

To Serve both God and King: Bernat Guilhèm de Montpellier (b. 1202-1238) and James I of Aragon

Servir a Dios y al rey: Bernat Guilhèm de Montpellier (a. 1202-1238) y Jaime I de Aragón

Martín ALVIRA CABRER

Doctor en Geografía e Historia. Profesor Titular de Universidad, Departamento de Historia de América y Medieval y Ciencias Historiográficas, Facultad de Geografía e Historia, Universidad Complutense de Madrid, C/ Profesor Aranguren, s/n, 28040-Madrid. España.

C. e.: malvira@ghis.ucm.es

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-7706-1907>

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Abstract: This paper aims to increase our knowledge of the personal and political history of Bernat Guilhèm de Montpellier (b. 1202-1238), maternal uncle of King James I of Aragon. Based on the documentary sources, his family origins, relations, early years and participation in political and military activity from 1220 onwards are studied. During the conquest of the kingdom of Valencia, Bernat Guilhèm was a central figure in the siege of Borriana/Burriana (1233) and the defender of the castle of Puig de Santa Maria (1237), where he obtained a great victory over the Valencian Muslims, which generated a whole legend whose iconographic echoes have reached to our day.

Keywords: Bernat Guilhèm; Montpellier; Entenza; James I the Conqueror; Crown of Aragon; Warfare.

Resumen: Esta contribución pretende ampliar nuestros conocimientos sobre la historia personal y política de Bernat Guilhèm de Montpellier (antes 1202-1238), tío materno occitano del rey Jaime I de Aragón. Tomando como base las fuentes documentales y crónicas, se estudian sus orígenes familiares, sus parientes, sus oscuros primeros años y su participación en la actividad política y militar a partir de 1220. Durante la conquista del reino de Valencia, fue protagonista del asedio

de Borriana/Burriana (1233) y sobre todo de la defensa del castillo del Puig de Santa Maria, donde obtuvo una gran victoria sobre los musulmanes valencianos, lo que generó toda una leyenda cuyos ecos iconográficos llegan hasta nuestros días.

Palabras clave: Bernat Guilhèm; Montpellier; Entenza; Jaime I el Conquistador; Corona de Aragón; Arte de la guerra

Summary: Introduction; 1. Bernat Guilhèm's parents; 2. His older brother Guilhèm IX and his half-sister Maria: the intervention of the King of Aragon, Peter the Catholic, in Montpellier (1202-1204); 3. Bernat Guilhèm's other siblings; 4. Bernat Guilhèm's presence in the sources; 5. Bernat Guilhèm's first appearances alongside his nephew, King James I (August 1220-February 1233); 6. The good and loyal vassal: the siege of Borriana (June-July 1233); 7. Moments of prestige at court and closeness to the king; 8. The relative and good servant: commanding the Puig de Santa Maria (1237); 9. Bernat Guilhèm's death and the crisis of Puig (January 1238); 10. Bernat Guilhèm's grave; 11. Montpellier does not forget.

Sumario: Introducción; 1. Sus padres; 2. Su hermano mayor Guilhèm IX y su hermanastra María: la intervención del rey de Aragón Pedro el Católico en Montpellier (1202-1204); 3. Sus otros hermanos; 4. Su presencia en las fuentes; 5. Primeras presencias junto a su sobrino, el rey Jaime I (agosto 1220-febrero 1233); 6. El buen y leal vasallo: el asedio de Borriana (junio-julio 1233); 7. Momentos de prestigio en la corte y cercanía al rey; 8. El pariente y buen servidor: al mando del Puig de Santa María (1237); 9. Su muerte y la crisis del Puig (enero 1238); 10. Su sepulcro; 11. Montpellier no se olvida.

INTRODUCTION¹

The gradual distancing of the Crown of Aragon from southern France following the defeat at Muret (1213) and the victory of the French king in

¹ Abbreviations: *ACA*: Archivo de la Corona de Aragón. *ACRA*: Tomás, Guillermo y Carlos Laliena (eds.), *Acta Curiarum Regni Aragonum. Tomo I: Cortes de los reinados de Alfonso II a Alfonso IV (1164-1328)*. *AVJI*: *Arxiu Virtual Jaume I. Documents d'època medieval relatiu a la Corona d'Aragó*. *Universitat Jaume I* [online], <http://www.jaumeprimer.uji.es>. *CRCAR*: *Crònica real de la Corona de Aragón*, Arag. ed. Carmen Orcástegui, *Crònica de San Juan de la Peña (versión aragonesa)*; Cat. ed. Amadeu J. Soberanas, *Crònica general de Pere III el Cerimoniós: dita comunament Crònica de sant Joan de la Penya*; Lat. ed. Antonio Ubieto, *Crònica de San Juan de la Peña*. Valencia: Anubar, 1961; English transl. Lynn H. Nelson, *The Chronicle of San Juan de la Peña: A Fourteenth-Century Official History of the Crown of Aragon*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1991. *DARA*: *DARA-Medieval (Documentos aragoneses)* [online], <https://dara.aragon.es/opac/doma/>. Desclot: Bernat Desclot, *Llibre del Rei En Pere*. *DJI*: Huici, Ambrosio y Cabanes, María Desamparados (eds.), *Documentos de Jaime I de Aragón*, 7 vol. Valencia: Anubar, 1976-2017. *Itinerari*: Miret, Joaquim, *Itinerari de Jaume el Conqueridor. Edició facsímil* [1918]. *LF*: James I of Aragon, *Llibre dels Feys*. *LIM*: *Liber instrumentorum memorialium. Cartulaire des Guillems de Montpellier*. *PC*: Alvira, Martín (ed.), *Pedro el Católico, rey de Aragón y conde de Barcelona (1196-1213)*. *Documentos, testimonios y memoria histórica*.

the Albigensian Crusade (1229) led to the uprooting or exile of some Occitan nobles who were relatives and/or vassals of the king of Aragon James I the Conqueror (Raymond II Trencavel, Olivier de Termes, Chabèrt de Barbairan...). The conquests of Majorca (1228-1231) and Valencia (1233-1245) also encouraged the presence in the Iberian Peninsula of members of other Occitan noble families (the Rocafolh, the Lunel, etc.).² This study is part of a series of works dedicated to the Occitan nobles of Montpellier and its region, some relatives of King James I, who collaborated with him in the conquest of the kingdom of Valencia (Figure 2).³ Probably the best-known is James's maternal uncle, Bernat Guilhèm de Montpellier, famous for his participation in the early phase of the conquest (1233-1238).⁴ Here we intend to advance knowledge of Bernat Guilhèm's personal, political, and military history, as well as examining his portrayal in later iconography.

1. HIS PARENTS

Family history is important for understanding Bernat Guilhèm's origins and his arrival at the court of the king of Aragon. He was the son of Guilhèm VIII, Lord of Montpellier (1157-c. 1202), and his second wife, mentioned by James I himself in his memoirs, the *Llibre dels Feys* (c. 1270): *He took another wife, who was from Castile (we don't remember the name of that woman's father, although she was called "Dona*

² A synthesis of these processes, drawing on the aforementioned specialized literature, can be found in Alvira, Martín, *Muret 1213. La bataille décisive de la croisade contre les Albigeois* (Valence d'Albigeois: Vent Terral, 2024).

³ They are the result of our participation in the research project *Nobconnect. Nobleza sin fronteras: movilidad y conectividad en los territorios hispánicos y occitanos (ss. X-XIII)* (Agencia Estatal de Investigación 10.13039/501100011033 and «FEDER Una manera de hacer Europa»). Ref.: PID2022-137138NB-I00, 2024-28), directed by Inés Calderón Medina. I would like to thank my colleague and good friend Damian J. Smith (St. Louis University) for his kind work reviewing the English texts and his always expert and interesting remarks. I also appreciate the observations of the two anonymous reviewers of this text.

⁴ Badenes, Julio Samuel, "Bernat Guillem d'Entença. Alcaide del Castillo del Puig de Santa María y personaje fundamental en la conquista de Valencia y su reino", in *El ciclo de la vida comarcal y su transgresión*, dirs. Noelia Gil and Francisco A. Cardells (Valencia: Universidad Católica de Valencia San Vicente Mártir, 2018), 225-36; "Bernat Guillem d'Entença", *Viajar con Jaume I* [online]; "Bernat Guillem de Montpeller", *Gran Enciclopèdia Catalana* [online].

Agnès”).⁵ The identity of this lady-in-waiting to Queen Sancha of Castile (c. 1154-1208), wife of the King of Aragon, Alfonso the Chaste (1162-1196), has recently been revealed by the French author Philippe Figuière. She is Inés Pérez de Cavia, daughter of Pedro Ruiz Mío Cid de Olea and Inés Ordóñez (Figure 2).⁶ Guilhèm VIII married her in 1187 after having repudiated his first wife, the Byzantine Eudoxia Komnenos (whom he had married in 1174), since she had given him only one daughter, Marie of Montpellier (1182-1213), and no sons. This second marriage was approved by King Alfonso, who was keen to strengthen his hegemony over the Occitan political sphere by taking advantage of this close connection with the lord of Montpellier.⁷



Figure 1: Tomb of Bernat Guilhèm of Montpellier (14th century)
Royal Monastery of Puig de Santa Maria, Valencia (M. Alvira)

⁵ *LF*, chap. 4. In Anglophone historiography he is known as William VIII, but here we use the Occitan form of the name. In the case of other Occitan barons, we also use the Occitan form.

⁶ Figuière, Philippe, “Dona Agnès de Castella : une énigme séculaire résolue. Les origines familiales d’Agnès, seconde épouse de Guilhèm VIII de Montpellier”, *Études héraultaises*, 56 (2021): 193-211.

⁷ See Marcos, Ernest, *La Dama de Bizanci. Un enigma en la nissaga de Jaume I* (Barcelona: Universitat de Barcelona, 2013); Vidal, Henri, “Les mariages dans la famille des Guillems, seigneurs de Montpellier”, *Revue historique de droit français et étranger*, 62 (1984): 231-45.

2. HIS OLDER BROTHER GUILHÈM IX AND HIS STEPSISTER MARIE: THE INTERVENTION OF THE KING OF ARAGON, PETER THE CATHOLIC, IN MONTPELLIER (1202-1204)

The marriage of Guilhèm VIII and Inés Pérez de Cavia was considered adulterous in the eyes of the Church, so their children were not recognized as legitimate by Popes Celestine III (1191-1198) and Innocent III (1198-1216), although they were protected by both.⁸ The papacy was then defending a model of ecclesiastical, monogamous, and indissoluble marriage as opposed to the common aristocratic practice of successive and revocable marriages driven by patrimonial and political interests.⁹ Despite this lack of recognition, in his will (November 1202) Guilhèm VIII named as his heir the first son he had by Inés, the future Guilhèm IX (1190-a. 1213), thus depriving his daughter Marie, the only legitimate daughter for the Church, of her right to the lordship of Montpellier.¹⁰ The situation changed radically following what Henri Vidal called the “Montpellier Revolution” of 1204. It was a “coup d’état” orchestrated by a section of the urban patriciate that restored Marie as the ruler of Montpellier. The maneuver was instigated by the king of Aragon, Peter the Catholic (1196-1213), who –encouraged by the fact that the Pope did not recognize the legitimacy of her half-brother Guilhèm IX– then married Marie and thus incorporated the lordship into the domains of the Crown of Aragon.¹¹ From this marriage James I (1213-1276) was born in 1208. Bernat Guilhèm, half-brother of Queen Marie, was therefore brother-in-law of King Peter and maternal uncle of James the Conqueror.

⁸ Smith, Damian J., “*Per venerabilem* In Its Original Context”, in *Law, Politics and Religion in Medieval Europe, c.1100–c.1350. Papers in Honour of Anne Duggan*, ed. Travis Baker (Turnhout: Brepols, forthcoming).

⁹ Baumel, Jean, *Histoire d’une seigneurie du Midi de la France... Naissance de Montpellier, 985-1213* (Montpellier: Causse, 1969), 189-92; Vidal, Henri, “Guilhèm VIII et Agnès de Castille, histoire et légendes d’un adultère 1187-1202”, in *Études d’histoire du droit privé en souvenir de Maryse Carlin*, ed. Olivier Vernier (Paris: La Mémoire du Droit, 2008), 851-64; Figuière, “Dona Agnès”, 194; Aurell, Martin, *Les noces du comte. Mariage et pouvoir en Catalogne (785-1213)* (Paris: Publications de la Sorbonne, 1995), 427-66.

¹⁰ LIM, n° XCIX (4.11.1202). Cited by James I in his memories: *This William of Montpellier, who was the eldest son of William of Montpellier, fought to be lord of Montpellier*, LF, chap. 4.

¹¹ Vidal, Henri, “La révolution montpelliéraine de 1204”, *Bulletin de l’Académie des Sciences et Lettres de Montpellier*, 18 (1987): 239-47; and Smith, “*Per venerabilem*”.

The “Montpellier Revolution” and the dispossession of Guilhèm IX possibly placed Inés Pérez de Cavia and her children under the protection and control of King Peter the Catholic. We will see later that part of the family may also have gone to Castile. Bernat Guilhèm’s elder brother, Guilhèm, would be used by the king of Aragon in early 1213, as a pawn in a major political-diplomatic operation aimed at ending the Albigensian Crusade to the advantage of the Crown of Aragon. On 27 January, in the so-called “Oaths of Toulouse”, the Occitan relatives, vassals, and allies of Peter the Catholic –Count Raymond VI of Toulouse, Count Raymond Roger of Foix, Count Bernard IV of Comminges, and Viscount Gaston VII of Bearn– placed themselves under the protection of the king of Aragon and accepted his authority. Shortly before this, on 24 January 1213, Peter the Catholic granted the young Guilhèm IX the lordship of Montpellier as a fief, making him his man and vassal. It is interesting that, in this important act, Guilhèm IX remembered both his mother, Inés, and Queen Sancha of Castile, King Peter’s mother.¹²

The defeat and death of the King of Aragon at the battle of Muret (12 September 1213) put an end to this relationship. The lordship of Montpellier then passed into the hands of the young James I, heir to King Peter and Queen Marie. Guilhèm IX must have remained in Catalan-Aragonese lands at that time, although we have no further news of him. Joaquín Salleras, historian of the Aragonese city of Fraga, has stated that, in 1213, Guilhèm IX (“Guillem d’Entença”) received the lordship of Fraga from King Peter and that, in July 1215, he ceded it, along with “otros castillos, como el de Aisle, los valles de Eyres y Berin y otros” to his brother Bernat Guilhem, who thus became lord of Fraga.¹³ The French/Spanish language teacher Philippe Figuière has repeated this undocumented information, adding that the donation by his brother Guilhèm IX in 1215 was made within the framework of his will.¹⁴ We see

¹² *filius Agnetis femine, recipio a vobis domino meo Petro (...) filio Sancie femine felicis recordationis inclite regine Aragonum, PC, t. III, n° 1.443; Ferrer, Maria Teresa and Riu, Manuel (dir.), Tractats i negociacions diplomàtiques de Catalunya i de la Corona catalanoaragonesa a l’edat mitjana. Vol. I.1: Tractats i negociacions diplomàtiques amb Occitània, França i els estats italians, 1067-1213 (Barcelona: IEC, 2009), n° 162 (Toulouse, 24.01.1213). Regarding this type of document and agreement, see Kosto Adam J., *Making Agreements in Medieval Catalonia: Power, Order, and the Written Word, 1000-1200* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001).*

¹³ Salleras, Joaquín, “Bernat Guillem d’Entença señor de Fraga (1215-1238)”, *La Voz del Bajo Cinca* (19.07.2007) [online].

¹⁴ Figuière, “Dona Agnès”, 196.

this information reproduced on the internet. The problem is that the ACA document cited by Figüiere (to which Salleras must have been referring, although he does not indicate this) is not a donation from Guilhèm IX of Montpellier to Bernat Guilhèm, but rather a donation from the Pallarès baron Guillem d'Erill to his brother Bernat d'Erill.¹⁵ Thus, it cannot be asserted that Bernat Guilhèm de Montpellier was lord of Fraga. In fact, the lack of information prevents us from knowing what domains he held in the Crown of Aragon before marrying and becoming related to the Entenza lineage. James I himself would later recall that he was the one who inherited *all that he possessed*.¹⁶

3. BERNART GUILHÈM'S OTHER SIBLINGS

The first mention of Bernat Guilhèm is in the aforementioned will of his father, Guilhèm VIII of Montpellier, at the beginning of November 1202 and likewise the mention of his other brothers (Figure 2). After Guilhèm IX, the next was Tomàs, who received several domains from his father; we know from James I that Tomàs was raised at the court of the king of Aragon, Peter the Catholic, and that he was called *Tortosa* or *Tortoseta*, probably because he had lived in this city in southern Catalonia.¹⁷

Another was, Ramon or Raimon, who was given by Guilhèm VIII to the Cistercian abbey of Grandselve, located northwest of Toulouse.¹⁸ Ramon did not, however, dedicate himself to the monastic life, since he appears later, in September 1212, with King Peter the Catholic in Uncastillo (Aragon). Raimon identity here is clear, since he calls himself *filius quondam Guillermi domini Montispessulani*.¹⁹ The dating of this document has led to the claim that he participated in the battle of Las Navas de Tolosa, fought two months earlier (July 16, 1212).²⁰ This is another

¹⁵ ACA, Chancellery, Parchments of James I, n° 44 (07.1215). I owe the opportunity to consult this document to the kind help of archivist David Menaza.

¹⁶ *LF*, chap. 400. Speaking about his son Bernardo Guillén II, see *infra*.

¹⁷ *Thome filio meo, qui dicitur Tortosa*, LIM, n° XCIX (4.11.1202); *qui havia nom Tortoseta*, *LF*, chap. 4. Also in the 14th-century Latin translation: *quartum filium, dictum Tortoseta, quem postea rex Petrus habuit in palatio*, Marsili, chap. 2.

¹⁸ *Raimundum filium meum, volo esse monachum Grandis silve*, LIM, n° XCIX (4.11.1202).

¹⁹ *PC*, t. III, n° 1.389 (Uncastillo, 21.09.1212).

²⁰ Figüiere, "Dona Agnès", 196.

claim that has no documentary confirmation, since the fact that a few days later the king was in Huesca with several barons who were present at the battle²¹ is not sufficient proof in itself. However, the presence in this parchment of September 1212 of the son of the Count of Comminges (the future Bernard V, 1225-1241) alongside Raimon de Montpellier does confirm two interesting facts: the presence of young Occitan heirs at the court of the King of Aragon; and the participation of Bernat's brother Guilhèm in the preparations for the political and diplomatic intervention of Peter the Catholic in the south of France, which would end a year later in the disaster of Muret.²²

In December 1222 there is a *Raimundus de Montepesulano* receiving money from the bailiff of Lleida.²³ He also appears among the first Aragonese nobles who swore allegiance to the Infante Alfonso, firstborn son of James I, in the Cortes of Daroca (February 1228).²⁴ There is no data, however, to confirm his participation in the conquest of Majorca (1229) or in the ratification of the Treaty of Almizra (1244).²⁵ A *R. de Montepesulano* appears as a witness in Valencia in a document of October 1247.²⁶ Our Raimon de Montpellier could have been the father of Guillem Ramon de Montpellier, who was the *alcaide* of Castalla in 1283.²⁷

²¹ *PC*, t. III, n° 1.391 (Huesca, 29.09.1212) and t. V, Tabla 7.6.

²² *PC*, t. III, n° 1.389 (Uncastillo, 21.09.1212). See Alvira, Martín, Macé, Laurent and Smith, Damian J., "Le temps de la *Grande Couronne d'Aragon* du roi Pierre le Catholique. À propos de deux documents relatifs à l'abbaye de Poblet (février et septembre 1213)", *Annales du Midi*, 121-265 (2009): 5-22, at 9.

²³ *DJI*, vol. I, n° 38 (Daroca, 10.12.1222).

²⁴ *Raymundus de Montepesulano, juro et homagium facio*, *ACRA*, vol. I, t. I, 61-4, at 62 (Daroca, 6.02.1228). Figüiere claims that, as a result, he should have received a fiefdom in Aragon ("Dona Agnès", 196, without documentary reference).

²⁵ As stated without any documentary references in Figüiere, "Dona Agnès", 196. See *DJI*, vol. I, n° 111-114 (Barcelona, 21-27.12.1228) and vol. II, n° 388 (Almizra, 26.03.1244); likewise, he not mentioned there in the *LF*. He is also not found in Pérez, Lorenzo (ed.), "Corpus documental balear (I). Reinado de Jaime I", *Fontes Rerum Balearium*, 1 (1977): 1-112; Pérez, Lorenzo (ed.), "Corpus documental balear (II). Reinado de Jaime I", *Fontes Rerum Balearium*, 2 (1978): 113-176; Pérez Pastor, Plàcid, *Conquesta, repartiment i organització militar de Mallorca: els cavalls armats (1229-1350)*, PhD, dir. Antoni Virgili, Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona, 2021.

²⁶ *DJI*, vol. II, n° 471 (Valencia, 31.10.1247).

²⁷ Figüiere, "Dona Agnès", 196. We use the Catalan form here because Guillem Ramon lived in the lands of the Crown of Aragon and made his career there.

Bernat Guilhèm was born after Guilhèm, Tomàs and Ramon, being the fourth son of Guilhèm VIII and Inés Pérez de Cavia. He had four other younger siblings, two boys and two girls. One of the boys, Gui, was offered by his father as a monk to the great abbey of Cluny.²⁸ There is no further news of him. The story of Bergunhon, the youngest of the brothers, mentioned by James I in his memoirs, is more interesting.²⁹ His name means “Burgundian”, which is a reminder of the French origin of his grandmother, Mathilde of Burgundy, wife of Guilhèm VII of Montpellier. His paternal uncle Gui was also called *Burgondion* and had a daughter whom he named *Burgondiosa*.³⁰ In his will of 1202, his father destined him to be a canon of Le Puy, in Auvergne.³¹ As Philippe Figuière has shown, he must have gone to Castile with his maternal family, because he was in Toledo in November 1228. There he confirmed, as the *son of the noble and illustrious Don Guilhèm de Montpellier, may God bless him*, a donation written in Arabic from his Castilian grandmother, the mother of Inés Pérez de Cavia, to the monastery of San Clemente.³²

Bernat Guilhèm’s two sisters were Agnès of Montpellier, who married the Viscount of Béziers and Carcassonne Raymond Roger Trencavel, who died in 1209, at the beginning of the Albigensian Crusade, and Azalaïs of Montpellier, who married the Occitan nobleman Berenguier de Puègserguièr (fr. Puisserguièr).

4. BERNART GUILHÈM’S PRESENCE IN THE SOURCES

In his father’s will, Bernat Guilhèm was also consecrated to religious life as a canon of Girona and Lodève, northwest of Montpellier.³³ At the end of July 1209, he is mentioned unnamed in the donation of 2,000 sols made by Marie of Montpellier to her half-brothers in her first will.³⁴

²⁸ LIM, n° XCIX (4.11.1202).

²⁹ LF, chap. 4.

³⁰ Macé Laurent, “Les frères au sein du lignage : la logique du lien adelphique chez les seigneurs de Montpellier (XII^e siècle)”, in *Frères et sœurs. Les liens adelphiques dans l’Occident antique et médiéval*, dirs. Sophie Cassagnes-Brouquet and Martine Yvernault (Turnhout, Brepols, 2007), 127-36, at 131-2, n. 25.

³¹ LIM, n° XCIX (4.11.1202).

³² Figuière, “Dona Agnès”, 197-8 and 203-4 (our transl.). This document allowed this author to identify Guilhèm VIII’s second wife as belonging to the Cavia family of the Castilian nobility.

³³ LIM, n° XCIX (4.11.1202).

³⁴ PC, t. II, n° 909 (Aniane monastery, 28.07.1209).

We later find him in almost thirty documents of King James I dated between August 1220 and August 1237.³⁵ In these documents he is always called *Bernardus Guillelmi*, never “de Montpellier” or “de Entenza”. In his *LF*, James I calls him *Don Bernat Guillem d’Entença*, since he became related to this lineage, at the king’s own request, through his marriage to Jusiana or Juliana de Entenza (perhaps c. 1226-1227).³⁶

According to the historian Ferran Soldevila, it is unclear whether James I considered him Catalan or Aragonese.³⁷ Enric Guinot first included him among the Catalan nobility and, more recently, among the Aragonese.³⁸ It must be said that identifying the Entenza/Entença with modern criteria is difficult, since the lineage originated in Ribagorza, a peripheral region located between Aragon and Catalonia, where several languages were spoken and which was characterized until the end of the reign of James I by a great territorial vagueness.³⁹ There is talk of the

³⁵ *DJI*, t. I, n° 24 (Teruel, 12.08.1220), 45 (Huesca, 24.06.1223), 48 (Barcelona, 12.09.1223), 69 (Lleida, 30.06.1225), 78 (Lleida, 3.04.1226), 81 (Barcelona, 22.04.1226); *AVJI* [online], n° 147 (Barcelona, 13.05.1226); *Itinerari*, 62 (Barcelona, 18.05.1226); *DJI*, t. I, n° 83-4 (Barcelona, 10.06.1226), 96 (Monzón, 12.10.1227), 106 (Lleida, 10.11.1228), 168 (Tarragona, 6.05.1232), *AVJI*, n° 155 (Huesca, 10.08.1232); *DJI*, t. I, n° 176 (Sariñena, 6.02.1233), 183 (Borriana, 22.07.1233); 198 (Lleida, 18.03.1234), 215 (Zaragoza, 7.03.1235); *ACRA*, vol. I, t. I, 73-75 (Zaragoza, 18.03.1235); *AVJI*, n° 925 (Lleida, 21.10.1235); *DJI*, t. I, n° 222 (Lleida, 23.10.1235), 223 (Lleida, 27.10.1235), 224 (Barcelona, 11.12.1235), 225 (Barcelona, 13.12.1235), 226-7 (Barcelona, 23.12.1235) and 238; *AVJI*, n° 972; *ACRA*, vol. I, t. I, 79-81 (Monzón, 15.10.1236); *DJI*, t. I, n° 239; *AVJI*, n° 550; *ACRA*, vol. I, t. I, 81-2 (Lleida, 28.10.1236); and *DJI*, t. II, n° 244 (*Castrum de Cebolla*, 1.08.1237).

³⁶ *LF*, chap. 206; *Bernat Guillem, to whom we gave patrimony and a wife named Juliana, who was, through her mother of the lineage of Entença* (chap. 4). The possible date of the marriage can be deduced from the age of their heir, Guillem de Entenza, who was around 10-11 years old at the beginning of 1238, *LF*, chap. 235; Figuière, “Dona Agnès”, 207; see *infra*.

³⁷ Although it states that he was considered one of the most prominent nobles in Aragon due to the lands he inherited from his wife, Juliana de Entenza, *LF* (Soldevila), 254, n. 1.120.

³⁸ Guinot, Enric, “L’alta noblesa catalana en la conquesta de València”, *Anuario de Estudios Medievales*, 26-2 (1996), 647-85, at 655; also in “Catalonia: B. Entenza (Entença)”, *FMG* [online]; Guinot, Enric, “La nobleza aragonesa en los orígenes del reino de Valencia durante el siglo XIII”, in *Bajar al reino: relaciones sociales, económicas y comerciales entre Aragón y Valencia, siglos XIII-XV*, ed. Esteban Sarasa (Zaragoza: Institución “Fernando el Católico”-CSIC, 2017), 167-222, at 172, 210.

³⁹ Tomás, Guillermo, *Montañas, comunidades y cambio social en el Pirineo medieval: Ribagorza en los siglos X-XIV* (Toulouse-Zaragoza: PUM-Universidad de Zaragoza, 2016), 257-61, 378-80.

existence at the beginning of the 13th century of two family branches that shared the same surname: the first had its domains in the mountains of Tarragona, in the future barony of Entença; another in the ancient Ribagorzan domains of the lineage (the small lordship of Entenza and the castellanies of Benabarre, Fals, Perarrúa and Calvera) and the lordship of Alcolea de Cinca (Huesca). A century later there were some Valencian Entença and some Catalan Entença. The barony of the latter would later be included by royal decision in the county of Prades.⁴⁰ The second branch was born from the marriage of Jusiana de Entenza, daughter of Bernardo de Entenza, lord of Alcolea, with Count Hug III of Empúries (d. 1173). Their second son, Ponç Hug de Entenza (d. a. 1199), was the father of Jusiana de Entenza, the future wife of Bernat Guilhèm de Montpelier (Figure 3).⁴¹ Although we do not see him named as such in the documents, Bernat Guilhèm became, following this marriage, lord of Alcolea de Cinca, Entenza, and the aforementioned Ribagorzan castellanies of Benabarre, Fals, Perarrúa, and Calvera. At the beginning of the 20th century, genealogist José de Santiago attributed to him the adoption of a quartered coat of arms that seems clearly later (three gules bars on a silver field and a gules field).⁴²

The most eloquent testimony about his political-territorial affiliation is the document issued by the Cortes of Monzón on 15 October 1236, in which he appears as a witness among the Aragonese nobles: *De regno Aragonis: (...) Bernardo Guillelmi, avunculo nostro...*⁴³ The Entenzas, “the most powerful lineage of Ribagorza during the 13th century”, were,

⁴⁰ Juncosa, Eduard, *El privilegi fundacional del Comtat de les Muntanyes de Prades (6 de maig del 1324): estudi històric, transcripció i traducció* (Reus: s.e., 2024).

⁴¹ She had two brothers: Berenguer IV de Entenza and Gombaldo de Entenza. See Tomás, Montañas, 133, 153 and 287-289; also Romero, Manuel, “El señorío catalán de los Entenza a la luz de la documentación existente en el Archivo Ducal de Medinaceli (Sevilla). Años 1173-1324”, *Historia, Instituciones, documentos*, 4 (1977): 515-582; Pastor, Manuel, *El cartulari de Xestalgar: memòria escrita d'un senyoriu valencià* (Barcelona: Fundació Noguera, 2004), 40-4, at 40-2, 90; and the family tree of Figuière, Philippe, “Entença”, *Academia.edu* [online].

⁴² Santiago, José de, “Los Entenza”, *Linajes de Aragón*, V-13 (1914): 217-29, at 217, 224 (without reference). On the coat of arms of Entenza, see *infra*.

⁴³ *AVJI*, nº 972; *ACRA*, vol. I, t. I, 79-81, at 80 (Monzón, 15.10.1236); Guinot, Enric, “El repartiment feudal de l’horta de València al segle XII: jerarquització social i reordenació del paisatge rural”, in *Repartiments medievals a la Corona d’Aragó (segles XII-XIII)*, coords. Enric Guinot and Josep Torró (Valencia: Universitat de València, 2007), 115-200, at 172.

in fact, the only magnates in the region who considered themselves among the Aragonese.⁴⁴

5. BERNART GUILHÈM'S FIRST APPEARANCES ALONGSIDE HIS NEPHEW, KING JAMES I (AUGUST 1220-FEBRUARY 1233)

Due to his young age or other unknown reasons, Bernat Guilhèm does not seem to have participated in the main events that occurred during the first years of the minority of James I.⁴⁵ The first mention in royal documentation is from August 12, 1220, shortly after the beginning of the siege of Albarracín.⁴⁶ James I remembers in the *LF* some of the barons who participated in this royal defeat in the fight between factions of the nobility, but Bernat Guilhèm is not among them.⁴⁷ He also disappears after this episode. He does not appear in the Cortes of Huesca in 1221, nor in those of Daroca in 1223.⁴⁸ He does reemerge in 1223 in two documents along with other relatives of the king. We see this first in a grant of franchises to the town of Collioure given in June in Huesca with Archbishop Esparc de Labarta, another maternal uncle of James of Occitan origin,⁴⁹ Count Sanç, paternal great-uncle of the king, his son Nuno Sanxes, second uncle of James I, and other Aragonese barons.⁵⁰ In September in Barcelona, he acted in a donation in fief together with Count Sanç, Nuno Sanxes, the Infante Fernando of Montearagón, paternal uncle of the king, and several Aragonese and Catalan nobles.⁵¹

Bernat Guilhèm was not present at the Cortes held in Zaragoza in February 1225.⁵² He was in Lleida with the king on June 30, although he does not appear to have taken part in the failed siege of Peñíscola/Peñíscola (July-September 1225), the first offensive against the Muslims in

⁴⁴ Tomás, *Montañas*, 287, 260.

⁴⁵ For example, the Cortes of Lleida (summer 1214) or the confirmation of the *jaquesa* coinage (Lleida, 5.09.1218), *ACRA*, t. I, vol. I, 29-30 and 33-4.

⁴⁶ *Bernardus Guillelmi*, *DJI*, t. I, n° 24 (Teruel, 12.08.1220).

⁴⁷ *LF*, chap. 16; *LF* (Soldevila), 73, n. 166.

⁴⁸ *ACRA*, t. I, vol. I, 37-38 (Huesca, 19.04.1221) and 43-6 (Daroca, 18.03.1223).

⁴⁹ *Cat. Aspàreg*, cast. *Espàrago* de Labarta or La Barta (fr. Labarthe), Latour, Patrick de, "Sparegus (1203-1206...), un évêque de Comminges improprement identifié", *Revue de Comminges*, 135-1 (2019): 45-57.

⁵⁰ *DJI*, t. I, n° 45 (Huesca, 24.06.1223).

⁵¹ *DJI*, t. I, n° 48 (Barcelona, 12.09.1223)

⁵² *ACRA*, t. I, vol. I, 49-51 (Zaragoza, 23.02.1225).

Valencia.⁵³ At the beginning of April 1226, Bernat Guilhem attended an important family event: James I chose his burial place in the hospitaller monastery of Santa Maria de Sigena, founded by Queen Sancha of Castile, and the burial place of Peter the Catholic.⁵⁴ In the following months, we find Bernat Guilhem in four other royal documents.⁵⁵

The years 1227-1228 are sparse in data, since Bernat Guilhem is only recorded on two occasions.⁵⁶ He did not attend the Cortes of Almodévar (June 1227) and it is surprising not to find him with his brother Ramon de Montpellier at the aforementioned Cortes of Daroca (February 1228) where an oath was sworn to the Infante Alfonso as heir to James I.⁵⁷ Nor does he appear in any source related to the conflict over the county of Urgell (1228) or the conquest of Majorca (1229). The documentary silence goes from November 1228 until the beginning of May 1232, when he witnessed another important family and political event: the first will granted by James I, in which the appointment of the Infante Alfonso as his successor was confirmed.⁵⁸ We then find him in two documents related to the nobility, in August 1232 at Huesca and in February 1233 in Sariñena.⁵⁹

6. THE GOOD AND LOYAL VASSAL: THE SIEGE OF BORRIANA (JUNE-JULY 1233)

Bernat Guilhem de Montpellier comes alive for us for the first time thanks to the recollections of his nephew James I. In the *LF* he is remembered as a protagonist of the siege of Borriana/Burriana (c. June 5-July 15/22, 1233). He is the first mentioned among the Aragonese and Catalan barons present and called “our uncle”⁶⁰ by James. James singles out Bernat Guilhem’s loyalty in sharp contrast to other lords, including James’s uncle Ferdinand of Montearagón, who wanted him to abandon the siege. To prevail over those who held this opinion, the king says he

⁵³ *DJI*, t. I, n° 69 (Lleida, 30.06.1225).

⁵⁴ *DJI*, t. I, n° 78 (Lleida, 3.04.1226).

⁵⁵ *DJI*, t. I, n° 81 (Barcelona, 22.04.1226); *AVJI*, n° 147 (Barcelona, 13.05.1226); *Itinerari*, 62 (Barcelona, 18.05.1226); *DJI*, t. I, n° 83-4 (Barcelona, 10.06.1226).

⁵⁶ *DJI*, t. I, n° 96 (Monzón, 12.10.1227), 106 (Lleida, 10.11.1228).

⁵⁷ *ACRA*, t. I, vol. I, 55-7 (Almodévar, 02.06.1227), 61-4 (6.02.1228).

⁵⁸ *DJI*, t. I, n° 168 (Tarragona, 6.05.1232).

⁵⁹ *AVJI*, n° 155; *Itinerari*, 99-100 (Huesca, 10.08.1232); *DJI*, t. I, n° 176 (Sariñena, 6.02.1233).

⁶⁰ *LF*, chap. 157.

summoned the bishops, the Catalan noblemen, the Aragonese urban militia, and “*Don Bernat Guillem, who will do all I order him (...) and so we will take Borriana, in spite of the devil and the evil men who advised us badly*”.⁶¹

It is now that we hear Bernat Guilhèm speak for the first time. James I remembers him demonstrating his loyalty and military talent, advising the municipal militia to build palisades to tighten the siege and volunteering himself to hold the positions with his men at all times, relieved when necessary by the king’s troops:

Don Bernat Guillem came to us and he said: “Lord, already you have seen what advice they gave you, in saying that you should go from this place. But you would have no need to do it for any reason if you gave me this gift. Order up to three hundred hurdles to be made by the militias, and I, with my company, will go to place them around the moat. And order your company that if the Moors go out to us, they must come to our aid, as we would be poorly helped by the others. And I will be there night and day, and I will not move from there until God gives you Borriana. I will even eat there. Every so often, order your company to come to help me by night in turns, and to come to my aid”.⁶²

This attitude was praised by the Aragonese *mesnadero* Jimeno Pérez de Tarazona, alluding to his status as a “good and loyal vassal”, something that is explained, says James I, because he was *de nostra natura*, that is, of the blood and lineage of the monarch.⁶³

The king recounts how he fought alongside his knights and armed squires at Bernat Guilhèm the palisade, and how one night the Moors made a sortie to set fire to the mantlets he was defending, so James himself had to arm himself and rush to help. When he reached him, he asked: “*What’s happening, Don Bernat Guillem? How goes it?*”. And he said: “*Right and well, Lord. And you see there those Moors who tried to set fire to the hurdles, well, thanks to God, we have defended them well*”.⁶⁴ In reality, things were not going so well, because Bernat Guilhèm was wounded in

⁶¹ *LF*, chap. 169.

⁶² *LF*, chap. 170. The original texts can be consulted in the cited editions of Bruguera and Soldevila.

⁶³ *LF*, chap. 171.

⁶⁴ *LF*, chap. 171-172.

the leg by an arrow and the king himself had to give him emergency treatment:

Then a squire said to us: “Lord, Don Bernat Guillem has been wounded in the leg by an arrow”. And we said: “Let us send for lint from the camp, and draw the arrow out”. And we did so. And we ourselves pulled out the arrow and we put lint with water on the wound, and we had the wound bound with a piece of the shirt of a squire”.

This is a very interesting episode about military medical support in the 13th century. It also reflects James I's personal concern for his maternal uncle. The king wanted to relieve him of his duties until his wound healed, but he responded: “*Lord, I will not do it, as I will get better here as quickly or quicker than if I were in the camp*” (...) *And we recognized that he was showing great courage, so we permitted it.*⁶⁵ Borriana surrendered around 15 July 1233. A week later, Bernat Guilhèm appears as a witness to the royal concession of the castle of Chivert to the Templars for their help in the conquest.⁶⁶

In the following twenty months, Bernat Guilhèm's presence in royal documents was minimal, perhaps explained (at least in part) by his injuries. Only in March 1234 did he appear as a witness to some concessions to cloth merchants.⁶⁷

7. MOMENTS OF PRESTIGE AT COURT AND CLOSENESS TO THE KING

From 1235 onwards, we see an increase in Bernat Guilhèm's documentary presence, which denotes closeness to the king, prestige, and a privileged position at court. Unlike other leading nobles, Bernat Guilhèm is not mentioned, in the ecclesiastical Cortes of Tarragona held in February 1235,⁶⁸ but he is mentioned a month later in the Cortes of Zaragoza, which promulgated statutes of Peace and Truce. We see him early among the signatories following another relative, the Infante Fernando of

⁶⁵ *LF*, chap. 173. See Ferragud, Carmel, *Medicina per a un nou regne. El paper de la medicina i els seus practicants en la construcció del Regne de València (s. XIII)* (Alzira: Bromera, 2008), 157-8.

⁶⁶ *DJI*, t. I, n° 183 (Borriana, 22.07.1233).

⁶⁷ *DJI*, t. I, n° 198 (Lleida, 18.03.1234).

⁶⁸ *ACRA*, t. I, vol. I, 67-9 (Tarragona, 7.02.1235).

Montearagón, paternal uncle of King James.⁶⁹ About ten days earlier, Bernat Guilhèm had acted as a witness in a royal donation to the monastery of Rueda.⁷⁰

The references multiplied at the end of the year. Bernat Guilhèm was the first witness to two royal concessions granted on 21 and 23 October 1235 in Lleida.⁷¹ Four days later, he was present at the donation of the castle of Peñalba to the monastery of Sigena, this time in the company of two other Occitan barons linked to the Crown of Aragon: Count Roger Bernard de Foix (1223-1241) and Viscount Raymond II Trencavel of Béziers (c. 1207-c. 1267).⁷² In December, Bernat Guilhèm participated in Barcelona in the agreements related to the marriage of James I to Violante of Hungary –the donation *propter nuptias* and the increase in her dowry–, important matters for both the family and the kingdom. In the second, Bernat Guilhèm also appears as the first witness. He occupied the same privileged position on those same days in the granting of the purchase of movable property to the Bishop of Barcelona Berenguer de Palou II and in the donation of the castle and town of Cervera to the Order of the Hospital.⁷³

A year later, Bernat Guilhèm appears in similar terms in other events of great political importance. First, in the aforementioned Cortes of Monzón, convoked to prepare for the conquest of Valencia, guarantee the Peace and Truce of the kingdom, and to confirm the Jacan currency (October 1236). As we have seen, Bernat Guilhèm here joined the nobility of the kingdom of Aragon, along with his brothers-in-law Berenguer and Gombaldo de Entenza. Among the witnesses, he is once again placed directly after the Infante Fernando of Montearagón and, once again, in the company of the Count of Foix.⁷⁴ About two weeks later, we see Bernat Guilhèm in the General Curia of Lleida, where the provisions of the Cortes of Monzón regarding the conquest of the kingdom of Valencia were confirmed, and James I promised lands to all who would assist him in the

⁶⁹ *ACRA*, t. I, vol. I, 73-5, at 74 (Zaragoza, 18.03.1235).

⁷⁰ *DJI*, t. I, nº 215 (Zaragoza, 7.03.1235).

⁷¹ *AVJI*, nº 925 (Lleida, 21.10.1235); *DJI*, t. I, nº 222 (Lleida, 23.10.1235).

⁷² *DJI*, t. I, nº 223 (Lleida, 27.10.1235).

⁷³ *DJI*, t. I, nº 224 (Barcelona, 11.12.1235), 225 (Barcelona, 13.12.1235), 226 (Barcelona, 23.12.1235), 227 (Barcelona, 23.12.1235). On this bishop, see Alvira, Martín, *Mitra y loriga. El obispo de Barcelona Berenguer de Palou II (c. 1197-1241)* (Andorra: Anem, 2026, forthcoming).

⁷⁴ *DJI*, t. I, nº 238; *AVJI*, nº 972; *ACRA*, vol. I, t. I, 79-81, at 80-1 (Monzón, 15.10.1236).

enterprise, taking up the cross for the exaltation of the Christian faith (*asumentes crucem ad expugnandum regnum Valencie pro exaltacione fidei christiane*). The first witness of this document is again Bernat Guilhèm, also here with the Count of Foix.⁷⁵

In mid-November, he was still in Lérida with the king, acting as a witness, first after Ferdinand of Montearagon, to a concession to the Templars.⁷⁶ It is surprising not to find him again a month later in his hometown of Montpellier, when James I paid homage to the bishop of Maguelone.⁷⁷

8. THE RELATIVE AND GOOD SERVANT: COMMANDING THE PUIG DE SANTA MARIA (1237)

The bulk of the information on the last thirteen months of Bernat Guilhèm's life, until his death in January 1238, comes from the *Book of Deeds* by his nephew James I and, to a lesser extent, from the chronicle of Bernat Desclot (c. 1288). Once the conquest of Valencia was underway, the king planned to capture the castle of Anesa (also called Enesa, Yuballa, Cebolla or Cepolla, de la Patà and later Puig de Santa Maria), located on a moat (*puig*) about 15 km northeast of the capital. James's idea was to fortify the castle and turn it into the base for a strategic siege of Valencia designed to exhaust the city militarily and economically and force its surrender. To lead this delicate operation, he needed a reliable leader. After thinking it over, he decided to choose Bernat Guilhèm for reasons of kinship, trust and feudal obligation: *because he (...) was our uncle on our mother's side, and because the goods that he possessed, he possessed in our name*. The king proposed this to Bernat Guilhèm in secret:

So, as we were going along the road, we called him and drew aside with him from the road, and we said to him: "Don Bernat Guillem, you are a man whom we love and we trust, and you are very closely related to me, and I would like you to prosper and to give you the occasion to do us such a service that, because of the good that we do you, everybody will know that we have done a good thing in conceding it to you. Now, we have thought of something in which you can greatly serve us, and for which we would be obligated to do great good to you in return for the service that you would have done us".

⁷⁵ *DJI*, t. I, n° 239; *AVJI*, n° 550; *ACRA*, vol. I, t. I, 81-2, at 82 (Lleida, 28.10.1236).

⁷⁶ *AVJI*, n° 9 (Lleida, 15.11.1236).

⁷⁷ *DJI*, t. I, n° 241 (Montpellier, 16.12.1236).

Then he thanked us very much for that, and kissed our hand because of the mercy we have promised him, and asked us to tell him what the service would be.

James I then explained his strategy to take Valencia:

And we told him that it was our will to go and besiege the Puig de Cebolla, which lies nearly two leagues distance from Valencia; and that, when we had taken it, we would place him there with a hundred knights on that frontier.

*We explained to him that the castle was located on a hill, and that it was good and strong and well-constructed; and that we would give him with provisions for a year, and that all through the winter he would have to maintain the frontier there; and that when the summer came [in 1237] we would go there and we would devastate Valencia, and with the damage that they would receive from our raids and with the devastation we would do them, we should have ripened it just as one would with a fruit that one wishes to eat. And when we saw that it was the hour to besiege Valencia and that the city was in a grievous situation through lack provisions, we would summon all our nobles and townsmen: “Come to help us besiege Valencia and, with the will of God, Who will help us, we will take it. And when Valencia is taken, the entire kingdom shall be conquered down to Xàtiva”.*⁷⁸

Upon hearing the proposal, Bernat Guilhèm expressed some doubts, but the king convinced him by offering him feudal rewards (honour, prestige) and appealing to the ideal of death in the service of God and king:

*“if God allows you to fulfil this service which we have ordered you to do, I will make you the most honoured man in my kingdom, and if you die in God’s service and ours, you shall certainly obtain paradise. And for these two reasons you should not have any doubts in this matter”. Then he came to us and kissed our hand, and said that he would take the gift that we granted him.*⁷⁹

⁷⁸ *LF*, chap. 206. Regarding the conquest of the Kingdom of Valencia, see Burns, Robert I., *El regne croat de València: un país de frontera al segle XIII* (Valencia: Tres i Quatre, 1993); López Elum, Pedro, *La conquista y repoblación valenciana durante el reinado de Jaime I* (Valencia: P. López-F. Domenech, 1995), 57-63; Guichard, Pierre, *Al-Ándalus frente a la conquista cristiana: los musulmanes de Valencia (siglos XI-XIII)* (Madrid-Valencia: Biblioteca Nueva-Universitat de València, 2001), 531-68, esp. 545-51; Torró, Josep, *El naixement d’una colònia. Dominació i resistència a la frontera valenciana (1238-1276)* (Sueca: Universitat de València, 2006), 25-72, esp. 25-46.

⁷⁹ *LF*, chap. 207.

They then agreed to summon the royal army at Easter (30 March 1237), and the king summoned the nobles, the towns, and villages. At the beginning of Lent (around 4 March 1237), James I learned that Puig Castle had been razed by the Moors. In April, he set out to rebuild it with his retinue and perhaps some nobles and men from the councils of Daroca and Teruel.⁸⁰ James I camped on the Puig plain after 19 April 1237. The nobles then arrived with the councils of Zaragoza, Daroca, and Teruel, and work began on rebuilding the castle; this lasted for two months (May-June).⁸¹ The king ordered continuous raids on the surrounding area and the construction of a causeway connected to the sea to ensure the transport of supplies.⁸²

Desclot's account, less detailed, summarizes the events by saying that the king sent *En Bernat Guilhèm d'Entença and En Guillem d'Aguiló with eighty knights, and as many as thirty brothers of the Temple and the Hospital, and two thousand men on foot, two leagues from the city of Valencia to establish themselves on a hill called Puig de Cebolla* and from there to attack the Saracens continuously.⁸³

8.1. Trust betrayed

James I recalls that he had been waiting at Puig for three months when, perhaps at the beginning of July, two knights informed him that Bernat Guilhèm was in Borriana.⁸⁴ His annoyance at his uncle's long delay is evident. The latter went to Puig de la Cebolla Castle the following day, and James I went out to meet him. One hundred knights had come with him, plus another forty who were on their way. The *LF* then reproduces a very interesting scene that provides insight into James I's military talent, specifically his understanding of the importance of logistics in the art of

⁸⁰ *LF*, chap. 208-10; *LF* (Soldevila), n. 1.302.

⁸¹ *LF*, chap. 211; *LF* (Soldevila), n. 1.310, 1.313, 1.315. On June 21, the king was in Monzón, *Itinerari*, 127, 128.

⁸² *LF*, chap. 212.

⁸³ Desclot, chap. XLIX.

⁸⁴ *LF*, chap. 213. Soldevila stated that Bernat Guilhèm appears among the signatories of a document issued at the *castrum de Cebola* on July 9 (*LF*, no. 1.315). However, among the witnesses cited by Miret, whom Soldevila follows, only Infante Fernando, the steward Pedro Cornel, Pedro Fernández de Azagra, García Romeu, Artal de Luna, Jimeno de Urrea, Berenguer de Entenza and Guillem d'Aguiló are listed (*Itinerari*, 128).

war.⁸⁵ After greeting each other and taking an interest in him, the king asked him: “*But what about the provisions?*”. Bernat Guilhèm, uncomfortable, wanted to postpone his answer, which made the king suspect there was a problem.⁸⁶ Bernat Guilhèm then confessed to his nephew that he had spent almost all his resources supplying the knights, which is why he had not brought provisions to provision Cebolla Castle. The only things he had left in Tortosa were 300 bushels of wheat and 50 pigs pledged for a value of 1,500 *sueldos*. James I then expressed great displeasure at having his trust betrayed because he knew that, without supplies, the Puig could not be held and without the Puig he could not maintain pressure on the defenders of Valencia:

*“For God’s sake, Don Bernat Guillem, you have played a mean trick both on me and on yourself! For I trusted you and did not prepare myself for this, and now you cannot help me, nor I you (...) And you should know, for certain, that if you were not so closely related to me and that I did not love you so much, I do not know any man in the world on whom I would not avenge myself more for what you have done to me. For if this place cannot be held, Valencia is lost, now and perhaps forever after, since we will never again have so good an opportunity”.*⁸⁷

The king reacted quickly and well to save the situation, improvising the acquisition of bread, wine and oats in Borriana, buying sheep, cows and goats from the loot of the raids and seizing the cargo (flour, wine, oats) of some merchant ships anchored in Salou.⁸⁸

The only document in which Bernat Guilhèm appears during the Puig campaign is an exchange of the king with the Aragonese Rodrigo Jiménez de Luesia dated in the *castrum de Cebolla* on 1 August 1237. James is accompanied by the Infante Ferdinand, the steward of Aragon Pedro Cornel, Pedro Fernández de Azagra, Artal de Luna, his brother-in-law Berenguer de Entenza, García Romeu, Jimeno de Urrea, Guillem, clerk of the bishop of Barcelona and chancellor Berenguer de Palou II, and the

⁸⁵ Donald J. Kagay, “Jaime I of Aragon: Child and Master of the Spanish Reconquest”, *The Journal of Medieval Military History* 8 (2010): 69-108, at 84-90; Martín Alvira, “El Llibre del Fets de Jaime I de Aragón como manual militar”, *Studia Historica. Historia Medieval*, 40-1 (2022): 35-62, at 43-4.

⁸⁶ *LF*, chap. 213.

⁸⁷ *LF*, chap. 214.

⁸⁸ *LF*, chap. 215-6, 265; also *LF* (Soldevila), n. 1.327, 1.328, 1.331.

notary Guillem Galceran.⁸⁹ Some documents from those months and the news from the *Repartiment* allow us to know the names of other companions who were with Bernat Guilhèm in the Puig castle that summer: Rodrigo Jiménez de Tauste, Don Ladrón, the curia steward Jimeno Lopez *Danvios*, Gil de Atrosillo, García Pérez de Figuerola,⁹⁰ the Catalan Guillem d'Aguiló and Lope Martínez, commander of Alcañiz of the Order of Calatrava.⁹¹

8.2. The good leader: the battle of Puig de Santa Maria (August-September 1237)

In the absence of the king, who had departed Puig and was in Huesca, the emir of *Balansiya*, Zayyan ibn Mardanish, appeared with his entire army (600 knights and 11,000 men, according to the *LF*) to evict the Christians.⁹² The date, which is not clear, has been placed at the end of August or, more likely, in the first days of September 1237.⁹³ Bernat Desclot's chronicle better describes what happened among the Levantine Andalusians. The news of the presence of the Christians near Valencia alerted the Saracen king, who held a council and sent messengers and letters to the people of his domains, as far as Murcia, to summon his troops on horseback and on foot.⁹⁴

According to James I, the Christians learned what was happening when ten men on horseback who had gone to plunder the outskirts of Valencia returned to Puig and informed Don Bernat Guillem d'Entença and Don Berenguer [de Entenza] that Zaén [Zayyan] was coming with his entire army.⁹⁵ According to Desclot, however, it was a Christian captive who had escaped from prison in Valencia who warned Bernat Guilhèm and Guillem d'Aguiló that *all the Saracens of the kingdom of Murcia and the*

⁸⁹ *Bernardus Guillelmi, DJI*, t. II, n° 244 (*castrum de Cebolla*, 1.08.1237). As we saw above, we have no record of his presence in the document dated July 9 (*Itinerari*, 128) as Soldevila stated, *LF*, n. 1.315.

⁹⁰ *AVJI*, n° 164 (*castrum de Çebola*, 25.06.1237), 726 (27.07.1237), 994 (Puig de Santa Maria, 23.07.1237), 995 (Puig de Santa Maria, 1.08.1237)

⁹¹ *Itinerari*, 128; *AVJI*, n° 996 (Puig de Santa Maria, 4.08.1237), 993 (Puig de Santa Maria, 8.07.1237).

⁹² *LF*, chap. 217.

⁹³ *LF* (Soldevila), n. 1339; *LF* (Butiñá), n. 377.

⁹⁴ Desclot, chap. XLIX.

⁹⁵ *LF*, chap. 217.

*kingdom of Valencia, on horseback and on foot, would appear before them the following day.*⁹⁶

The famous battle of Puig de Santa Maria then took place. This was the most important pitched battle of the conquest of Valencia and the second great battle of the reign of James I (the first was Portopí, during the conquest of Mallorca). The combat was a great victory for the Catalan-Aragonese troops led by Bernat Guilhèm de Montpelier, his brother-in-law Berenguer de Entenza, and the Catalan baron Guillem d'Aguiló.⁹⁷ In the *LF*, James I reproduced the information contained in the battle reports delivered to him by the Huescan knight Guillén de Salas, sent as a messenger by the Puig garrison. The king described his men as good Christian knights who fulfilled the religious precepts of the holy war and decided to fight a pitched battle rather than defend the castle in an uncertain siege:

*Then, when they had heard their Mass, and those who had not already received it had received the Body of Jesus Christ, they all went outside of Puig, armed, since they said that if they shut themselves in, it would be worse for them, for they would more quickly be captured there than if they were outside. Then they commended themselves to Our Lord and determined to wage a battle with them.*⁹⁸

Desclot's later account takes up these details but recreates the events in much greater detail, giving great prominence to Bernat Guilhèm de Montpelier. The Christian troops of Puig met in council after learning of the imminent arrival of the Muslims, and he asked them to give their opinion, *whatever would be best for their welfare and for the honour of the king*. Some proposed abandoning the position, but Guillem d'Aguiló immediately took to the floor to remind them that they were there *"for the glory of God and of our Lady Saint Mary, and that His name may be exalted and that His holy worship may be sanctified here, and, likewise, that these unbelieving people may be destroyed and put to confusion, they and all Muslims like them, so that we, although we be but few men, may*

⁹⁶ Desclot, chap. XLIX.

⁹⁷ The military aspects of the battle in García Fitz, Francisco, "*Volien haver la batayla ab éls. La batalla del Puig (1237)*", in "*Fechos de armas*". *15 hitos bélicos del Medievo ibérico, ss. XI-XVI*, coords. Martín Alvira and Miguel Gomes Martins (Madrid: La Ergástula, 2021), 87-99.

⁹⁸ *LF*, chap. 217.

save our souls at this place. But we shall be more even than they, for God will be with us". This harangue of holy war was concluded with elements of honour and prestige typical of chivalric ideology: "...and the banner of Aragon will not retreat (...) for it is better to die with honour than to live with dishonour. Because, if we die, our souls will go to God but, if we live with dishonour, our souls and our bodies will alike be lost".⁹⁹

Bernat Guilhèm then speaks to endorse these words of great truth, wisdom, and great nobleness, and each man must bear them in his heart. Desclot, a chronicler fond of stratagems, now introduces a more technical discourse to demonstrate Bernat Guilhèm's ability as a military leader.¹⁰⁰ Because of the interesting information it provides, it is worth reproducing it in full:

It is very true that we here are but a small company of horsemen and footsoldiers, yet despite this, let us have unshaken faith in God by whom we live, for He will be on our side. Now let us arm for battle as best we may be able and order our line, for the Saracens have many men, without number, and will come upon us savagely and in disorder and they will think to take us straightway in their power. But we will act in the following manner: we have here four score horsemen, trusty and sure and clad in armour,¹⁰¹ and we have also, of mules and other beasts of burden,¹⁰² a good two hundred and there are with us two thousand men of foot. Now let them that have neither trappings¹⁰³ nor blazons take their quilted coverlets and place them over the mules and other beasts,¹⁰⁴ and let us make as many mounted horsemen as we shall be able. Moreover, let us use the banners and the standards which have brought hither our supplies.¹⁰⁵ And when the morning shall come, I shall sally forth from the ramparts with fifty horsemen and a thousand men at arms and I will fall upon the host of the Saracens on the

⁹⁹ Desclot, chap. XLIX.

¹⁰⁰ The reconstructed version of the story in Cingolani, Stefano M., *Historiografia, propaganda i comunicació al segle XIII: Bernat Desclot i les dues redaccions de la seva crònica* (Barcelona: IEC, 2006), 210-7, at 214.

¹⁰¹ Protected by chainmail and caparison.

¹⁰² In the original, *rossins* (rouncies).

¹⁰³ *Cat. trepes*: cloth coverings that were placed on the horse to protect its hair and skin from chafing caused by the chainmail, Riquer, M. de, *L'arnès del cavaller. Armes i armadures catalanes medieval* (Barcelona: La Magrana-RBA, 2011; first ed. 1968), nº 16, 82, 87.

¹⁰⁴ In the original, *rossins* (rouncies).

¹⁰⁵ This information aligns with the construction of a causeway by James I to supply the Puig fortress with supplies from the sea, *LF*, chap. 212.

side towards the south and all the other forces, both horse and foot, shall remain with Guillem d'Aguiló and the Templars and the knights of the Hospital. And the other footsoldiers, with all the standards and with twelve trumpeters shall hide behind the hill, with your banners flying and make as great a show of strength as you may and with a loud shout fall upon the host from the other side, And when the Saracens perceive this, they will think the number of men there to be far greater and that it is the king coming to bring aid, so that they will be dispersed and begin to flee. Then shall we be swift to follow close upon them and to strike them down".¹⁰⁶

In this passage, we see the need to prepare well for a frontal battle, as well as knowledge of Muslim tactics (simulated flight or *tornafuy*; quick movements of horsemen, etc.) aimed at disrupting and deceiving (*felonament*) the Christians. We also see great confidence in the mounted troops, especially when they were well protected. Desclot's portrait of Bernat Guilhèm is that of a good commander who organizes his men, gives precise orders, and knows how to exploit the limited resources available. He is also a leader capable of deceiving and shocking the enemy through the division and concealment of his forces, surprise attacks, the proper use of standards—one of them the *Señal Real*, the royal ensign that was meant to make the Saracens believe that the king of Aragon was coming to the aid of his men—and the use of musical instruments (noise).

According to reports received by James I, the Muslims formed up with the frontier foot soldiers (Jérica, Segorbe, Liria, Onda) in the vanguard, the most experienced in the front line, and behind them the knights with the rest of the infantry. The Christians charged, but their initial attacks were repulsed. They then charged downhill again and retook their lost positions. The Andalusians regained their spirit with loud shouts and also regained ground, forcing the Christians to retreat to one side of the castle. Then the Christians of Puig warned their men that the Muslims were retreating. When they heard this, the knights charged, shouting "Shame, knights, shame!" and "Holy Mary, Holy Mary!" The Muslims in the rear began to rout, and the Christian charge scattered the vanguard troops, initiating a pursuit that reached the *huerta* of Valencia. Many Saracens and three Christian knights died, one of them the standard-bearer of Bernat Guilhèm,

¹⁰⁶ Desclot, chap. XLIX.

which seems to be clear evidence of his own personal commitment to the battle. James I confirms that many knights were seriously wounded.¹⁰⁷

In Desclot's version, we see Bernat Guilhèm charging with his 50 knights and 1,000 footsoldiers, striking many Saracens to the ground, *killed by blows from their lances*. The Muslims defended themselves with lances and crossbows until they saw Guillem d'Aguiló emerge with his 200 men on horseback, mules, and horses, his 2,000 footsoldiers, the banners, and the royal standard (*l'estendard major reial*) to the sound of trumpets. They then began to flee and were pursued and massacred by the Christians for a league and a half, near the city of Valencia. Among the casualties, he adds seven foot soldiers to the three horsemen in the *LF*. He greatly exaggerates when he says that for every Christian killed, there were a thousand Saracens. He also exaggerates when referring to the loot obtained, as he speaks of the capture of many horses, mules, nags and weapons, a fact that contradicts the much closer and more reliable testimony of James I.¹⁰⁸

8.3. Victory and legend: the hero of Puig de Santa Maria

Even though Desclot's story is "invented", the heroic portrait it paints of Bernat Guilhèm de Montpellier is of interest to us, as it speaks to his good reputation at the end of the 13th century.¹⁰⁹ The memorialization of the victory at Puig certainly did not diminish its importance. This can be seen in the history of the Crown of Aragon compiled in Latin, Catalan, and Aragonese by King Peter the Ceremonious in the mid-14th century (formerly called the *Crónica de San Juan de la Peña*). Here, the victory of 1237 is considered a good example of the divine aid that the fortunate James I received during his many wars against the Muslims. This account introduces the appearance of Saint George to Bernat Guilhèm's troops as an explanatory element of the miraculous victory of the Christians:

Many of the saints aided him and his subjects fighting for him when he struggled against the Saracens. Once he sent the noble knight Bernat Guillem of Entença with other knights of Catalonia and Aragon into Valencia. They were on a certain hill now called Santa Maria del Puig and

¹⁰⁷ *LF*, chap. 218. The other casualties were the Aragonese Ruy Jiménez de Luesia and Jimeno Pérez de Triergua.

¹⁰⁸ Desclot, chap. XLIX. See *infra*.

¹⁰⁹ Regarding the recreation of the battle see Cingolani, *Historiografía*, 212-5.

*a countless number of Saracens had rushed upon them. When the battle raged most fiercely between them, Saint George appeared with a great army of celestial knights. With their aid, the Christians gained the day without a single one of them dying in battle.*¹¹⁰



Figure 4: “Battle of Puig”
Altarpiece of the *Centenar de la Ploma* or *Saint George* (c. 1405)
Victoria & Albert Museum (London)

Although nothing is mentioned about it in the earliest sources, the intervention of Saint George was closely linked to the memory of the victory of 1237. Proof of this is the well-known iconographic representation of the Battle of Puig, included in the famous *Retablo del*

¹¹⁰ *CRCAR*, chap. 35.

Centenar de la Ploma, one of the masterpieces of Valencian Gothic.¹¹¹ It was created around 1405 by the Aragonese Miguel Alcañiz, the German Andrés Marzal de Sas, and other artisans for the church of the Valencian local militia of the hundred crossbowmen who protected the *Senyera*, the city's standard (called "the Hundred of the Feather", because of the decoration on their caps). Its patron saint was Saint George, which is why the warrior saint occupies a privileged place in the center of the altarpiece (also called the *Retable of Saint George*). The central panel depicts his appearance at the Battle of Puig de Santa Maria (Figure 4).

The representation is a model of recreated memory, as the largest figures in the foreground are King James I, who was not present, and the aforementioned Saint George. The historical protagonists appear in the background, at the top of the scene, identified only by the arms on their banners: the golden eagle on a sable field by Guillem d'Aguiló; and the arms of the Entenza family by Bernat Guilhèm (golden field with a sable chief row).

The interpretation of the Battle of Puig would come closer to historical reality a century later. This can be seen in the introduction written by the Valencian theologian and historian Pere Antoni Beuter at the beginning of his *Primera part de la Història de València*, composed in 1538, where the memory of the miracle of Saint George is closely linked to that of Bernat Guilhèm as the architect of the victory of 1237:

“[The memorial of the capture of Valencia was celebrated on the day of Saint Denis in honour of Saint George] because it is the surname of Aragon and because it has shown itself to be so supportive and favorable in this conquest, which first appeared in the battle of Puig, where Captain Don Bernat Guilhèm d'Entença defeated the power of the Moorish king of Valencia with the help of the blessed saint”.¹¹²

Another hagiographic legend of the Battle of Puig is the one that associates the victory with the help of the Virgin Mary. We have already seen that James I claimed that the Christians defeated the Saracens with the cry of “Holy Mary!” and that Puig de Cebolla was already called “de

¹¹¹ See Cingolani, Stefano M., *Sant Jordi. Una llegenda mil·lenària* (Barcelona: Base, 2014), 116-7, 128 and 129-30 (other depictions of the saint).

¹¹² Beuter, Pere Antoni, *Primera part de la Història de València (1538)*, ed. Vicent Josep Escartí (Valencia: Universitat de València, 1998), 35.

Santa María” in the time of Bernat Guilhèm.¹¹³ In his Latin translation of the *LF*, composed in the early 14th century, the Majorcan Dominican Pere Marsili modified the original text to recreate the name change during the days of its first occupation by the King of Aragon and Bernat Guilhèm.¹¹⁴ Later, he added the *inventio* of an image of the Virgin inside a large bell belonging to an old monastic church from the time of the Visigoths, which Christian troops found while excavating to rebuild the fortress. In the account by Master Beuter, written in the mid-16th century, we again find the laudatory memory of Bernat Guilhèm de Montpellier:

“When the Castellan of the castle, Don Bernardo Guillem Dentença, was informed of what was happening, he went to see that marvel, and kneeling before that image, he worshipped the blessed virgin Queen of Heaven, commending himself to her gloriously with tears”.¹¹⁵

The Aragonese chronicler Bernardino Gómez Miedes, in his biography of King James (1584), also recalls that news of the discovery was communicated to the *alcaide* of Puig.¹¹⁶ This historical-religious tradition would be associated at the same time with another well-known Occitan figure from the time of James I, Pèire Nolasco (Saint Peter Nolasco), founder of the Order of Mercy (the Mercedarians), the famous Redemptorist order founded during the time of the Conqueror. This can be seen in Zurbarán’s painting dedicated to the discovery of the image of the Virgin of Puig (1630), in which King James and Saint Peter Nolasco appear in the foreground and, on the left-hand side, alongside other armed

¹¹³ *Podium Sancte Marie, DJI*, vol. II, n° 250 (Puig de Santa Maria, 24.01.1238); *LF*, chap. 218, 206.

¹¹⁴ Pere Marsili, chap. XXV (*LF*, chap. 217) and XXVIII (*LF*, chap. 237). See Badenes, Julio Samuel, “Los frescos del Camarín de la Virgen de El Puig de Santa María, del pintor José Vergara: iconografía, significado y valor hermenéutico para los valencianos del siglo XXI”, *Archivo de arte valenciano*, 91 (2010): 105-19, at 108 and 114-5.

¹¹⁵ Beuter, Pere Antoni, *Primera (y segunda) parte de la Corónica General de toda España, y especialmente del Reyno de Valencia* (Valencia: Joan Mey, 1551; first ed. 1550), book II, chap. xxxi, f. 90r.

¹¹⁶ Gómez Miedes, Bernardino, *La historia del muy alto e invencible rey Don Jaime de Aragón, primero deste nombre llamado el Conquistador* (Valencia: Casa de la viuda de Pedro de Huete, 1584), chap. XX, 213-4; and Badenes, Julio Samuel, “Los frescos del Camarín de la Virgen de El Puig de Santa María, del pintor José Vergara: iconografía, significado y valor hermenéutico para los valencianos del siglo XXI”, *Archivo de arte valenciano*, 91 (2010): 105-19, at 112-3.

knights, one looking at the viewer is none other than Bernat Guilhèm de Montpellier himself, the *alcaide* of Puig de Santa Maria (Figure 5).¹¹⁷



Figure 5: Francisco de Zurbarán, *Saint Peter Noslasco Discovering the Virgin of Puig* (1630).

Cincinnati Art Museum (Wikimedia Commons)

The two hagiographic legends of the Battle of Puig were combined in the 16th century, as can be seen in the *dels llaors i gojos de la Santíssima Verge* (praises and joys of the Most Blessed Virgin) (Figure 6). Saint George charges and puts the Muslims to flight alongside a knight in full armour who appears to be Bernat Guilhèm, while King James I kneels in prayer before the Virgin of Puig, above whose head is depicted the bell in which she was found.

¹¹⁷ Zuriaga, Vicent Francesc, “El rey fundador: Jaume I en la iconografía mercedaria”, *Potestas: Religión, poder y monarquía. Revista del Grupo Europeo de Investigación Histórica*, 15 (2019): 7-32, at 26-8; and Badenes, “Los frescos”, 112-3.



Figure 6: Woodcut of the praises and joys of the Most Blessed Verge (16th century).
(reproduced by Badenes, “Los frescos”, 113)

This iconographic memory, somewhat more in tune with historical reality than the late medieval one—insofar as King James I is not depicted fighting—remains relevant today. Visitors to the Royal Hall of the Puig de Santa Maria Monastery can see it in a large composition made in the mid-20th century using *socarrat* (Valencian painted tiles) and which reproduces the same scene from the 16th-century woodcut in greater detail. In the center of the image, two knights, Bernat Guilhèm de Montpellier and Guillem d’Aguiló, accompanied by Saint George, defeat the Muslims (Figure 7). The legend surrounding the composition describes it as follows:

“...the Christian knights led by Don Bernat Guilhèm d’Entença, entrusting themselves to Our Lord, left the castle and, shouting ‘Holy Mary’ with the help of Lord Saint George, won the battle during the last days of August 1237”.



Figure 7: “The Battle of El Puig in 1237”

Socarrat by Jaime de Scals (1913-1978)

Royal Hall of the Royal Monastery of Puig de Santa Maria (Valencia)

In the same Royal Hall, another *socarrat* of the same style imaginatively recreates the delivery of the church of Puig by King James I to the Order of Mercy, here in the presence of Bernat Guihèm and Guillem Aguiló, to the right of the throne, and of Saint Peter Nolasco and the Mercedarian Joan Verdera, to his left (Figure 8).¹¹⁸

¹¹⁸ See *Monasterios de España. Real Monasterio Mercedario El Puig de Santa María* [online].



Figure 8: “Jaime I hands over the Puig church to the Order of Mercy”

On the left, in the foreground next to the king, Bernat Guillem of Montpellier with Guillem d’Aguiló. *Socarrat* by Jaime de Scals (1913-1978)

Royal Hall of the Royal Monastery of Puig de Santa Maria (M. Alvira)

8.4. After the battle

The account of the Battle of Puig in Bernat Desclot’s chronicle maintains a triumphalist tone until the end. After his defeat, the terrified Saracen king of Valencia ordered all the city gates to be sealed except one. The news of the victory was communicated to James I, and the Christians held rituals of thanksgiving to God and expressed their joy.¹¹⁹ The events are presented in more detail and realistically in the *LF*. After receiving the news and ordering a *Te Deum* in the cathedral of Huesca to celebrate the triumph, the king summoned the nobles and councils from Daroca, as well as pack animals with supplies, ordering them to gather in Teruel. He then

¹¹⁹ Desclot, chap. XLIX.

marched toward Puig, where he was received by his uncle, Bernat Guilhèm, Berenguer de Entenza, the friars of the military orders, and Guillem d'Aguiló. He congratulated them all and promised to replace the horses they had lost, also giving them a fifth of the booty as a reward for their victory. After resupplying the fortress, he marched to Borriana. Bernat Guilhèm and Guillem de Aguiló accompanied him and his men to Puçol. There he dismissed them so they could return to defend Puig.¹²⁰

8.5. Between Muret and Puig: the forsaken vassal and the good king

Rumours of a possible advance by the Emir of Valencia's army toward the Puig to take advantage of his absence were etched in the king's memories. While he was in Borriana, Guillem d'Aguiló arrived first by boat from the Puig, but the king ignored his warning. What happened next reveals that Bernat Guilhèm and other nobles were trying to keep King James I away from the risks of a pitched battle with the Muslims. The disaster of Muret was still on everyone's mind. At midnight, an Aragonese knight, Sancho de Mora, arrived with a message from the Puig:

“God save you, lord. I have come here by order of Don Bernat Guillem d'Entença to speak to Don Pedro Cornel, since he did not wish to send word of it to you”.

When the Aragonese *ricohombre* insisted, the messenger replied:

“Don Bernat Guillem sends word to you that Zaén [Zayyan], with all his forces, will be at Puig tomorrow morning, and that he must do battle with him. Now, if he saw you in such a plight, he would not fail you, so he asks that you will go to help him”.

Pedro Cornel proposed that the king withdraw northward while he went to reinforce the forces at Puig, saying: *“For since Don Bernat Guillem has sent word to me, I will not let him down”*. James I recalls his discussion with Pedro Cornel: the latter warning him of the danger; the king expressing his desire to be present at the battle and not abandon his subjects. The monarch ultimately prevailed and began the march toward Puig, confessing, hearing mass, and taking communion along the way

¹²⁰ *LF*, chap. 219-22.

because he believed a pitched battle was imminent. Shortly before reaching Puig, a messenger informed him that the news was untrue and that his men were not in danger.¹²¹

James then decided, along with his uncle, to inspect the surroundings of Valencia to ascertain what was happening. Several captured Muslims confirmed that there was neither a concentration of troops nor anything that would suggest an attack on Puig. James I withdrew again to Borriana to organize the dispatch of reinforcements from Aragon and Catalonia. His uncle accompanied him again to Puçol, and Berenguer de Entenza a little further.¹²² The *LF* continues with other interesting passages about the military operations around Valencia although Bernat Guilhèm is not mentioned in these passages.¹²³

9. BERNAT GUILHÈM'S DEATH AND THE CRISIS OF PUIG (JANUARY 1238)

The king learned of his uncle's death while in Zaragoza. The cause is unknown, and we have no evidence from other sources. The news first reached the nobles, who commissioned Infante Fernando of Montearagón, James I's uncle, to communicate it to him. The *LF* shows the king's deeply felt reaction, in a passage that also provides insight into his uncle's personality and virtues:

*Now, we were deeply upset when we heard these words, and for a good while we could not respond to them, because of the great sadness that we felt at his death. Then, after a while, we made an effort to respond to them, and we said to them: "We are deeply saddened by the death of Don Bernat Guillem for many reasons. First, he was our relation, since he was our uncle on our mother's side, and we had entrusted to him a place as prized to us as Puig, through which one can take Valencia and the entire kingdom. Furthermore, we grieve for a reason that is greater than all that we have said: because he was a very good and loyal person, who had a great desire to serve us, and he has died serving God and us. But let us console ourselves about him, because his soul, as all good Christians must believe, will go to a good place".*¹²⁴

¹²¹ *LF*, chap. 223-4.

¹²² *LF*, chap. 225.

¹²³ *LF*, chap. 226-30.

¹²⁴ *LF*, chap. 231, 232 (quote).

James I recalls his great distress, to the point that the next day after mass he refused to leave his chamber so that others would not notice his pain. After meeting to deliberate, the nobles entrusted Blasco de Alagón, the most experienced expert in the Valencian campaigns, with the advice to abandon the Puig position and postpone the conquest for later. James I responded by recalling the victory his uncle had achieved and saying that despite his death, he would not abandon Puig:

*because of the death of Don Bernat Guillem (a nobleman of ours who had defeated the king of Valencia's forces on the battlefield), and because we had won the largest part of the kingdom of Valencia that could be won, and had done so after we had achieved the larger part of the deed through which the kingdom of Valencia could be won, everyone would think that the merit of holding the place was his alone. And I would rather demonstrate, at all times, that my valour was such that the death of Don Bernat Guillem would not affect me, nor would it even if four or five men such as he were to die. "So let me tell you that the place shall not be abandoned, but that, through that place, we will win Valencia and all the other land".*¹²⁵

The king immediately marched to Puig with 50 knights, taking with him his uncle's eldest son and heir, the young Guillén de Entenza (c. 1227-b. 1258), who was about ten or eleven years old.¹²⁶ From a document we know that he was already there on 24 January 1238.¹²⁷ In the *LF*, James recalls that, upon arriving, he found Berenguer de Entenza, Guillem d'Aguiló and the friars of the military orders of the Hospital, the Temple, Calatrava and Uclés (Santiago) inconsolable. The monarch comforted them and tried to raise their morale by telling them that he himself would take his uncle's place as their lord. Bernat Guilhèm's body was in its coffin, but it had not been buried because the plan had been to bury him in the Cistercian abbey of Santa Maria de Escarp (Lleida). James I ordered that he be buried in the castle itself.¹²⁸ The next day, James knighted his son Guillem de Entenza and gave him all the land his father had owned.¹²⁹ James entrusted command of the fortress to Berenguer de Entenza.

¹²⁵ *LF*, chap. 233, 234 (quote).

¹²⁶ The date of his death in Pastor, *El cartulari de Xestalgàr*, 42-3. We call the son by his Aragonese name rather than the Occitan one because he was already a member of the Aragonese nobility. See *supra*.

¹²⁷ *DJI*, vol. II, n° 250 (Puig de Santa Maria, 24.01.1238).

¹²⁸ *LF*, chap. 235. The text says Segorbe, but the location seems to be Escarp.

¹²⁹ *LF*, chap. 236.

HISTORIA DE CATALUNA



JUPEAMENTO DE E JAIME EN EL PUIG DE SANTA MARIA.

Figure 9: “Oath of James I at Puig de Santa María”

Victor Balaguer, *Historia de Cataluña y de la Corona de Aragón*, vol. II (1860).¹³⁰

James I promised to return at Easter with reinforcements, but the troops were discouraged. At night, James learned from a Dominican that some 60 knights of the garrison had decided to abandon Puig when he himself left. The *LF* recalls the monarch’s disappointment, a sleepless night due to stress (tossing and turning more than 100 times in bed, sweating as if he were in a bath) and his low opinion of the knights, whom he called “bad people” and the “most arrogant people in the world”. The following morning, he gathered them all in the church and took the famous Puig oath: that he would stay and would not march beyond Teruel or the Uldecona River until the city of Valencia fell (Figure 9). To prove his commitment, he ordered the queen, Violante of Hungary, and her two-

¹³⁰ See also the painting by Ramón Garrido Méndez, entitled *Lo jurament del Puig* (1892), in the Basilica de la Mare de Déu dels Desemparats/Virgen de los Desamparados in Valencia. In modern times, the oath was depicted in popular media such as children’s trading cards: “Jurament de Don Jaume en el Puig de Santa Maria (Any 1238)”, Col·lecció de cromos de la *Historia de Jaume I de Catalunya i Aragó*, Xocolates Riucord, Chocolates San Carlos y Mensa i Xocolates Filatelia (1932).

year-old daughter (Violante, the future queen of Castile) to be brought to him. In this way, he managed to convince the knights of his resolve.¹³¹ On 16 February 1238, James was back in the fortress with Berenguer de Entenza and Guillem d'Aguiló.¹³² Two months later, at the end of April, the siege of the city of Valencia itself began; it would fall into Christian hands in October 1238.¹³³ Berenguer de Entenza and Guillén de Entenza, the brother-in-law and heir of Bernat Guilhèm, were present at the surrender.¹³⁴

10. BERNAT GUILHÈM'S GRAVE

In the cathedral of Valencia, in the chapel of the “Sagrado Corazón de Jesús” (also called the “de la Virgen del Rosario”), a medieval tomb is attributed to a certain “Berenguer Guillem d'Entença”, who is said to have died in 1227 and who is called “uncle” of King James I.¹³⁵ This tomb is not, in any case, that of Bernat Guilhèm.¹³⁶

Bernat Guilhèm was buried by order of his nephew in Puig Castle. In the 14th century, the body was moved to the Gothic monastery church, to the chapel of Saint Michael, later called “Nuestra Señora de la Merced”, located to the left of the altar. His white marble tomb dates from that period and changed location several times until returning to this chapel in the mid-20th century. Due to its poor condition, it was restored after the Spanish Civil War. It is attached to the wall and consists of an urn that was previously supported by three lions (Figure 10). It features six pointed arches decorated with rosettes and animals. In the lower part, several

¹³¹ *LF*, chap. 236-8.

¹³² *Itinerari*, 130.

¹³³ *DJI*, t. I, n° 251 (Puig de Santa María, 22.04.1238), 252 (*in obsidione Valencie*, 26.04.1238).

¹³⁴ *DJI*, t. II, n° 273 (Ruzafa, 28.09.1238). The benefits received by Berenguer de Entenza in Guinot, “El repartiment”, 131-2, 186.

¹³⁵ “Recorrido interior: 22. Sagrado Corazón de Jesús”, in *Catedral de Valencia* [online], <https://catedraldevalencia.es/arte/recorrido-interior-catedral/capilla-del-sagrado-corazon-de-jesus/>; “Sepulcre de Berenguer Guillem d'Entença”, in *Wikipedia* [online], https://ca.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fitxer:Sepulcre_de_Berenguer_Guillem_d'Enten%C3%A7a_a_capella_de_la_Mare_de_D%C3%A9u_del_Roser_catedral_de_Val%C3%A8ncia.JPG; and “Catedral de València”, in *Wikipedia* [online], https://ca.wikipedia.org/wiki/Catedral_de_Val%C3%A8ncia [22.03.2026].

¹³⁶ We do not find this character in the genealogy of the Entença (Figure 3). The coats of arms of the tomb is not that of the Entença, see *supra*.

groups of cowed figures, both men and women, express their mourning. Behind the sarcophagus, on the wall, there is a frieze that decorated an arch that has now disappeared. It contains more than twenty figures of lay people and clergy with a cross, books, holy water, a censer, and candlesticks celebrating a funeral service presided over by a bishop.



Figure 10: Tomb of Bernat Guilhem de Montpellier (14th century)
Royal Monastery of the Puig de Santa Maria, Valencia (M. Alvira)

Of most interest to us is the recumbent statue of Bernat Guilhèm (1.65 m), which has also been extensively restored. His head rests on a cushion and his feet rest on a large, recumbent lion. He is dressed as a knight. He wears a semicircular helmet “with a spiked monclure” and narrow bands that divide it into four parts and converge in a circle at the top. His face has open eyes, a large nose, a mustache, and a beard. He wears a cuirass with a coif under a surplis, open at the lower sides and decorated at the edges. The neckband features a ribbon decorated with cabochons that have disappeared (Figure 1). Beneath the lower part of the cuirass, an undergarment can be seen that could be a thin gambeson. Although the restored hands depict fingers, in the original they must have been chainmail gauntlets. The studded belt features several metal pieces and ring fastenings. The two metal plates on the scabbard are decorated with

shields. The sword has a straight ridge. The legs are protected with knee guards and metal greaves, as well as scale breeches (Figure 10).¹³⁷ Both the statue's workmanship and the weaponry depicted date from the early 14th century.

The tomb bears no epitaph or inscription, although a text was added later on the white wall, now invisible, which described the legendary memory of our figure in non-medieval and inaccurate terms:

“Don Bernardo Guillén de Montpellier y Entenza, son of Guilhèm, Count of Montpellier, and of Lady Maria Greek, daughter of the Emperor of Constantinople, Manuel Komnenos and brother of Lady Mary the Saint, mother of King Don James of Aragon, was guide of the first military exploits of this General of great courage and prudence, Lord of the Counties of Pallás, Ribagorza, Tamarit, Faura, Campos de Jaca, Sos, Uncastillo and Roda; Steward and Grand Seneschal of Aragon; he won the Great Battle of Puig, in which Saint George appeared; attended the discovery of the Holy Figure of Our Lady of Puig and died in this Castle of which he was Governor in the month of December of the year 1237”.¹³⁸

11. MONTPELLIER DOES NOT FORGET

Bernat Guilhèm de Montpellier and Jusiana de Entenza had other children besides the firstborn Guillén (Figure 3).¹³⁹ Sibila de Entenza (d. 1288), the youngest daughter, married the Aragonese nobleman Pedro Fernández de Bergua. Her second son, Bernardo Guillén II de Entenza, is better known (d. 1304).¹⁴⁰ In addition to living a long life, he was very

¹³⁷ Llorente, Teodoro, *Valencia*, 2 vol. (Barcelona: D. Cortezo, 1887-89), vol. I, 434-5 (this fairly detailed description also mentions a misericorde dagger); and *Monasterios de España. Real Monasterio Mercedario El Puig de Santa María* (2013) [online].

¹³⁸ Reproduced by Pérez, Josefa, “El Monasterio de Nuestra Señora de El Puig”, *Boletín de la Academia Valenciana de Genealogía y Heráldica*, 16 (2010): 148-60, at 157; cited by Llorente, *Valencia*, vol. I, 435.

¹³⁹ The later history of the family in Tomás, *Montañas*, 287-91 and following; Romero, Manuel and Palet, María Teresa (ed.), *Col·lecció diplomàtica de la baronia d'Entença (1174-1411)* (Barcelona: Fundació Noguera, 2022); Romero, Manuel, “La baronia que va ser del noble Guillem d'Entença (1174-1408)”, *Miscel·lània del CERE*, 32 (2022): 315-26; and Garí, Blanca, “El linaje de Entença en el Mediterráneo del S. XIII”, in “*La societat mediterrànea all'epoca del Vespro*”. *XI Congresso di storia della Corona d'Aragona*, 4 vol. (Palermo: Accademia di Scienze Lettere e Arti di Palermo, 1984), vol. III, 151-63.

¹⁴⁰ Santiago (“Los Entenza”, 224) called the eldest son Ramón Guillermo (Guillén), which seems to have led Figuière to assume that there was a third son named Ramón

active in politics, serving as steward of Aragon in 1257 and 1263.¹⁴¹ In 1300 he made a will before going to Outremer, arriving in Cyprus and taking the habit of the Hospitallers there.¹⁴²

We are interested in two late episodes involving this second-born son of Bernat Guilhèm de Montpellier, as they are directly related to the Occitan origin of his father and the Montpellerian rights of his grandfather Guilhèm VIII. In the Cortes of Huesca, Calatayud and Ejea in 1264-1265, during the revolt of the Aragonese nobility against James I, Bernardo Guillén II de Entenza demanded from the monarch the restitution of *Montpesler et de la senyoria de Monpesler*, stating that he had a right to both by inheritance and that he had been forcibly disinherited from these domains by the king.¹⁴³

A few years later, in 1271, Infante Peter (the future King Peter the Great) began to organize a military campaign after learning of the deaths of the childless Counts of Toulouse, Alphonse of Poitiers and Joanna of Toulouse, daughter of Count Raymond VII and last descendant of the Saint-Gilles dynasty. The historian Jerónimo Zurita recounts that the people of Toulouse had requested the Infante's help and that he, after gathering most of the kingdom's cavalry and other troops, was determined to cross the Pyrenees and reach the capital, even if the King of France came out in person and had to engage him in a pitched battle. The Infante's arguments were a clear appeal to the former domination of the Crown of Aragon in southern France: he claimed that the Counts of Toulouse had once been *allies and kinsmen of the Kings of Aragon*, and that *King Don*

Guillén ("Dona Agnès", 196 and 207). Santiago also mentions, without further details, a second daughter named Teresa Gombal de Entenza (ibid.). The genealogy also "Catalonia: B. Entenza (Entença)" [13.06.2025]. We call the children by their Aragonese names because they were members of the Aragonese nobility.

¹⁴¹ *DJI*, t. III, nº 727 (Zaragoza, 2.03.1257); Baronia de Valdeolivos, ES/ABV, 00143/0024 (Alcolea de Cinca, 8.08.1263), *DARA* [online]; and *DJI*, t. IV, nº 1372 (Ejea, 3.12.1263).

¹⁴² "Bernat Guillem d'Entença", *Gran Enciclopèdia Catalana* [online]. He was the father of Gombaldo de Entenza and Teresa de Entenza, Santiago, "Los Entenza", 225; According to Figüière, he married Urraca Ibáñez de Baztán ("Dona Agnès", 207).

¹⁴³ *ACRA*, vol. I, t. I, 197-204, at 202. For King James, these claims *had neither rhyme nor reason*, and he was astonished that Bernardo Guillén would rebel against him when *we had inherited the father (...) with all that he possessed*, *LF*, chap. 395, 400. See Zurita, Jerónimo, *Anales de la Corona de Aragón* [1562-1580], ed. Ángel Canellas (Zaragoza: Institución "Fernando el Católico"-CSIC, 2003), book III, chap. lxvi. The episode is also recalled by Santiago, "Los Entenza", 225. On Bernardo Guillén in this revolt, Tomás, *Montañas*, 258-9 and 287-8.

*Pedro, his grandfather, one of the most valiant princes of his time, had been killed in their defense, another reminder of the battle of Muret. James I, fearing open war with the King of France, opposed this intervention and, on 15 October 1271, ordered all nobles and councils not to join his son, forcing him to cancel the expedition. Among the Aragonese nobles who had wanted to join the Infante was Don Bernaldo Guillén de Entenza.*¹⁴⁴

These two interesting episodes suggest that the old Ultra-pyrenean bonds of the Montpellier-Entenza lineage were still alive among the family members many decades after they had left their Occitan homelands.

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¹⁴⁴ Zurita, *Anales*, book III, chap. lxxix (“De la muerte de Juana condesa de Tolosa”); Lafuente, Mario, *El contrato feudo-vasallático en Aragón. Las convocatorias de servicio militar (1260-1371)*, 2 t. (Zaragoza: Institución “Fernando el Católico”-CSIC, 2022), nº 6 (F). See Alvira, *Muret 1213*, 264-9.

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