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978-0-521-88643-7 - Dominicans, Muslims and Jews in the Medieval Crown of Aragon

Robin Vose

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MEDIEVAL CROWN OF ARAGON

With their active apostolate of preaching and teaching, Dominican friars were important promoters of Latin Christianity in the borderlands of medieval Spain and North Africa. Historians have long assumed that their efforts to convert or persecute non-Christian populations played a major role in worsening relations between Christians, Muslims and Jews in the era of crusade and *reconquista*. This study sheds new light on the topic by setting Dominican participation in celebrated but short-lived projects such as Arabic language *studia* or anti-Jewish theological disputations alongside day-to-day realities of mendicant life in the medieval Crown of Aragon. Whether in old Catalan centers like Barcelona, newly conquered Valencia or Islamic North Africa, the author shows that Dominican friars were on the whole conservative educators and disciplinarians rather than innovative missionaries – ever concerned to protect the spiritual well-being of the faithful by means of preaching, censorship and maintenance of existing barriers to interfaith communications.

ROBIN VOSE is Assistant Professor of History at St. Thomas University, New Brunswick.

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To Owen, Ryley and Kim
with love

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ABBREVIATIONS

ACA	Arxiu de la Corona d'Aragó, Barcelona
ADP	Arxiu Diocesà, Palma de Mallorca
AFP	<i>Archivum Fratrum Praedicatorum</i>
AHN	Archivo Histórico Nacional, Madrid
ARM	Arxiu del Regne de Mallorca, Palma de Mallorca
ARV	Arxiu del Regne de València
AST	<i>Analecta Sacra Tarraconensia</i>
ASV	Archivio Segreto Vaticano
BN	Bibliothèque National, Paris
BUB	Biblioteca Universitaria de Barcelona
BUV	Biblioteca Universitaria de València
CHR	<i>Catholic Historical Review</i>
Diago	F. Diago, <i>Historia de la Provincia de Aragon de la Orden de Predicadores</i> (Barcelona, 1599; repr. Valencia, 1999)
EV	<i>Escritos del Vedat</i>
<i>Llibre dels fets</i>	James I of Aragon, <i>Llibre dels fets del rei en Jaume</i> , ed. J. Bruguera (Barcelona, 1991); tr. D. Smith and H. Buffery as <i>The Book of Deeds of James I of Aragon</i> (Aldershot, 2003)
MOFPH	<i>Monumenta Ordinis Fratrum Praedicatorum Historica</i>
Mansi	J.D. Mansi, ed., <i>Sacrorum conciliorum nova et amplissima collectio</i> , new edn., 58 vols. (Paris, 1907–27)
<i>Opera Omnia</i>	Thomas Aquinas, <i>Opera Omnia</i> , 25 vols. (Parma, 1852–73; repr. New York, 1948–50)
Régné	J. Régné, <i>History of the Jews in Aragon: Regesta and Documents (1213–1327)</i> , ed. Yom Tov Assis (Jerusalem, 1978)
Ripoll	T. Ripoll, ed., <i>Bullarium Ordinis Fratrum Praedicatorum</i> , 8 vols. (Rome, 1729–40)

List of abbreviations

Sbaralea	J. Sbaralea <i>et al.</i> , <i>Bullarium Franciscanum Romanorum Pontificum</i> , 7 vols. (Rome, 1759–1904)
SCG	Thomas Aquinas, <i>Summa Contra Gentiles</i> (Rome, 1888)
SSOP	J. Quétif and J. Échard, <i>Scriptores Ordinis Praedicatorum</i> , 2 vols. (Paris, 1719–23; repr. New York, 1959–61)
ST	Thomas Aquinas, <i>Summa Theologiae</i> , 5 vols. (Ottawa, 1941–5)

Biblical citations are taken from the Vulgate edition as printed at Paris by Berche et Tralin (1882); English translations are my own unless otherwise noted.

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NAMES AND TERMINOLOGY

A book written in English about many different regions in a pre-modern time whose “national” boundaries were as fluid as its dialectical orthography is bound to offend readers with a special interest in linguistic consistency. Since I am not such a reader myself, making no claims to specialization in such fields as Catalan or Arabic onomastics, I have not felt compelled to dwell on the matter. My approach has rather been eclectic and practical, guided by a hope that the result will be comprehensible to primarily anglophone audiences. Personal names have for the most part been given in Anglicized form: James instead of *Jacme*, *Jaime*, *Jaume*, *Iacobus* or any of the other variants found in medieval and modern texts. Surnames are generally given as they surface in primary sources. Latin surnames seem more appropriate than vernacular versions for ecclesiastics who normally appear in Latin documents; vernacular alternatives are given in parentheses at times. I apologize in advance if I have caused any confusion by discussing Raymond Martini instead of *Raimundus*/*Ramon Martí*, or John of Podio Ventoso rather than *Johannes*/*Joan Puigventós*, to cite but two examples. No attempt has been made to transliterate Arabic or Hebrew according to modern scholarly norms, and diacritics have often been omitted. Given that my focus is on medieval Dominican perceptions of their world I felt it acceptable to err on the side of simplification as they tended to do (thus Ali for ‘*Alī*’). I have also included garbled medieval readings (“miramolin” for *amīr al-mu’minīn*) in some cases; to “correct” them would be to occlude part of the story.

I have sought to use place-names that would be reasonably identifiable to most readers. Rome for *Roma* is an obvious concession, and Cordoba for *Córdoba* is common; more contentious perhaps is my use of Catalan Lleida for *Lérida*, but then Bugia for Algerian *Bougie*/*Bijaya*. I did not mean to make any nationalist or other political points through toponymy; I merely used terms I personally found to be simple and recognizable, among the many variations available in each case. Wherever

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confusion might arise I have tried to provide alternative spellings in parentheses.

Most egregious undoubtedly are the problematic uses of “Aragon” and “Aragonese” which will be found herein. The “Crown of Aragon” is a historians’ fiction, conveniently designating territories united under kings of Aragon but including at various times such distinct polities as the kingdoms of Valencia, Mallorca, Sicily and Sardinia, the Counties of Barcelona and Urgel, and the Lordship of Montpellier.¹ “Aragon” and “Catalonia” were two of its regions, and today both are Autonomous Communities within the Spanish federation; each had an important and distinct medieval vernacular. To call medieval Catalans or Valencians “Aragonese” is strictly wrong, and potentially insulting to some, but they *were* subjects of the king of Aragon; furthermore, by the fourteenth century Dominicans from Aragon, Catalonia, Valencia and even Mallorca (though no longer subject to the king of Aragon in the latter case) were all members of their Order’s Aragonese Province. To be consistent and accurate here would be extremely clumsy. In compromise, friars and others have often been called “Aragonese” simply as a means of identifying their belonging to that Province (formerly part of the Province of Spain) and/or being subject to a king who included “Aragon” among his titles. Similar difficulties emerge with designations of “Spanish,” “French,” “Almohad” or “Hafsid,” but I again crave the reader’s indulgence in glossing over any resulting oversimplifications.

Finally, a note about religious terminology. One person’s convert is another’s apostate or renegade. Archaic and potentially derogatory words such as “infidel,” “saracen,” “marrano” (and of course the subjective theological categories of “truth”/“error”) are inevitable in a study of medieval Dominican friars and their relations with non-Christian peoples. These relations, though sometimes relatively benign, were hardly egalitarian or open-minded by modern standards. Needless to say, I in no way mean to endorse medieval bigotry or intolerance of any form by repeating such words in the pages that follow. The sentiments presented here are those of historical characters who felt strongly about their belief systems. My goal is to present their world as fully and accurately as possible for the purpose of historical comprehension – not as fuel for anachronistic polemic or apologetic religious arguments.

¹ T. Bisson, *The Medieval Crown of Aragon: A Short History* (Oxford, 1986) provides a helpful introduction to the subject.

MAPS



Map 1. The Crown of Aragon and its neighbors, thirteenth and fourteenth centuries (after O.R. Constable, *Housing the Stranger*, Cambridge University Press, 2003, p. 108)

Maps



Map 2. Dominican convents in the Province of Aragon, to 1330
(after R.I. Burns, *Crusader Kingdom of Valencia*, Harvard University Press, 1967. Reprinted in R.I. Burns and Paul Chevedden, *Negotiating Cultures*, Brill, 1999, p. 12)