

THE BIRTHS OF THE CHILDREN OF JAIME II

Michael McVaugh

INVESTIGACIÓN

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Jaime (I, 83), b. 1296.

María (I, 309), b. 1297.

Alfonso (I, 127), b. January 1299.

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¹J. Ernesto MARTÍNEZ FERRANDO, *Jaime II de Aragón: Su vida familiar*, 2v., Barcelona 1948.

Constanza (I, 133), b. 1300.

Juan (I, 141), b. 1301.

Isabel (I, 151), b. 1300-1302.

Blanca (I, 170, 310), b. 1302.

Pedro (I, 158), b. 1305.

Ramón Berenguer (I, 178), b. 1308.

Violante (I, 183), b. October 1310.

Martínez Ferrando was of course not primarily concerned to work out the details of this sequence, but in fact it is possible to use the archival materials to develop a somewhat more precise chronology, one which can be of use (for example) in trying to interpret the medical history of the royal family. This can best be presented by treating each child individually, but not in chronological order, and summing up at the end.

a) *Jaime*. Nine years after Martínez Ferrando's work was published, the Institut d'Estudis Catalans published posthumously an essay by Joaquim Miret i Sans (1919) on Jaime II's *primogenitus*, which declared that the Infante Jaime had been born on 29 September 1296, eleven months after his parent's marriage². This is perfectly consistent with the earliest known direct reference to the Infante, a letter from the king to his mother-in-law, Queen Maria of Naples, on 7 July 1297, assuring her that he, Queen Blanca, and the Infante Jaime were all enjoying full bodily health. It is also consistent with the king's grant to his consort on 8 November 1296 referring to «filiis nostris communibus de nobis et vobis natis seu nacturis»³.

This reasonably secure date allows us to see Jaime II planning for medical care at the birth of his first child. In late 1295 and again in the spring of 1296, Jaime summoned the physician Guillaume de Toulouse from Paris to his court. By 25 August 1296 Guillaume was at the court in Valencia with

² Joaquim MIRET I SANS, *El Forassenyat Primogènit de Jaume II*, Barcelona 1957, p. 9, gives the date without substantiation. It is evidently based on the marriage contract between the Infante and Leonor of Castile, which in passing says «Et demas desto prometemos que des de el dicho Infante don Jaymes nuestro fiijo fuere dedat de quatorze annos los cuales (seran) compidos del dia de Sant Miguel de Setiembre primero que viene que sera en la era de mill. et trezientos et quarenta et siete annos...» (A.C.A. Canc. Reg. 1521, f. 81v; dated «primo dia de deziembre era de mill. ccc. 46 annos»); see MIRET I SANS, p. 12.

³ A.C.A. Reg. 252, ff. 165v, 160v.

the title of «*fiscus illustris domine regine Aragonum*»; eight days later he was granted a salary of 2000 *solidi* yearly, and on 15 September was awarded houses next to the palace in Barcelona, all for «*servicia... nobis exhibita et que per vos speramus... exhiberi*»⁴. Presumably these *servicia* included supervision of the birth of the expected baby; nevertheless, although the delivery was evidently successful, master Guillaume does not reappear in the Aragonese archives.

b) *Alfonso*. The second son of Jaime II and Blanca, who became the heir to the throne when his older brother Jaime renounced his position in 1319 (and who succeeded his father as Alfonso IV of Aragon in 1327), is named in a document of 15 March 1301 that orders a saddle and bridle to be taken to him⁵, at a time when he must have been about two years old. Queen María of Naples wrote to Jaime II on 28 January 1299 to announce that Blanca had just given birth to «*un mout beau fil sans grevance de son cors*», a son who (though there unnamed) can only have been Alfonso⁶. We can thus fix his birth securely in January 1299.

c) *María*. This oldest daughter of the monarch is named in a document of 6 June 1298, when a small grant was made to her nurse Elvira⁷. Her birth must have been only a matter of weeks earlier. Learning unexpectedly that messengers from Philippe IV of France were about to arrive in his dominions, Jaime II wrote immediately from Xativa to Philip (as well as to Charles II of Naples and Jaime II of Mallorca) on 26 March 1298 to explain that «*nos... de partibus Regni Valencie propter propinquitatem partus domine Regine consortis nostre carissime non ita cito comode recedere poteramus*» and that he was sending messengers ahead in haste⁸. The expected birth presumably occurred, then, in April or May 1298 and must have been that of María. It is worth remarking that since, as we have seen, Alfonso was born just eight or nine months later, his birth must have been premature; perhaps this is why Queen María was so careful to reassure Jaime II of

⁴ A.C.A. Reg. 194, ff. 253v, 250v, 257.

⁵ A.C.A. Reg. 268, f. 47v.

⁶ Printed in MARTINEZ FERRANDO, v. 2, pp. 1-2.

⁷ A.C.A. Reg. 264, f. 417.

⁸ A.C.A. Reg. 252, ff. 189v-191.

his new son's health and good appearance. It is likely that master Hugo was the physician in attendance —he at least was the queen's physician during May-July 1298— and the fact that Jaime II granted Hugo the considerable sum of 2000 silver *uronenses* on 9 January 1299, immediately before Alfonso's birth, suggests that Hugo may have overseen the Infante's birth as well.

d) *Constanza*. The earliest direct reference to Constanza that I have seen is of 12 December 1303⁹, but still earlier ones may well exist, for Constanza had evidently been born more than three years before. Giménez Soler quotes a document of 1306 as saying «el primero dia deste mes de abril del anyo contenido en esta carta en seys annos primeros aveniros sera cumplida la edat de los doltze anyos»¹⁰. Thus Constanza appears to have been born 1 April 1300. Her birth occurred in Valencia and was probably overseen by Arnau de Vilanova, who had arrived at court a few months before and on whom Jaime was to depend increasingly for medical care, and by Bernard Marini¹¹.

e) *Blanca*. In a document of July 1314 published by Martínez Ferrando¹², Blanca is referred to as having completed «annum duodecimum sue etatis in mense marcii proxime preterito» —that is, she was born in March 1302. Sometime before November 1301 Ermengaud Blasi, the nephew of Arnau de Vilanova, had been appointed the queen's physician, but by January Ermengaud had returned to Montpellier. On 27 January, therefore, the king wrote to Arnau himself, urging his presence at the court in Valencia and explaining that «consors nostra in partu quem gestat in utero sperat in proximo expediri»¹³ (Bernard Marini had left

⁹ E. GONZÁLEZ HURTEBISE, *Libros de Tesorería de la Casa Real de Aragón*, v. I, Barcelona 1911, núm. 1549, p. 349.

¹⁰ Andrés GIMÉNEZ SOLER, *Don Juan Manuel*, Zaragoza 1932, pp. 32-404.

¹¹ On Arnald's presence in the court at Valencia at this time, see P. MARTÍ, «Regesta de documents arnaldians coneguts», *Estudis Franciscans* 47 (1935), 268-9, and references there. MARTÍNEZ FERRANDO, v. 1, pp. 136-137, calls attention to an independent reference to Constanze's birth in Valencia. On Bernard Marini, see below, n. 22.

¹² MARTÍNEZ FERRANDO, v. 2, p. 108.

¹³ P. MARTÍ, «Nous documents per a la biografia d'Arnau de Vilanova», *Analecta Sacra Tarraconensia* 11 (1935), 100.

for France a month before). A letter of 28 April 1302 shows that Arnau had come to court and was preparing to leave again; the birth had apparently had no complications¹⁴.

f) *Isabel*. The date—even the year—of Isabel's birth has puzzled historians for some time. Zeissberg suggested the year 1300, but did not make his reasoning entirely clear. He appears to have believed that in order for Isabel to have married in January 1314 she must have been born at least twelve years before, and, since he assumed that Juan was born in 1301 (for reasons we will see below), he supposed that Isabel had to have been born the previous year as a twin to her sister-whom at one point he calls «Blanca» but elsewhere implicitly identifies as Constanza¹⁵.

This confusion can be avoided now that we have acknowledged that Blanca was born in March 1302. Isabel was indeed already born by this time, as Zeissberg inferred (she is named in a document of 14 December 1301¹⁶), and the normal nine-months' pregnancy that seems to underlie the unworried letter quoted above from Jaime II to Arnau de Vilanova dated January 1302 would imply that Blanca's conception occurred in June 1301 and thus that Isabel's birth came no later than May 1301. Constanza had been born just a little over a year earlier. Constanza and Isabel could still have been twins, but there is no need to suppose the relatively rare occurrence, since all our facts are consistent with a date of February-May 1301 for the latter's birth.

g) *Juan*. In trying to fix the date of Juan's birth, it is tempt-

¹⁴ Michael R. McVAUGH, «Further documents for the biography of Arnau de Vilanova», *Dynamis* 2 (1982), 368-9 (doc. 60a).

¹⁵ Heinrich RITTER VON ZEISSBERG, «Elisabeth von Aragonien, Gemahlin Friedrich's des schönen von Österreich (1314-1330)», *Sitzungsberichte der Kais. Akademie der Wissenschaften in Wien, Phil.-Hist. Classe*, Bd. 137 (Wien 1898), VII. Zeissberg suggests in his table on p. 33 that Blanca was born at the end of 1299 or the beginning of 1300, and that hence Isabel could have been her twin; he does not mention Constanza here. Yet on pp. 11-12 he recognized that Constanza was the second daughter and Blanca the fourth, thus implicitly making Isabel a (hypothetical) twin of Constanza. MARTÍNEZ FERRANDO (v. 1, p. 151) follows the argument on p. 33 rather than that presupposed by p. 11.

¹⁶ A.C.A. Reg. 294, f. 29, ordering a payment to be made to her *nutrix*, Teresa García.

ing to begin from the inscription on his sepulture at Tarragona Cathedral, which states that he died 19 August 1334, «anno vero etatis sue 33». But it is probably safer to start instead with a letter from his father Jaime II to the Cardinal-Bishop of Tusculum, dated 14 November 1313, which reads in part:

quando... tonsuram ei tradidit clericalem speciali privilegio concessit eidem quod in vicesimo etatis sue anno pontificalem dignitatem recipere valeret libere... et cum esset tunc memoratus infans in nono, nuncque sit in anno undecimo constitutus, poterit ipse dominus summus pontifex... defectus supplere predictos...¹⁷

The Infante Juan was accorded the tonsure on or very near to 11 June 1311¹⁸. Jaime's letter would thus imply that Juan was eight, not yet nine, in June 1311; and ten, not yet eleven, in November 1313; or, taking the two statements together, that his birth took place between 15 November 1302 and 10 June 1303¹⁹. This is entirely consistent with a series of letters from the Avignon popes to Juan, making reference to his age²⁰, which indeed can be used to narrow down still further the period in question. A letter of Pope John XXII dated «5 kals. Apr. pontificatus nostri anno

¹⁷ A.C.A. Reg. 349, f. 16. Johannes Vincke, «Jacob II. und Alfons IV. von Aragon und die Versorgung des Infanten Johann mit kirchlichen fründen», *Römische Quartalschrift* 42 (1934), 6, n. 3, says mistakenly that this document places Juan «im 12. Lebensjahr».

¹⁸ A.C.A. Reg. 349, f. 69.

¹⁹ Other writers have assumed implicitly that «anno etatis sue» is a direct index to the number of birthdays passed. Thus Vincke (*loc. cit.*) writes «Nach seiner Grabschrift in der Kathedrale zu Tarragona starb Johann von Aragon am 19. August 1334 «anno vero aetatis suae 33». Danach wird er in der Regel als 1301 geboren bezeichnet». Surely, however, the phrase means that he had had 32 but not yet 33 birthdays, so that the inscription implies that he was born between 20 August 1301 and 18 August 1302, or on balance in 1302 rather than 1301. (*Cf.* the usage quoted in nn. 20 and 21 below).

²⁰ E.g., in letters of Clement V: «in nono etatis tue anno constitutus existat» (dated «id. Jun. pontificatus nostri anno sexto» or 13 June 1311; A.C.A. Reg. 349, f. 70); «in undecimo etatis tue anno vel circa illum consistas» (dated 13 kals. Jun. pontificatus nostri anno octavo» or 20 May 1313; A.C.A. Reg. 349, f. 110r-v). The latter phrase is repeated in the letters that follow —ff. 111v-112, 113v, 115v— all but one of which bear the date «13 kals. Jun.». The exception, at f. 113v, is misdated «13 kals. Jul.» and it is this mistaken date that is quoted by Vincke (*loc. cit.*).

primo» (25 March 1317 —John was elected pope in August 1316) says that *dictus Johannes... in quintodecimo etatis sue anno constitutus fore noscatur*», indicating that the Infante had already had his fourteenth birthday by this date²¹. In other words, the Infante Juan seems to have been born between 15 November 1302 and 25 March 1303. The Tarragona inscription, prepared over thirty years later, has to be acknowledged as incorrect: on 19 August 1334 Juan would have been in his 32nd year, not his 33rd.

Medically —biologically— this dating of Juan's birth presents no difficulties. The previous child of Jaime II and Blanca had been their daughter Blanca, born as we have seen in March (perhaps early March) of 1302. Juan could thus have been born prematurely in November or December 1302, or after a normal nine-months term in January-March 1303. Both Arnau de Vilanova and Ermengaud Blasi were absent from the court during much of 1302-1303, and the principal royal physician was at first Bernard Marini²². But in September 1302 Bernard left the court with an urgent message and summons for Jean d'Alest of the medical faculty at Montpellier, a physician selected at the recommendation of «*nonnullos in nostra curia*» to replace Bernard. Perhaps Arnau or Ermengaud had spoken highly of Jean; they would have known each other teaching at Montpellier, and Arnau and Jean were later to work together on the revision of the medical faculty's curriculum there. Jean seems to have arrived in Catalonia in Octo-

²¹ A.C.A. Reg. 349, ff. 118v-119.

²² Bernard Marini first appears in royal service in February 1300 (Reg. 294, f. 11v); two months later, on 20 April, he was granted 1000 s. yearly on the tribute of the *aljama judeorum* of Barcelona, for «*servicia... nobis et illustrissime domine regine consorti nostre karissime exhibita*» (Reg. 197, f. 104v). Coming as it does only a few weeks after the birth of the Infanta Constanza, this grant suggests a reward for assistance at the successful delivery. Another grant, this time an outright gift of 6000 s. for services to the king and queen, was made 11 December 1301 (Reg. 268, f. 250). Six days later the king provided Bernard with credentials for a trip to visit friends and relatives in France (Reg. 120, f. 174), but by June 1302 he was back at the royal court. In August the king granted him reimbursement totalling 3012 s. for books and other items lost in a shipwreck (Reg. 294, ff. 65v-66). Then in September Bernard consolidated the sums owed him by the court (Reg. 269, f. 87), gave up his yearly grant from the Barcelona *aljama* (Reg. 125, f. 1), and left the court for good, travelling via Montpellier to consult with the physician Jean d'Alest (Reg. 125, ff. 55v-56).

ber 1302 and to have left early in February 1303²³. Nowhere in the royal correspondence of this period are there allusions to some acute illness at court that could explain his summons, and it seems possible that Jean was meant to replace Bernard in supervising the queen's pregnancy. His departure in February would then mean that by this time the Infante had been born and was in good health; from what we have seen of him, Jaime II would not willingly have allowed a famous physician to leave his court if the queen's delivery had been only a few weeks away. On balance, then, perhaps we can conclude that the Infante Juan was born in November or December 1302, in which case he, like his brother Alfonso, would have been a premature baby.

h) *Pedro*. The case of the Infante Pedro raises difficulties of another sort. I have not come upon a direct reference to Pedro earlier than May 1308, and our only clue as to his date of birth comes in his own account of the revelations that came to him late in life and led him to join the Franciscan order: «yo rehebi lo sant abit de mossen sent Francesch lany de la Incarnacio de Jesu Christ mil. CCC. LVIII et en lany de mi dit frare Pere LIII anys» (in fact, his entrance into the order came on 12 November 1358)²⁴. This wording suggests that at that moment Pedro was between his 52nd and 53rd birthdays, in his 53rd year, and hence that he was born between November 1305 and November 1306. By this time Ermengaud Blasi had returned to the court as its principal physician, and he would probably have attended the queen. It

²³ On 29 October 1302 Jean d'Alest was granted 500 s. monthly for as long as he remained in royal service (Reg. 269, f. 103). By 22 November (Reg. 294, f. 81v) he had been paid 152 s. for his travel expenses from Montpellier to Gerona; by 29 November (*id.*, f. 82) he had been paid a further 200 s. for his October expenses. He received 500 s. on the first day of December 1302 and of January and February 1303, after which all payments stopped (A.C.A. Real Patrimonio, Reg. 774, f. 36v).

²⁴ Quoted by Josep Maria POU, *Visionarios, beguinos y fraticelos catalanes* (Vich 1930), p. 350. The study by Alfonso María de Barcelona, «El Infante Fray Pedro de Aragón», *Estudios Franciscanos* 11 (1913), 132-6; 12 (1914), 129-41, 434-8; 13 (1914), 204-15; 14 (1915), 205-18; 15 (1915), 58-65, seems not to have been completed and offers no further information, saying only «nos inclinamos a creer que nació en el año 1305, en contra de lo que hemos leído en algún autor, toda vez que él mismo dice en sus escritos que, al entrar en la orden seráfica, en 1358, tenía cincuenta y tres años de edad».

is suggestive that after seven pregnancies in six years, the queen had not borne a child in three or four years, and it is tempting to wonder whether between 1302 and 1305-1306 there were other pregnancies that did not reach term.

A further piece of evidence may allow us to narrow down the possible date of Pedro's birth a little further. A letter from Jaime II to the king of Mallorca dated 22 September 1306 excused him from a meeting on the grounds that Queen Blanca was then suffering from a quartan fever; surely if she had been far along in pregnancy, Jaime would have mentioned this fact as well in making his excuses²⁵. In all probability, then, Pedro was born before September 1306.

i) *Ramón Berenguer*. This last son of Jaime II and Blanca was born in 1308, at least two and perhaps three years after Pedro, their previous child, and this comparatively long period of time again suggests that Blanca may have been experiencing difficulties in pregnancy. A remark in her will (signed in Valencia, 18 August 1308) indirectly supports this hypothesis, stating that she is drawing it up «iuxta nostrum puerperium existentes, partusque nostri periculum obstupescentes ob multa pericula que emergunt femineo sexui ante partum et in partu similiter et post partum»²⁶. Less than two weeks later the child —Ramón Berenguer— was born, on 31 August 1308: writing in September, King Fernando of Castile congratulated Jaime II on the birth of a son on the «postrenero dia de agosto»²⁷.

By this time Jaime II had acquired the two physicians who were to serve the court for the remainder of his reign, Joan Amell and Martí de Caliga Rubea. Ermengaud Blasi had left royal service for good at the end of 1306, shortly after the birth of the Infante Pedro. Before leaving, he had recommended that Joan Amell be appointed to care for the royal children, and the latter had arrived in November 1305; within a few years he had received the title of *phiscus major*, and kept it into the reign of Alfonso IV. Martí de Caliga Rubea had been at court since late 1304, but he too became important only after Ermengaud's departure. Although the king con-

²⁵ A.C.A. Canc. Reg. 236, f. 237.

²⁶ The document is published by Martínez Ferrando, v. 2, pp. 34-39.

²⁷ A.C.A. C.R.D. Jaime II 3363, dated 19 September era 1346 (= 1308).

tinued to consult a variety of other physicians, he never again suffered the inconstancy of medical assistance that marked the first 15 years of his reign. In August 1308, then, both Joan Amell and Martí de Caliga Rubea were at court, and both may have attended at Ramón Berenguer's birth.

j) *Violante*. In a letter of 14 October 1310 the king wrote that Blanca had died after giving birth to this their last child, «post dolores gravissimos, quibus racione partus sui extitit per dies aliquos multipliciter lacessita... die martis proxime preterita» —that is, on the 13th²⁸. The register of the queen's correspondence in her last years stops with a quantity of letters dated 11 October 1310, and it would be consistent with Jaime's account to suppose that the birth occurred then, with Blanca dying two days later.

In this way we may arrive at a new sequence for the births of the children of Jaime II and Blanca:

Jaime: b. 29 September 1296 (Valencia).

María: b. April/May 1298 (Valencia).

Alfonso: b. January 1299 (Naples).

Constanza: b. 1 April 1300 (Valencia).

Isabel: b. February-May 1301²⁹.

Blanca: b. March 1302 (Valencia).

Juan: b. November-December 1302.

Pedro: b. 1305-1306.

Ramón Berenguer: b. 31 August 1308 (Valencia).

Violante: b. 11 October 1310 (Barcelona).

²⁸ Published by Martínez Ferrando, v. 2, pp. 40-41.

²⁹ In his *Jaume II o el seny català* (Barcelona 1956), p. 160, Martínez Ferrando suggested that Queen Blanca gave birth to a child in Murcia in March 1301. He gave no reason for his suggestion, and I have not yet found documentation to support it, but if it is correct the child must have been Isabel.