Queen Violant de Bar to the Governor of Aragon Regarding Borja and Magallón

Document Summary

Letter from Queen Violant de Bar to mossèn Sanxo Martínez de Biota, counselor of King Joan I and portantveus de governador (lieutenant governor) in the Kingdom of Aragon.[1] The queen sharply reprimands the governor for his continued delay in handing over the castle and towns of Borja and Magallón to her agent, mossèn Francesc ça Garriga, and for withholding money collected by one en de Canalies from the revenues and rights pertaining to those places. She dismisses the governor's justifications as contrived and groundless, accuses him of contempt for royal commands, and orders him to deliver the properties and funds immediately, warning him that further delay will bring severe consequences.

Source: ACA, Reg. [register number], ff. 90v–91r. **Language:** Catalan. **Date:** 11 March 1387, Barcelona. **Document type:** Royal mandate / letter of reprimand.

Reconciled Transcription

[f. 90v]

Governador molt som maravellats [?] e no sens rahó moguda ab [?] axí en favor deu [?] de tan gran desservey prejudici e dampnatge nostre havets dilatat e dilatats liurar de poders nostres lo castell e viles de Borja e de Magalló a mossèn Francesch ça Garriga que havem tramès per reebrels en nom nostre aquí pertanyen per certes rahons e títols hoc e en lo dit en de Canalias [?] certes quantitats de moneda que havets reebudes e per en per dita via [?] de les rendes emoluments e drets dels dits castell e viles pertenen [?] a vós de nostres maneres e rahons exquisides e colorades e no havets fundament algú en justícia ni en rahó e per ço seguint ço que deuets e l'onestat de vostre offici e convé [?] en menys preu dels manaments del senyor rey e nostres sobre açò a vós fets als quals deuriets promptament obeir majorment en los propers fets seus e mes e daquells pendre principal càrrech. E si saviament entenets que per esser vra reyna e senyora no deuriets en vós o en mes fets usar de semblants actes [?] mas anar dret camí e mostrar vos hi bon official e affectuós servidor del senyor rey e nostre per que reprenem [?] vos en fortment de no solament ne siats digne de reprehensió mas encara d'aspra e greu correcció vos pregam volem e manam que totes dilacions foragitades liurets en continent realment e de fet al dit mossèn Francesch ça Garriga en nom nostre lo dit castell e viles desus dites e al dit en de Canalies tots los béns que haurets trobats en aquells e tot ço que reebut haurets e sia vers vós de les vendes e drets daquells. E açò no mudets ne

[f. 91r]

tardets per neguna rahó car certificam vós que pendrets massa gran càrrech per a nós e conexerets ço en smerets [?] per obra. Dat en Barçalona sots nostre segell secret manat [?] a xj dies de Març del any Mil ccc lxxxvij. V[er?] deponte.

Al amat nostre mossèn Sanxo Martínez de Biota conseller del senyor rey e portantveus de governador en lo regne d'Aragó.

[Right margin notation:] Domina [?] Regina [?] misit eam sig[natam]. Expedit. P.

English Translation

Governor, we are greatly astonished — and not without reason moved — [that] in such great disservice, prejudice, and damage to ourselves[2] you have delayed and continue to delay delivering from our possession the castle and towns of Borja and Magallón[3] to mossèn Francesc ça Garriga,[4] whom we have sent to receive them in our name, to whom they pertain by certain reasons and titles; and also [withholding] from the said en de Canalies[5] certain quantities of money that you have received, and likewise by the said means[6] the revenues, emoluments, and rights of the said castle and towns — [all this you retain] from our hands by diverse contrived and specious reasons,[7] and you have no foundation whatsoever in justice nor in reason. And therefore, following what you owe and the propriety of your office — which amounts to[8] contempt of the commands of the lord king and ourselves made to you regarding this matter, which you should have promptly obeyed, especially in his own affairs and mine, and taken principal charge of them —

And if you wisely consider that, since [we are] your queen and lady, you ought not in your affairs or in mine to engage in such acts,[9] but rather to go by the straight path and show yourself therein a good official and affectionate servant of the lord king and ourselves — therefore we reprehend you strongly:[10] [you are] not only worthy of reprehension but also of harsh and severe correction.

We pray, wish, and command you[11] that, all delays set aside, you deliver immediately, really and in deed,[12] to the said mossèn Francesc ça Garriga in our name the said castle and towns abovesaid, and to the said en de Canalies all the goods that you shall have found therein and all that you shall have received and that is owed to us from the revenues and rights of the same. And this do not alter nor delay for any reason, for we certify to you that you would incur too great a burden toward us,[13] and you would learn this when you experience it in deed.[14]

Given in Barcelona under our secret seal, commanded,[15] on the 11th day of March of the year 1387. V[er?] de Ponte.[16]

[Address:] To our beloved mossèn Sanxo Martínez de Biota, counselor of the lord king and lieutenant of the governor in the Kingdom of Aragon.[17]

Footnotes

1. On Sanxo Martínez de Biota, see the preceding letter in this register. He served as portantveus de governador — that is, the lieutenant who exercised the functions of the governor general in the Kingdom of Aragon. The office carried broad judicial and administrative powers within the realm, subordinate to the crown.

2. The opening clause is syntactically dense and partially corrupt in both the initial transcription and the HTR. The overall sense is clear: the queen expresses amazement and indignation at the governor's delays. The exact phrasing between *moguda* and *desservey* — where both sources stumble — may contain an additional phrase qualifying the manner or extent of the governor's fault.
3. Borja and Magallón (modern Borja and Magallón, province of Zaragoza) are neighboring towns in the Aragonese comarca of Campo de Borja. The castle of Borja was a significant royal stronghold. That the queen sought to secure both places through a single agent suggests they formed a coordinated seigneurial or revenue unit within her dotal or patrimonial holdings.
4. Francesc ça Garriga: the queen's designated agent for receiving possession of Borja and Magallón. This is the same figure who appears in the preceding document regarding Magallón. The ça Garriga family was prominent in Catalan royal service.
5. *En de Canalies* (or *Canalias*): a named individual, apparently involved in collecting revenues at Borja and Magallón. The honorific *en* indicates minor nobility or burgess rank. The exact form of the surname is uncertain — *Canalies* and *Canalias* both appear. He seems to be a second agent, tasked specifically with receiving revenues and movable goods as distinct from ça Garriga's role in taking physical possession of the castle and towns.
6. The phrase *per en per dita via* is unclear in both sources. The sense appears to be "and likewise by the same means" or "and also through the said channel," referring to the revenues the governor has collected and retained.
7. *Maneres e rahons exquisides e colorades*: lit. "contrived and colored reasons and pretexts." The adjective *colorades* (colored, specious) is a legal term for arguments that have the appearance of validity but lack genuine substance. This is pointed chancery language — the queen is not merely disagreeing with the governor's justifications but characterizing them as legally fraudulent.
8. The verb governing *en menys preu* is uncertain in both sources. The clause structure requires a verb meaning "amounts to" or "is tantamount to" contempt. The reading *convé* is tentative. The overall meaning is clear: the governor's inaction constitutes contempt for royal commands.
9. *Semblants actes*: "such acts." Alternatively, the HTR suggested *desforç* (dispossession, acts of defiance), which would be more legally pointed. The manuscript is ambiguous.
10. The verb is difficult in both sources; the reading *reprenem* (we reprehend/reprove) is a reconstruction based on contextual sense and the later noun *reprehensió*. The queen's rhetorical structure is escalatory: first reprehension, then the threat of "harsh and severe correction."
11. *Pregam, volem e manam*: "we pray, wish, and command." A standard tripartite formula in Aragonese royal correspondence, arranged in ascending order of authority. Its use signals that the command carries the full weight of royal prerogative.
12. *En continent realment e de fet*: "immediately, really and in deed." Another standard chancery formula emphasizing that compliance must be actual and prompt, not merely nominal.

13. *Pendrets massa gran càrrech per a nós*: lit. "you would take on too great a burden toward us." The *càrrech* here carries the sense of culpability or liability — i.e., the governor would incur serious consequences and royal disfavor.
14. *Conexerets ço en smerets per obra*: lit. "you would know/learn this when you experience [it] through deed." The verb *smerets* is uncertain; it may be a form of *esmenar* (to amend/experience) or possibly *sentir* in a dialectal spelling. The threat is veiled but unmistakable: the consequences will be felt in practice, not merely in words.
15. *Sots nostre segell secret manat*: "under our secret seal, commanded." The use of the *segell secret* (secret seal, as opposed to the great seal) is typical for personal royal correspondence and mandates of this type.
16. *V[er?] de Ponte*: likely a scribal or notarial identifier. The name *de Ponte* (or *Deponte*) may identify the scribe or the official who authorized the dispatch. The initial letters remain uncertain.
17. The *portantveus de governador en lo regne d'Aragó* was the effective head of royal administration in the Kingdom of Aragon. The title literally means "he who carries the voice of the governor," i.e., the governor's lieutenant. In practice, the portantveus exercised the full powers of the governorship.

Unresolved Ambiguities

1. **Opening clause (f. 90v, line 1):** The exact phrasing between *moguda* and *desservey* remains unresolved. Both the initial transcription and the HTR stumble here, and the available readings (*ab axi en favor deu*, *de axi en faver dey forma*) do not parse cleanly. The overall sense — indignation at great disservice — is not in doubt.
2. **Verb governing *en menys preu* (f. 90v, mid-text):** The reading *convé* is conjectural. Neither *corney* (HTR) nor *cornen* (initial) is satisfactory. The syntactic function requires a verb meaning "amounts to" or "turns into."
3. **Verb in *per que reprenem vos* (f. 90v, mid-text):** Reconstructed from context and the cognate noun *reprehensió*. The manuscript letterforms are ambiguous; neither source's reading is fully secure.
4. **The phrase *per en per dita via* (f. 90v, line ~8):** Both sources give uncertain readings. The grammatical function is clear (introducing a parallel clause about revenues), but the exact wording is not.
5. **Gender of *maravellats* (f. 90v, line 1):** The masculine form *maravellats* appears in the HTR. One would expect the feminine *maravellades* given that the queen uses the royal *we*. However, masculine forms in the royal plural are not unattested when the chancery scribe defaults to conventional formulae. The manuscript reading is uncertain.
6. **Verb *smerets* in the closing threat (f. 91r):** Possibly *esmenar* (to amend), *sentir* (to feel/experience), or another form. The threat is clear in intent but the exact verb is not securely read.

7. **Chancery notation (f. 91r, right margin):** Partially legible. The formula appears to be an expediting note (*Domina Regina misit eam signatam. Expedit. P.*) but the abbreviations are not fully resolved. The initial *P.* likely identifies the expediting clerk.
8. ***Actes* vs. *desforç* (f. 90v):** Whether the queen accuses the governor of "such acts" generally or specifically of *desforç* (acts of dispossession/defiance) depends on a reading that neither source resolves with confidence.