

Queen Violant de Bar to Juan I of Castile (14 March 1387)

Document Summary

A letter from Queen Violant de Bar of Aragon to Juan I of Castile, addressed as "very dear and beloved brother." The queen acknowledges receipt of a communication delivered by the Castilian king's ambassadors — the Bishop of Osma and the Archdeacon of Treviño — who presented their credentials and conveyed certain requests to Joan I of Aragon on behalf of the Castilian crown. Violant responds that although both she and Joan I hold fraternal affection for the Castilian king and regard his interests as their own, the specific matters requested cannot be accomplished at present, for urgent reasons set out in a separate letter of response (*letra de responsiua*) from Joan I. The queen expresses regret that Joan I could not satisfy the Castilian king's wishes, and assures him of continued good will. She directs the addressee to his returning ambassadors for further details. The letter is dated at Barcelona, 14 March 1387, under the queen's secret seal.

Source: ACA, Cancillería (register number to be confirmed), ff. 95v–96r.

Scribe: Bartholomeus Siruent (Bartomeu Sirvent).

Reconciled Transcription

[f. 95v]

Rey muyt caro et muyt amado hermano. Nos la Reyna d'Aragon vos embiamos muyto a saludar como aquell por quien querriemos que diesse Dios tanta vida pau e honra quanta vos mismo querriedes. Sabet hermano muyt caro e muyt amado ~~struck-through-text~~ que recebimos la carta que nos embiastes por el honrado padre en xpõ el bispo d'Osme e l'archidiano de Trevinyo vros ambaixadores. E aquella entendida plenerament e la credença que de vra part nos han explicada los dictos ambaixadores muyt saviament e bien sobre las cosas que demandastes del senyor Rey marido e senyor nro muyt caro. Respondemos vos que iassia el dicto senyor e nos hayamos fraternal e cordial affeccion a vos muyt caro hermano e a vra casa e reputemos vros feytos nros propios e por consequent deseyemos sobiranament a vos complazer en todo lo que podiessemos. Empero las dictas cosas no se son podidas ne se puedan fazer a present por las razones necessarias e vrgentes posadas en la letra de responsiua del dicto senyor que vos embio sobre aquesto. El qual por que non ha podido satisfacer a vostro voler como volgre, roman no sines grand desplacer, e nos e no un menor. Assi hayades por firmo hermano muyt caro que en estos feytos e en todos otros tocante vra honra e el bien e prosperidat de vra casa entenda fazer el dicto senyor toda cosa a ell possibla. E nos otrossi entendemos todos tiempos promover aquellos e con el dicto senyor e en otra manera fazer lo que fariamos en nros

[f. 96r]

propios afferes. E sobre esto vos fablaran mas largament los dictos vros ambaixadores que s'en tornan a vos, ynformados mas plenament de nra intencion. E si otras cosas vos plazen que fer podamos embiat las nos dezir, e

nos complir lo hemos volenterosament. E sea todos tiempos guarda de vra la sancta Trinidad. Dada en Barcelona sub nro siello secreto acostumbrado a xiiij dias de Março del anno Mccclxxxvij. La Reyna.

Domina Regina ex premissis fiat littera / manu magistri Bartholomei Siruent / p.

Annotated English Translation

Most dear and most beloved brother-king.¹ We, the Queen of Aragon, send you warm greetings, as one for whom we would wish that God grant as much life, peace, and honor as you yourself would desire. Know, most dear and beloved brother, that we received the letter that you sent us by the honored father in Christ the Bishop of Osma² and the Archdeacon of Treviño,³ your ambassadors. And having fully understood that letter, and the credence⁴ that on your behalf the said ambassadors have most wisely and well set forth to us concerning the matters that you requested of the lord King, our very dear husband and lord — we respond to you that although the said lord and we bear fraternal and heartfelt affection toward you, most dear brother, and toward your house, and regard your affairs as our own, and consequently desire supremely to oblige you in all that we could, nevertheless the said matters have not been able to be accomplished, nor can they be accomplished at present, for the necessary and urgent reasons set forth in the letter of response⁵ from the said lord that he sends you concerning this. Because he has not been able to satisfy your wish as he would have wished, he remains not without great displeasure — and we with no less.⁶

Thus hold it as certain, most dear brother, that in these affairs and in all others touching your honor and the welfare and prosperity of your house, the said lord intends to do everything possible to him. And we likewise intend at all times to advance those [interests], both with the said lord and in other ways, doing what we would do in our own affairs. And on this matter the said your ambassadors, who are returning to you more fully informed of our intention, will speak to you at greater length.

And if there are other things that please you that we can do, send word to us, and we shall fulfil them willingly. And may the Holy Trinity be your guardian at all times. Given at Barcelona under our customary secret seal, on the fourteenth day of March in the year 1387.⁷ The Queen.

The lady Queen, having heard the foregoing, ordered the letter to be drawn up, by the hand of master Bartholomeus Siruent.⁸

Footnotes

Unresolved Ambiguities

1. **Struck-through text (f. 95v, line 4):** A line of text was canceled by the scribe before *que recebimos*. The underlying words have not been recovered from the manuscript images and would require examination of the original or enhanced imaging.

2. **Addressee identification:** The letter is addressed to a king styled as "brother" (*hermano*), and the ambassadors are Castilian ecclesiastics (Bishop of Osma, Archdeacon of Treviño). The most likely addressee is **Juan I of Castile** (r. 1379–1390). The specific "matters" (*cosas*) that Joan I was unable to grant remain unknown without the accompanying *letra de responsiua*; they may relate to the complex Castilian-Aragonese diplomatic agenda at the opening of Joan I's reign (the Western Schism, the Duke of Lancaster's claims, or bilateral territorial/dynastic questions).
3. **"roman":** Accepted on the basis of the researcher's direct paleographic reading as a form of *romanir/romandre* ("to remain"). This Aragonese form would benefit from confirmation against other attestations in the registers, as it is not among the most common verb forms in this chancery's output.
4. **"e no un menor":** The syntax is slightly unusual. The translation above reads *un menor* as "a lesser [one]" (i.e., "no lesser displeasure"). An alternative parsing — *e no en menor* ("and not in lesser [degree]") — would yield a similar sense but would require emending *un* to *en*. The researcher's reading *un* is retained.

1. The address "Rey muyt caro et muyt amado hermano" uses the conventional kinship formula between sovereigns of equal rank. The language of the letter is Aragonese — a Castilian-inflected register typical of the Aragonese royal chancery when corresponding with Castile — rather than the Catalan more commonly found in Violant's correspondence with Avignon or with subjects within the Crown of Aragon. ↩
2. The bishopric of Osma (Burgo de Osma), in Castile. The bishop at this date requires prosopographical confirmation; the see was sufficiently prominent to be a natural choice for a royal embassy. ↩
3. The archdeaconry of Treviño, a Castilian ecclesiastical jurisdiction. Together with the Bishop of Osma, these two Castilian churchmen constituted Juan I of Castile's embassy to the Aragonese court. ↩
4. *Credença*: the letter of credence presented by ambassadors authorizing them to speak on behalf of their principal and specifying the scope of their mandate. The term is standard in Aragonese diplomatic formulae. ↩
5. *Letra de responsiua*: a formal letter of response, here referring to a separate document from Joan I to Juan I of Castile addressing the substance of the Castilian requests. The present letter from Violant thus functions as a parallel, more personal communication accompanying Joan's official reply. ↩
6. The corrected reading of this passage is: *El qual por que non ha podido satisfer a vostro voler como volgre, roman no sines grand desplacer, e nos e no un menor*. The verb *satisfere* ("to satisfy") resolves the crux. *Volgre* is an Aragonese conditional of *voler* ("would wish/would have wished"). *Roman* is a form of *romanir/romandre* ("to remain"), yielding: "he remains not without great displeasure." The final clause — *e nos e no un menor* — means "and we [remain] with not a lesser [displeasure]," expressing the queen's solidarity with Joan I's regret at being unable to comply with the Castilian king's requests. ↩
7. 14 March 1387. The Aragonese chancery used the Nativity dating style (year beginning 25 December), so this date is straightforward: March 1387 falls within the same year in both the Nativity style and modern reckoning. Joan I had acceded to the throne on 5 January 1387 following the death of Pere III (IV), making this letter from the early weeks of the new reign. ↩

8. The scribal subscription follows standard chancery form: the queen audited (*audiuit*) the document and ordered it produced (*fiat littera*) through the hand of *magister* Bartholomeus Siruent (Bartomeu Sirvent). The abbreviation *p.* likely stands for *probata* or a similar validation mark. Sirvent appears to be a chancery scribe in Violant's household; further appearances of his name across the registers would help confirm his role and tenure. ↩