

1293: A Catalan Treaty between Aragonese and Mamlūk Sovereigns, from the Archives of the Crown of Aragon

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Abstract: This article examines the Catalan version of a treaty negotiated by King James II of Aragon (r. 1291–1327) and the Mamlūk sultan al-Ašraf Ḥalīl (r. 689–693/1290–1293) in 1293, whose Arabic version was the subject of a previous article in *Transmediterranean History* (2022). Adding to that article, the present study details the unusual characteristics of this diplomatic agreement in the context of the later Crusades. It analyses the treaty's key points, including the unexpected military aid pledged by the King of Aragon, the measures designed to facilitate trade between Catalanian subjects and the Mamlūk sultanate, and the text's emphasis on friendship and concord between the two sovereigns and their states. The article ends by reassessing the complex legacy of this atypical agreement.

Source

Archivo de la Corona de Aragón, Cartas Reales, Jaime II, Serie general, n° 222; ed. Àngels Masià de Ros, *La Corona de Aragón y los estados del norte de Africa: política de Jaime II y Alfonso IV en Egipto, Ifríquía y Tremecén*, Barcelona: Instituto Español de Estudios Mediterráneos, 1951, pp. 266–270, doc. 3. Translation: Damien Coulon, Stéphanie Alkofer, María Dolores López Pérez, and Sari Nassar.

E que aquesta amor e aquesta amistat e aquestes covinençes qui son escrites e feytes entre ab dues les parts a tots jorns; e que aquestes covinençes deuen esser firmes e estables que les dues partides e los II Regimes sien tots ensemps una cosa e per negun qui muyra de la una de les partides nos degen abatre ses convinençes per metre ni per traure negun batliu; e que tots los batlius qui seran batlius del Soudan degen esser en aquestes covinençes qui son estades escrites entre les dues partides en les Incarnacions davant dites lo jorn de diyous a XVIII jorns de saffar DCXCII anys de la profeta Mafumet; E en lany de la Incarnacio de Jhesu Xrist MCCXCII anys fo feit.

And that this affection and this friendship [between Sultan al-Ašraf Ḥalīl and King James II of Aragon, King Sancho IV of Castile and King Dinis of Portugal] and these covenants be written and established between the two parties forever; and that these agreements must be firm and immutable, so that the two parties and the two regimes shall be as one and that should anyone die among either party, these covenants shall not be called into question by the appointment or dismissal of an official; and that all the officials who shall serve under the sultan must be bound by these agreements which have been established between the two parties according to the aforementioned timetables, on Thursday the eighteenth day of Šafar, in the year 692 of the Prophet Muḥammad; this agreement was made in the year of the Incarnation of Jesus Christ 1292 [1293].

Authorship & Work

[§1] The few lines above are taken from one of many diplomatic treaties concluded during the medieval period, preserved in the archives of the Crown of Aragon in the “Royal diplomatic letters” section (*Cartas Reales Diplomáticas*). The text was written in Catalan and bears the date 1292, meaning it was actually drafted in 1293.¹ This agreement was concluded by King James II of Aragon (r. 1291–1327), who ruled the Crown of Aragon—which at the time encompassed the Kingdom of Aragon proper, the kingdoms of Valencia and Mallorca², and the Catalan counties, including Barcelona—and the Mamlūk sultan al-Ašraf Ḥalīl (r. 689–693/1290–1293), who ruled over Egypt, Palestine, and Syria.³ The treaty drew extensively from an agreement concluded on 25 April 1290 by the respective predecessors of the two sovereigns, Alfonso III (r. 1285–1291) and Qalāwūn (r. 678–689/1279–1290), which is only preserved in its Arabic version.⁴

[§2] The 1293 document from the archives of the Crown of Aragon consists of a long roll of paper made up of four taped sheets, reaching a total height of 166.2 cm.⁵ It is unusual for such a text to be presented in this form; also unusual is the presence of a few interlinear traces of translation from the Arabic and the absence of a final oath and seal, which usually indicated the sovereigns’ endorsement and proved the agreement’s authenticity. Might this actually have been a draft treaty?

[§3] An explanation of these unusual features was recently provided by Frédéric Bauden:⁶ the document is actually a late copy, likely made in early 1306 when a new embassy traveled to Cairo. In short, not long after the treaty was concluded in 1293, for reasons yet unclear, James II changed his position and his diplomatic strategy, particularly vis-à-vis the papacy as we will see below, as a result of which he did not officially proclaim the agreement. The struggles faced by the Mamlūk authorities in the wake of the assassination of Sultan al-Ašraf Ḥalīl on 12 Muḥarram 693/14 December 1293 compromised the resumption of relations between James II and the new, very young sultan al-Nāṣir Muḥammad (r. 693–694, 698–708, 709–741/1293–1294, 1299–1309, 1310–1341), who was overthrown for the first time in 694/1294. However, shortly after his first restoration, in 1300,⁷ during the last invasion of the Mongol Ilkhanids in Syria, he dispatched an embassy to Barcelona, which was followed by further exchanges of embassies between the countries in 1303 and in 1305–1306. It was during the latter exchange, in Cairo, that al-Nāṣir Muḥammad commissioned a new edition of the text of the 1293 treaty, which largely drew from the 1290 text,⁸ in order to have it officially proclaimed

¹ The excerpt gives the precise date of the treaty in the Ḥijrī calendar as 19 Šafar 692, equivalent to 29 January 1293. As the change of year occurred in Easter in the medieval Crown of Aragon, 1293 can be inferred from the equivalence in the Julian calendar which is also referred to in the document.

² The Kingdom of Mallorca, which had been separated from the Crown of Aragon after the death of King James I in 1276, following the latter’s instructions, was effectively occupied by the King of Aragon since the crusade decreed by the Pope against the Crown of Aragon (1285) and until the Treaty of Anagni (1295), see below.

³ James II’s envoys for this agreement were Romeu de Marimon, the King’s notary in the Vallès region, and the knights Berenguer Sant Vicenç, Ramon Alamany, a Barcelona citizen, and the king’s representative (*parledor per lo rey*) Guillem Lobet. I thank Stéphane Péquignot for his remarks on these ambassadors in his Barcelona talk on 5 March 2024, “Las instrucciones a los embajadores, un elemento clave de la diplomacia real aragonesa. El ejemplo de las negociaciones del tratado de 1293,” which allowed me to correct the location where the leading envoy Romeu de Marimon performed his duties, as interpreted by Masià de Ros, *La corona de Aragon y el norte de Africa*, doc. 3, p. 266.

⁴ See the presentation and English translation of this 1290 Arabic version: Ibn ‘Abd al-Zāhir (*Tašrīf al-ayyam wa-l-‘uṣūr bi-sīrat al-sultān al-Malik al-Manšūr*), in: Holt, *Early Mamluk Diplomacy*, pp. 130–140.

⁵ Bauden, *Diplomatics*, p. 23.

⁶ Bauden, *Diplomatics*, pp. 26–27.

⁷ Holt, *Al-Nāṣir Muḥammad’s Letter*.

⁸ The clauses in the two agreements are identical. The only differences are: the sovereigns and individuals mentioned and bound to the treaty alongside the King of Aragon (King James I of Sicily, who would later become

in the Crown of Aragon, as was customary.⁹ This is very likely how the two versions (Arabic and Catalan) of the agreement came to be preserved in the archives of the Crown of Aragon in Barcelona, without the Catalan being properly issued on parchment, as should have been the case according to chancery standards.

[§4] Can we, for that matter, infer that this was an unratified and ultimately irrelevant agreement lacking impact, especially given that its more unexpected diplomatic and military provisions never had to be enforced?¹⁰ On the contrary: first, the 1293 treaty had been prepared by the Crown of Aragon by embassy instructions from August 1292 that are also preserved; the two documents, along with the envoys' letters of accreditation, constitute a highly valuable set of documents that gives us an insight into the diplomatic negotiation process.¹¹

[§5] Most important, an Arabic version of the same 1293 agreement was also preserved, and has been analysed by Bogdan Smarandache,¹² with a similar final section (see above: "Source") that lacks a reference to the treaty's period of validity, in *Transmediterranean History*. Here I am taking up the opportunity to present and analyse this Catalan version as a complement to Bogdan Smarandache's article. The two texts, in Arabic and Catalan, are exceptional in that they preserve two versions of the same agreement between Christian and Muslim rulers that has very few diplomatic precedents.¹³ They are characterised by a twofold relation, pertaining first to their diplomatic contents, which define the relations between the two powers, and second to the opportunities for comparison they offer, allowing us to verify the translation—in this instance, from Arabic to Catalan—in terms of correspondences and possible discrepancies.

Content & Context

[§6] Following Smarandache's article,¹⁴ here is a quick presentation of the contents of the Catalan version of the agreement, with differences to the Arab version noted whenever applicable.

[§7] The text classically begins with the protocol of the agreement, presenting the two sovereigns (clauses 1–2), then the King of Aragon's messengers, and the territories under the authority of the two monarchs (clauses 3–6). In addition to the King of Aragon, it mentions the

James II of Aragon, and their brothers Frederick and Peter, in 1290) and the Mamlūk sultan (al-Ašraf Ḥalīl, in 1290); the envoys mentioned; the list of the territories over which both sovereigns ruled, which is longer in the 1293 edition, particularly for those regarded as ruled by the sultan; finally, the two sovereigns' oaths—among the few parts of the text to contain religious references, which were obviously needed to make a solemn commitment under God—which are not included in the 1293 version, probably because in the 1290 version, the Mamlūk sultan and the King of Aragon had made a pledge on behalf of their respective successors. See Holt, *Early Mamluk Diplomacy*, pp. 138–139.

⁹ Moeglin and Péquignot, *Diplomatie*, p. 518.

¹⁰ Although they published and spread awareness of this surprising agreement in its Catalan and Arabic versions, most historians downplay its scope, mainly because its most unexpected clauses in the diplomatic and military realms ultimately never needed to be enforced, or because it was never officially proclaimed. See Masià, *La Corona de Aragón y los Estados del Norte África*, p. 78; Holt, *Early Mamluk Diplomacy*, pp. 27–28; and Bauden, *Diplomatics*, p. 31. On the agreement's lack of echo in the historiography despite its originality, see Coulon, *Une phase décisive*, p. 119.

¹¹ Archivo de la Corona de Aragón, Cancillería Real, Reg. 252, fols 38r–40r. For an edition of the embassy instructions, see Capmany, *Memorias Históricas*, vol. 2/II, n.º 53 p. 78; and Masià, *La Corona de Aragón y los Estados del Norte África*, doc. 2, pp. 264–266.

¹² Smarandache: 1293: An Aragonese-Mamlūk Agreement.

¹³ Bauden, *Diplomatics*, p. 3, notes that the Arabic version of the 1293 treaty from the archives of the Crown of Aragon is the oldest preserved original Mamlūk chancery document in Europe, and the only extant copy of a treaty concluded between the Mamlūk and another sovereign.

¹⁴ To make comparison easier, the numbering of clauses here follows the one used in Bogdan Smarandache's article, with a discrepancy introduced by the presence of an additional clause in the Catalan version (see FN 17).

kings Sancho IV of Castile (r. 1284–1295) and Dinis I of Portugal (r. 1279–1325), respectively his stepfather and brother-in-law, also bound to the treaty. The following clauses deal with the subjects as mentioned below:

7. Protects Mamlūk territory from Christian attacks—in particular by Franks and Crusaders—if necessary using military resources provided by the kings of Aragon, Castile, and Portugal;
8. Forbids King James and his subjects from aiding Franks among the sultan’s allies who might refuse to comply with the present agreement;
9. Forbids King James from aiding Christians—the Pope, Frank or Greek kings—or Mongols who might request his assistance;
10. Obliges the King of Aragon to inform the sultan of any planned attacks against him of which King James might have knowledge;
11. Prescribes the rescue of shipwrecked subjects of both sovereigns and of their goods, in the territories of either party;
12. Protects the possessions and goods of merchants subject to one of the two sovereigns in their respective territories;
13. Protects the sultan’s envoys travelling to the king’s estates;
14. Forbids the king and the sultan from aiding pirates (“corçaris”);
15. Arrest of any party in breach of this agreement by order of the king;
16. Gives royal authorisation to export iron, coal, and wood to the sultan’s territories;
17. Gives royal sanction to repatriate Muslim slaves by the king and to ship them to the sultan’s lands;
18. Permits the settlement of disputes between Christian and Muslim merchants in the sultan’s territories according to the sultan’s law;
19. Restitutes, by royal order, lost and subsequently recovered goods belonging to Muslim merchants on ships belonging to subjects of the king;
20. Allows the expulsion of subjects of the sultan and of the king who have committed theft, to their respective territories;
21. Allows pilgrims carrying a letter of safe conduct (“letres”) by the king to travel to Jerusalem;
22. Obliges the king to protect the sultan’s territories, to prevent any attack by the sultan’s enemies and to aid the sultan;
23. Obliges the king’s subjects to pay customs in Alexandria and Damietta.

[§8] The presentation and the number of the clauses, as well as the measures they contain, are overall very similar, if not identical to those found in the Arabic version, of which this Catalan text is to a large extent a translation. This becomes clear in particular if one compares the Catalan and Arabic versions of the excerpt cited above (the Arabic version cited in Smarandache’s article): they express the same ideas, in the same order—friendship, belonging to the same political entity, unlimited validity of the agreement—but in different terms, diversified to an even greater degree by the translation.

[§9] This agreement could be regarded as a treaty of military alliance, considering such assistance is provided for by clause 7, on the part of the King of Aragon (and of his stepfather and brother-in-law) for the sultan’s benefit (“with their galleys, their weapons, their barons, their knights and their foot soldiers”), against attacks from the Pope and Christian sovereigns in particular. However, the Catalan term *aliança* does not appear in the Catalan version, perhaps

due to the asymmetrical character of the military engagement outlined in the text. It is accordingly more appropriate to speak of military aid from the king to the sultan—the term “aid” (*ajuda*) is in fact employed in clause 22. The Arabic text, on the other hand, uses the term *mušādaqa*, which Smarandache translates as “alliance,”¹⁵ although the Arabic term primarily refers to friendship. In short, what is discussed here is an entirely unprecedented case of military aid between a Muslim sovereign from the Mashriq and a western Christian monarch, notably in the later crusading period.

[§10] Additionally, the text is not referred to as a truce, but as “conventions of peace and friendship” (*convinençes de la pau e les amistatz*) between sovereigns, which was reason enough for al-Qalqašandī, the person in charge in the Mamlūk chancery (m. 821/1418)—which preserved the best Arabic version—to file it among the rare examples of negotiated, rather than imposed agreements between a Muslim and a non-Muslim ruler.¹⁶ The agreement effectively has no mention of a terminus, as is stated in the excerpt cited above.

[§11] The Catalan text differs from the Arabic version in parts. One of the main differences concerns the reciprocity of some clauses, with reciprocal clauses slightly more numerous in the Arabic version. This is the case, for instance, in clause 10, which in the Catalan version only obliges the King of Aragon to assist the sultan, and not the other way around. Moreover, clauses 7 and 8 restate the King’s military obligations vis-à-vis the sultan, with complementary provisions, but this is not the case in the Arabic version. As a result, the sultan’s position of strength is reinforced in the Catalan version of the agreement, making it even more unbalanced than its Arabic counterpart.¹⁷ The aforementioned military alliance was clearly asymmetrical: the King of Aragon had to come to the Mamlūk sultan’s aid in the event of an attack by a Christian sovereign, but the sultan was under no similar obligation.

[§12] This agreement is very surprising, especially if we recall that it was concluded at a time when the Crusader states founded by Christians in Palestine and Syria were disbanded. This happened precisely in May 1291, i.e. between the two versions of the agreement, which was negotiated first in 1290, and then a second time in 1293 by the respective successors of the King of Aragon and of the Mamlūk sultan.

Contextualisation, Analysis & Interpretation

[§13] We need to consider the broader context to better understand this agreement, starting by addressing the geopolitical situation in the western Mediterranean that allowed the two sovereigns to come into contact (§§ 14–15) and then looking at the genesis of the agreements of 1290 and 1293 respectively (§§ 15–20), as well as at the main and highly particular original provisions of the 1293 text (§§ 21–26) and their effects (§§ 27–31). Two major events/phenomena shed light on the surprising rapprochement between the kings of Aragon and the Mamlūk sultans: the revolt known as the Sicilian Vespers and the continuation of the Staufens’ Mediterranean policy by King Peter III of Aragon.

[§14] The revolt of the Sicilian Vespers in 1282 indeed facilitated the surprising rapprochement between the kings of Aragon and the Mamlūk sultans. In the course of the revolt, Sicily, ruled

¹⁵ Smarandache, 1293: An Aragonese-Mamlūk Agreement, Source.

¹⁶ Smarandache, 1293: An Aragonese-Mamlūk Agreement, § 10. In clause 15, the agreement is in fact referred to as a truce (*treva*), and al-Qalqašandī does use that term (*hudan*) in reference to these agreements negotiated between Muslim and non-Muslim sovereigns.

¹⁷ Clause 14, which prohibits giving assistance to pirates, does not appear in the Arabic version copied by al-Qalqašandī. It was apparently omitted, as it is included in the Arabic version preserved in the Arabic section of the Archives of the Crown of Aragon. However, the poor state of preservation of that version makes it difficult to use. See Alarcón y Santón and García de Linares, *Los documentos árabes*, n. 1, p. 342. This is why it is left unmentioned in Smarandache’s article, which only considers 22 clauses.

until then with papal support by Charles of Anjou (r. 1266–1285), the young brother of the King of France, (Saint) Louis IX (r. 1226–1270), came under the control of King Peter III the Great of Aragon (r. 1276–1285), father of Alfonso III (r. 1282/1285–1291) and James II (r. 1291–1327) who negotiated the 1290 and 1293 agreements with the Mamlūk sultans. Peter III led the rebellion and legitimised his takeover of Sicily by citing the lineage of his wife Constance, the daughter of Manfred (r. 1258–1266), who himself was the bastard son and successor of Emperor Frederick II of Hohenstaufen (r. 1198/1212/1220–1250), both kings of Sicily.¹⁸

[§15] This change of sovereignty over Sicily marked a major turning point in the history of the Mediterranean and of southern Europe: the kings of Aragon were now aligned with the Staufen's Mediterranean policy, thus turning away from the papacy, but opening diplomatic lines of contact with the main Muslim rulers, particularly in Ifrīqiya and in the Levant.

[§16] The agreements of 1290 and 1293 between the kings of Aragon and the Mamlūk sultans prolonged this Mediterranean strategy. It led the former to openly oppose the papacy and its traditional allies, including the Angevins, who still controlled Southern Italy and Provence, and dangerously isolated them in the western Mediterranean. In fact, the pope had decreed a crusade against the Crown of Aragon, led by King of France Philip III (r. 1270–1285), supported by the Angevins in 1285. Against all odds, however, it had been a military failure, partly due to the emerging Catalan-Aragonese naval supremacy; Philip III died that same year as he retreated.

[§17] However, to support this major conflict in the western Mediterranean, the kings of Aragon had to cover their backs in the Iberian Peninsula. This is why, in the year of his coronation, i.e. 1291, the cunning James II quickly negotiated the Treaty of Monteagudo with his neighbor and stepfather, King Sancho IV of Castile. This agreement heralded a new alliance between the two sovereigns, who planned to partition out future conquests in North Africa: the king of Castile was to be awarded lands in northwestern Africa, then under Marīnid rule, whereas those in the central and eastern parts of North Africa would go to the king of Aragon.

[§18] This explains why the kings of Castile and Portugal are almost systematically mentioned alongside the king of Aragon in the 1293 agreement with the Mamlūks, although they did not maintain relations with the Levant to speak of, and the agreement did little to change matters in that regard. Still, it allowed James II to lead an Iberian alliance that reinforced his power and prestige in the eyes of the Mamlūk sultan, whose territories and power were clearly superior.

[§19] The Treaty of Monteagudo also shows that there was no systematic effort on the part of the kings of Aragon—no more than on that of the Staufen's, incidentally—to secure agreements with Muslim rulers around the Mediterranean in the spirit of religious “tolerance,” an anachronistic concept if understood in the modern sense of the term.¹⁹ Rather, it reflected a context of increasing diplomatic negotiations between Mediterranean powers, especially between Christians and Muslims in the Levant as the final dissolution of the Latin East bolstered Mamlūk power in the early 1290s.²⁰

[§20] It is indeed worth noting that the Genoese also concluded a treaty with Sultan Qalāwūn on 13 May 1290, barely three weeks after another had been concluded with King Alfonso III of Aragon, on 23 April. Clearly, the envoys of the two western powers, who had to spend time

¹⁸ Vanlandingham, Hohenstaufen Heritage; Jaspert, *Zwei Mal Konstanze*.

¹⁹ Here “tolerance” should be understood solely in the sense of “bearing,” “enduring,” as one endured an evil in the Middle Ages.

²⁰ In addition to the documents presented in the following paragraph, it is worth noting the trading tax cuts granted by King of Cyprus Henry II of Lusignan (r. 1285–1306) to Catalan merchants. See Capmany i de Montpalau, *Memorias históricas*, vol. II (1), doc. 31; and the embassy of King Edward I of England (r. 1271–1307), who travelled to meet with the Mongol Ilkhan Ghaykhatu (r. 1291–1295) in Summer 1291 and came back in 1293, and whose accounts have been preserved, see: Desimoni, *I conti dell'Ambasciata*.

together in these circumstances, fought to secure the most favorable concessions from the sultan, particularly regarding taxes on trade, at a time when the Venetians had already been granted a general safe conduct in autumn 1288, which ensured their access to the sultanate's ports and preserved their commercial interests.²¹ This quick succession of trade agreements should also be related to a decree promulgated by Sultan Qalāwūn in May 1288, which urged merchants from all regions, in effect not only Westerners, to trade in Egypt and bring Mamlūks.²²

[§21] Still, the main originality of the 1290 and 1293 agreements between the kings of Aragon and the Mamlūk sultans²³ lies in the fact that they primarily included political and military provisions, which seems logical between sovereigns, whereas the merchant republics of Genoa and Venice stuck to negotiations that were primarily commercial, even though their implications in terms of maritime strategy and power should not be overlooked. In effect, considering the number of clauses and their order in the text—whose final part admittedly lacks coherence—these political and military provisions dominate. Most importantly, they required a major new strategic commitment on the part of the King of Aragon,²⁴ in line with the policy established by Emperor Frederick II, the great-grandfather of kings Alfonso III and James II, in the 1229 Treaty of Jaffa, concluded with the Ayyūbid sultan al-Kāmil (r. 615–635/1218–1238).²⁵ It should be underscored in this context that the Aragonese–Mamlūk agreement cannot be considered a truce in the strict sense, since the kings of Aragon were not at war with the Mamlūks.²⁶ The overused term “peace,” which appears twice in the agreement, would have been more appropriate if it had been officially proclaimed in the Crown of Aragon.

[§22] The agreement's other main provisions pertain to trade, customs, and maritime regulation. Notably, most of these clauses imply a reciprocity for the subjects of the two sovereigns, regarding for instance shipwrecked travelers (clause 11) and merchants' wares (clause 12). These provisions were designed to boost trade, particularly for the Catalans, the most active traders in the Crown of Aragon. They are the only ones to be mentioned by name in the

²¹ Coulon, *A Decisive Phase*, p. 255.

²² Al-Qalqašandī: *Ṣubḥ al-a'šā*, ed. Ibrāhīm, vol. 13, pp. 339–342; Wiet, *Les marchands d'épices*, pp. 90–91; Vallet, *Decree by Mamlūk sultan Qalāwūn*, doc. 33, pp. 136–138. This decree may have been inspired by an embassy and a letter dispatched by a Singhalese prince to Cairo in 1283, urging the sultan to expand trade into the island, along the spice route, see: Vallet, *L'Arabie marchande*, pp. 598, 621–622; Coulon, *A Decisive Phase*, pp. 255–256.

²³ For a first analysis of the components of this agreement, see: Coulon, *Barcelone et le grand commerce d'Orient*, pp. 44–45; also cited in Moeglin et Péquignot, *Diplomatie*, p. 568.

²⁴ Regarding this matter, I would qualify what I wrote in 2017 in Coulon, *Commercial Influence*, p. 287, namely that the most important provisions in the double agreement of 1290/1293 pertained to the protection of trade, before I started specifically examining the text of this surprising agreement in 2018–2019 in Coulon, *Une phase décisive*. The clauses that were most closely complied with across the entire fourteenth century were ultimately those pertaining to trade, the main focus of my research up to 2016–2017.

²⁵ The Mamlūk chancery scribe and historian Ibn 'Abd al-Zāhir makes a direct reference to the truce negotiated in 1229 between Frederick II and al-Kāmil in his presentation of the 1290 agreement between the King of Aragon Alfonso and Sultan Qalāwūn in which he served as a witness, in *Tašrīf al-ayyām wa-l-'uṣūr bi-sīrat al-sulṭān al-Malik al-Manṣūr*, as is pointed out in Holt, *Early Mamluk Diplomacy*, p. 131; the passage was also cited by Bauden, *Diplomatics*, p. 8.

²⁶ Remark made by Muhammad Ibrahim 'Abd al-'Aal during his presentation “Comments on the agreement between Sultan al-Ašraf and King James II of Aragon in 1293 AD / 692 H, through the text of al-Qalqašandī, *Ṣubḥ al-a'šā fī šinā'at al-inṣā'*” during the workshop *Négociations et accords entre chrétiens et musulmans. Autour de la version arabe du traité de 692 H / 1293 entre couronne d'Aragon et sultanat mamlūk / Negotiations and Agreements between Christians and Muslims. The Arabic Version of the 692 AH / 1293 Agreement between the Crown of Aragon and the Mamluk Sultanate*, organised by Damien Coulon, Cairo, IFAO, 9 May 2024. It should be noted in this respect that King James I's 1269 crusade was aborted at an early stage due to adverse winds and weather conditions, off the Balearic Islands, as he described himself in his autobiographical account, the *Llibre dels feits*, ed. Soldevila, § 489.

agreement, in clause 16 on the trade of foodstuffs theoretically banned by the papacy, which could effectively be considered war material. However, the clause that discusses taxes on merchandise (clause 23) only mentions taxes due to the sultan, in Alexandria and Damietta, the only named ports. While this set of commercial and maritime provisions is not exceptional, unlike the political and military ones, it does constitute a compensation of sorts for the engagement expected of the King of Aragon in the latter arenas, and thus serves to balance the agreement somewhat. Now, the Catalan merchants, who already disposed of a *funduq* / *fondaco* and a consul in Alexandria since 1262,²⁷ would be able to acquire precious South Asian spices there, to meet the growing demand in the West and to effectively compete with their Venetian and Genoese rivals.

[§23] A third, less prominent theme is addressed in a single clause (21) that authorises Christian pilgrims to travel to Jerusalem with a safe conduct issued by the King of Aragon. This is the only clause that exclusively benefits the Catalan-Aragonese side and, as such, represents another modest means to balance out the agreement, as well as the only clause to address religious matters explicitly. However, this clause should not be overlooked, not only because it sheds light on medieval mentalities, but because western Christians may have believed that the end of the Latin East could jeopardise the possibility of making the main pilgrimage to Jerusalem.

[§24] The political and military clauses and the language used to describe the close relations between the two sovereigns, particularly in the document's protocol and eschatocol, indicate that we are dealing with an exceptional agreement. The Arabic terms *mawadda* and *muṣādaqa*—which Smarandache translates as “friendship” and “alliance”—are matched by *amor* and *amistat*, meaning “affection” and “friendship” (see excerpt above); employing such a linguistic register to describe the relations between a Christian and a Muslim sovereign is unusual, particularly in the context of the later Crusades. It should be noted, however, that these objectives and values of “concord and friendship” were an integral element of agreements that specialists of medieval diplomacy refer to as treaties of “perpetual peace” and “alliance” between Christian sovereigns in the West.²⁸

[§25] In keeping with these fine provisions, the agreement is stipulated to be valid “forever” (*a tots jorns*)—see the excerpt above—and its decisions “firm and stable” (*firmes e estables*), reflecting a logic of “perpetual peace” that departed markedly from that of a truce, which is inherently limited in time. This directive, although far from usual, can be found in several Western agreements, where it did not require religious legal justification, unlike on the Islamic side.²⁹ Smarandache also notes that “the lack of a terminus for the agreement does suggest a novel type of diplomatic agreement,” while remarking that occurrences of this type seem to increase in the late Middle Ages.³⁰

[§26] However, as Smarandache also points out, the 1293 agreement goes even further by stipulating, in the Catalan version, that “the two parties and the two regimes will be one” (see

²⁷ Coulon, *El desarrollo*, pp. 663–664.

²⁸ Moeglin and Péquignot, *Diplomatie*, pp. 542, 547. The terms in quotation marks are from these two pages. Also, as Stéphane Péquignot has noted in his aforementioned lecture “Las instrucciones a los embajadores,” there are nine occurrences of the term *concordia* in the 1292 embassy instructions, but none in the text of the 1293 agreement.

²⁹ Smarandache, 1293: An Aragonese-Mamlūk Treaty, § 21. Although the Mālikī justifications supporting that Muslim sovereigns determine the duration of agreements deserve to be cited in the passage in question, I doubt that they had any kind of influence in a Middle Eastern context.

³⁰ Smarandache, 1293: An Aragonese-Mamlūk Treaty, n. 65, citing König, *Dār al-ḥarb*, p. 49, FN 67, which points to other cases from the late Middle Ages, for instance a treaty concluded between Florence and the Hafsiids on 5 October 1421, referred to as an *instrumentum pacis perpetue* in its Latin version and as *ṣulḥ mustamirr* in the Arabic one.

above: *que les dues partides e los II Regismes sien tots ensemps una cosa*), a sentence the reader may initially find somewhat perplexing. Let us remark, first, that the Catalan version is slightly more concise than the Arabic, which uses the formulation “one kingdom and one entity” (*mamlakatan wāḥidatan wa-šayʿan wāḥidan*), although the fairly vague Catalan term *cosa* does echo the Arabic *šayʿan*. Likewise, the terms “parties” (*partides*) and “regimes” (*Regismes*) are also very broad, and relate to what must be governed. According to Smarandache, this may reflect an attempt to comply with traditional Islamic legal principles, which oppose *dār al-islām* and *dār al-ḥarb*.³¹ As these principles were rendered inapplicable in this exceptional case of rapprochement and concord, the writers of the agreement used this formulation to merge the two states, thus producing an astonishing single entity. This reflects, on the one hand, the extent of the rapprochement enshrined in this agreement, but also, on the other, the ability of the Mamlūk sovereigns to adjust or relax religious legal doctrines.

[§27] Let us now retrace the succession of events after the 1293 treaty, to ascertain why the text was preserved in the archives of the Crown of Aragon, despite its unfinished form, and what its legacy may have been under these conditions. As we have seen, a number of events very quickly contributed to making some of its provisions irrelevant, starting with James II’s unexpected reconciliation with Pope Boniface VIII (sed. 1295–1303) through the Treaty of Anagni (24 June 1295). The king of Aragon seems to have undertaken a quick and complete reversal of a diplomatic policy ultimately centered on the Sicilian question and the conflict with the Pope. Might he have intended to use the 1293 agreement with the Mamlūk sultan as a last resort to threaten the pope, should no agreement be reached? At any rate, the Treaty of Anagni makes no mention of the 1293 agreement.³²

[§28] Yet, during the embassy of 1305–1306, the Mamlūk sultan al-Nāṣir Muḥammad insisted on having the agreement officially proclaimed in the Crown of Aragon to force James II to honor its commitments. For this purpose, he had the text redrafted, in Arabic and Catalan, and sent to the King of Aragon. But this pressure ultimately caused the embassy to fail: the planned liberation of Templar prisoners who were subjects of the king³³ was revoked; they were held in Egypt as a means of pressure on James II. As a result, the sultan’s envoy, who was tasked with ensuring that the treaty would be effectively proclaimed in the Crown of Aragon, was removed from the ship en route, off the coast of Alexandria, by James II’s envoy, who, however, did send the newly-rewritten agreement to the king.³⁴

[§29] Another dispute between the two sovereigns ensued, probably exacerbated by the second overthrow of al-Nāṣir Muḥammad in 1309–1310. Yet, James II kept the text of the agreement in his archives. The unfinished form of the Catalan version proves that he did not proclaim the treaty. However, he must have learned that al-Nāṣir Muḥammad had managed to reclaim power in 1310. After a few years of waiting, he eventually sent an embassy to Cairo in 1314, to arrange, among other things, for the liberation of Catalan and Aragonese prisoners. Three other embassies followed at regular intervals, in 1318, 1322, and 1327,³⁵ attesting to the resumption

³¹ Smarandache, 1293: An Aragonese-Mamlūk Treaty, § 22.

³² Péquignot, *Au nom du roi*, pp. 11, 405, notes that “the King of Aragon’s radical position changed quite rapidly [toward an agreement with the Pope] over the course of the year 1293.” [*la position radicale du roi d’Aragon évolue assez rapidement [en faveur d’un accord avec le pape] au cours de l’année 1293*]

³³ They were Templars of the Crown of Aragon, who had been imprisoned during their retreat in the battle of 1302. The prisoners included the Catalan Templar Dalmau de Rocaberti; see Claverie, *La contribution des Templiers de Catalogne*, pp. 183–189. The matter was regularly discussed in the course of the following embassies commissioned by James II.

³⁴ Bauden, *Diplomatics*, pp. 26–27. See also Atiya, *Egypt and Aragon*, pp. 28–32 and Masià, *La Corona de Aragón y los Estados del Norte África*, pp. 104–111.

³⁵ Atiya, *Egypt and Aragon*; Alarcón y Santón and García de Linares, *Los documentos árabes*, doc. 149–151; and Masià, *La Corona de Aragón y los Estados del Norte África*, pp. 112–127.

of relations between the two sovereigns, although the 1290/1293 treaty had not been proclaimed. Over the same period, Catalan merchants were able to travel to Egypt and Syria without difficulty, thanks to a system of exonerating fines from which the king actually benefited.³⁶

[§30] A normalisation of relations did occur, showing that, in a sense, the agreement was implemented, at least in the area of trade, which also allowed merchants to confirm as they traveled through Egypt that no additional crusade had been initiated in the West, in compliance with the treaty's clause 10. At this time, Pope Boniface VIII was mainly grappling with King Philip IV of France (r. 1285–1314), who kept a close watch on pontifical power in Avignon as the Knights Templar were disbanded. However, as James II had not proclaimed the treaty, he had saved face vis-à-vis the Pope, while discreetly honouring some of the commitments set down in the text. Whether this was duplicity, opportunism, or deft maneuvering, James II freed himself from papal pressure and came out winning both ways.

[§31] As has been well documented, the cordial relations between the Aragonese and Mamlūk sovereigns continued after the deaths of James II in 1327 and al-Nāṣir Muḥammad in 1341, with fairly regular exchanges of embassies and letters.³⁷ Catalan merchants went on prosperously trading in Egypt and Syria throughout the fourteenth century and up to the early fifteenth century, even competing with their Venetian and Genoese counterparts.³⁸ The main goals of the 1290/1293 agreement were achieved.

[§32] In conclusion, the value and deep originality of this double agreement of 1290/1293 must be stressed despite its significant formal flaws, which clearly make it impossible to call it an official treaty. Still, it deserves scholarly attention for many reasons: its objective of near-absolute concord, the common goals set by the sovereigns and their envoys despite the climate of religious opposition characterising the late crusading period, its undeniable outcomes, and the very rare preservation of two such ancient versions of the same agreement in the two original languages. Hopefully a joint translation of the two Catalan and Arabic versions of the agreement will be published, including the closely connected Arabic text of 1290 and the instructions to the Aragonese embassy of 1292. Such a publication would provide a major contribution to the connected history of negotiations and diplomatic agreements between Christian and Muslim powers.

(Translation: Jean-Yves Bart)

Edition(s) & Translation(s)

Edition of the Catalan version of the 1293 treaty: Masià de Ros, Àngels (ed.): *La corona de Aragón y los estados del norte Africa. Política de Jaime II y Alfonso IV en Egipto, Ifríquía y Tremecén*, Barcelona: Instituto Español de Estudios Mediterráneos, 1951, doc. 2–3.

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³⁶ Coulon, *Barcelone*, pp. 87–89.

³⁷ A total of 26 embassies was dispatched between the Crown of Aragon and the Mamlūk sultanate between 1290 and 1390; see Coulon, *Négociier avec les sultans*, p. 307. See: Alarcón y Santón and García de Linares, *Los documentos árabes*, doc. 152; Masià, *La Corona de Aragón y los Estados del Norte África*, pp. 127–129. Over twenty letters between kings of Aragon and Mamlūk sultans and embassy instructions were issued between 1307 and 1333, see: Bauden and Dekkiche, *Mamluk Cairo*, pp. 11–15, 66–69.

³⁸ Coulon, *Barcelone*; Coulon, *A Decisive Phase*, p. 266.

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