquer e en Gabriell Peyró, paers, manaren an Matheu Coral e an Pere Jugo, missatgers de la Paheria, que facen venir los prohòmens de les corts en comiient, com ells per los feyts de les corts los hagen mester* (“Wednesday, XVIII of August, the honourable Jachme Riquer and Gabriell Peyró, *paers*, sent to Matheu Coral and Pere Jugo, messengers from the city, who meet with the outstanding men of the *Corts*, since they are required for some aspects to be dealt with in the *Corts*”). AML. reg. 742, f. 65r.

47. In 1436, the General Council granted the *paers* the ability to control the representatives of the city and to give them a number of distinguished men, to be decided by them, to be able to advise them. AML. reg. 412, ff. 43r-45r.

48. “[...] This General Council agrees that the things [...] proposed by *paers* and are forwarded [...] to the *paers* and the outstanding men that they have chosen, and that the majority of these deal with and decide how to deal with each argument [...]. Once a decision is taken, it will be forwarded to the General Council for it to be deliberated”. AML. reg. 411, f. 6r.

49. In 1435, the councillors of Barcelona wrote to those of Lleida about matters regarding the King’s policy. And the *Consell General* of the city: [...] *acorda [...] que los senyors de pahers ab algune prohòmens per els elegidós e ab conseyl dels advocats de la Ciutat facen sa bona resposta als dits honorables conseylers, e no resmenys a conseyl dels prohòmens desús scrits o de la major part de aquells facen tots quelle bones provisions als dits affers [...] romant lo present conseyl general als dits prohòmens [...] tot plen poder* (“[...] agrees [...] that the *paers*



Therefore, the members of the *Consell de Prohoms* were usually members of the General Council and enjoyed the full power granted by this board, although their decisions, in the end, had to be confirmed with the *paers*.<sup>50</sup> They met when they were called by them to deliberate on a specific matter of the Corts, in particular when there was news from the syndics.<sup>51</sup> To this end, in another documentary reference, we find:

*Ítem fonch proposat per los dits honorables pahers que saben com la ciutat té los honorables en Jachme Navara e n'Anthoni Cardona per síndichs e misagés, a les corts qui-s celebren vuy en Barchinona e demés, que moltes vegades los dits misatgés scriuen a ells dels actes de les dites corts, per los quals los han a fer ses respostes e satisfer a açó que-ls fan saber, e serie cosa que cada vega que-ls aghesen a sciure per los dits actes hagesen ha ajustar conseyl, dels quals los dits pahers haien a procehir en tots los actes qui los dits misatgés los faran saber. E axí matex ells hauran a sciure a ells.*<sup>52</sup>

All this shows the important role of this kind of commission in handling matters dealt with in the parliaments, as well as the family or clientele relationships of their members with the procurators in the Corts, which does not exclude contacts with the other representatives of the Royal Estate in these assemblies and with the other classes —something which often involved interferences between the various powers inside and outside the city and with people with a certain decision-making power in the other two classes—.

Because of all this, we believe that we can talk about a marked, programmed desire by the citizens belonging to the oligarchy to control the political and economic power also through these commissions, that were transformed, beyond their technical function, into a complicated power control mechanism. In fact, beyond the family and clientele relationships of their members with other circles of power inside and outside the city, as we have mentioned, we should not dismiss the role that these commissions played in managing the information that arrived at and left the assemblies of Corts, as an effective way of controlling the power in the city itself and outside it.

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and some outstanding men of their own choosing, and with the advice of lawyers in the city, meet the honourable counsellors, and proceed as best as can be to deal with the issues [...], with the General Council giving these outstanding men [...] complete power”). AML. reg. 411, ff. 43v-45v.

50. [...] *Acorda lo conseyl general e elegí per a les coses desús proposades per los dits honorables misatgés los prohoms dehesen damunt dits ab conseyl dels quals, o dels sis de aquells, los dits pahers, prohesquen en tots los actes que hauran a ffer a les dites Corts [...] donant los tot plen poder* (“ [...] To address the issues proposed by the procurators the General Council chooses various outstanding men, giving them full power, and establishing that the *paers* should proceed after having in mind their opinion, or at least six of them) AML. reg. 413, f. 10v-10r.

51. AML. reg. 742, f. 65r.

52. “It was proposed by the honourable *paers* who, like the honourable Jachme Navara and Anthoni Cardona, procurators of the city to the courts of Barcelona, to write very often asking how to proceed in the acts of said *Corts*, that every time they should respond to the procurators a council must convene to deliberate on these acts, in order to respond to these procurators”. AML. reg. 413, f. 10v-r.



## 4. Conclusions

What the urban government of Lleida had at stake in the *Corts* of the period of Alfonso the Magnanimous was too important and complex to be left in the hands of just a few chosen people. Therefore, the conditioners of the power granted to the urban procurators were different. Among them, we would particularly mention the memorials, of different kinds, ranging from those which were very long and highly detailed through to those that were much more schematic and showed the haste of the General Council for them to reach the syndics. Another control system was, without a doubt, the epistolary exchange to which the *paers* and the General Council subjected their representatives in the *Corts*, so that they could keep the city informed about what happened in the assemblies. In this area, we should also contemplate the solemn oath that the Lleida procurators were urged to make in the *Corts* before leaving, and the *Consells de Prohoms de les Corts* in the municipality.

In fact, these commissions, specially created to assess and advise the syndics in the *Corts* as well as the municipal government about the arguments concerning the popular assemblies, were extremely important. This enables us to state that they were not just mere technical bodies for managing things, but genuine power control instruments. This statement is also confirmed by the notable experience of most of the members of these *Consells de Prohoms de les Corts*. Therefore, the political, economic and social importance of many of the members, or of their families—with a very active participation in the municipal government, in other commissions and boards and holding prominent municipal positions, or, in certain cases in other political bodies further afield than the municipal ones—leads us undoubtedly to talk about a desire to control the political and economic power and to manage information, perfectly studied by the urban oligarchies, which, to a great degree, reflects the network of contacts within the Royal Estate and in the *Corts* in general, of the municipalities from their interior.<sup>53</sup>

On the other hand, the professional, family and personal contacts of the procurator (some of whom were even highly appreciated by the Crown) could counteract the opinion and the strength of the *Consell de Prohoms de les Corts*, although it should not be forgotten that many of the members of these commissions had been syndics or belonged to one of their families.

All this shows the great capacity of the Lleida procurators and of the various members of the *Consells de Prohoms de les Corts* to create bonds and to weave relationships both within the *General Council* of the city as well as in other circles

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53. One example is the network of personal, family and political relations of one of the syndics in the *Corts* held in Lleida in 1440, Gispert Mateu, a lawyer, who also worked as a procurator of the city in the following *Corts* of 1442-1443. He is found in a large number of the *Consells de Prohoms de les Corts* between 1435 and 1453. AML. reg. 411, ff. 43r-45r; reg. 412, ff. 23r-24r; reg. 415, ff. 46r-47r, 76v-77r, 77v-78r, 97v-98r, 110v-111v; reg. 366, ff. 4r-5r. We also know that he was a cousin of the Montsuars, a family which, as is well known, enjoyed great prestige in and outside the city. Gispert Mateu was also related to another of the main magnates of the *Consell General* of Lleida, Nadal Botella. Lladonosa, Josep. "La casa Montsuar de Lleida", *La nissaga dels Montsuar*, Jeannine Cossé, Josep Lladonosa, eds. Lleida: Institut d'Estudis Ilerdencs, 1982: 82.



of power of the Principality of Catalonia, achieving a decisive importance for their families in municipal decisions and, by extension, of the Royal Estate, which, on occasions, conditioned the timing and the decisions of the representative assemblies.<sup>54</sup>

Therefore, in the analysis of the commissions of the Lleidan *Prohoms de les Corts* and of the procurator in the *Corts*, it should be taken into account that it was frequently found that one family had different members, either simultaneously or successively, in these commissions or in the high circles of the municipality, thereby perpetuating the family power and increasing the prestige of the lineage and its economic power.

In addition, it should be taken into consideration that some families that played a notable role in the procuration in the *Corts* also had notable members in the Ecclesiastic Estate.<sup>55</sup> Being granted a title of nobility was one of the family strategies to get a better position in the urban government and that of the Crown, an open path towards the participation in the Military Estate in the assemblies and a way of obtaining a greater degree of influence and power as a lineage.<sup>56</sup> This also permitted the urban oligarchies to create a solid network of clients and contacts that brought together all the relevant sectors of society and which, in some cases, even connected different kingdoms of the Crown.

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54. Therefore, for example the syndic of the city of Lleida, Bartomeu Maull, an expert in law, was called on various occasions by Magnanimous' lieutenant, Queen Mary, to be advised on matters of a personal nature. AML. reg. 742, ff. 106r-107v. In the same way, Simó Sunyer, a well-known jurist from Lleida, procurator in the *Corts* on various occasions, acted as the *proveïdor de greuges* ("civil servant") of the Royal Estate in the *Corts* of 1431, along with the Barcelona syndic, Vicent Padriça. *Cortes de los Antiguos Reinos de Aragón...*: XVII, 83. Years before, in 1410, he acted as messenger for the city before the king, along with other very well-known people from the city, such as Bernat d'Olzinelles, Francesc de Sant Climent and Samsó de Navés. AML. reg. 405 Bis, ff. 11v-13r. In the same way, Jaume Navarra, *ciudadà honrat* ("oligarch") and procurator from Lleida at the *Corts* on various occasions, held the position of *proveïdor del Braç Reial* (speaker of the Royal Estate) in the *Corts* of 1419-20. *Cortes de los Antiguos Reinos de Aragón...*: XVI, 58-59. His sons held various positions in different boards of the urban government. His son Jaume was *veguer*, and having been appointed a knight, participated in the *Corts* of 1493 as part of the Military Estate, while his brother Vicenç represented Lleida in the *Corts* of 1473-1479. Pere Cardona, a syndic from Lleida in the controversial *Corts* of 1454, was *oïdor de comptes* of the *Diputació del General* (accounts reviewer of the General Provincial Council), while his son Miquel was a key holder of the *Estudi General* of the city and appeared among the deputies of the Military Estate between 1473 and 1479. Martí, Esther. *Lleida a les Corts...*: 112-113, 118-119.

55. For example the Cardona and the Maull families, among others.

56. See, for example the previously mentioned Navarra family, or the Bosch or the Gralla families. Martí, Esther. *Lleida a les Corts...*: 106-130.

