

# ACA, Cancillería, Reg. [?], f. 14v

## Royal Mandate Concerning the Forced Baptism of a Jewish Child in Girona

Field	Details
Document type	Royal mandate of inquisition ( <i>mandatum inquisitionis</i> )
Issuer	Joan I of Aragon
Addressee	Bailiff of Girona and his lieutenant
Date	Barcelona, [20?/8?] July 1387
Subject	Investigation of the forced abduction and baptism of a seven-year-old Jewish boy; custody provisions for the baptized child
Complainant	Salamon Scaleta, Jew of Girona
Accused	Sons of en Castell, en Pingeleuder, and en Peralta; a son of Bartholomeus Bener
Iussio	Francischus ça Costa
Language	Latin, with Catalan onomastic forms
Registration note	A similar letter ( <i>alia similis</i> ) was registered under the same date

### Reconciled Transcription

Ad nos presencia Salamon Scaleta iudeus dicte Civitatis nobis lacrimabiliter recitavit quod pridem filii den Castell den Pingeleuder den Peralta et quidam filius Bartholomei Bener civitatis predictae violenter corpore proprio amore [?] capuerunt quendam eius filium etatis septem annorum et paucum plus et illum abduxerunt per aliquos dies tenuerunt et per proprium [?] per vim ut dicit baptizare fecerunt et nunc intra [?] illum tenent donec per tanto [?] nobis dicit [?]. Et mandamus vobis [?] sub pena quingentorum florenorum auri nostro [erario?] [?] si contrafecerint ipso facto applicandorum quapropter de premissis diligentissime inquiratis et si per dictam inquisitionem vobis delatum repereritis dictum delinquentem de corpore proprio arrestari vobis tenere possitis [?] dictam inquisitionem cum per quem fuit factum [?] et interlocutorie testimonium aut eius copiam clausam et sigillatam nobis plico transmittatis ut ea recognita valeat in Curia de iusticia provide iudicium adiudicare. Tunc quod dictum puerum

baptizatum faciatis teneri per christianos bone fame et conversacionis talis quod occultari nequat sub pretextu et [ad] finem abduci valeat. In cuius rei testimonium presentes vobis fieri iussimus comunium [?].

Datum Barchinone [xx?/viii?] die mensis julij anno a nativitate domini millesimo CCCo LXXXo septimo. :: ffrancischus ça Costa [?].

*Registration note:* Alia similis [?] pro registrata fuit sub data Barchinone de dicto Julij anno predicto signata et mandata predicta fuit expedita.

*Right margin:* Andreas Paulli [?] [additional notations, partially illegible].

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## **Annotated English Translation**

Joan, etc.,<sup>1</sup> to our faithful bailiff of Girona and his lieutenant, greetings and our grace.

Before us in person,<sup>2</sup> Salamon Scaleta,<sup>3</sup> Jew of the said city, tearfully recounted to us that recently<sup>4</sup> the sons of en Castell, of en Pingeleuder, and of en Peralta,<sup>5</sup> together with a certain son of Bartholomeus Bener,<sup>6</sup> of the aforesaid city, violently, in person, [willfully?]<sup>7</sup> captured a certain son of his, aged seven years and a little more, and abducted him. They held him for some days and, on their own [authority?],<sup>8</sup> by force, as he says,<sup>9</sup> they had him baptized. And now they hold him within [their keeping?],<sup>10</sup> until [such time as?] he reports [the matter] to us.<sup>11</sup>

And we command you, under penalty of five hundred gold florins,<sup>12</sup> to be applied to our [treasury?]<sup>13</sup> ipso facto if they contravene [this order]: wherefore, you shall investigate the aforesaid matters most diligently, and if through the said investigation you find the said delinquent<sup>14</sup> to have been reported to you in person, you may arrest and hold [them]. The said investigation, together with [an account of] by whom it was carried out, and the interlocutory testimony,<sup>15</sup> or a sealed and closed copy thereof, you shall transmit to us by sealed packet,<sup>16</sup> so that once it has been reviewed, a just judgment may be rendered in the Court.<sup>17</sup>

Then [we further order] that you cause the said baptized boy to be kept by Christians of good repute and conduct,<sup>18</sup> such that he cannot be hidden under [any] pretext and may [ultimately] be produced [before us].<sup>19</sup>

In testimony whereof we have ordered the present [letter] to be issued [and sealed] on your behalf.<sup>20</sup>

Given at Barcelona, [20th?/8th?] day of the month of July, in the year of the Nativity of the Lord one thousand three hundred and eighty-seven.<sup>21</sup> Francischus ça Costa.<sup>22</sup>

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## Notes

1. The abbreviated intitulation *Johannes etcetera* stands for the full royal style. Standard in routine mandates to local officials.
2. *Ad nos presenciam*: Salamon Scaleta appeared personally before the king or his court to lodge his complaint, rather than submitting it through a procurator or in writing. This personal appearance (*presencia*) lends particular weight and urgency to the petition.
3. **Salamon Scaleta**: The complainant is the father of the abducted child. The surname Scaleta does not appear in the most widely cited prosopographical compilations for fourteenth-century Girona Jewry, though the Girona *call* (Jewish quarter) was one of the largest and best-documented in the Crown of Aragon. The name merits cross-referencing against Jaume Riera i Sans's inventories and the ACA *Varia de Cancillería* series for further attestation. The HTR misread this name as "Fernandum Salerno, procuratorem iudeorum" — a plausible-sounding but entirely fabricated reading that would have materially changed the document's evidentiary value.
4. *Pridem*: "recently" or "not long ago" — a temporal marker situating the abduction in the recent past relative to the date of the mandate. This is distinct from the HTR's "quidam" (certain), which lost the temporal information.
5. **Den Castell, den Pingeleuder, den Peralta**: Catalan patronymic constructions using *d'en* (< *de* + *en*, the honorific article used before given names and certain surnames). The Latin text preserves these vernacular naming forms untranslated, as is standard in Aragonese chancery practice when referring to laypeople. "Peralta" is a well-attested Catalan and Aragonese surname (cf. the noble lineage of the Peralta in Navarre and Aragon). "Pingeleuder" is unusual and may be a garbled or dialectal toponym; archival verification of the reading is desirable. "Castell" (*castell* = castle) is a common Catalan surname. The document names the perpetrators' fathers but not the sons themselves — the bailiff would have been expected to identify the individuals from local knowledge.
6. **Bartholomeus Bener**: A fourth perpetrator, identified by his father's name. "Bener" is the reading from the HTR; the manuscript is difficult at this point and the surname could also be read as "Tener" or similar.
7. *Amore* [?]: This reading, from the HTR, is contextually puzzling in a description of violent abduction. It may be a misreading of another word — perhaps *armata [manu]* (with armed force) or a *more* (by habitual practice). Alternatively, *amore* in medieval legal Latin can occasionally function as "willfully" or "intentionally" (*amore proprio* = of one's own volition), which would serve as a legal intensifier alongside *violenter* and *corpore proprio*. The reading requires archival verification.

8. *Per proprium* [?]: Uncertain. Possibly "on their own [initiative/authority]" (*per proprium motum*), or perhaps a misreading of *per presbyterum* (through a priest), which would indicate clerical complicity in the forced baptism. If the latter, this would be significant evidence for the involvement of local clergy. The HTR reads "per proprium" without further resolution.
9. *Ut dicit*: "as he says" — standard formulaic hedging in reported complaints, preserving the distinction between the complainant's allegations and adjudicated fact. The chancery does not vouch for the truth of the narrative at this stage.
10. *Nunc intra illum tenent*: "now they hold him within [their keeping]." The HTR itself marks *intra* with uncertainty. The implication is that the perpetrators continue to detain the baptized child, preventing his return to his father.
11. The transitional clause between the *narratio* and the *dispositio* (roughly "donec per tanto nobis dicit") is garbled in both the HTR and my initial transcription. The sense appears to be that the perpetrators held the child until Salamon Scaleta brought the matter to the king's attention, prompting the present mandate.
12. **Five hundred gold florins**: A substantial penalty. The Aragonese gold florin (*florí d'or d'Aragó*) was struck at approximately 3.5 grams of fine gold. Five hundred florins would represent a punitive sum far exceeding the means of most urban laypeople, underscoring the seriousness with which the Crown treated forced baptism of Jews.
13. *Nostro* [*erario*?]: The word designating the royal treasury is uncertain in both transcriptions. Standard formulae use *erario nostro* or *fisco nostro*. The HTR reads "moneta nostra curiam," which does not parse; my initial reading ("ciano") is equally unsatisfactory.
14. *Dictum delinquentem*: "the said delinquent" — singular, though the narrative names multiple perpetrators. This may be a formulaic singular standing for the group, or it may reflect a specific legal designation of a principal offender.
15. *Interlocutorie testimonium*: An interlocutory finding — a preliminary judicial determination made in the course of the investigation, prior to a definitive sentence. The bailiff is to forward this, along with the full inquisitorial record, to the royal court for final adjudication.
16. *Plico*: "by sealed packet" — the physical means of secure transmission of judicial documents to the royal court.
17. The jurisdictional structure here is significant: the bailiff conducts the local investigation but does not render final judgment. The sealed record is transmitted to the *Curia* (royal court) for definitive sentencing. This reflects the Crown's direct interest in cases involving the Jewish community and forced conversion, which were reserved to royal jurisdiction.

18. **Custody provision:** This clause reflects the canonical-legal paradox of forced baptism in medieval Christendom. The forced baptism was *illicit* — a criminal act warranting investigation and punishment — but *valid* sacramentally. Once baptized, the child was considered a Christian under canon law and could not be "returned" to Judaism, even though the baptism had been obtained by violence. The mandate therefore orders the child placed in the custody of reputable Christians (*christianos bone fame et conversacionis*) rather than returned to his Jewish father. This dual framework — punishing the perpetrators while treating the baptism as irreversible — is consistent with papal teaching from the Fourth Council of Toledo (633) through Innocent III's decretal *Maiores* (1201) and its reception in Aragonese legal practice. For Joan I's administration, the priority was deterrence: the 500-florin penalty and criminal investigation served to protect the Jewish community from further incidents, even as the individual child's baptismal status was treated as settled.
  19. *Et [ad] finem abduci valeat:* The clause specifies two conditions for the child's guardianship: (a) the child cannot be hidden under any pretext (*occultari nequat sub pretextu*), and (b) the child may ultimately be produced (*abduci valeat*) — presumably before the royal court for the resolution of the case. The concern is that the perpetrators' associates might spirit the child away to prevent judicial proceedings.
  20. *In cuius rei testimonium presentes vobis fieri iussimus comunium [?]:* The final word is uncertain. Standard formulations end with *comuniri* or *munitam* (referring to the affixing of the royal seal), and "comunium" may be a scribal or transcription error for one of these.
  21. The day of the month is uncertain: I read "xxo" (20th), while the HTR reads "VIII" (8th). The month is confirmed as July by the registration note below the main text, which reads "de dicto Julij." The HTR's reading of "aprilis" (April) is clearly wrong.
  22. **Francischus ça Costa:** Francesc ça Costa, vice-chancellor of Joan I, whose *iussio* appears on numerous documents from the early months of Joan I's reign. The HTR reads "per Franciscum Canet," but ça Costa is prosopographically well-attested in this role in 1387 and the reading is consistent with his appearances in other documents from Reg. 1751.
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## Unresolved Ambiguities Flagged for Archival Verification

1. **Register and folio identification:** The document is from f. 14v of an unidentified register. Confirmation of the register number is needed.
2. **"Amore" (line 4):** The word between *corpore proprio* and *capuerunt* is contextually problematic. Verify whether the manuscript reads *amore*, *armata [manu]*, or something else entirely.

3. **"Per proprium" (line 6):** Verify whether this reads *per proprium [motum]* (on their own initiative) or *per presbyterum* (through a priest). The latter would have significant implications for clerical complicity.
4. **"Pingeleuder" (line 3):** This surname/toponym is unusual. Verify the reading — it could be a dialectal or garbled form of a more recognizable name.
5. **"Bener" (line 4):** The surname of Bartholomeus's son. Could also be "Tener" or another reading.
6. **Transitional clause (line 7):** "Donec per tanto nobis dicit" does not fully parse in either transcription. Verify the passage connecting the *narratio* to the *dispositio*.
7. **Treasury designation (line 8):** The word after "nostro" designating the royal treasury is unclear in both transcriptions. Verify: *erario*, *fisco*, or something else.
8. **"Comunium" (line 17):** Verify the final word of the testimonial clause. Expected: *comuniri* or *munitam*.
9. **Day numeral in the date:** Verify whether the manuscript reads "xxo" (20th), "viii" (8th), or another numeral.
10. **Iussio:** Verify whether the signing official is *ffrancischus ça Costa* (vice-chancellor) or *Franciscum Canet* (HTR reading). Prosopographical evidence favors *ça Costa*.
11. **"Salamon Scaleta":** Cross-reference against prosopographical records for the Girona *call*. The name should appear in other ACA documentation if this individual had further dealings with the Crown.
12. **Registration note and "Alia similis":** The note indicates a similar letter was issued. Identify the second recipient — likely a bailiff of another town where the same or related perpetrators operated, or where the child was being held.