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## CONFERENCE REPORTS

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### *The 'Crown of Aragon' and the Mediterranean*

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1. As one of the organizers of the IXth Congress on the History of the Crown of Aragon, held in Naples (11th-15th April 1973), I should like to make a number of preliminary remarks before going on to give an account of proceedings of the Congress.<sup>1</sup>

In contrast to earlier Congresses (I am thinking mainly of those that have taken place since the war: Saragozza [1952], Majorca [1955], Cagliari [1957], Barcelona [1962], Valencia [1967], without going back to the first in 1908) which were open to free participation with no limitations on the nature or subject of contributions, the IXth Congress was based on one single theme — the Mediterranean unity of the Catalan - Aragonese, and Italian community. Rather than a theme this should perhaps be called a hypothesis which may, or may not, prove valid, and which might even have been discarded at the outset as methodologically incorrect or ill-founded. The title 'common

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<sup>1</sup> The programme of the Congress, with the title « La Corona d'Aragona e il Mediterraneo: aspetti e problemi comuni, da Alfonso il Magnanimo a Ferdinando il Cattolico (1416-1516) » was composed of two introductory papers, by E. PONTIERI, *Aragonesi di Spagna, Aragonesi di Napoli e gli stati italiani della seconda metà del '400*, and by A. MARONGIU, *Gli ultimi bagliori della monarchia aragonese*, and the following six papers which were accompanied by some eighty briefer communications: I. *L'organizzazione politico-amministrativa dei regni della Corona d'Aragona e il suo funzionamento*, given by F. UDINA and R. MOSCATI; II. *I parlamenti e le altre istituzioni rappresentative*, given by J. LALINDE; III. *L'area catalano-aragonese nel sistema economico del Mediterraneo occidentale*, given by F. MELIS; IV. *Le strutture sociali dei paesi della Corona d'Aragona: a) le feudalità*, given by A. BOSCOLO, b) *le città* (this paper was not given); V. *Elementi comuni nella cultura e nella spiritualità del mondo aragonese*, given by M. DE RIQUER and M. BATLLORI; VI. *La civiltà figurativa*, given by F. BOLOGNA.

aspects and problems' looked to a definition of the individual structures of the community which we defined here, but should these definitions not prove successful then the whole exercise might easily descend to a mere comparative examination of a virtually limitless range of local conditions. It would seem that the greatest problems faced social, cultural and art historians, as their political and legal colleagues would always be able to find some basis for the unity of the Aragonese lands in the unity of the dynasty and the empire. In terms of culture, society and economics, in fact, the various ties between the Aragonese lands certainly created a multiplicity of connections, both internal and external, — that is with the remainder of the Mediterranean and with Europe — but these do not necessarily constitute *common structures*. Again, there might be the tempting but dangerous possibility of examining those aspects which were apparent not only in the Aragonese territories, but were to be found throughout the Mediterranean — or anyway, throughout the western Mediterranean — and this, in fact, would imply searching for the 'spirit', or, as Braudel has called it, the 'rhythm' of the century, within the period bounded by the title.

To my mind the most important academic achievement of the Congress was the sustained attempt on the part of the participants — and, in particular, on the part of those giving papers — to provide some critical basis to the discussion of a proposition which initially might appear to be no more than ill-chosen.

The expansion of the Crown of Aragon which took place over a number of centuries culminated in 1442 with the conquest of the Kingdom of Naples, and so was confined to the Mediterranean basis. Given the considerable area controlled by the Kingdom it was natural that from that time on interest should be centred increasingly on Naples and on Alfonso the Magnanimous. Alfonso's 'Italian absenteeism', as Spanish historians have called his permanent residence in Naples, which left not only his consort Maria but the whole of Catalonia as well 'virtually a widow', quickly became a central theme for the poets of Alfonso's court.<sup>2</sup> This prolonged absence was the consequence of the new conquest and the possession of new and vast Italian territories, and has rightly been seen recently by Professor Jesus Lalinde as a major factor in the institutional development of the Aragonese Crown, in so far as it determined the development of the juridical concept of '*representación*', (that is, the representation and delegation of the king's powers), as well as the development of the offices of Lieutenant and Viceroy. It was this that allowed the greatest freedom and autonomy for the individual states

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<sup>2</sup> R. ARAMON I SERRA, *L'absència del «Magnanim» con a tema poetic* in «Actas y Comunicaciones» of the IVth Congress on the History of the Crown of Aragon (Mallorca 1955), II, Barcelona 1970, pp. 397-411; M. DE RIQUER, *Alfonso el Magnanimo visto por sus poetas*, in the collection «Estudios sobre Alfonso el M. con motivo del Quinto Centenario de su muerte», Barcelona 1960, pp. 175-96.

within the framework of the unity of the whole association. Although the origins were distant, unwritten and lay, I would say, in the genesis of the Aragonese Crown, it was now in the XVth century that its political organization had to respond to the imposing demands of ruling a Mediterranean empire.

The theme of the king's absence was to be transferred at the start of the XVIth century from Catalonia to Naples, and was to be transformed into the corresponding myth of the king's return — articulated by Tristano Caracciolo<sup>3</sup> — especially prior to the visit of Ferdinand the Catholic, when hopes grew in Naples that he would settle permanently in the city, as his uncle Alfonso had done 60 years earlier. Part of this myth was the idea that the presence of sovereign, of a natural king, was essential to the life of the State and the ordering of its primary function — that is, of administering justice. The Catalans' desire for justice, which had been accentuated by a fruitless wait of over 30 years, on one hand, and on the other the imagine, which we find in the writings of Neapolitan historians<sup>4</sup> of the period, of King Alfonso quelling a popular riot by virtue of his presence alone as he rode through the streets of the city, were both aspects of a still medieval concept of the king being in intimate contact with his people. It this conception which was now placed dramatically in conflict with the obligations and demands imposed by the unprecedented expansion of his empire and by the growing evolution of the organization of the State.

The debate over the nature of the union of the Aragonese states — which seemed to have been finally settled — was one again reopened by Professor Federico Udina. At this point one must observe that while legal historians have been content to describe the formal characteristics of personal union, a number of political historians have indicated the way in which the actions of the sovereign in practice in fact created new situations which no longer strictly corresponded to this conception, as, for example, when the king entrusted his officials with tasks which exceeded the bounds of their specified competence, in such a way as to make the ties between some of the component parts of the Crown of Aragon more real and substantial — in particular those between Naples and Sicily, which were at one time seen by Alfonso as forming the Kingdom « *de las dos Sicilias* » (of the Two Sicilies). A considerable debt is owed to Ruggero Moscati for making, some 20 years ago, the important distinction within the bureaucratic structure of Alfonso's empire between specific and general competencies, which opened the way for a type of research which has not yet been completely carried through.<sup>5</sup> It is highly significant

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<sup>3</sup> Especially in the *Epistola de statu civitatis* (MURATORI, RR. II. SS., XXII, p. 1<sup>a</sup>, Bologna 1925, p. 154).

<sup>4</sup> M. SCHIPA, *Contese sociali napoletane nel Medio evo*, Naples 1906, pp. 311-12; G. A. SUMMONTE, *Historia della città e regno di Napoli*, I (Naples 1675), p. 209.

<sup>5</sup> In addition to the well known essays by R. MOSCATI, *Ricerche sugli atti superstiti della cancelleria napoletana di Alfonso d'A.*, in « Riv. Stor. Ital. », LXV (1953), *Primo*

that the first of the offices with general competence extending throughout the empire — which were to remain unique — were those of the General Treasurer and the Guardian of the Royal Patrimony (as is known the Royal Patrimony included the personal possessions of the Crown, together with the profits derived from its own commercial enterprises, together with those of the State, without distinction). These offices derived from the financial needs associated with a Mediterranean policy. But the creation of these new offices would have had no value, given the extremely fragmented fiscal organization, with its individual and often conflicting variations from state to state, had there been no parallel accurate and efficient mercantile organization, by means of which the incomes from, for example, a *secrezia*, or a customs-house, or the hearth tax etc., in Valencia, or in Sicily, or in Aragona, might be immediately available wherever the king desired them by effecting a series of exchange operations. The war for the conquest of the Neapolitan kingdom led to the elaboration of this system, which was based on the exchange markets of Barcelona, Valencia, Palermo, and Naples and also tested it.

Among a range of possible examples I should like to suggest one which illustrates this mechanism that made the connection between political initiative and the changing, variable and frequently uncertain availability of finances operative; it is documented in an interesting memo in the Aragonese Chancery.<sup>6</sup> In February 1440 Alfonso, whose headquarters were at Gaeta, gave his secretary Battista Platamone who had been sent to Sicily as Viceroy, Vicar and Lieutenant, the task of collecting as much cash as possible from the citizens and clergy of Palermo on the security of the *secrezie*, the port revenues and other sums of revenue. As it was considered best that these revenues should remain available on the island for other urgent needs of the court, Alfonso instructed the Viceroy, the Warden of the Ports and the Treasurer in Sicily to provide personally the security for the full amount of the loans, which were to be repaid to the creditors, « *per viam cambiorum per dictum d. Johannem (Ixar) in partibus Aragonum* ».<sup>7</sup> In the same way the purchase

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*censimento di fonti aragonesi per la storia di Sicilia*, in « Studi medioevali in onore di A. Di Stefano », Palermo 1956, and especially *Nella burocrazia centrale di Alfonso d'A.: le cariche generali*, in « Studi in onore di R. Cessi », I (Rome 1958), p. 372, cf. the comprehensive study by A. J. RYDER, *The evolution of imperial government in Naples under Alfonso V*, in the collection « Europe in the later Middle Ages », London 1965, pp. 332-57.

<sup>6</sup> ARCHIVO DE LA CORONA DE ARAGÓN (=ACA), reg. 2935 cc. 119-22. This question will be treated by the present author in a study on Alfonso of Aragon and his Mediterranean empire. Here we anticipate the main lines of.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibidem*: « et ita concordantur cum vicerege et domino Johan de Ixar quod dictis mutuantibus obligent se predicti Vicerex dominus Johannes magister portulanus et Thesaurarius, nomine proprio, de solvendo omnem illam quantitatem mutuatam, infra certam dilacionem per dictum viceregem et dominum Johannem statuendam, per viam cambiorum per dictum dominum Johannem in partibus Aragonum, ut si redditus secre-

of 4,000 *salme* of grain which was needed for the military campaign was to be paid for with bills of exchange drawn on the Warden of the Port Johan de Ixar, and payable in Aragon six months after his arrival there.

In the April of the same year the king was informed of the great difficulty in finding money in Sicily and of the way in which the Viceroy had been able to raise only a certain sum, and this only as a result of pawning his own goods as security. This sum the procurator of the Royal Patrimony was in the process of forwarding to the king. But from the moment when the *secrezie* were no longer able to yield a further penny, and the ports had been tied up as securities for the whole year, the Viceroy had been forced to « *pendre a cambi los dits diners per a Cathalunya* »<sup>8</sup> (take in exchange these same dinars from Catalonia). Unsatisfied with these achievements, Alfonso again insisted that the Viceroy send him by ship up to 25,000 ducats, and in order that he might receive these as soon as possible he ordered « *ques poguessen pendre cambis per lo dit visrey e don Johan de Ixar pagadors en Barchelona o en Valencia* » ('that they might take bills on the said viceroy and don Johan de Ixar payable in Barcelona or Valencia') on the 50,000 florins received in the kingdom of Valencia from usury suits, and which were already in the hands of the secretary Pere Besalú. At the end of the operation, which was concluded relatively quickly, the king was able to state in reply to the complaints of the Sicilian Viceroy that the monies had in fact been given, not by Sicily, but by Aragon.<sup>9</sup>

On other occasions, however, things turned out differently, in such a way that at one moment Aragon, at another Sicily or Barcelona, and all the other parts of the empire all contributed in varying measure to the financial needs created by Alfonso's policy.

In 1446 the Councillors of Barcelona denounced the harm which Catalonia suffered as a result of the exchange system, which suited the demands created by Alfonso's policy but which also damaged the country. They complained that « due to a continual haemorrhage of monies, this land is then left without any, and in the opinion of the experts this is due to the large

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*ciarum portuum obligandorum ut supra possint converti in succursum aliarum necessitatum regiarum et curie domini, quem reputat ad maximum servitium quod pecunie Aragonum per istam viam anticipentur in tempore* ».

<sup>8</sup> ACA reg. 2935, c. 129: « fou informat mes anant lo dit senyor, per lo dit conservador per part del dit visrey, dela gran pobretat e difficultat que diu esser en lo dit regne de Sicilia de trobar diners, e ab quanta fatiga lo dit visrey segon diu ab lo seu sols credit ha trobat la peccunia quel dit conservador porta al dit Senyor ala qual diu se es obligat lo dit visrey en nom propri, com deles secrecies nos puxa haver hun diner e los ports siens obligats per tot lo present any e que per ço es stat necessari pendre a cambi los dits diners per a Cathalunya ».

<sup>9</sup> *Ibidem* c. 130: « e que lo dit visrey tansolament haia trames Xm. ducats es ne lo dit Senyor molt meravellat, maiorment com aquells en veritat se puxa dir esser diners procehits de Arago e no de Sicilia ».

and quite unorganized number of exchange operations which are effected with no recourse even to hard cash. And these same experts believe that, were the payments and liquidations of all foreign exchanges effected by the City's *Taula del Cambi* and in no other Bank nor in any other way, then these exchanges would be moderated and regulated, and in consequence, gold and silver from foreign lands would begin to flow in, so that the Mint would be able to strike coin and the country might escape from the storm into which it has been plunged by the monetary heamorrhage ».<sup>10</sup>

The seriousness of the Councillors' proposal, due to its far-reaching political and financial implications, can be measured by the reaction of Queen Maria. Although well aware that the Kingdom of Aragon paid a great deal and that none of this remained within the country because the King's Treasurer, Perot Mercader, removed it all in the process of exchange transactions, she added that the proposed reform would be « most prejudicial and harmful to the king, for the bills of exchange to be paid on his account, which are presented at the office of Jacme de Casasage (one of the king's bankers), that the same proposal would be contrary to mercantile custom and practice, and that, in the queen's opinion, it would be contrary to the constitution of Catalonia ».<sup>11</sup>

In the light of such factors it is possible to explain the nature of the balance of payments between Barcelona and Naples during the reign of Alfonso; while on one hand the commercial balance largely favoured Barcelona, due to the export of cloth in particular, no other Catalan trading partner received so many Catalan bills of exchange as Naples. The bills of exchange, together with mercantile bills for marine insurance and cargo insurance, played an important role in the relations between Barcelona and Naples. Since these currency operations, just like other goods, were also insured, one cannot simply explain the phenomenon in terms of the problems created by the division of risks, or in terms of the particular uncertainty or danger of shipping on this route. But it is also quite clear that the maritime exchange

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<sup>10</sup> ARCHIVO HISTORICO DE LA CIUDAD DE BARCELONA, *Registre de Deliberacions*, vol. 4, cc. 5<sup>v</sup>-6: « per la evacuacio continua quis fa deles monedes, aquesta terra romandra sens aquelles, e segons opinio dels intelligents son ne causa los cambis quis fan en grand nombre e desordonadament e sens intervencio de pecunias, e crehen los dits intelligents que si los pagaments e deliurances de tots los cambis eren fetes e fets en la taula del cambi dela Ciutat, e no en altra taula ni en altre forma, los dits cambis serian areglats e moderats, e per consequent hic seria aportat or a argent de parts estranyes, e en aquesta forma batria la seca e respiraria aquesta patria dela tempesta en que es per la evacuacio deles dites monedes... ».

<sup>11</sup> *Ibidem*, c. 6: « seria a gran desservey e dan del senyor Rey per los cambis ques han apagar per lo dit Senyor, qui son consignats ala taula den Jacme de Casasage, e que la dita ordinacio seria contra us e practica dels negocis mercantivols (...), e encara, segons ala dita senyora es stat dit, seria contra constitucions de Cathalunya ».

operation is essentially a form of credit, as it is clear that the flow of bills of exchange towards Naples was essentially a flow of cash — there was in fact a monetary current which flowed towards the capital of the kingdom, which was quite independent of trade balances, but which is explicable in political and financial terms. Catalan merchants and ship-owners arriving in Naples were all engaged with the court, to whose financial requirements they responded to varying degrees but with equal alacrity.<sup>12</sup>

In his paper on economic aspects Federigo Melis, distinguished — in the sort of analytical reconstruction marked by breadth of vision and concreteness of documentation to which the author has now made us accustomed, — a central nucleus in the Catalan-Aragonese economic sphere formed by the Barcelona-Majorca-Valencia triangle, which provided the fulcrum for the entire system of mercantile banking and generally of commercial relations for the whole world, as it then existed. Acting as a hinge this triangle drew together the various centres of the Mediterranean and the North Sea and provided technical and practical uniformity for operations conducted in such disparate area as Andalusia, Brittany, England etc. This system, which was to last until the decisive change brought about by the geographical discoveries took place, was built up by Catalan merchants but also, one should add at once, by Florentine, Genoese and Venetian businessmen. Within the triangle it is possible to distinguish a number of different functions: Barcelona was the controlling and clearing market, while Majorca and Valencia were markets for conducting normal business. There were also three basic trading axes: Majorca-Maghreb, Valencia-Flanders, Barcelona-Tuscany.

This system was only in part the cause, however, of the way in which the economic activity of the Aragonese Crown was effected. The triangle is also, for other reasons, closely tied to the Italian peninsula and its island for both political and economic reasons. Were we to attempt to identify the developmental mechanism — as it is now called — of the Crown of Aragon, and deduce from it a model which would be valid for the century in question, as possibly also for the previous century, we should then find this in the '*bisectoral*' nature of the system, which included an industrial sector, comprising the 'western kingdoms' (or, more accurately, their cities) and an agricultural sector, comprising the Italian kingdoms (Naples, Sicily and Sardinia). I should not have emphasized this point were it simply derived from fashionable modern writing on economics (in which case the finding would hardly have been original), but I have done so because King Alfonso the Magnanimous himself was aware precisely of this factor, and, in fact, organized his economic policy in conformity with it. A first example of this occurs during the conquest of the Neapolitan kingdom, with regard to the function of

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<sup>12</sup> M. DEL TREPPO, *I mercanti catalani e l'espansione della Corona d'Aragona nel secolo XV*, Naples 1972<sup>2</sup>, p. 219 seq.

Gaeta,<sup>13</sup> and the second in an even more explicit and informative context. From 1449, in fact, the king drew up an economic programme based on the following four points:<sup>14</sup>

1) Prohibition on the import of foreign worked woollen cloths into the lands of the Crown of Aragon,

2) All subjects of the Crown were obliged to use only national shipping,

3) An enormous increase in investment in ship-building — especially the building of ships over 1,000 *barrels* capacity — and a resulting policy of limiting charter rates,

4) The prohibition for the 'Western kingdoms' from obtained supplies of grain and other agricultural products in France and Castile, and a parallel obligation to import them exclusively from Sicily, Sardinia and Naples.

In December 1451, when the project was put into effect, the king wrote to his consort Maria, who was his Lieutenant in Catalonia, emphasizing the « mutual and reciprocal trade and exchange in basic necessities of life. That means that for the general benefit of all our kingdoms and lands, the kingdom 'on this side' (of the Tirrenian sea) — that is, Naples, Sicily and Sardinia — take woollen cloths from the 'beyond' kingdoms alone — from Catalonia etc. — where they are abundant, while the 'beyond' kingdoms, which are provisioned almost entirely from abroad, take their grain exclusively from the South Italian kingdoms, when it is abundant and cheap ».<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> DEL TREPPO, *op. cit.*, p. 593, where reference is made to the king's considerations over Gaeta « ciutat notable, port singular e famos en tota Italia, vesi a Roma e a son patrimoni e a moltes parts altres, e scala principal en Italia de mercaderia » ('that notable city, with its unique port famous throughout Italy, close at hand to Rome and to the Patrimony of the Church, and to many other regions too, as well as being one of the leading ports for Italian commerce') as well as those over the conquest of the kingdom: « obtengut el Realme, deven (the catalans) pensar quanta mercaderia hix de aquell, quanta sen desempatxa de sos Regnes dalli » 'Having obtained the kingdom, the Catalans must consider the volume of trade which leavers its shores, and also the number of goods that are imported there from the higher Kingdoms', that is from Catalonia particularly).

<sup>14</sup> DEL TREPPO, *op. cit.*, p. 602 seq.

<sup>15</sup> Cited in DEL TREPPO, p. 603: « los regnes e terres de Ponent, quant aquests que en aquestes parts possehim (...) porien usar de una mutua e reciproca contractacio e comerci deles coses al us de la vida principalment necessaries: ço es que per benefici de tots los dits regnes e terres nostres, lo regnes deça prenguessen de aquells dalla, e no de altra part, draps de lana, dels quals habunden, e aquests dalla, que se proveexen quasi en tot de fora de aqueixos regnes e terres prenguessen dels daça, e no de altra part, los forments que haurien mester, puys aquests ne abunden e a gran mercat ».

In his communication on *Le blé de Sicile dans l'économie méditerranéenne au XV<sup>e</sup> siècle* M. Aymard stressed the strengthening of a colonial commercial infra-structure during the century in Sicily. As regards the colonial character of the Sardinian economy, which was totally subordinated to Barcelona and Catalonia, it is sufficient to point out that the Catalans who went there to fish coral took all the equipment they needed from home, including even their wine, and that while Catalan ships bound for the Levant stopped

Beyond political unity, however, which was created in a number of particular ways, and beyond economic integration which presupposed differences rather than similarities both in structure and development, is it possible to ascertain any cultural and social unities among these lands?

The various countries belonging to the Crown showed above all else major structural differences in social organization which derived from their individual histories in periods prior to that which concerns us here. Barcelona, Perpignan, Valencia and Majorca, with their strong mercantile and urban middle classes, and with the political importance of their urban patricians, although not city states like the Italian republics, gave the Crown of Aragon, in its Iberian area, the character of a 'state of cities'.<sup>16</sup> This was hardly the case in the lands on the Italian peninsula and the islands, where political hegemony was held by the barons and where even in the largest city, Naples, the powerful citizen patricians were essentially aristocratic and feudal, being the so-called 'nobiltà di seggio'. They lived on the proceeds from land and the exercise of arms, both at home and abroad, enjoyed feudal jurisdiction in the areas surrounding the capital and increasingly in the provinces as well, and differed in no way from the barons, with whom they were closely related, except for the fact that they lived in the city.

As a result feudalism existed in varying degrees in each of the kingdoms, and in each was organized differently. The Neapolitan, and perhaps also the Sicilian baronage was the most compact, while the Catalan and Aragonese had the greatest internal variation and subdivision, seen for example in the peculiar distinction between the knights and *donzells*, on one side, and the *grandees* and barons, on the other. In his paper Alberto Boscolo illustrated in particular the juridical differences between the various forms of feudalism in the Aragonese dominions, with the various *mos Hispanie*, *mos Italie*, and *mos Sardinie*, differences which also implied differing relations with the Crown. Although he did not neglect to examine the possibility of differing economic attitudes and social influence, unfortunately he mentioned only briefly the problem (which really is a problem common in the Crown of Aragon) of the spread of the Catalan and Aragonese feudal families to the Italian islands and to Naples. A number of young French and Catalan scholars have already provided some clear answers to some of the questions he posed, in examining systematically the problem of the economic and social function of feudalism in Sicily and Catalonia.<sup>17</sup>

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at Alghero to load coral, on their return they did not stop at Sardinian ports. Spices and other imports were distributed through the good offices of Barcelona: see DEL TREPPO, *op. cit.*, pp. 53, 172.

<sup>16</sup> The inspiration for this definition comes from P. VILAR, *La Catalogne dans l'Espagne moderne. Recherches sur les fondements économiques des structures nationales*, Paris 1962, vol. I, p. 446.

<sup>17</sup> The following communications, together with that by Aymard mentioned above, were of interest: H. BRESCH, *La féodalité sicilienne (1392-1507)*; A. CONDE, J. E. RUIZ

In Sicily during the XVth century there was increasing fragmentation and mobility of feudal land, which passed from hand to hand either due to alienations, in the form of dowries, or, in some 12% of the cases, in straight purchase transactions. Entire feudal patrimonies passed into the hands of new merchant families, state officials and the urban middle class. The penetration of mercantile capital into the countryside together with the economic problems by which the nobility were beset, due to their extravagance and indebtedness, brought about the emergence of enterpreneurial activities, in which the nobility also participated, in the administration of cereal, sugar, and live stock farms (*masserie*). Over all, feudalism remained strong and strengthened the pressure on its vassals by restoring feudal rights and vilenage which had disappeared during the XIVth century. The growth of cereal production, which was stimulated by foreign demand, led to a rapid rise in landed rents after 1450.

In Catalonia the fall in feudal rents (*censi*), as well as economic difficulties, encouraged the nobles to strengthen the juridical and feudal organization of their extensive holdings and so to reject any transformation in agrarian organization. But even here certain changes were effected by the appearance of urban capital, notably the introduction of plants yielding dye-stuffs, saffron etc., which were more and more in demand from the growing urban industries.

Even Neapolitan feudalism took part in the various initiatives in the agricultural field, and did not limit itself simply to exacting *terraggi*, and other feudal dues. Direct administration was increasing, assisted by the recruitment of salaried labour, as is seen in the fruit farms of the Prince of Taranto, or on the property of Count Gesualdo di Conza in an area which was quite cut off from the Appennines. But it is best seen in the cereal producing areas of Capitanata, where the Della Marra and Carafa families, both *nobili di seggio*, formed, in conjunction with working - bailiffs, « field companies » (*compagnie di campo*), that is, commercial organizations for farming their extensive properties.<sup>18</sup>

It is worth mentioning, however, that the Neapolitan barons did not succeed in extending their control over agricultural production to include more purely commercial aspects, such as the ports and wholesale depots (*caricatori*), in which the Sicilian barons, on the other hand, had had an interest for some time. This shows clearly the absence of what one might call sea-going aspirations which had always been so strong amongst the Sicilian and Catalan barons, and which were illustrated in the second half of the XVth

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DOMENEC, A. UDINA, *Los problemas fundamentales del sistema de produccion feudal catalan en la baja Edad Media*; J.P. CUVILLER, *Noblesse sicilienne et noblesse aragonaise en 1392-1408. Collusions et rivalités de deux groupes de privilégiés, d'après les registres Tractarum (2104 et n. 2324) de l'Archivo de la Corona de Aragón.*

<sup>18</sup> For all this I would refer the reader to my book which is at present in the press: *Aspetti dell'agricoltura pugliese nel Medioevo: le masserie della Capitanata.*

century by their increasing tendency to invest in ships and shipping. With increasing frequency the *nau* of the Count of Modica, Bernardo Giovanni Cabrera was to be found on the Mediterranean shipping routes making voyages to Sicily, Rhodes, Alexandria, while the galley of the Valencian Francesc Gilabert Centelles, Count of Oliya travelled to Naples and Sardinia, the *nau* and the galleass of Joan Roiz de Corella, Count of Cocentaina and governor of the Kingdom of Valencia, made voyages to Flanders and Cagliari. The galley and galliot of Joan Ramon Folc III, Count of Cardona and Prades, voyaged to Marseilles and Palermo, the galleys of the Catalan Galceran de Requesens, who, from 1465, was Count of Trivento, travelled to Alghero; among these there was also the galley of the Neapolitan Guglielmo Sanseverino, Count of Capaccio, which made a voyage from Barcelona to Naples in 1485.<sup>19</sup>

The existence of slavery in various degrees also helps to indicate the differences between the social structures of the various lands of the Crown. By analysing the cargoes of the ships which plied the Mediterranean and the contracts which the Mediterranean merchants undertook, we might conclude that there was a very extensive slave trade, what Professor Verlinden has vividly described as a pan-Mediterranean trade. But if one examines their destination and use, it must be concluded that in the majority of cases these were essentially domestic slaves, — used in the Aragonese lands, as in Genoa, Florence and Venice, — or else slaves used for Court services, and perhaps also in the arsenals. Only Majorca, and to some extent Valencia, developed any form of slave economy by using this form of labour in large quantities to work in the fields.<sup>20</sup> The agricultural economy of Naples, Sicily and Catalonia was characterized by other forms of land tenancy — share cropping (*colonia parziaria*), vileyage, agricultural wage earners and even, although this was rare, enforced labour service, — but completely excluded the use of slaves, be they Circassians, Bulgars or Moors.

But in this line of enquiry it would be extremely difficult to discover any unity within the social structures of the various lands of the Aragonese Crown and of their development, except over a very long period which would extend beyond the limits of the XVth century set by the Congress. It would be necessary, then, to settle for less fundamental topics of inquiry, and to give some consideration to more superficial developments. I should like, however, to take the opportunity to suggest that one should look in a different direction in order to discover the elements which are perhaps unique to this century,

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<sup>19</sup> See the documents in my *I mercanti catalani etc.*, Appendix I and II.

<sup>20</sup> In addition to the fine communication made by C. VERLINDEN, *I paesi della Corona di Aragona e la tratta panmediterranea nel Quattrocento*, there were also those of L. PILES ROS, *La Esclavitud en Valencia (1400-1425)* and of CORTES ALONSO, *La esclavitud en Valencia durante el reinado de Alfonso V: licencias a esclavos liberados para volver a los reinos musulmanos*.

and in particular to Catalan-Aragonese society — elements which are to be found throughout the Mediterranean and which indicate a number of social factors which were themselves capable of acting as vehicles for transmitting cultural values.

2. Within the structure of societies which were largely static and dominated by feudal baronages, on one hand, and urban patricians, on the other, the emergence of two social groups, during the period between the reigns of Alfonso the Magnanimous and Ferdinand the Catholic, should be noted in particular. Neither group was of recent formation, but it was only in this period, in the circumstances of Aragonese expansion, that they were able to express fully both their capacity to show initiative and also their essentially Mediterranean interests: they were the merchants and the knights, the former in opposition to the urban patricians, the *ciudadans honrats*, and the latter in opposition to the great feudatories.

The XVth century was filled with knights and knights errant, both in the Principality of Catalonia and, even more so, in the kingdom of Valencia. Of this such invaluable documents as challenges to combat, challenges to duels etc., the publication and interpretation of which owes to much to the intelligence and outstanding sensitivity of M. de Riquer bear incontrovertible evidence.<sup>21</sup> These documents bear witness to a chivalric nostalgia, to furious yearnings for vendetta and death, to attitudes which range from the overweening to the compassionate, in an atmosphere which can only be described by the famous but much abused title of Huizinga's book.

Even chivalric romances, which are quite denied the elements of fantasy and marvel which typify French and Castilian romance, make constant appeal to historical and social reality against which the characters, who always remain to some degree human, can quite easily be set.

But these knights who journeyed through the world in search of adventure, competing in tournaments, imposing on themselves sacrifices and pledges to overcome hazardous trials which so often ended tragically in the '*passos d'armes*', do not represent a merely marginal and picturesque section of life, but point to a precise and fundamental social structure of the period. France, as a result of the attraction of its literary traditions, and also of the conditions caused by the Hundred Years War, together with England, Granada and Ceuta, were the favoured destination of the Catalan and Valencian knights while in turn Catalonia and Valencia themselves attracted the knights of other lands, Burgundians, Germans etc.

It was Alfonso V's Neapolitan venture, however, that provided a fresh outlet and a new attractive destination for the knight errant. Joanot Martorell,

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<sup>21</sup> For M. DE RIQUER, in addition to the references in his paper *v. Historia de la Literatura catalana*, II, Barcelona 1964, pp. 575-723, and *Letres de batalla*, I, Barcelona 1963 (in the series « Els Nostres Classics »).

author of *Tirant lo Blanc*, provides an illustration of this. A knight himself, and one quick to throw down the gauntlet, he received in 1442 a provocative challenge to single combat from a youth who was obviously hoping to gain a measure of publicity for himself by challenging so famous a knight. But, as he had little inclination to involve himself in an affair from which he had little to gain, Martorell replied to his insolent challenger that, if he was aching to use his sword, much the best thing would be to go to Naples and place himself at the service of the king who was fighting rebels there.<sup>22</sup>

But the king's service was not really the same thing, and in Italy fighting in one of the well organized companies of arms must have offered little opportunity for chivalric imaginations. The hero of Martorell's romance is himself transformed as he moves further and further away from the misty lands of the north into the world of the Mediterranean, from a knight errant into a disciplined soldier and wary strategist (a type such as Bernat Vilamari, the Aragonese admiral), as Riquer rightly pointed out. More suited to the restless spirit of adventure was the privateering, which provided a real extension of knight errantry. In this sense Alfonso's Mediterranean venture provided a totally unexpected opportunity and a whole host of new possibilities, not least of which was the conversion of the knight errant, turned privateer finally into merchant and ship-owner. An indicative example is provided by the career of four knights errant who took part in Spain, in July and August 1434, in the most famous of those obligatory competitions in which the skill and valour of men at arms were tested, the '*passo honroso*'.<sup>23</sup> Among them Bernat de Requesens, the brother of Galceran, at that time bailiff of Catalonia, held a series of public and military posts (he was an admiral in Alfonso's service during the 1440s), but the activity he preferred above all was privateering and, with the armed galley provided by the *Generalitat* of Catalonia, it was no rare occurrence that he turned on those he was supposed to be protecting, extorting money from the merchants, and blackmailing the authorities. Rimbau de Corbera was also a privateer in Alfonso's service, and in 1438 captured a fine Genoese vessel of which remained the main share-holder for several years, in partnership with a group of Barcelona merchants, and carried grain from Sicily to Naples. Francí dez Valls was an authentic knight errant, and even prior to the '*passo honroso*' had taken part in a similar affair, a trial of single combat at Ceuta. When the war for Naples began he followed Alfonso, but after the disaster at Ponza was captured by the Genoese. He reappeared in 1451 as '*conseller, cambrer e capità*' of the king, in command of two royal galleasses which were engaged in that year in a series of lengthy commercial voyages, leaving from Palermo and calling at the ports of the Iberian peninsula then continuing up Sluys

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<sup>22</sup> DE RIQUER, *Literatura catalana*, II, p. 640.

<sup>23</sup> *Op. cit.*, p. 585.

and Southampton. As for the last of the four, there is some difficulty in identifying him with the Joan de Camós who in 1445 appeared as commander of a large galley from Barcelona, voyaging to the Levant, who was described as 'ciutada' (citizen) in the notarial deed.<sup>24</sup>

Among such knights, however, a certain number emerge who alternated military and privateering ventures with commercial voyages and trading speculation, often having political or administrative careers at the same time. I myself have been able to follow the interesting career of the 'cavaller' Joan Sabastida d'Hostalric.<sup>25</sup> On the Mediterranean routes, from the mid-century (and this precise dating could be important), vessels belonging to knights such as Bernat Saplana, Galceran de Requesens, the Valencian Siscar, Simonot de Bellprat<sup>26</sup> and of course Sabastida were often to be found, and alongside them ships of varying sizes and often highly suspect purposes which were said to belong to monks, abbeys, clerics and bishops.<sup>27</sup>

The war and the Mediterranean venture brought about a closer contact between knights and merchants, and the practicalities of business conquered even these restless and adventurous men at arms, so that the commercial company Sanchiz-Carriera established at Barcelona in 1494 and in operation until 1504, made up of some 20 share holders, for the most part *cavallers* and *donzells*, can no longer be an object of surprise.<sup>28</sup>

The contact between these two groups tended to lead to the formation of common attitudes and life styles which also had much in common within the framework of society in the period. The knights' traditional hostility towards the townsmen, who were trained in letters and who believed that all differences could be settled with a written codicil, can be found expressed in the famous combat between the lawyer Gabriel Ferruç and the knight Guerau Massanet,<sup>29</sup> and still led to a number of similar disputes. But in my opinion these were mainly external attitudes, mere expressions and conventions, which were believed less and less. In other words, although they scorned them in their speech, these knights had recourse increasingly to lawyers and notaries to regulate their own quarrels, which they did not always chose to settle by the sword. Fiery letters of 'deseiximent' (challenge) were employed as weapons of blackmail to extort money, and the arbiters between contestants were not always barons or sovereigns, but also notaries. Joannot Martorell received as a reply from a baron, whom he had challenged over

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<sup>24</sup> To identify these figures see the name index of my *Mercanti catalani etc.*, and M. DE RIQUER, *Cavalleria fra realtà e letteratura nel Quattrocento*, Bari 1970, pp. 188-197.

<sup>25</sup> DEL TREPPO, *op. cit.*, pp. 757-827.

<sup>26</sup> His biography is in L. VOLPICELLA, *Regis Ferdinandi primi Instructionum Liber*, Naples 1916, p. 280.

<sup>27</sup> DEL TREPPO, *op. cit.*, index and appendices I-II.

<sup>28</sup> *Op. cit.*, p. 824.

<sup>29</sup> DE RIQUER, *Gabriel Ferruç y Guerau de Massanet. Poetas catalanos del siglo XV*, Castellon de la Plana, 1951.

boldly, « jo no vull veure sa lletra de batalla ne menys accepte aquella »<sup>30</sup> (' I do not wish to see your challenge to combat, nor do I accept it '), a reply which would seem to be taken directly from a notarial protocol, as was used, for example, by merchants when stating, in good or bad faith, that they did not wish to honour their debts, when the notary would write on their behalf: « responch que no vull acceptar la dita letra de cambi ne al temps pagar, pertant com nol conech ne tench res del seu ».<sup>31</sup>

Vastly more important and decisive in terms of the nascent structure of the Mediterranean empire than the activity of the knights, however, was that of the Catalan merchants, in that their presence in political, administrative and social terms gave them a quite unique character. Their operation, commercial customs and methods, and technical vocabulary, together with the legal code of the *Consulate of the Sea*, which was so comprehensive, well articulated, and easily adopted, as its success indicates, meant that the Catalan merchants constituted a unifying factor in the Mediterranean which was of greater importance even than the political factor represented by the Crown itself.<sup>32</sup>

Guy Romestan<sup>33</sup> has made an important contribution to the study of the function of Alfonso V's bankers, in identifying a powerful group of Perpignan financiers, Bertran Crexells, Thomas Taquí, Francesco Gíginta, as the backers of his ventures. One could add others to these, such as the Della Cavalleria, the Jews of Saragossa, Baldasar Torrella, Pere Cimart, the Barqueres etc. But I will not go beyond repeating an impression which I have always had, and that is that if during Afonso's first and second Neapolitan expeditions Florentine and Italian banks provided considerable assistance, (from the accounts of the Neapolitan treasury for 1440-41 and the records of the Aragonese Chancery emerge the names of the Rucellai, Medici, Mannelli and especially Guizzo de Lico della Casa and Francesco di Antonio di Bertolino), after the conquest this role declined, and after 1447 it was completely removed, as a result of Alfonso's deliberate policy of giving the merchants and bankers of his native landfree rein in the Neapolitan kingdom. However,

<sup>30</sup> DE RIQUER, *Literatura catalana*, cited p. 645.

<sup>31</sup> « I reply that I do not wish to accept the said bill of exchange nor pay on its expiry, as I do not know him or hold any of his goods ».

<sup>32</sup> The penetration of their commercial methods probably did not go beyond the Maghreb, as the communication by CH.-EMMANUEL DUFOURCO, *La continuité des activités catalano-aragonaises dans les Etats musulmans méditerranéens, d'Alphonse le Magnanime à Ferdinand le Catholique*, would suggest, but a number of their commercial expressions penetrated the Christian area, even in areas which were hardly favourable, being more technically and culturally advanced. It is interesting that in the Strozzi record books of the mid-century one finds Catalan expressions written in a Florentine hand, such as *bistrare* (from the Catalan *bestreure*, to advance money) and *traginiere* (from the Catalan *traginer*, a porter).

<sup>33</sup> *Les hommes d'affaires de Perpignan dans le Royaume de Naples à l'époque d'Alphonse le Magnanime*.

after the separation of the Neapolitan kingdom from the Crown of Aragon, the Catalan merchants maintained their position in Naples, and continued to act as principle financiers for Ferrante, as cases of Galceran Martí, the Besalú and the De Parets show.<sup>34</sup>

It should be noted however that if Alfonso intended to reduce and finally eliminated a force such as the Florentine bank, which had always influenced the monarchy of the Mezzogiorno, his attitude towards the southern financiers was quite different — he sought their collaboration and in a number of ways promoted their fortunes. Around the sovereign then, and the complex multi-state Mediterranean system of which he was head, there was formed a group of major businessmen and merchant bankers of various national origins, who came to be the real connective tissue of the system. In addition to the Catalan names which have been mentioned, there were the Neapolitans Miroballo, the Sicilians Settimo and Abbatellis, the Pisan citizen of Palermo Pietro Gaetano, the Cotrugli from Ragusa etc. Their mutual relations, and the contacts which each maintained at the same time with Naples, Palermo, Barcelona, and Valencia, constituted a factor of major importance within the Aragonese community, and is an element of that community which really was common to the society of all those lands.

Their economic and social ascendancy was a repetition of a well known paradigm: (a) commercial activity, leading to financial transactions with the Crown at moments of particular difficulty for the latter (i.e. budgetary problems, wars etc.); (b) '*familiaritas*', that is, highly personal and intimate relations with the sovereign, leading to important posts in the administration; (c) social promotion, on concession of the '*militia*' (soldierly status), and consolidation of their own wealth through purchase of feudal lands and jurisdictions.

When Alfonso came to Naples in 1443 Giovanni Miroballo was a merchant and member of the *piazza degli Armieri*, one of the wards into which the *Università del Popolo*<sup>35</sup> was divided, and as captain of the ward he contributed to the cost of the triumphal procession. By 1444 he was administrator of the customs of Naples, and, after having assisted the Crown on numerous occasions with loans, was to see the bank which he had established in Naples with his son Alberico, conceded in 1448 the functions of treasury of the State and repository of taxes, together with the bank of Pere Cimart.<sup>36</sup> From then on the financial history of the Aragonese monarchy coincided with that of the Miroballo bank, which is why it is such a disaster that no fragment even of its accounts has survived.

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<sup>34</sup> DEL TREPPO, *op. cit.*, p. 256 seq.

<sup>35</sup> SUMMONTE, *op. cit.*, III, p. 7.

<sup>36</sup> P. GENTILE, *Lo stato napoletano sotto Alfonso I d'Aragona*, in « Arch. Stor. Nap. », LXII (1937), p. 29.

Business progressed well, and the bank opened a branch in Palermo: the exchange operations conducted between the two were very frequent. Meanwhile Miroballo became the chief accountant to the *Camera della Sommaria* (in Sicily at the same time the post of accountant was held by another banker, Abbatellis), and received, probably in 1451, the title of militia, while in the following year he was invested by the king with the important township of Viesti in Puglia, together with Lettere, Gragnano and Positano in Campania, while hundreds of vassals took oaths of fealty to him; other feudal lands he purchased from the Countess of Sanseverino. He ended his career as president of the *Sommaria* and, after 1459, as master of the Royal Mint.<sup>37</sup> A brother, Geronimo, doctor *in utroque* was President of the *Sommaria* under Alfonso (1447), and a collateral official of the most important judicial organ, the *Sacro Regio Consiglio*, in 1449.<sup>38</sup> His sons Alberico, who died before his father, and Carlo were bankers; the latter directed the agency at Palermo, and was also a ship-owner, having a fine galeass which carried his name and plied between Barcelona, Naples and Sicily.<sup>39</sup> Antonio, like his father, was Master of the Mint in Naples, and then royal commissar, governor and viceroy of the Principality; he married a Sanseverino, daughter of the Count of Lauria.<sup>40</sup> The family's rise, which was achieved on the basis of Giovanni Miroballo's fortune, was concluded by its inclusion in one of the quarters ('*seggi*') of the Neapolitan nobility.<sup>41</sup>

It was Sicily rather than Naples, however, that witnessed a growing strength within the feudal world of the mercantile class, and also the transfer in its hands of important baronial possessions and incomes. « The barons of Sicily — the Viceroy wrote to Alfonso in 1453 — are not sufficiently well off to be able to make advances on the taxes; but the Catalan merchant Bernat Oliver will do this on their behalf ».<sup>42</sup> Giovanni Cabrera, the Count of Modica, who was forced to lend the king 30,000 ducats, had to draw up a contract with the Perpignan merchant Thomas Taquí and hand over to him the *secrezia* of Modica-Ragusa, as well as pawn the grain depôt

<sup>37</sup> A. SILVESTRI, *Sull'attività bancaria napoletana durante il periodo aragonese*, Naples 1953, p. 14; *Regesto della Cancelleria aragonese di Napoli*, ed. by J. Mazzoleni, Naples 1951, pp. 2, 7; *Fonti aragonesi*, ed. by the Neapolitan archivists, volume III, Naples 1963, p. 22; ACA, reg. 2913, cc. 22, 110; reg. 2917, c. 24.

<sup>38</sup> GENTILE, *Lo stato di Alfonso d'Aragona*, Montecassino 1909, p. 46; ACA, reg. 2912, c. 22.

<sup>39</sup> DEL TREPPO, *op. cit.*, p. 163.

<sup>40</sup> VOLPICELLA, *Liber Instructionum*, p. 369.

<sup>41</sup> C. TUTINI, *Dell'origine de' seggi di Napoli discorsi*, Naples 1754, p. 103, states that the Miroballo family belonged to the *seggio di Montagna*, but he does not say when this ended. But in 1490 Antonio Miroballo was head of the *estaurita* of the *piazza* of the *sedile di Portanova*. On the connection between the *estaurita* and the *sedile*, see TUTINI cited pp. 163-65.

<sup>42</sup> ARCHIVIO DI STATO DI PALERMO (=ASP) *Lettere viceregie*, reg. 52 c. 132, reg. 50 c. 28.

of Pozzallo (which had an annual turn-over of 12,000 *salme* of grain) to the same Taquí, Pere Cimart and Guillem March Cervello, as security.<sup>43</sup>

Pere Cimart purchased the castle of Chiaromonte from the same Count of Modica, while Pietro Gaetano, his partner, purchased the barony of Tripi in Val Demone, where he undertook major canal building operations and was granted permission to hold fairs and markets by the king.<sup>44</sup> The feudal holding of Giarratana, formerly held by Cabrera, passed to a Casasagia, (the powerful family of Barcelona merchants and money changers) and then to Simone di Settimo, the Palermo banker.<sup>45</sup> It looks as though the dismemberment of a number of feudal patrimonies was taking place, but this is deceptive. The most recent mercantile fortunes did not in fact prove to be any more sound.

In the records of the Aragonese Chancery 1453 was described as the year of the « *abatiments dels banchs e mercaders de Napolis* »<sup>46</sup> (the collapse of Neapolitan merchants and banks). Pere Cimart certainly went bankrupt, and part of his possessions were acquired by Pietro Gaetano; the following year it was the turn of Pere Vendrinyans, who had a bank in Perpignan, and the court proved to be his main creditor.<sup>47</sup> Shortly after, Guillem March Cervello, « the important agent and purveyor of the royal court » for some ten years, was accused of stealing 70,000 ducats, his goods were confiscated and sold, while he was condemned to death.<sup>48</sup>

One might say that such examples, so obvious and apparent to all, provided the primary inspiration for reflexions on the theme of the vagaries of fortune (the « *de varietate fortunae* ») which became so widespread in Neapolitan literature, from the humanist Tristano Caracciolo to the courtier Loise de Rosa.

These episodes were connected with various initiatives of the Crown, with the expansion of the states' activity and with its consequent transformation from a mainly feudal, or one might say family organized, complex into a bureaucratically structured entity. They characterized the epoch and naturally influenced social relations and customs. Gabriel Cardona, the treasurer of Calabria who fled with the king's money<sup>49</sup>, or the powerful master of the Mint of Majorca, Francesco Sunyer, who counterfeited coin, were disquieting cases, and dangerously contagious examples. In 1450 three well known barons from Basilicata, one being Ugo di Sanseverino, were tried for counterfeiting.<sup>50</sup>

<sup>43</sup> ACA, 2873 c. 6; ASP, *Lettere viceregie*, reg. 53 c. 4; reg. 60, c. 1; reg. 56 c. 117.

<sup>44</sup> ASP, *R. Cancelleria*, reg. 96, c. 191; ACA, reg. 2872, c. 106; ASP, *Protonotaro*, reg. 44 c. 230.

<sup>45</sup> ASP, *Protonotaro*, reg. c. 819.

<sup>46</sup> ACA, reg. 2896 c. 118.

<sup>47</sup> ASP, *Lettere viceregie*, reg. 57 c. 19; *Protonotaro*, reg. 43 c. 133.

<sup>48</sup> ACA, reg. 2943 c. 43; ASP, *Lettere viceregie*, reg. 63 c. 292.

<sup>49</sup> ACA, reg. 2658 c. 84.

<sup>50</sup> P. GENTILE, *Lo stato napoletano etc.*, in « Arch. Stor. Nap. », cited p. 40.

But rather than the confused and summary records of such episodes, the source which expresses most fully the unique atmosphere created in the period of Catalan Aragonese Mediterranean expansion, touching on all its aspects, is the work by Benedetto Cotrugli, « *Della mercatura e del mercante perfetto* », which was completed near Naples during the epidemic of 1458. Cotrugli was from Ragusa, from a family of merchants, and from his early youth had had a strong interest in scholarly pursuits, to which he devoted himself with an enthusiasm which he hints at when he writes regretfully « that events, God willing, turned out so that in the midst of the most wonderful pursuit of philosophy we were dragged away from studies and replanted in commerce which necessity made it appropriate for us to follow... ».<sup>51</sup> It was this, however, which gave him a wide experience of men and Mediterranean affairs. He had close commercial relations, through a company trading in wool-stuffs, with Barcelona, where he certainly spent some time, and with Valencia, while he also had many friends at Florence, among them Francesco di Nerone. He came to Naples after its conquest by Alfonso (roughly at the time when Francesco Laurana arrived from Dalmatia); he had continuous connections with the court and with Alfonso, whom he affectionately called 'my lord', and also through the posts which he gained in the administration of the kingdom (he was master of the Mints in Naples and L'Aquila, a post which he then passed on to his son Giacomo). Court and administration experience also caused him some bitterness: he was convicted of fraudulently taking money out of the country and condemned to forfeit his post. It is this which explains the wise recommendations in his book that « generally it is not suitable for any merchant to have dealings with any court », <sup>52</sup> and a number of bitter reflections such as the following: « when one is looking after silver, gold, monies, or similar things of value, one must remember that one is not sheltering knaves, louts, family hangers-on of every description, party followers, robbers, fugitives, gamblers, and such as are wont to shelter in the courts of Princes and great lords who are forced, out of regard for their states, to shelter all manner of men ».<sup>53</sup>

Cotrugli's book is a work which is both highly original and also reflects the epoch and milieu in which it was written. The author had seen, sadly, that in the world of commerce « people were unsuited, disordered, dissolute and vain » and that « this art, which is so necessary and so needed, so spontaneous and so useful... is fallen in the hands of untutored and boorish men, is conducted with no regulation, without order, with abuses but without laws, and in place of wise proposals and premises is given over to delaceration, is a mere prey to the ignorant and a laughing stock for fools ».<sup>54</sup> So he set

<sup>51</sup> B. COTRUGLI, *Della Mercatura e del mercante perfetto*, Brescia 1602, p. 5.

<sup>52</sup> COTRUGLI, *op. cit.*, p. 29.

<sup>53</sup> *Op. cit.*, p. 126.

<sup>54</sup> *Op. cit.*, p. 5.

out to seek and formulate the rules of this science or discipline with the professed aim of « aiding those who wish to acquire goods with honour and without offending God or their neighbour ».

But the major novelty — and here the contrast with Italian treatises, such as those of Alberti, Rucellai and Palmieri — becomes clear — lies in the awareness of the social function of the merchant in civil society, of his relations with other groups and forces, with lords, gentlemen, public powers etc. The starting point is a theoretical treatment, in scholastic and Aristotelian terms, of this function; but the result is a comprehensive delineation of the true characteristics of the merchant and of the extremely high moral and human values of which he, more than any other, was the bearer: a proud but measured exaltation of his dignity which was essentially *dignitas hominis*. The inspiration for such a description lay not in any narrow desire to vindicate either family or « *la santa masserizia* » (sacred chattels), but in general precepts and concepts about the collective interests of society.

I have stressed the originality of Benedetto Cotrugli's attitudes and achievement. In the framework of social organization drawn up by Ramon Lull in the *Arbre de Scientia*, the merchant had no place and flanking the barons, the knights, the judges etc. we find only the townsman and the urban patricians. Francesc Eiximenis, at the end of the XIVth century, restricted himself to defending the merchant in so far as his activity and function was of general public value.<sup>55</sup> But in B. Cotrugli's work the XVth century merchant regains his own code of conduct and moral life, a code which sets out his duties and public functions, and in the paradigms of social life it should be placed alongside the manuals of the perfect knight (ranging from the « *admonitio* » of Duoda, a feudatory of Settomania in the IXth century to Ramon Lull's *Libre de l'Ordre de Cavalleria*) and also alongside the nascent literature on courtly life.

This dual, knightly and bourgeois aspect of Aragonese Mediterranean society was also reflected in the customs and attitudes of the court and the monarchy, at least in the time of Alfonso the Magnanimous who was certainly the most Mediterranean of all the Aragonese kings of the XVth century. The richness and complexity of his character, the scale of his undertakings and his openness to new ventures made the true mirror of his age. He may well in fact present an ideal filed for historical analysis, as soon as we feel that the time has come to turn from the sterile polemics between historicists and structuralists back to biographical study, in the sense attributed to it by W. Dilthey — that is as the meeting point of the universal and the particular in history.

There is no time here to sketch the limitations and basis for a study of the psychology of Alfonso the Magnanimous, but it is worth pointing to

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<sup>55</sup> F. EIXIMENIS, *Regiment de la cosa publica*, Barcelona 1927 (in the series « Els Nostres Classics »), p. 167.

certain aspects of his character as governor and ruler of the Mediterranean. Jimenez Soler had already noted the chivalric nature of the Mediterranean enterprise and also the authentic determination and adventurous spirit of its author, who was a true « knight errant » and who saw the venture through with the same spirit and assumptions as those knights who had set out to « exercise in different parts of the world the hardy deeds of knightthood »<sup>56</sup> — knights who were his devoted friends and whom, in a letter of 1417, Alfonso had recommended to his cousin the king of Castile. Now, after the studies of Martin de Riquer, it is easier for us to understand the nature of that spirit and also its connection with the social and mental structure of the time.

The subject of the king's economic and commercial undertakings has by now, I think, been sufficiently exposed. What well might be examined further, however, are the mental attitudes that lay behind his commercial enterprises, in particular the psychology of his negotiations, his business affairs, and his adhesion to certain views which were widespread among merchants at the time, which emerge strongly from the more lively and personal parts of his correspondence. These certainly influenced him as an administrator, and resulted from his close contacts with merchants and his own circle of businessmen. In one of the letters to « our illustrious and dearly beloved son », Ferrante, written during the Neapolitan campaign of 1440, Alfonso followed with anxiety the latter's attempts to find the cash required for the despatch of certain galleys: « considering the current price of corn and the fact that it will continue to increase, it would cause us the greatest harm were you to obtain the necessary capital by selling, as you intend, our corn which will arrive from Sicily at the price of 6 *carlini* per *tomolo* », <sup>57</sup> (this was the price at which Ferrante wished to sell). He concluded by saying that should it prove necessary to sell, Ferrante should do so but « at the current price for a *tomolo* of corn at the time that our corn reaches Gaeta ». <sup>58</sup> Than a few days later « considering that corn today is much dearer than we had anticipated... » <sup>59</sup> he ordered his son to suspend all transfers to the creditors and sell the consignment of grain himself at 1 ducat (10 *carlini*) a *tomolo*.

On another occasion Alfonso made this typically business-like suggestion to the ship captain and officers who were encountering difficulties in selling

<sup>56</sup> JIMENEZ SOLER, *Itinerario del rey don Alfonso de Aragón y de Nápoles*, Saragosa 1909, p. 7: « exercir en diversas partidas del mundo los strenuos actos de cavalleria ».

<sup>57</sup> ACA, reg. 2646, c. 87 (from Capua, 31 March 1440): « illustre e car fill nostre (...) considerat quant val vuj lo forment e quant se spera encara mes valer a nos seria molt gran dan los dits diners se haguessen per via de venda fahedora del forment nostre qui vindra de Sicilia a raho de 6 carlins lo thume ».

<sup>58</sup> « al preu que valdria lo thumo del forment en aquell temps quel nostre forment aplegara en Gayeta ».

<sup>59</sup> ACA, reg. 2646, c. 90 v.: « actes que lo forment es huy en altre for molt mayor que no us pensaven » (Letter from Capua, 4 April 1440).

a consignment of grain to the civil authorities of Majorca: « should it so occur that no reasonable agreement be reached, then (the ship's captain) will anchor his vessel and prepare to depart for Valencia or Barcelona, and it may well be that seeing this the contractors may be more willing to purchase... ».<sup>60</sup>

From this practical experience of commercial affairs arose the king's conviction that not only was the merchants' function quite indispensable in the political and financial system of which he was ruler, but also of their need for freedom and security. Evidence of this is the highly detailed « *observacio dels contractes mercantils* »<sup>61</sup> ('the keeping of mercantile contracts'), the deference of complete freedom for currency exchange operations, which a Sicilian viceroy wished to destroy to please the king, and even toleration of the practice of usury, on the grounds that if it was accepted as a financial necessity for the state, then that portion which the merchant received could not be condemned.<sup>62</sup> In the letters of the Chancery expression of esteem and support for the merchant are often found, as for example: « for these merchants who have performed such excellent services, and without whom we could not carry on our affairs, it is essential that they be treated in such a way that they be given all we have promised, for the preservation of our good faith and credit ».<sup>63</sup>

Trust, credit and the king's honour (which as Alfonso often declared were more precious than his life) were his inalienable principles of conduct, and in these one can see the mingling of the sentiments and attitudes of the business man and the knight. Neglect in observing dates fixed for payment displeased the king, and he was troubled « not only on account of the interest and increase in costs and damage which arise, but also for the shame which is caused us, and in the interest of our credit and honour, things which must be preserved above all others ».<sup>64</sup> In the same way Alfonso would deliver to negligent officials and untrustworthy advisors, or to politicians whose overweening and unsound methods had compromised his credit and honour, moral reproof in the form of the merchants' ethic: « com deven fer mercaders e persones de be »<sup>65</sup> (as merchants and other honest men should behave), is

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<sup>60</sup> ACA, reg. 2716 cc. 77<sup>v</sup>-80<sup>v</sup>: « on no se acostassen a raho fara de continent metre ala colla la dita nau e mostrara voler far la volta de Valencia o de Barchinona (...), e pora esser que, veent aço los dits jurats se meten en algun bon tall rasonable per lo qual pora contractar... ».

<sup>61</sup> ACA, reg. 2882, c. 25.

<sup>62</sup> ACA, reg. 2935, c. 140.

<sup>63</sup> ACA, reg. 2899, c. 95: « aquests mercaders qui tant servey nos fan, sens los quals bonament no poriem fer nostres affers, es necessari axi sien tractats, els sia attes lo per nos a ells promes, per conservacio de nostra fe e credit ».

<sup>64</sup> ACA, reg. 2882, c. 26: « no solament per los interessos, creximent de despeses e dans queus ne seguexen, mas de la vergonya queus ne redunda, e interes de (n)ostre credit e honor, los quals sobre totes coses se deven conservar ».

<sup>65</sup> ACA, reg. 2890, p. 65.

a fine expression to be found in a letter dictated to his secretary Jacobo di Cassino, which interestingly parallels Benedetto Cotrugli's idea which was expressed with a similar juxtaposition: « observe that which you promise, for once men, and especially merchants, cease to observe promises, nothing is left in them deserving to be called either merchant or true man ».<sup>66</sup>

How mistaken were the Florentine ambassadors, who hoped to bring about the suspension of reprisals which the king had taken against their merchants who had been guilty of underpaying him for a consignment of grain, and imagined that they would succeed in persuading him with this argument « that the king may not wish to concern himself in such matters as damages and interest rates, which are commercial affairs rather than matters worthy of royal attention »!<sup>67</sup>

3. To conclude this picture of the proceedings of the Congress I would like to say a few words about Ferdinando Bologna's exceptional paper on figurative culture, and Miquel Batllori's rich and comprehensive paper on culture and spirituality. In fact I must limit myself to raising a number of questions, as the problems and suggestions posed by the two papers are so interesting and important. One might for example ask whether the numerous centres, on which both the plastic arts and literary circles drew and which throughout the XVth century enriched the culture of the Aragonese world, were all and always closely tied to the presence of the court, or whether they were also connected, as in Catalonia at any rate, to other social groups, such as the merchants? Again one might ask what function, if any, the feudal barons of Naples and Sicily and the small courts in their castles may have had? P. Batllori emphasized the attraction which the Spanish court of Ferdinand the Catholic exercised on the Sicilian humanists, that is to say on the essentially peripheral area of the Mediterranean empire, especially after it was transferred to Naples under Alfonso the Magnanimous. But under Ferrante Naples had a strong influence on Spain in terms of the plastic arts, and in the second half of the century gave as much as it had received in the first half. Did this then result from the monarch's attempt to give greater independence to his Neapolitan state, even to the extent of its leaving, or considering itself to be outside the Aragonese community? One might also ask whether the very multiplicity of cultural centres resulted from the unique, and extremely articulate, political structure of the Aragonese Crown, and from its political traditions in which the integralist design which provide the ideological key

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<sup>66</sup> COTRUGLI, *op. cit.*, p. 58: « et quando prometti, osserva, perché levato di mezo gl'huomini, et spzialmente li mercanti, la osservanza della promessa, nulla resta in loro perché mercante o vero huomo da bene chiamare si possa ».

<sup>67</sup> N. F. FARAGLIA, *Storia della lotta tra Alfonso V d'Aragona e Renato d'Angiò*, Lanciano 1908, doc. XXXVI, p. 400.

to the Castilian empire in the modern period were quite absent? On the other hand the Catalan Gothic style which was imposed at every stage of Mediterranean expansion on the religious and civil architecture of the conquered lands may have assumed the function of an official language, as the chronicler Muntaner hoped would happen in his *bell catalanesc*? These are questions, however, which I cannot attempt to answer here.

I have, perhaps, dwelt too long on Alfonso the Magnanimous, saying little about Ferdinand the Catholic, in whom it is true to say that the scholars gathered in Naples showed less interests. In their opening papers, however, Ernesto Pontieri and Antonio Marongiu were able to find the right perspective in which to view the two. I tend to feel that there is a definitive continuity between the early and later periods of the Trastámara dynasty, which covers both sides of the Tyrrhenian Sea. *Pactismo* was the real substance of the constitutional organization of the Crown of Aragon and was the basis on which their political actions were taken. When they moved away from this formula was it to create a new one which could hold good for the future, for the next three centuries? To pose the question in these terms is to turn in on its head and to reveal all too clearly the historian's inevitable perspective, the wisdom of hindsight. But what we must really try to identify from the start are the reasons which lay behind the new formula of absolutism or authoritarianism.

As Pontieri pointed out, Ferrante exercised an absolutism at Naples which was both progressive and levelling, in that it subordinated all social forces in the country. Ferdinand the Catholic reached against *pactismo* when it was necessary to correct administrative malfunctioning and put an end to the scandals in the administration of justice, as Rosario Gregorio held, and this has since been restated by Marongiu. In these terms the alternative was not between *pactismo* and *assolutismo*, but between good and bad administration of justice, hence neither formula corresponds unilaterally with good or bad — and in this sense it was a policy which Alfonso had already followed. In 1453 (the date is most probable), he received the ambassadors of the Catalan *Corts* in Naples. They had come to submit a number of proposals on judicial matters to his judgement. The king, on examining them, judged them to be « indecents, impertinents e inhonestissimes » ('indecent, impertinent and totally dishonest'), and quite incompatible with the dignity and majesty of his crown; were he to accept them it would be the end of his kingdom. He went on to say that he had always administered justice in the Principality of Catalonia taking due regard of its laws and customs, but on every occasion there had been deferments, delays, abuses and deviations which had left dangerous gaps in the legal system, and this had arisen because « the *Usatges* of Barcelona, the constitutions and edicts of the courts of Catalonia, with their privileges and claimed customs and freedoms have impertinently been adopted to trammel

up the course of justice ».<sup>68</sup> Viceversa, he continued, in the kingdom of Naples, which he had conquered personally, « where he enjoys absolute authority, there being no obstacles or pretended liberties intervening to obstruct the course of justice, he has administered, and continues to administer, justice with no obstruction », <sup>69</sup> the result being that every form of disorder had ceased, all his subjects led peaceful and quiet lives. He then gave the dumb-struck ambassadors further instruction and precise details on how justice was administered to the satisfaction of all, on the nature of the judicial organs, the « *audiencia publica* » held by the king every Friday, and the *Sacro Regio Consiglio* « lo qual cascun dia se celebra e resideix en la sua ciutat de Napolis » ('which is celebrated every day and resides in his city of Naples').

What emerges from this fine, unedited document — which itself is in fact a draft with the king's counter-suggestions and corrections included — is that one of the basic problems, and one which was destined to develop during this century, was not that of a political formula, but the problem of justice, of justice pure and simple.

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<sup>68</sup> « A empatzar aquella son stats in pertinentment allegats Usatges de Barchelona, constitucions e capitols de Cort de Cathalunya, privilegis, e pretesos usos e libertas ».

<sup>69</sup> « On ha la potestat absoluta e no hi son fets tals opposits o allegacions per empatzar la justicia, ha fet e fa ministrar continuament iusticia... ».

