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REPRESENTATION

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H.J. Cohn

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The *braç reial* or royal estate of Valencia and Sardinia at the time of Philip IV

LLUÍS-J. GUIA MARÍN

SUMMARY

This article examines the Valencian and Sardinian third estates' responses to Phillip IV's monarchical power. During his reign (1621–65), the political autonomy of Cagliari and Valencia was the target of a special pressure by which their statutory powers, which they had enjoyed since medieval times, were systematically sabotaged. At each session of the kingdom's estates, in which Cagliari and Valencia held institutional and political pre-eminence, motives for friction with the Crown were made evident. At the same time, both cities often maintained tense relations with other royal municipalities, which refused to accept that they were interlocutors given preference by the monarchy when the time came to organize tax contributions. The king, in order to divide the estates and weaken resistance to his requirements, promoted this tension.

This study of the structure and internal organization of people in the royal estate (of urban representatives) in the kingdoms of Sardinia and Valencia during the middle of the seventeenth century aims to highlight the similarities between the political and social trajectories of corresponding local oligarchies during a period that was crucial in the process of affirming the power of the Hispanic monarchy in each of its territories.

During this process of affirming royal power, historical research has shown that the political autonomy of the cities and towns depending directly on the crowns was under particular pressure, and especially that of the two capitals of Cagliari and Valencia. The various statutory powers the municipalities were meant to enjoy from medieval times, which had been repeatedly confirmed by their own royal privileges, were systematically sabotaged by the monarch himself and his delegates, the viceroys and high courts, in order to ensure more effective collaboration between the king-

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doms in the internal and external politics of the monarchy.¹ Likewise, and very frequently, this participation was not decided nor premeditated from outside the local institutions, but it was rather the oligarchy itself that asked for or encouraged greater royal involvement in order to ensure its power in relation to the rest of the non-privileged social groups² or to the dynamism of other municipalities, which became a danger to the internal superiority of the *braç reial* or royal estate of the capitals in both kingdoms.

In any case, and in spite of these contradictory features, relations between the Crown and the third estate acquired in public a confrontational character that both diffused and simplified the complexity of the interests of all the parties involved in the conflict.³ This was a forced and evident dichotomy that meant that the assemblies and parliaments placed particular emphasis, above many other issues, on the main reasons for friction between the king's representatives and the cities. Although it is simplistic to see the cities as cohesive entities with a uniform internal dynamic and specific common interests, these frictions really existed and it was difficult, as well as not very convenient for the monarchy, to resolve them within the framework of parliamentary meetings.

The impossibility of getting satisfaction for some local demands, themselves sometimes contradictory in nature, meant that the municipalities tried to use other means, apart from those available in the assemblies or parliaments, in order to defend common interests and to ensure that the monarch heard their demands. Recourse to extraordinary embassies or maintaining syndicates at the Madrid court are some

¹ Concerning this issue, and with regard to the Valencian case, see: J. Casey, *El Regne de València al segle XVII* (Barcelona, 1981); D. De Lario Ramírez, *El Comte-Duc d'Olivares i el Regne de València* (Valencia, 1986); A. Philipo Orts, *El Centralismo de nuevo cuño y la política de Olivares en el País Valenciano* (Valencia, 1988); Ll. Guia Marín, 'Les últimes Corts valencianes', in *Del reino de Valencia a la Comunidad valenciana*, ed. R. Ferrero and V. Garrido (Valencia, 2000), pp. 93–107.

For the case of Sardinia, see G. Tore, *Il Regno de Sardegna nell'età di Filippo IV* (Milan, 1996); and idem, 'Oligarchie, Consigli civici e autoritarismo regio nella Sardegna Spagnola', in *Autonomia Municipal en el mundo mediterraneo*, ed. R. Ferrero (Valencia, 2002), pp. 189–210. Also of note are contributions such as those by B. Anatra, who has made general analyses of the period of the Austrian monarchy in Sardinia, among which are: 'Corona e ceti privilegiati nella Sardegna Spagnola', in *Problemi di Storia della Sardegna Spagnola*, ed. B. Anatra et al. (Cagliari, 1975), pp. 9–132; and 'Istituzioni urbane nella Sardegna di Antico Regime', in *Autonomia Municipal en el mundo mediterraneo*, ed. R. Ferrero (Valencia, 2002), pp. 123–31.

² Recently, the work of J. López i Camps, 'València sota Carles II: entre el reformisme i l'intervencionisme reial' (unpublished research paper, Valencia, 2003) has insisted on this close correspondence between the oligarchy of the capital and the monarchy in the later 'foral' period.

³ The climate of institutional confrontation (very often not contradictory to the interests of the monarchy) is evident in the parliamentary assemblies at the time of Philip IV and can be tracked down through the proceedings of the assemblies and the legislation put forward by the Crown. On Valencia, see L. Ramírez, *Cortes del reinado de Felipe IV. Cortes valencianas de 1626* (Valencia, 1973); and Ll. Guia Marín, *Cortes del reinado de Felipe IV. Cortes valencianas de 1645* (Valencia, 1984). For Sardinia, the complete proceedings of the various assemblies of the Sardinian *Corts* have been published in G. Tore, *Il Parlamento straordinario del viceré Gerolamo Pimentel marchese di Bayona (1626)* (Cagliari, 1998). Within the framework of the project to publish all the proceedings of the Sardinian parliaments, started in 1984 and sponsored by the Consiglio Regionale de la Sardegna, the following are currently in course of publication: A. Mattone, *Il Parlamento del viceré Giovanni Vivas (1624)*; G. Tore, *Il Parlamento del viceré Marchese di Bayona (1631–1632)*; G. Murgia, *Il Parlamento del viceré Fabrizio Doria, duca d'Acellano (1641–1643)*; P. Sanna, *Il Parlamento del viceré Francesco Fernandez de Castro, conte di Lemos (1653–1656)*.

of the institutional solutions that were frequent in Valencia and, to a lesser degree, in Sardinia during the seventeenth century. These mechanisms acquired particular importance in Valencia, where the assemblies met very infrequently. In the case of Sardinia, the relatively greater geographical distance meant that key agents at the court were vital to maintain smooth relations, if not with the local oligarchies then with the monarchy and its key ministers.

Given the long intervals between assemblies, the ruling classes of each of the territories of the former Crown of Aragon needed to find ways to coordinate their activities or simply have contact with the Crown. In the case of the *País Valencià* territory, these efforts became relatively intense from the middle of the sixteenth century, possibly as royal absenteeism became more evident. The ruling classes therefore attempted to consolidate the permanent forums of assemblies and, as a second step, to reinforce their connection with the monarchy in order to overcome the geographical obstacle of distance and the political obstacle of delegated authorities, viceroys and the high court. Consequently, using traditions firmly rooted in the different Catalan–Aragonese countries or territories ended up being habitual practice among the ruling classes in Valencia. Llorenç Matheu y Sanz, who dealt with the formation of the estates, considered, erroneously, that this is particular to Valencia. Consonant with his pro-monarchical position, he suggested that it would be more convenient to the interests of the Crown not to organize them.⁴ Mechanisms to create and bring about these assemblies had been reflected in legislation, particularly since the reign of Philip II, to such an extent that the last innovations were introduced in the assemblies in 1645, in this case aimed at preserving what was, for the ruling classes, an irrefutable right.⁵

On some occasions, and as in the other kingdoms of the monarchy, the Sardinian ruling classes resorted to sending emissaries, trustees, messengers – the name doesn't really matter – who, at the highest level, represented the aspirations of the privileged groups as a whole or individually. At the start of the reign of Philip IV, and owing to conflicts between the ruling classes and the viceroy, Joan Vivas de Canyamàs, the Marquis of Cagliari, was responsible for presenting the complaints of the aristocracy at court.⁶ Also, at the conclusion of the parliamentary assemblies (and even before), a direct approach was sometimes initiated at the court of Madrid to persuade the monarch to resolve some issues not decided with the viceroys; the Marquis of Laconi

⁴ L. Matheu y Sanz, *Tratado de la celebración de cortes generales del reino de Valencia* (Madrid, 1677), Chap. XIX.

⁵ Ll. J. Guia Marín, 'Les Corts valencianes a l'Edat Moderna. Les Corts de 1645', in *Les Corts a Catalunya* (Barcelona, 1991), pp. 282–9. Of note concerning these issues is Ll. J. Guia Marín, 'La Junta de Contrafurs. Uns inicis conflictius', *Saitabi* 42 (1992), pp. 33–45; and idem, 'Autonomia municipal, poder normatiu y autoridad regia en el reino de Valencia (siglo XVII)', in *Sardegna e Spagna. Citta e territorio tra medioevo et età Moderna* (Rome, 2001), pp. 59–68.

⁶ *Advertiments i avisos de don Simón Castañer síndico del estamento militar del Reyno de Sardenña para el Sr. Conde de Cúller acerca de los negocios que se le cometen de dicho estamento*, Mar. 1624, Archivio Comunale di Cagliari (= A.C.C.), Fondo Aymeric, busta 9, no. 3. The University Library of Cagliari has a printed petition addressed by the Count of Cagliari to the monarch with all the arguments of the ruling classes, Biblioteca Universitaria di Cagliari, Fondo Baille, 6.3.2. *Stamenti. Relazioni e petizioni degli Stamenti al Regio Trono*, fols 19r–30r.

did this for the parliament convened by the Marquis of Camarasa in 1666–68.⁷ Years later, having completed the parliament of the Duke of Montellano (1698–99), the Count of Villasalto, on behalf of the military estate, visited the court to resolve some pending issues.⁸ The capital also managed to make its demands arrive directly, by sending trusted emissaries to the court, such as Joan Aymerich.⁹ In the middle of the seventeenth century, the trustee Bernabé Camacho de Carvajal was responsible for managing affairs concerning the city.¹⁰ Normally, Sardinian ‘nationals’ who were occasionally or permanently at the court in Madrid acted as intermediaries in any public or private matter, like consuls. Charles II himself provided evidence of this practice in a letter to the royal estate, via his first representative, the First Minister of the city of Cagliari.¹¹ With the accession of the Savoy dynasty, embassies were also sent from the ruling classes to the court at Turin. Hence one of the first assignments was carried out by the Marquis of Villaclara.¹²

Our comparative study of the trajectory of these two territories of the Hispanic monarchy analyses the reign of Philip IV and aims to be the foundation for an in-depth investigation of the issues outlined here throughout the whole early modern era.¹³ This choice is justified because this reign came at the end of a long historical period throughout which a similar institutional, political and even social structure had prevailed in these territorial areas. In spite of the fact that they were two lesser kingdoms of the already diffuse Crown of Aragon, Valencia and Sardinia had common elements and instructive patterns in the degree of integration of local oligarchies in the political and institutional apparatus of the Hispanic monarchy and, ultimately, in the character and solidity of this political structure.

⁷ B. Anatra, *La Sardegna. Dall'unificazione Aragonesa ai Savoia* (Turin, 1987), p. 435 ff.

⁸ A.C.C., Fondo Aymerich, busta 9, no. 43, 1699–1700.

⁹ *Privilegis de las gracias que sa magestat ha atorgades a la Ciutat de Caller a supplicació del Sindich Mossen Joan Aymerich*, A.C.C., Copie de carte reali, vol. 35, no. 6, 10 May 1520.

¹⁰ A.C.C., vol. 81, Lettere dei Consiglieri 1569–1574, 1648–1652, fol. 55r ff., various documents of 1640 concerning this representation.

¹¹ A.C.C., Carte Reali, vol. 27, 30 Aug. 1679.

¹² A.C.C., Segreteria di Stato i di Guerra, II serie, vol. 54, p. 51.

¹³ The parallelism in the trajectories of these two minor kingdoms in the Crown of Aragon towards the end of the period of estates has been the object of numerous works, both national and foreign, and even the subject for learned conferences. Of note are the contributions published in the minutes of the ‘Congresses of the Crown of Aragon’, held at Alghero and Jaca in 1990 and 1993, dealing respectively with *Els Virreis i la pràctica del Govern. Serveis a la Monarquia i ordre públic a València i Sardenya a mitjans segle XVII* and *Defensa de la costa, concordances d'actuació del poder polític en València i Sardenya en la segona meitat del segle XVI*. Similarly, since 1993 various seminars and congresses have taken place alternately in Sardinia and Valencia, of note being the following: *Sardenya: Una Historia pròxima* (Valencia, Dec. 1993); *Corts Valencianes e Parlamenti Sardi nel Medioevo e nell'Eta Moderna* (Alguer, Oct. 1994); *Gli Statuti del Regno di Valenza e del Regno di Sardegna a l'Età Medioevale e Moderna* (Cagliari, Oct. 1999); *Autonomia Municipal en el mon Mediterrani: Història i perspectiva* (Valencia–Alpuente, Nov. 2000); *El municipi al mon mediterrani. Entitats locals i assemblees representatives* (Valencia, Nov. 2002). Recently I have been concerned with furthering comparative research into the political and institutional structure of the class-based society of Sardinia and Valencia. One of the first results has been my contribution to the international Congress *Sardegna, Spagna, Mediterraneo e Atlantico dai Re Cattolici al Secolo d'Oro*, Mandas (Sardinia) 25–27 Sept. 2003, entitled ‘Els estaments sards i valencians. Analogia jurídica i diversitat institucional’ [The Sardinian and Valencian ruling classes. Legal analogy and institutional diversity].

The importance of the assemblies and parliaments has often been magnified. They have been seen as the paradigmatic setting where the key episodes of political confrontation were played out between the various territories and a monarch who increasingly imposed his power. Without discussing the representative dimension of these assemblies, we should also emphasize their discrete role as a bastion defending some official or estate privileges that were mixed up with the individual or collective privileges of the social classes. Their operational mechanisms had often acquired a ritual nature that, apparently solid and based on a secular tradition, disguised great fragility.¹⁴ This fragility must be attributed not only to pressure from the king, but also to internal divisions within the social groups or classes themselves. We should not limit analysis of these confrontations to the disagreement to be expected between the three broad groups of the ruling classes in society (ecclesiastical, noble, and the third estate or administrative). In fact, the most significant divisions occurred within each of these three levels.

But before continuing to analyse the nature of the representative assemblies of both territories, clarification is necessary of the double terminology of assemblies (*corts*) and parliaments (*parlaments*). Historiography has exaggerated the differences between the representative assemblies of the Iberian countries of the Crown of Aragon and the parliamentary meetings of the Italian kingdoms of the Crown, undervaluing or omitting the special situation of Sardinia. As we know, the case of Sardinia is special as it continued to belong to the Crown of Aragon and not to Italy until the end of the Austrian dynasty. Historiography has set up an exaggerated dichotomy between some institutions and others in such a way as to exaggerate the difference even in name: in some cases reference is made to assemblies or *corts*, in others to parliaments. Leaving aside the obvious particularities of Naples and Sicily, imbued with a complete earlier tradition when they became part of the Crown of Aragon and of the Hispanic monarchy, we believe the dichotomy to be forced in the case of Sardinia.¹⁵

It is known that the representative assemblies of Valencia and Sardinia had one basic difference: Sardinian parliaments were presided over by a viceroy as an *alter ego* to the king, while the Valencian *corts* required the attendance of the king or the heir to the throne.¹⁶ There are several exceptions to this dissimilarity that should be

¹⁴ Concerning procedural aspects of the assemblies, see the minutes from the congress held at Montsó, in June 2002, entitled *Cortes Generales de la Corona de Aragón en el siglo XVI*. These minutes were published in the journal *IUS FUGIT. Revista interdisciplinar de Estudios Histórico-jurídicos* 10/11 (2003).

¹⁵ The historiography of Sardinian representative assemblies experienced a watershed at the congress held at Cagliari in 1984, entitled *Acta Curiarum Regni Sardiniae: Istituzioni Rappresentative nella Sardegna Medioevale e Moderna. Acta Curiarum Regni Sardiniae* (Cagliari, 1986). At this congress, and of particular note with regard to the issue in question, was the talk by A. Marongiu, 'Il Parlamento o Corti del vecchio Regno sardo', pp. 15–123. On the historiography of Sardinian parliaments, see the study by P. Sanna, 'I Parlamenti del Regnum Sardiniae: problemi storico-istituzionali', *Archivio sardo del movimento operaio, contadino e autonomistico* 47/49 (1996), pp. 29–49. This journal number published all the contributions presented at the congress held in Alghero in October 1994, organized by the universities of Sassari and Valencia (*Corts Valencianes e Parlamenti Sardi nel Medioevo e nell'Eta Moderna*).

¹⁶ This issue was considered to be very important by people at the time. Matheu, an author from Valencia, reflects this in his treatise on the *corts* at Valencia. The first chapter is dedicated to the concept and origin of the *corts*, distinguishing the general *corts* of the Crown of Aragon and the special *corts* of each

mentioned. First, the separation into three chambers or estates, the composition and internal structure of these, and many procedural aspects, such as the mechanisms for calling a meeting, entitlement to attend, the negotiation of new royal proposals and taxes, etc. followed models that did not differ greatly from those used in the *corts* of the Principality of Catalonia. It should even be noted that, more than as a mere anecdote, the language most frequently used in all three cases was Catalan, an evident and logical consequence of a common history. Lastly, we should also repeat the issue of terminology: Sardinian documentation systematically uses the word *corts* for the island's class-based assemblies. It is also true that the term 'parliament' was used, and sometimes in a vague manner, but even when Sardinia was losing its ties with the Hispanic monarchy it continued to use the term *corts* to refer to what theoretically was still the leading institution of the kingdom.¹⁷ The proportion or frequency of the use of one noun or the other is difficult to evaluate and, even if this were possible, it would not contribute much to what is a false and sterile debate. In fact, there is no need to be afraid of naming the Sardinian assemblies in an ambivalent manner with the double terminology that historically characterized them. It will therefore be made clear from time to time that we are dealing with a political and institutional formation in the purest style of the Catalan–Aragonese tradition in order better to understand its historical dimension.

Another issue is the evaluation of the importance of the viceroy presidency compared with the theoretically more profitable direct presidency of the king. This fact, and the distance between the nerve centre of the monarchy and the territories on the other side of the sea, could be perceived at the time as a reason for their unequal treatment. This perception, given the divergent histories of these territories since the beginning of the eighteenth century, was later exaggerated and ties with the Hispanic monarchy were exclusively characterized as dominance by a foreign power.¹⁸ Although to an extent true, this is a simplification and is in contrast with the different analysis of the integration with the house of Savoy, as well as with the al-

kingdom, and here he limits himself to comparisons between Aragon and Catalonia. The references to Sardinia, citing writings by the auditor A. Canales de Vega, the regent F.G. De León or the lawyer L. De Casanate, are very brief, e.g. 'What is observed in Sardinia cannot affect the Kingdoms of there: because those Parliaments are not held with the attendance of the Royal person', Matheu y Sanz, *Tratado de la celebración de cortes generales ... de Valencia*, pp. 13 and 14. On the works by Canales, León and Casanate, see Tore, *Il Regno*, pp. 34, 171.

¹⁷ In 1710, the viceroy passed on the petition received from Vienna in order to extend the donation granted in the last *corts* (parliament), presided over by the Count of Montellano in 1699, A.C.C., Reale Udienza, classe IV, no. 69/1, *Prórroga del Real Donativo del año 1710*, 16 July 1710. Under the dominance of the house of Savoy, and for the same reason, the city of Cagliari requested in exchange that its petitions should be accepted as if they had been presented at an assembly, A.C.C., *Copia de las suplicas presentadas por los tres estamentos Eclesiastico Militar y Real*, Segreteria di Stato e di guerra, II serie, vol. 54, 23 April 1721, fos 11v–30r.

¹⁸ The classification of the historical period in which Sardinia was linked to the Catalan–Aragon dynasty or the Hispanic monarchy as that of 'Aragonese domination' or 'Spanish domination' is frequent in Italian historiography. Often this is no more than a terminological or linguistic recourse without any due importance, and it is employed by historians of various types. By way of example, see the valuable work published by Jaca Book, which names volume III of the *Storia dei Sardi e della Sardegna*, as *L'Età Moderna. Dagli aragonesi alla fine del dominio spagnolo* (Milan, 1989).

ternative analysis of the relations of the Iberian members of the Crown of Aragon with a monarchy that was fundamentally Castilian.

Without doubt, by comparison with the rest of the Crown's subjects the Sardinians had both reason to complain and grievances, but they were not the only ones. The people of Valencia often received similar treatment. But before evaluating or comparing the extent of these situations, it should be mentioned that the viceroy presidency paradoxically meant that the Sardinian *corts* were more vital, being held every ten years during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, a regularity far removed from the infrequent assemblies in the principality, in Aragon or in Valencia,¹⁹ not to mention the case of Mallorca that didn't even have its own assembly.²⁰ In any case, we should not think that this vitality meant that the Sardinian assemblies were stronger, and the direct presence of the king at the *corts* of Valencia, Catalonia and Aragon did not make him forget his desire to become an absolute monarch, something that was evidently not particularly beneficial for the people of Valencia.

Apart from some differences in the name, the presidency, and the frequency of sessions, the nature of the relations between the monarchy and each of its territories and privileged groups was the same. Although some details were different and would ultimately lead to different institutional solutions, these solutions were not substantial and therefore their importance should not be exaggerated.

In the cases of Valencia and Sardinia, the internal structure of the social classes attending the assemblies was similar; it is significant, albeit simplifying a highly complex process, that the model, we repeat, was that of the principality. As copies of a model, these structures may in some respects have resembled each other more than they resembled the model itself, at least in some of the institutional solutions that could interest the monarchy. It is common knowledge in historical research that the Crown always enjoyed greater power in the Valencian and Sardinian assemblies than in those of the Principality of Catalonia or Aragon.²¹

The ecclesiastical estate was fundamentally made up of leading dignitaries (archbishops and bishops) and the chapters of the corresponding cathedrals, although in

¹⁹ In the case of Valencia, only 13 assemblies were held during the whole modern era. If we take into account the fact that eight of these were held by Ferdinand the Catholic and Charles V, the number of assemblies for the rest of the period was only five, concentrated in the reigns of Philip II, Philip III and Philip IV, as Charles II didn't convene any assembly. In the case of Sardinia, from Ferdinand the Catholic to Charles II there were 20 assemblies with an almost mathematical frequency of every ten years, and the last assembly was held in 1698–99.

²⁰ R. Piña Oms, 'Els antics Consells Generals de les Balears: Organització i Evolució', in *Les Corts a Catalunya. Actes del Congrés d'Història Institucional* (Barcelona, 1991), pp. 290–95. Also of note is J. Juan Vidal, 'Mallorca: un reino sin Cortes', *Archivo sardo del movimiento operaio, contadino e autonomistico* 47/49 (1996), pp. 237–51. Lastly, of particular interest are the studies by R. Piña Oms, 'La Representación de Mallorca', and A. Planas Roselló, 'La participació mallorquina en las Cortes Generales de la Corona de Aragón', at the Congress held at Montsó in 2002.

²¹ The negotiation of taxation was gradually disassociated from the king's prior acceptance of proposals presented by the classes or estates to such an extent that the assemblies and parliaments often used to end with an agreed offer of taxation, while still waiting for the king to sanction the legislation. The small interest of the monarch in keeping to his side of the 'pact' led naturally to corresponding protests from the ruling classes. These protests never managed to break the necessary and beneficial association between these privileged groups and the Crown.

the case of Valencia the abbots and priors from some houses were also automatically included, as well as the military orders. From the point of view of the monarchy's interests, this was not an estate that would present too many difficulties in its demands. The words expressed by the archbishop of Cagliari on the taxation of the assemblies of 1655 are symptomatic:

If the vote that I shall now declare were only of my own estate, I am the one who must least compensate in giving it by the general and particular obligations with which I have been born as a vassal of his majesty, as I have been benefited by his royal greatness and thus with the desire to correspond in part to them I have attempted on all occasions not to be lacking in such a precise enterprise ...'.²²

Royal patronage of the Church neutralized any impulse to resist taking part in the fiscal contributions that continually affected the whole of each kingdom. In the case of the assemblies in Valencia, the superiority of the archbishop of Valencia was undeniable compared with the other dioceses of Tortosa, Sogorb and Oriola. In the case of Sardinia, in spite of attempts by the church of Sassari to assert some supposed superiority over the archbishopric of Cagliari, the vital nature of the capital's diocese was preserved by the monarchy itself, which not very interested in allowing arguments to be given that could weaken Cagliari's role in relation to the whole kingdom. This attitude can be explained by the monarchy's desire not so much to support the capital but rather to avoid any ruptures in a fragile correlation of forces that had so far been beneficial to the crown.

The leading role of the aristocracy is evident. This was by far the largest group since practically all those who enjoyed military privilege, with very few exceptions, had the right to attend the assemblies. They also had the right to attend any meeting of their group that was held outside these assemblies. In reality, only those living in the respective capitals exercised this right, as meetings held outside the assemblies, much more regulated and frequent in Valencia than in Sardinia,²³ did not have a fixed calendar but were called to resolve extraordinary and urgent matters. In the case of both Sardinia and Valencia, the military estate conditioned how the main institutions of the class-based society functioned. The nature of the territory conquered, common in both kingdoms, accounts for the political and social importance achieved by the aristocracy. Most of the territory was under feudal law and a few families that controlled large tracts of land stood out above the rest. These great lineages (Mandas, Gandia, Quirra, Villasor, etc.) were often common to both Sardinia and Valencia and consequently had the right to attend the parliamentary meetings of one territory or another. The fact that they did not personally go to the meetings of their respective estates did not mean that their power and influence was not felt at an internal level, both within the estate and in its relations with the monarchy, and therefore throughout the kingdom.

²² A.C.C., vol. 189, *Voto y parecer de don Bernardo de la Cabra Arçobispo de Càller*, 10 Feb. 1655.

²³ The claim by the Sardinian ruling classes to achieve the right to convene at the same level as their peers in Valencia was a recurrent problem and never completely resolved to their entire satisfaction. Some of the petitions from the *Corts* already insisted on this official approval in 1485, cited by J. Dexart, *Capitula sive Acta Curiarum Regni Sardiniae* (Cagliari, 1641), p. 66. Concerning this issue, see Anatra, 'Corona e Ceti', analysing the trajectory of these petitions.

As with the rest of this class-based society, the military estates of the two countries were also characterized by strong internal divisions. These divisions often became quite intense, both during the parliamentary meetings and in the periods in which the assemblies and parliaments did not meet. These rivalries were the result of various factors, such as the natural differences in interests between landowners and the untitled aristocracy in the main cities; or disputes between the aristocracy of these different municipalities (e.g. Sassari and Cagliari). These internal rivalries were structured or inserted into factions or groupings that were not too different from one kingdom to the other.²⁴

In the case of Sardinia, these rivalries undoubtedly had medieval precedents before the establishment of a single kingdom under Catalan–Aragonese dominance. The passing of time, however, had helped to dilute the differences of origin within this ruling class to such an extent that we may assert that in the seventeenth century, independently of the family tongue used by each member of these elites (Sardinian, Catalan or Spanish), they were all considered to be natives of the kingdom of Sardinia, and also as belonging to the political, cultural and social area of the Hispanic monarchy.

With regard to the royal estates, the preliminary point needs to be made that an important role was played by the large municipalities at the heart of the political system of absolutism. These large municipalities were mostly under royal jurisdiction and could therefore be directly represented in the assemblies for each territory. To a large extent the municipalities had to pay most of the bill for royal demands, as well as meet those expenses of their administrations that were also necessary to ensure internal social stability, given the basic needs of a population characterized by strong social contrasts. The internal composition of these royal estates varied at least in the number of cities and towns that were entitled to take part in the assemblies. In the case of Sardinia this number was very small, Cagliari and six other cities (Sassari, Alghero, Bosa, Castellaragonés, Oristany and Iglesias), while in the case of Valencia the royal estate had over thirty members, including the two municipalities with the status of city as well as a large number of towns that, for various reasons and not only owing to their size or importance, had been granted this privilege.

In spite of the obvious difference between the ruling classes representing the third estate of the two parliamentary assemblies, there was also an evident similarity between these two groups of municipalities, highlighted by the historiography, namely their great dependence on monarchical authority. This dependence can be explained by the fact that they were also formed in parallel to the processes of conquest. The monarchy, erecting a new state or transforming a previous situation, had been generous in granting privileges in order to set up a common model of

²⁴ The phenomenon of banditry in the modern era has been the object of intense concern by historians. There are numerous works that have highlighted the importance achieved by banditry in Catalonia, Valencia, Naples and Sardinia. Given the physical impossibility of specifying the main works, see for its symbolic value the international congress held in Sardinia (Fordongianus–Samugheo) in October 2002 and published as *Banditismi Mediterranei. Secoli XVI–XVII*, ed. F. Manconi (Rome, 2003), with numerous contributions referring to Valencia and Sardinia.

municipalities throughout the territories of the Crown.²⁵ In these cases, it was also absolutely clear that the principle of municipal power was based on an initial royal concession; there was no room to attest sovereignty or any traditional rights to justify or claim municipal power. The monarchy was very clear about this and would remind them of it at all times. Consequently, municipal oligarchies knew that their power depended ultimately on royal support and therefore had to maintain close correspondence with the Crown beyond the one-off confrontations or *tours de force* that went no further than a discrete and often respectful disagreement. Gianfranco Tore²⁶ believed that, in the kingdom of Sardinia from the first few years after the Catalan–Aragonese conquest, the urban oligarchies showed a particular propensity to satisfy the king's financial demands and did not show any significant opposition to the orders and provisions emanating from sovereigns aimed at organizing and ensuring the good government of cities, and that this could become extensive, in terms of both space and time, in the kingdom of Valencia, although he suggested that the case of Sardinia was a singular example compared with the mainland countries of the Crown of Aragon.

The similarities are even greater and more evident in the structure of the royal estate itself. The institutional and political superiority of the respective capitals of each region, Cagliari and Valencia, is particularly of note, a superiority that was also born out of the processes of conquest and that, in some way, conditioned the overall trajectory of the whole class. In the case of the Iberian kingdom, the formula often used of 'the City and Kingdom of Valencia' was a reflection of a situation of undeniable political superiority. In the case of Sardinia, successive provisions from the Crown helped primarily to highlight the existence of privileged relations between the Crown and the capital of the kingdom.²⁷ The two cities often had poor relations with the rest of the royal cities and towns, who did not want to accept that the former were the king's preferred conduits when organizing extraordinary financial and military services. This irritation was encouraged by the king himself and his delegates in order to divide the royal class and consequently ensure more feeble resistance to his requirements. This permanent conflict had particular manifestations in the period we are studying.

The trajectory of the Sardinian royal estate was conditioned by the growing resentment against Cagliari by what was considered the most representative city of the north of the island, namely Sassari. The insistent pressure of people from Sassari (including Francesc De Vico, the first Sardinian 'regent' or member of the Council

²⁵ Concerning the organization of the municipal governments in the Crown of Aragon see the works by Anatra and Tore cited in note 1, above, and A. Alberola Romà, 'Autoridad real y poder local. Reflexiones en torno al desarrollo del procedimiento insaculatorio en los municipios valencianos durante la época foral moderna', *Pedraques* 12 (1992), pp. 9–38; D. Bernabé Gil, 'Els procediments de control reial sobre els municipis valencians (segles XVI–XVII)', *Recerques* 38 (1999), pp. 27–46; A. Philipo Orts, *Insaculación y élites de poder en la ciudad de Valencia* (Valencia, 1996); R. Narbona Vizcaino, *Valencia, municipio medieval. Poder político y luchas ciudadanas (1230–1418)* (Valencia, 1995); and J. M. Torras i Ribé, *Els municipis Catalans de l'Antic Règim, 1453–1808* (Barcelona, 1983).

²⁶ Tore, 'Oligarchie', p. 194.

²⁷ Ibid.

of Aragon, a position he held from 1627 to 1650²⁸) to make his city stand out within any estate, whether by claiming ecclesiastical primacy, the creation of its own university, or particular meetings of the military estate, was ultimately neutralized as the Crown took advantage of, or limited, the town according to its own interests. The rivalry between Cagliari and Sassari gave rise to truly insensitive situations: the capital's councillors, given the possible imminent transfer of the archbishop, put forward their trustee at the court to ensure that someone from Sassari should not be appointed. Finally, the pressure paid off as the bishop of Barbastro was promoted to the see of Cagliari.²⁹ Neither did Sassari have the support of cities such as Alghero, a traditional ally of Cagliari.³⁰ The greater presence of an oligarchy of Catalan origin in the capital and in Alghero, compared with the rest of the Sardinian cities, could account for some of the initial reasons behind this rivalry. In any case, and as mentioned before, time had helped to dilute these differences of origin within the class, and consequently the rivalry of both cities' oligarchies, in the final stages of Spanish dominance, were based on reasons of a more financial, political and even cultural nature. This was a question of survival at a time when Sardinia, as the rest of the Spanish Mediterranean, was undergoing an economic stagnation that was felt particularly in the island's trade with the outside world and therefore in the economic activities of its main cities.

In the case of Valencia, confrontation had a privileged setting at the last meeting of the assembly in 1645, when the capital was against the rest of the royal estate, which demanded greater involvement in internal decision making. There was also an apparently neutral attitude on the part of the Crown that allowed the capital to consolidate its leadership during the rest of the period of special privileges or the estates era.³¹ In other words, the characteristics of the *corts* or parliaments of Valencia and Sardinia, and of the privileged groups that could be found there, did not differ greatly, and neither did the policy of the monarchy with regard to both territories.

As pointed out above, parliamentary meetings in both territories were held with very different frequencies. In spite of the distance and apparent lack of harmony between the institutional practice of one kingdom and the other, in both cases the *corts* and parliaments ended up helping to maintain the ties between the monarchy and the privileged classes. Not even in the middle of the seventeenth century, at the time of major difficulties for the Crown, did the Sardinian or Valencian ruling classes know how to, nor were they able to, resist royal demands for greater financial help. The persistent internal divisions and structural weaknesses prevented this. It is undoubtedly necessary to describe in more detail the degree of responsibility and

²⁸ The confrontation between Cagliari and Vico achieved a high degree of intensity if we take into account that the latter was the regent of the Crown's top institution. In a letter, possibly to the Vice Chancellor, the ministers did not shrink from considering Vico a dangerous enemy, A.C.C., vol. 81, Lettere dei Consiglieri 1569–1574, 1648–1652, fols 106v–07r, 22 Dec. 1641.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, fol. 69r ff., 1640.

³⁰ In a letter from the councillors of Alghero to the councillors of Cagliari regarding the selection by draw of one of its citizens, it is clear how this alliance was maintained for a long time, A.C.C., vol. 37, Lettere del Comune di Alghero alla città di Cagliari (1622–1794), no. 32, 12 Nov. 1704.

³¹ L. Guàrdia Marín, 'La Ciudad de València y el Brazo Real. Las Cortes de 1645', in *Homenaje al Dr. D. Juan Reglà Campistol*, 2 vols (Valencia, 1975), ii, pp. 583–96.

the role played by each of these classes in acquiescing to royal demands. In any case, beyond the evident loyalty and domestication of the clerical estate (which only exhibited a different attitude in the case of some cathedral capitals), the role played by local oligarchies within the royal estate was truly decisive in ensuring that the king's proposals triumphed.

In the case of Valencia, the *corts* met only twice during the reign of Philip IV.³² The first time was in 1626, in response to the project of Olivares's Union of Arms, and embroiled the kingdom in almost permanent contributions that made the immediate holding of new assemblies unnecessary. The second meeting of the reign, and the last in the whole period of estates or special privileges, came about in 1645, in the midst of the Catalan war, as a result of the need to satisfy a military policy that demanded immediate taxes. The solutions or institutional changes established for the convening of this meeting and the mathematically apportioned collaboration of the royal cities and towns in payments to the monarchy during the rest of the century condemned the Valencian *corts* effectively to disappear.³³ In fact, the *corts* did not meet at all throughout the reign of Charles II, although this does not mean that there was a lack of stable contributions to the Crown.

In the case of Sardinia, there were five assemblies.³⁴ The first was in 1624, within the context of a fierce challenge against the ruling classes from the viceroy of Valencian extraction, Joan Vives de Canyamàs, and in which the strong divisions between Cagliari and Sassari overflowed. The second, the minutes of which have been published by G. Tore,³⁵ was an extraordinary assembly held in 1626 for the same reasons as the assemblies held simultaneously for the rest of the Crown. The Sardinian ruling classes agreed to steep contributions for the Union of Arms project in exchange for their personal promotion and ultimately for the stability of the dominant elites. The third, held in 1631–32, became the only assembly of all the countries of the monarchy held during this decade. In spite of greater financial commitment, the persistent internal divisions within the different ruling classes,³⁶ as well as their structural weaknesses, prevented them from obtaining any advantage for the kingdom, beyond

³² On these assemblies, see Ramírez, *Cortes valencianas de 1626* and Guia Marín, *Cortes valencianas de 1645*.

³³ Ll. Guia Marín, 'Los estamentos valencianos y el Duque de Montalto. Los inicios de la reacción foral', *Estudis* 4 (1975), pp. 129–45.

³⁴ Numerous studies have highlighted the role of the Sardinian *corts* in the modern era and particularly during the reign of Philip IV. Apart from works previously cited, see G. Serri, 'Il prelievo fiscale in una periferia povera. I donativi in età spagnola', *Annali della Facoltà di Magistero dell'Università di Cagliari* 7 (1983), pp. 89–130; A. Mattone, 'Centralismo monarchico e resistenze stamentarie. I Parlamenti sardi del XVI e del XVII secolo', *Istituzioni rappresentative nella Sardegna medievale e moderna*, pp. 127–79; idem, 'Corts catalanes e Parlamento sardo: analogie giuridiche e dinamiche istituzionali (XIV–XVII secolo)', *Rivista di storia del diritto italiano* 64 (1991), pp. 19–44; G. Murgia, 'La società sarda tra crisi e resistenza: il Parlamento Avellano (1640–1643)', *Archivio sardo del movimento operaio contadino e autonomistico* 41–43 (1993), pp. 79–109; G. Tore, 'Il Regno di Sardegna nell'età dell'Olivares (1620–1640): assolutismo monarchico e Parlamenti', *ibid.*, pp. 59–78.

³⁵ Tore, *Il Parlamento*, p. 3.

³⁶ The description by the Spanish authorities of the Sardinians as *Pocos, locos y mal unidos* ('Few, mad and badly united') very crudely reflected a reality present in the history of the island: the permanent division of their privileged groups that was taken advantage of by the monarchy to assert its power.

the granting of some specific privileges. The second assembly of 1641–43 was held under the same conditions, with the pressure of immediate needs caused by the war in Catalonia. Sardinia contributed to the monarchy's needs systematically and beyond its means from the time the Olivares project was set up. At that time an extensive economic crisis affected the whole island, particularly in the form of a reduction in commercial traffic, so that great tension resulted from this level of contribution being maintained. This tension was particularly virulent among the main cities attending the assemblies, which had been directly affected in their political and commercial interests. The last parliamentary assembly in the reign of Philip IV occurred in 1653–56. Although a part of the ruling classes (particularly the military) tried to advance, or simply regain, their capacity for negotiation with the Crown and to use the parliamentary assembly to achieve their former individual and communal objectives, once again internal divisions sabotaged all possibility of success, and this time they were encouraged by the viceroy's palace. This situation was similar to the confrontations with the viceroy of the ruling classes in Valencia, led by the military estate, in the 1650s – confrontations that, on the rebound, would end up by consolidating the royal cities and towns as the main conduits for organizing taxes for the kings.

Throughout these assemblies, both in Sardinia and in Valencia, it can be asserted that the royal estate was easily controlled by the monarchy, beyond any possible opposition of the ruling classes to the demands of the latter. The weakness of the ruling classes' oligarchies, concerned about their status and obliged to deal with the serious problems threatening the internal stability of their communities, made them particularly vulnerable to governmental pressure. Ultimately they depended on the king's support to handle any impulse to democratize municipal management that might be proposed by the urban sectors that were excluded from the main offices of power. The rise of these groups could endanger the exclusive privileges of the oligarchy. This *modus operandi*, which we can find in one municipality after the other, was reproduced throughout the estate. The main representatives, i.e. the capitals of each kingdom, never dared to oppose royal policy to the extent of forcing the monarch to look for more comfortable partners more predisposed to accept his demands. In exchange for their collaboration they kept their prime status and most of their privileges.

Consequently, in Valencia during the rest of the century and as a generalized practice after the Catalan war, it was the capital of the kingdom that, on behalf of the whole ruling class and without any kind of explicit approval from the latter, offered the monarch those taxes that had to be paid by all royal cities and towns.³⁷ These did not have the chance to meet again in an assembly of the royal estate, not even within the context of the *corts* nor outside this context, as Philip IV had accepted to maintain the exclusivity of Valencia as the representative for the whole royal estate outside the assemblies. As to Sardinia, the leading role of Cagliari in negotiating and managing financial contributions to the monarch was more diffused

³⁷ For this period, apart from the work by Joaquim López, *València sota Carles II*, see also S. Garcia Martínez, *Valencia bajo Carlos II: Bandolerismo, reivindicaciones agrarias y servicios a la monarquía* (Villena, 1991).

because parliamentary assemblies were still held until the end of the century. The ten-year frequency and almost routine nature of these assemblies ended up by introducing another custom, an automatic tax that went beyond the means of the kingdom, totalling around 70,000 crowns.

In any case, in those periods when the Sardinian parliament did not meet, Cagliari (in the person of its leading minister) was the only link with the Crown for the royal estate. Given the ten-year frequency of the assemblies and the length of time they remained in session, these periods without a parliament were perhaps not very significant, nor were the kind of issues dealt with. Similarly, the correspondence given and received by Cagliari denotes a situation of privilege and a similar influence to those that could be enjoyed, with some differences, by other capitals in the kingdoms of the former Crown of Aragon, especially Valencia. The monarchy also promoted this superiority in the royal estate by granting the appropriate favours and privileges.³⁸ This intermediary role with the rest of the estate was often exercised at the request of the monarch himself or the viceroys.³⁹ Even the letters between Cagliari and the rest of the cities in Sardinia show not only more or less covert disputes with Sassari but the subordinate status of Alghero and Oristany, in so far as they considered Cagliari to be the capital of the kingdom.⁴⁰ The attitude of Cagliari's oligarchy, who avoided the appearance of being less collaborative than its eternal rival, Sassari, sometimes led to pathetic episodes.⁴¹ Without doubt the capital's natural insecurity was deliberately encouraged by the monarchy, which apparently expected internal disputes when these were in its own interest.

The maintenance of social status and political power on the part of local oligarchies compared with their neighbours had a price: this price was not limited to establishing a permanent contribution from the communities to the administration that was beyond their means, but also directly sabotaged the municipalities' political structure and furthered the absolute power of the monarchy. In practice, the Crown and its delegates ended up being involved in choosing key municipal officers, municipal finances were systematically audited by visitors sent by the king, and the most essential statutory powers of the municipalities would end up being worth no more than the paper they were written on, foiled by the complicity of the people

³⁸ A.C.C., Pergamene, no. 533, 6 May 1679.

³⁹ A.C.C., Carte Reali, vol. 27, 27 August 1675.

⁴⁰ Although the letter is a document with a certain amount of protocol in its content, the style of the letter addressed by the councillors of Alghero to their counterparts in Cagliari, for their election, is still indicative of this subordinate situation, A.C.C., vol. 37, Lettere del Comune di Alghero alla città di Cagliari (1622–1794), no. 2, 25 June 1626. For their part, the councillors of Oristany asked those of Cagliari for instructions in order to take a decision on the payment of the tax requested by the viceroy, A.C.C., vol. 38, Lettere della città di Oristano, 1617–1793, no. 19, 2 Dec. 1688. In contrast, the style of the letters from Cagliari to the rest of the cities communicating the election of the councillors denotes its superior position, as asserted in the signing of the missives by all the councillors, a privilege not enjoyed in other municipalities, A.C.C., vol. 81, Lettere dei Consiglieri 1569–1574, 1648–1652, fols 5v–6r, 3 Dec. 1639.

⁴¹ In the mid-seventeenth century the not very orthodox arguments of Sassari in order to achieve ecclesiastical primacy were virulently contested by Cagliari with stronger ones, Biblioteca Universitaria di Cagliari, Fondo Baille, 6.3.1, *Memoriale delle città di Cagliari e Sassari*, fols 61r–78v.

in charge of the municipality. The maintenance of Cagliari and Valencia as privileged links with the royal estate also had another price, namely the impossibility of the local community as a whole being able to offer any resistance to the king's policies.