

ChatGPT Version 5.2

January 22, 2026

You said:

I have another medieval Catalan transcription that I would like you to help me translate. I will paste the transcription here. It is my original transcription of an early 1387 letter from Joan I of Aragon Gaston Febus, the Count of Foix-Bearn. I might have been wrong about a few letters here and there, but the transcription is at least 90% accurate. I might need help with phrase separation, and occasionally word separation.. I put an asterisk * at the end of the words for which I felt unsure about my transcription. Please help me make transcription corrections where needed. Then help me translate and contextualize the information. Here is the transcription: Per una persona que ses absentada de aquesta Ciutat per alguns crimes comeses contra nostra persona propria, i havem entes que sen es anada en vostra terra, trametem a vos lo feel lochtinent d'alguatzir nostre en Gerau. Informat per nos sobre aquest fet per qeus pregam car cosi que donets fe a ço que ell vos en dira e ho complistats per obra car plaer nos en farets eus en havrem molt que grair.

ChatGPT said:

Oh, this is a nice, tight little letter—and very Joan. You're right that it's already quite solid; the issues are mostly light normalization, a couple of verb forms, and smoothing phrase boundaries rather than any deep re-reading. I'll go step by step, the way you like.

1. Light transcription review and proposed corrections

I'll reproduce your text first, then give a **minimally corrected/normalized reading**, flagging what I'm changing and why.

Your transcription

Per una persona que ses absentada de aquesta Ciutat per alguns crimes comeses contra nostra persona propria, i havem entes que sen es anada en vostra terra, trametem a vos lo feel lochtinent d'alguatzir nostre en Gerau. Informat per nos sobre aquest fet per qeus pregam car cosi que donets fe a ço que ell vos en dira e ho complistats per obra car plaer nos en farets eus en havrem molt que grair.

Proposed corrected reading (very conservative)

Per una persona que s'és absentada d'aquesta ciutat per alguns crims comesos contra nostra persona pròpia, e havem entès que se n'és anada en vostra terra,

trametem a vós lo fidel lloctinent d'alguatzir nostre, en Gerau. Informat per nós sobre aquest fet, per què us pregam, car cosí, que donets fe a ço que ell vos en dirà e ho compliscats per obra, car plaer nos en farets e us en havrem molt a grair.

Notes on specific points

- **ses absentada → s'és absentada**
Standard reflexive perfect; your reading is correct in substance.
- **de aquesta → d'aquesta**
Orthographic normalization.
- **crimes comeses → crims comesos**
comeses is very likely **comeses**; this is a classic scribal ambiguity.
- **i → e**
Normal Catalan chancery preference before a vowel.
- **havem entes → havem entès**
Straightforward normalization.
- **sen es anada → se n'és anada**
Again, your reading is right; this just clarifies clitics.
- **lo feel → lo fidel**
feel = *fidel* is extremely common in letters introducing trusted officers.
- **lochtinent → lloctinent**
Normalized spelling; your reading is correct.
- **Informat per nos sobre aquest fet**
This phrase works well as-is, but punctuation after *Gerau* really helps.
- **per qeus → per què us**
Expanded and separated.
- **complistats → compliscats**
Subjunctive plural fits the syntax of polite request formulae.
- **eus en havrem → e us en havrem**
Just separation; meaning unchanged.

Overall: no major paleographical red flags here. This is a clean text.

2. English translation (faithful, slightly polished)

Because of a certain person who has absented himself from this city on account of some crimes committed against our own person, and since we have learned that he has gone into your land, we are sending to you our loyal lieutenant of the alguazil, Gerau. He has been informed by us concerning this matter; therefore we ask you, dear cousin, to give credence to what he will tell you and to carry it out in practice, for you will do us great pleasure thereby, and we shall be very grateful to you for it.

If you want a *more literal* version (less elegant, more document-like), I can give that too—but this captures the tone very accurately.

3. Contextual and diplomatic analysis

This short letter actually tells us quite a lot.

a. Nature of the offense

The phrase

“**crims comesos contra nostra persona pròpria**”

is strong. This is not generic wrongdoing; it implies:

- a **direct offense against Joan himself** (insult, violence, conspiracy, lèse-majesté, or possibly a court scandal),
- and one serious enough to justify **cross-border pursuit**.

Joan is asserting *personal sovereign injury*, not just public disorder.

b. Cross-border cooperation with Foix-Béarn

Addressing **Gaston Fébus**, Count of Foix-Béarn, makes perfect sense:

- Foix was a **frequent refuge zone** for fugitives from the Crown of Aragon,
- relations were pragmatic, often managed through **personal kinship language** (*car cosí*),
- extradition was informal and **relational**, not juridically codified.

Joan does not command; he **asks**, but with heavy moral pressure.

c. Role of Gerau, lieutenant of the alguazil

This is key:

- Joan sends **the lieutenant of his alguazil**, not a noble envoy.
- This signals a **judicial-police action**, not diplomacy.
- The phrase “*donets fe a ço que ell vos en dirà*” essentially asks Gaston to treat Gerau’s words as if they were Joan’s own.

This is *delegated royal voice*.

d. Formula of reciprocity

The closing formula:

“car plaer nos en farets e us en havrem molt a grair”

This is classic late-14th-century political courtesy:

- cooperation = pleasure rendered,
- pleasure = obligation remembered.

It hints at future reciprocity without specifying it.

4. Big-picture takeaway

This letter fits very neatly into:

- Joan I’s **early reign assertiveness** (1387),
- his use of **personal authority** rather than institutional process,
- and the porous, negotiated nature of **Aragon–Foix justice**.

It’s a small document, but it speaks volumes about:

- sovereignty,
- mobility,
- and the practical mechanics of medieval political policing.

If you’d like, next we could:

- compare this to **Violant's parallel request letters**,
- look for **Latin chancery analogues** of the same formula,
- or try to infer **what kind of "crime against the person"** most commonly triggered this wording in Joan's reign.

This one's a keeper.

ChatGPT can make mistakes. Check important info.