

Solidarity or Fiscal Rapacity?

The interplay between Food Supply Policy and Taxation in Valencia during the 1350s-1360s *

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Introduction¹

This paper analyses the intricate relationship between food provisioning policies and the tax system in the Mediterranean city of Valencia during the pivotal decade from 1350 to 1360. These years witnessed the final shaping of the city's financial structure, which came to rely on indirect taxes and the issuance of long-term annuities. At the same time, the city introduced, for the first time, a decisive subsidy policy to ensure the grain supply to its urban population—ostensibly as a means to maintain social stability.

While these two areas—taxation and food provisioning—have traditionally been studied in isolation, I argue that a holistic approach is essential to understanding their interconnected roles within a broader systemic framework. To that end, after outlining the historiographical context and the sources employed, I present the historical background before analysing the city's tax system, its food supply policies, and the internal contradictions that emerged, particularly those relating to the stated goal of preserving social peace.

A preliminary conceptual clarification is necessary: can food supply policy be considered an expression of solidarity? The term 'solidarity' is not explicitly present in medieval thought, but its principles were implicitly understood as part of a broader concept: *caritas*. This complex theological virtue was authoritatively defined by St Thomas Aquinas as the orderly love of God, oneself, and the others, thus constituting the basis for all common good and social harmony.² Although medieval thinkers offered other understandings, one of the main derivations was the notion of 'just price' as an element of the 'common good'.³

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¹ Main abbreviations: f. (folio), m. (mano), ACA (Archivo de la Corona de Aragón), C. (Cancillería), AMV (Arxiu Municipal de València), MC (Manual de Consells), CC (Claveria Comuna), reg. (registro), srv (sous reials de València), drv (diners reials de València).

² ST. THOMAS AQUINAS, *Summa Theologica*, II-II, Q. 23-46, specifically questions 26 and 27. For a detailed explanation on Thomas Aquinas' contribution to the conception of common good see: MARY M. KEYS, *Aquinas, Aristotle, and the Promise of the Common Good* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006).

³ RAYMOND DE ROOVER, 'The Concept of the Just Price: Theory and Economic Policy', *The Journal of Economic History* 18, no. 4 (1958): 418–34.

The question, then, is whether the food supply policies in Valencia were framed in these terms. While it is impossible to know precisely what the city's rulers understood as the 'common good', they explicitly linked their policies to this ultimate purpose. In 1358, for instance, they stated that their initiatives were: 'a be e utilitat de la cosa pública e per tal que major habundància de blats en aquella fos trobada' (for the benefit of the *res publica* and to ensure a greater abundance of cereals in the city).⁴ The intention to aid the populace, particularly the poor, was even more explicit during the famine of 1325, when Valencian jurors appealed to the king for help: 'farets-ne servii al nostre senyor Déus, per rahó de les gents populars, e a la Ciutat gràcia e mercé' (you will do service to our Lord God, for the sake of the poor people, and grace and mercy to the city).⁵

This study examines the various initiatives known as 'supply policies' as a coherent system. I contend that the evidence presented here suggests a fundamental repurposing of this system. Although its primary aim may have been to serve the common good by ensuring a steady food supply at moderate prices, it was ultimately retooled to expand the fiscal capacity of the city's rulers.

Sources and Historiographical Framework

The complexity of the analysis presented in this paper situates it at the intersection of several historiographical fields, all of which must be taken into account. The first area is the study of urban food supplies. The question of how medieval urban populations secured their sustenance and managed the related logistical, economic, and political challenges has been explored from a range of perspectives, including the history of alimentation, urban governance, market systems, famine studies, and logistics. While the history of alimentation provides the broadest interpretative framework, the approach adopted here aligns more closely with the historiographies of market structures and urban governance.

In recent years, the study of famine—its causes and the societal mechanisms devised to mitigate or prevent its effects—has attracted growing scholarly interest.⁶ In this regard, the Crown of Aragon has emerged as a particularly fertile ground for research. Although many important studies could be cited, I will refer specifically to

⁴ AMV, MC, A-13, m. 3, f. 4–6r (05/06/1358). The expression 'a be e utilitat de la cosa pública', or its variations, appears frequently in documents concerning these aids. See, for example: AMV, MC, A-13, m. 1, f. 46v–47v (20/01/1357); AMV, MC, A-13, m. 3, f. 26–27r (27/07/1358), 27v–29v (14/08/1358), etc.

⁵ AMV, MC, A-1, f. 235v–236r (19/06/1325); *Epistolari de la València medieval*, ed. AGUSTÍN RUBIO VELA, 2nd ed. (València: Publicacions de l'Abadia de Montserrat, 2003), 189–90, doc. 79.

⁶ Three edited volumes offer a general overview of the topic and reflect the current state of research in this field; PERE BENITO I MONCLÚS, *Crisis alimentarias en la Edad Media: modelos, explicaciones y representaciones* (Lleida: Milenio, 2013); PERE BENITO I MONCLÚS and ANTONI RIERA MELIS, *Guerra y carestía en la Europa medieval* (Lleida: Milenio, 2014); PERE BENITO I MONCLÚS, LUCIANO PALERMO, and ANDREA FARA, *Políticas contra el hambre y la carestía en la Europa medieval* (Lleida: Milenio, 2018).

the recent monograph by Adam Franklin-Lyons, which offers the most comprehensive overview of the field to date for this region of Europe.⁷

The second field at this historiographical crossroads is fiscal history. The study of historical tax systems traces its roots to Joseph A. Schumpeter's seminal 1918 work, which laid the foundation for what would later be termed 'fiscal sociology'.⁸ Since then, numerous scholars have deepened our understanding of medieval tax regimes, using them as windows into the functioning of past economies, the evolution of public policy, and the broader processes of state formation.⁹

The Crown of Aragon has emerged as one of the most promising contexts for investigating the formation and evolution of medieval tax systems and their socio-economic impact. Despite regional variations, Aragonese cities generally developed a fiscal model centered on the replacement of direct taxation with sales taxes and a debt structure that increasingly relied on the sale of long-term annuities.¹⁰ The monarchy's financial needs played a crucial role in this development, as urban tax systems became instrumental in transferring the costs of Mediterranean and Peninsular warfare to the local populations.¹¹ In this way, cities and towns were transformed into what might aptly be described as 'fiscal factories'.¹²

If the Crown of Aragon constitutes one of the most promising European contexts for studying fiscal and provisioning systems, the city of Valencia has, over recent decades, emerged as a privileged case study. Although Valencia's experience is not unique—similar challenges and responses can be found across Europe—it offers a particularly compelling model. The system developed by the city's authorities to address food supply and financial pressures during these decades proved remarkably durable, enduring for more than four centuries.

⁷ ADAM FRANKLIN-LYONS, *Shortage and Famine in the Late Medieval Crown of Aragon: Vulnerability and Resilience in the Late-Medieval Crown of Aragon* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2022), vi.

⁸ JOSEPH A. SCHUMPETER, *Die Krise des Steuerstaats* (Graz–Leipzig: Leuschner–Lubensky, 1918).

⁹ For a broader perspective on the development of this field, see: DENIS MENJOT, MATHIEU CAESAR, and PERE VERDÉS PIJUAN, 'History of Taxation in Medieval Europe: Sources, Historiography and Methods', in *The Routledge Handbook of Public Taxation in Medieval Europe* (London: Routledge, 2023), 15–54; SIMONETTA CAVACIOCCHI, *La fiscalità nell'economia europea sec. XIII–XVIII* (Florence: Firenze University Press, 2008).

¹⁰ MANUEL SÁNCHEZ, ANTONI FURIÓ DIEGO, and JOSÉ ÁNGEL SESMA MUÑOZ, 'Old and New Forms of Taxation in the Crown of Aragon (13th–14th Centuries)', in *La fiscalità nell'economia europea*, 99–130; ANTONI FURIÓ, 'Deuda Pública e intereses privados: finanzas y fiscalidad municipales en la Corona de Aragón', *Edad Media: Revista de Historia* 2 (1999): 35–80.

¹¹ VICENT BAYDAL SALA, 'El papel de la guerra en el proceso de construcción de la fiscalidad pública en el reino de Valencia (1250–1365)', *Revista Roda da Fortuna: Revista Eletrônica sobre Antiguidade e Medievo*, no. extra 1–1 (2014): 148–69; MANUEL SÁNCHEZ MARTÍNEZ, *Pagar al rey en la Corona de Aragón durante el siglo XIV: estudios sobre fiscalidad y finanzas reales y urbanas* (Madrid: Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas, 2003), accessed 11 April 2025, <http://catdir.loc.gov/catdir/enhancements/fy1317/2005420987-t.html>.

¹² ANTONIO JOSÉ MIRA JÓDAR and PAU VICIANO NAVARRO, 'La Construcció d'un Sistema Fiscal: Municipis i Impost al País Valencià (Segle XIII–XIV)', *Revista d'Historia Medieval* 7 (1996): 135–48.

The financial system of Valencia from the thirteenth to the fifteenth centuries has been thoroughly examined in the works of J. V. García Marsilla, R. Narbona, A. Mira, P. Viciano, and E. Cruselles, among others.¹³ In parallel, the various initiatives undertaken by city officials to ensure grain provisioning—culminating in a policy of import subsidies and market regulation—have been documented in the studies of A. Rubio Vela, E. Cruselles, and P. Sanahuja, among others.¹⁴

¹³ JUAN VICENTE GARCÍA MARSILLA, *Vivir a crédito en la Valencia medieval: de los orígenes del sistema censal al endeudamiento del municipio* (València: Publicacions de la Universitat de València, 2002); JUAN VICENTE GARCÍA MARSILLA, 'La formació d'un mercat del crèdit: orígens i difusió del censal en la societat valenciana: segles XIII-XIV', *Butlletí de la Societat Catalana d'Estudis Històrics* 12 (2001): 135–44; JUAN VICENTE GARCÍA MARSILLA, 'La génesis de la fiscalidad municipal en la ciudad de Valencia (1238–1366)', *Revista d'Historia Medieval* 7 (1996): 149–72; JUAN VICENTE GARCÍA MARSILLA and JORGE SÁIZ SERRANO, 'De la peita al censal. Finanzas municipales y clases dirigentes en la Valencia de los siglos XIV y XV', in *Colloqui Corona, Municipis i Fiscalitat a la Baixa Edat Mitjana*, eds MANUEL SANCHEZ and ANTONI FURIO (Lleida: Institut d'Estudis Ilerdences, 1997), 307–36; JUAN VICENTE GARCÍA MARSILLA, 'Las empresas del fisco. Arrendamiento y gestión privada de los impuestos en el reino medieval de Valencia (siglos XIV-XV)', in *La fiscalità nell'economia europea*, 851–62; JUAN VICENTE GARCÍA MARSILLA, 'Avalando al rey. Préstamos a la Corona y finanzas municipales en la Valencia del siglo XV', in *Fiscalidad de estado y fiscalidad municipal en los reinos hispánicos medievales*, eds DENIS MENJOT and MANUEL SANCHEZ MARTINEZ (Madrid: Casa de Velázquez, 2006), 377–90. RAFAEL NARBONA VIZCAÍNO, 'Finanzas municipales y patriciado urbano: Valencia a finales del Trescientos', *Anuario de Estudios Medievales* 22 (1992): 485–512. MIRA JÓDAR and VICIANO NAVARRO, 'La Construcció d'un Sistema Fiscal'. Furthermore, Pau Viciano has devoted several works to the same issue in the scenario of the Valencian town of Castelló de la Plana. See: PAU VICIANO NAVARRO, *Més enllà de la senyoria: mercat i impostos a Castelló de la Plana, segles XIV-XV* (Catarroja: Editorial Afers, 2017). ENRIQUE CRUSELLES GÓMEZ, 'Las sociedades arrendatarias de los impuestos municipales de Valencia (1410-1450)', *Medievalismo: Revista de La Sociedad Española de Estudios Medievales* 27 (2017): 133–58. A particularly significant contribution to the development of this area was issue no. 7 of *Revista d'Història Medieval* (1996), devoted to the origins of municipal fiscality.

¹⁴ AGUSTÍN RUBIO VELA, 'El Abastecimiento Cerealista de Una Gran Urbe Bajomedieval. Aproximación al Problema Campo-Ciudad En El País Valenciano', in *L'Escenari històric del Xúquer. Actes de la IV assemblea de La Ribera* (L'Alcudia: Ajuntament de L'Alcudia, 1986), 102–35; AGUSTÍN RUBIO VELA, 'El problema frumentari a València i la crisi de la Unio (1340-1348)', *Homenatge al doctor Sebastià Garcia Martínez*, 3 vols (València: Universitat de València, 1988), vol. 1, 89–102; AGUSTÍN RUBIO VELA, 'Valencia y el control de la producción cerealista del Reino en la baja Edad Media: orígenes y planteamiento de un conflicto', in *Demografía y sociedad en la España bajomedieval* (Zaragoza: Universidad de Zaragoza, 2001), 33–65; AGUSTÍN RUBIO VELA, 'Trigo de Aragón en la Valencia del Trescientos', *Crecimiento económico y formación de los mercados en Aragón en la Edad Media: (1200-1350)* (Zaragoza: Universidad de Zaragoza, 2009), 319–67. ENRIQUE CRUSELLES GÓMEZ, JOSÉ MARÍA CRUSELLES GÓMEZ, and RAFAEL NARBONA VIZCAÍNO, 'El sistema de abastecimiento frumentario de la ciudad de Valencia en el siglo XV: entre la subvención pública y el negocio privado', *La Mediterrània, àrea de convergència de sistemes alimentaris (segles V-XVIII). XIV Jornades d'Estudis Històrics Locals* (Palma: Institut d'Estudis Balearics, 1996), 305–32; ENRIQUE CRUSELLES GÓMEZ, 'El mercado de harina en la huerta de la Valencia cuatrocentista', *En la España medieval* 48 (2025): 225–47. PABLO SANAHUJA FERRER, 'Con el hambre a las puertas. El abastecimiento de Valencia durante la Guerra de los Dos Pedros (1356–1366)', *Medievalismo: revista de la Sociedad Española de Estudios Medievales* 27 (2017): 327–51; PABLO SANAHUJA FERRER, 'Alimentar la ciudad en tiempos de guerra. El abastecimiento cárnico de Valencia durante la Guerra de los Dos Pedros (1356-1366)', *Aragón en la Edad Media* 30 (2019): 351–87. Foundational studies on the urban food supply of Valencia include: HERMENEGILDO RAUSELL BOIZAS et al., 'Movimiento secular de las importaciones trigueras del siglo XV mediante las "Ayudas de la ciudad de Valencia"', *Estudios: Revista de historia moderna* 2 (1973): 5–12; MARÍA AMPARO CUEVES GRANERO, 'Abastecimientos de la ciudad de Valencia durante la Edad Media', *Saitabi: revista de la Facultat de Geografia i Història* 12 (1962): 141–67.

The purpose of this paper is to draw attention to one final area of inquiry: the study of social peace and public order in the Middle Ages. This broad field intersects with several others, including justice, criminality, and urban governance. Focused on Valencia, the seminal work of R. Narbona, *Pueblo, poder y sexo*, provides valuable insight into the complexities of public order in medieval Valencia—a picture further enriched by his studies on urban governance and the administration of justice.¹⁵

While each of the three areas explored in this paper—public finance, food provisioning, and public order—has been gaining increasing traction on their own, their intersection has not yet undergone sustained or systematic analysis. Only a handful of scholars have touched on this convergence, and even then, only partially.¹⁶

To address this gap, I draw upon one of the major advantages of working with the Crown of Aragon: the richness and diversity of its archival sources. This study is based primarily on materials from the Archivo Municipal de Valencia (AMV)—particularly the series Manuals de Consells (MC), which records the city council's decisions, and Claveria Comuna (CC), the municipality's accounting books. Additional records were drawn from the Chancery of the Archivo de la Corona de Aragón. This latter archive includes the series Sigilli Secreti, Guerre Castelle, and Comune. While all contain royal letters, they are of a different character: Sigilli Secreti comprises letters issued under the monarch's private seal, Guerre Castelle contains letters relating to the War of the Two Peters, and the Comune series includes letters of a more diverse and common nature.

Historical Context

In addition to the devastating impact of the Black Death across Western Christendom, two major crises defined the 1350s and 1360s for the city of Valencia. The first was the Union Revolt, or Union War (1347–1348), a rebellion against the authoritarian rule of Peter IV of Aragon. This conflict saw a significant alliance between segments of the Aragonese nobility and the urban oligarchies of Valencia. The eventual outcome—a decisive defeat for the rebels—marked a clear affirmation of royal authority and had

¹⁵ RAFAEL NARBONA VIZCAÍNO, *Pueblo, poder y sexo: Valencia medieval (1306-1420)* (València: Centre d'Estudis d'Història Local, 1992); RAFAEL NARBONA VIZCAÍNO, *Valencia, municipio medieval: poder político y luchas ciudadanas (1239-1418)* (València: Ayuntamiento de València, 1995); RAFAEL NARBONA VIZCAÍNO, 'El justicia criminal: una corte medieval valenciana, un procedimiento judicial', *Estudis castellanens* 3 (1986): 287–310.

¹⁶ Among the limited number of studies on this subject, noteworthy contributions include those by E. Cruselles, J. M. Cruselles, R. Narbona, and J. V. García Marsilla, who have examined the intersection of urban finances and food supply; CRUSELLES GÓMEZ, CRUSELLES GÓMEZ and NARBONA VIZCAÍNO, 'El sistema de abastecimiento frumentario de la ciudad de Valencia en el siglo XV'; JUAN VICENTE GARCÍA MARSILLA, 'La sisa de la carne: ganadería, abastecimiento cárnico y fiscalidad en los municipios valencianos bajomedievales', in *Los tributos de la tierra: fiscalidad y agricultura en España (siglos XII-XX)*, eds RAFAEL VALLEJO POUSADA and ANTONI FURIÓ (València: Universitat de València, 2008), 81–102.

lasting consequences for the city of Valencia, which had played a prominent role in the revolt.¹⁷

The second major crisis was the War of the Two Peters (1356–1366), a protracted and destructive conflict between Castile and Aragon. This war, which ultimately evolved into a Castilian civil war and paved the way for the rise of the Trastámara dynasty, stands as one of the most devastating military engagements in the history of the Iberian Peninsula.¹⁸ The decade-long conflict between Peter I ‘the Cruel’ of Castile and Peter IV ‘the Ceremonious’ of Aragon unfolded in multiple phases, with shifting scenarios and varying regional impacts. Although the city of Valencia faced supply difficulties and financial pressures from the outset of the war, the final years posed an especially severe challenge. During this period, the Kingdom of Valencia became the principal theatre of military operations, and the city endured two intense sieges in 1363 and 1364.¹⁹

Taxes and Subsidies: A Complex Analysis

The two aforementioned crises had a profound impact on the development of both the supply policies and the fiscal system of Valencia. In the aftermath of the Union Revolt, it became necessary to both punish the rebels and address the massive debt accumulated by the city. These objectives were pursued through the imposition of the *Imposició dels Damnificats* (Tax of the Wronged), which comprised two distinct sets of levies. On the one hand, taxes were introduced to compensate the king and others harmed by the rebellion, targeting the territories that had supported the uprising. On the other hand, a specific set of taxes was applied exclusively within the city of Valencia to reduce its public debt.

These taxes fell primarily on essential goods consumed by the broader population—such as cereals, meat, and cloth. Although indirect taxation had been previously employed in Valencia, this marked the first occasion in which such taxes were both intended to last a decade and imposed at notably high rates. Combined with

¹⁷ VICENT BAYDAL SALA, *Els orígens de la revolta de la unió al regne de València (1330-1348)* (València: Universitat de València, 2013); MATEU RODRIGO LIZONDO, ‘La unión de Valencia (1347-1348). Una revuelta ciudadana contra el autoritarismo real’ (PhD diss., Universitat de València, 1987); MATEU RODRIGO LIZONDO, ‘La Unión valenciana y sus protagonistas’, *Ligarzas* 7 (1975): 133–66.

¹⁸ Although earlier historiography had already recognised the war’s significant role in shaping the institutional and economic development of the Crown of Aragon, recent studies by M. Lafuente and P. Sanahuja have highlighted deeper long-term consequences of this conflict; MARIO LAFUENTE GÓMEZ, *Dos coronas en guerra: Aragón y Castilla (1356-1366)* (Zaragoza: Universidad de Zaragoza–CEMA, 2012); MARIO LAFUENTE GÓMEZ, *Un reino en armas: la guerra de los Dos Pedros en Aragón (1356-1366)* (Zaragoza: Institución Fernando el Católico, 2014); PABLO SANAHUJA FERRER, ‘Un reino asediado. El impacto de la guerra de los dos Pedros en el reino de Valencia (1356-1369). Estructuras políticas, económicas y sociales’ (PhD diss., Universitat de València, 2022).

¹⁹ SANAHUJA FERRER, ‘Un reino asediado’, 244–417.

the general levies, the city-specific taxes placed an unprecedented fiscal burden on Valencia's urban population.²⁰

In this already strained financial context, the outbreak of the War of the Two Peters in 1356 led to a dramatic increase in military expenditure. The city's existing tax revenues quickly proved insufficient. This pressure led to negotiations between the city council and the king in 1359, resulting in royal authorisation for new taxes to replace the previous ones.²¹ While our understanding of the exact structure of these new taxes remains incomplete, it is clear that their administration—though partially restricted—was transferred to the jurisdiction of the *jurats* and the city council of Valencia.²²

In September 1362, however, the city council disregarded the initial limitations and introduced a significant tax increase without prior royal approval. These new levies were imposed in addition to existing ones:²³ 2 *sous reials de València* per *cabiz* (approximately 201 litres) of cereal or flour; 1 *diner real* per pound of mutton; 6 *diners* per pound of cloth; 2 *diners* per pound of other merchandise; 12 *diners* on retail wine and 6 on wholesale wine; and 6 *diners* on the sale of livestock or other goods.²⁴ These restrictions were eventually lifted during the Cortes of Monzón in 1363, when King Peter IV formally granted the city the privilege of imposing taxes at its own discretion.²⁵

Despite the significant tax burden imposed on the Valencian population, municipal debt continued to rise, further accelerated by the mounting costs of warfare. The last reliable debt estimate dates back to 1344, placing it at the already considerable figure of 700,000 *sous reials de València* (srv). The Union Revolt and the subsequent Mediterranean military campaigns only deepened the city's fiscal crisis.²⁶

Although no detailed records exist to precisely track the evolution of municipal debt during the War of the Two Peters, one clear indicator of its dramatic increase was the resort to the *censal*. A *censal* was a perpetual annuity contract that allowed cities to convert short-term loans into long-term financial obligations with reduced immediate costs. Valencia issued its first *censal* in 1355, valued at 112,000 srv. By 1366, the growing reliance on this instrument was underscored by the conversion of a 360,000 srv debt

²⁰ VICENT BAYDAL SALA, 'Els fonaments del pactisme valencià. Sistemes fiscals, relacions de poder i identitat col·lectiva al regne de València (c. 1250 - c. 1365)' (PhD diss., Universitat Pompeu Fabra, Barcelona, 2011), 686–94, accessed 12 April 2025, <https://repositori.upf.edu/items/8ebc6d97-f8f2-4df1-bcfd-53405feb0442>; RODRIGO LIZONDO, 'La unión de Valencia', 404–405.

²¹ AMV, MC, A-13, m. 3, f. 55r–56v (21/02/1359); BAYDAL SALA, 'Els fonaments del pactisme valencià', 691.

²² Although the original grant charter has not been preserved, other documents indicate that Infante Fernando and the city council had established certain limitations, including regulations on the collection of tax revenues and restrictions on tax farming; AMV, MC, A-13, m. 3, f. 51–52r (17/01/1359); AMV, MC, A-13, m. 3, f. 55r–56v (21/02/1359); ACA, C., reg. 1168, f. 15 (02/03/1359).

²³ This practice was not uncommon; multiple taxes could be levied simultaneously on the same goods, each serving a distinct fiscal purpose; GARCÍA MARSILLA, 'La génesis de la fiscalidad'.

²⁴ AMV, MC, A-14, m. 3, f. 11v–12r (23/09/1362).

²⁵ ACA, C., reg. 1188, f. 150v–151r (16/01/1363); AMV, Privilegios Reales, Pedro IV, n.º 85 (16/01/1363); FURIÓ, 'Deuda Pública e intereses privados'.

²⁶ GARCÍA MARSILLA, *Vivir a crédito en la Valencia medieval*, 243–47.

owed to the financier Jafudà Alatzar into a *censal* annuity of 30,000 *srv*. The year before, in 1365, *censal* annuities already accounted for 39% of the municipal budget. In 1366, the city council made the decision to convert all outstanding debts into *censals*, and, by 1367, it had established a dedicated *clavari de censals* (receiver of *censals*) to manage these obligations.²⁷

In addition to managing the growing debt and military expenditures, the *jurats*—Valencia’s ruling officials—invoked the necessity of securing a reliable food supply as a central argument in their 1359 negotiations with the king for new taxation rights.²⁸ In the preceding decades, the *jurats* had employed four principal strategies to ensure the availability of cereals, particularly wheat. First, they engaged in the direct purchase of grain in large quantities. Second, they confiscated and redistributed stored cereals. Third, they provided favourable loans to grain importers. Fourth, they regulated sale prices for designated importers. Each of these measures had its strengths and weaknesses, as city leaders had learned through earlier experiences in the fourteenth century.²⁹ However, these strategies were designed primarily to respond to short-term supply shocks. To address long-term provisioning needs, the *jurats* implemented a more ambitious and financially demanding policy: subsidising wheat imports from abroad.

In 1356, Valencia’s municipal authorities introduced a subsidy system, granting a bonus of 2 *solidi reials de València* (*srv*) for each *cabiz* or *cafis* of wheat—equivalent to approximately 201 litres—imported by merchants under prearranged agreements. This policy proved highly effective in its early years, enabling the importation of five million litres of wheat by 1358.³⁰

By contrast, the *jurats*’ intervention in the meat market was far less ambitious. Their efforts primarily focused on price regulation through legal measures. Between 1358 and 1366, this policy targeted a range of meat products, particularly mutton, goat, and pork.³¹

The king also intervened during times of acute crisis to secure Valencia’s food supply. His involvement took several forms, but two were especially significant. First, he ordered the diversion of ships carrying grain destined for other territories—mainly Catalonia—to the port of Valencia.³² While this forceful measure proved effective in alleviating the city’s immediate shortages, it had serious repercussions elsewhere,

²⁷ GARCÍA MARSILLA, *Vivir a crédito en la Valencia medieval*, 247–56; NARBONA VIZCAÍNO, ‘Finanzas municipales y patriciado urbano’.

²⁸ AMV, MC, A-13, m. 3, f. 55r–56v (21/02/1359); ACA, C., reg. 1168, f. 15 (02/03/1359).

²⁹ SANAHUJA FERRER, ‘Con el hambre a las puertas’. For a full description of the system, see JUAN VICENTE GARCÍA MARSILLA, *La jerarquía de la mesa: los sistemas alimentarios en la Valencia bajomedieval* (València: Diputació de València, 1993), 24–65.

³⁰ SANAHUJA FERRER, ‘Con el hambre a las puertas’.

³¹ SANAHUJA FERRER, ‘Alimentar la ciudad en tiempos de guerra’; GARCÍA MARSILLA, ‘La sisa de la carn’.

³² These orders were reiterated on several occasions throughout the war: ACA, C., reg. 1183, f. 172v (9/12/1362); ACA, C., reg. 1187, f. 205v–206v (19/06/1363); ACA, C., reg. 1385, f. 147v (06/09/1363); ACA, C., reg. 1191, f. 476 (09/09/1363).

notably causing an artificial scarcity in cities like Barcelona in 1364.³³ Second, the king intervened in price regulation.³⁴ Although only one such royal decree has been preserved, it offers valuable insight: issued in May 1364, it set maximum prices for cereals—50 *srv* per *cabiz* of wheat, 20 *srv* for barley, and 16 *srv* for oats. While the king acknowledged that these prices were high, he considered them justified given the extraordinary needs of both the civilian population and the army.³⁵

Additionally, the Cortes of Cullera, held in June 1364, enacted a sweeping subsidy policy to encourage grain imports. It granted 4 *srv* for each *cabiz* of wheat and 2 *srv* for each *cabiz* of barley, reinforcing the broader effort to secure urban provisioning during a period of severe instability.³⁶

Contradictions of a Framework

In summary, the city council of Valencia had been granted the necessary tools to confront a mounting public debt, rising military expenditures, and the challenges of implementing a food supply policy during the war with Castile. This policy aimed to guarantee access to affordable food—especially cereals—for the city's population during periods of crisis, ensuring that ordinary residents could participate in the food market without facing prohibitive costs.

Yet, major contradictions surfaced soon after the policy was put into practice. As early as 1358—just two years after its implementation—the *jurats* observed that many citizens were purchasing wheat outside the official granaries, instead resorting to the black market. In response, the city council imposed fines of sixty *solidi* in an effort to deter this behaviour.³⁷ The fact that common people were willing to risk penalties to avoid the official channels suggests two possible explanations: either the city granaries offered grain of lesser quality or even in a poor state of conservation—a situation demonstrated on multiple occasions—or black market prices were at least comparable to, if not lower than, the subsidised prices offered by the city.³⁸ According to the city council, the issue was indeed the price: individuals, millers, and bakers were attempting to evade the taxes that increased the cost of grain from official channels.³⁹

This scenario, which recurred in 1360, points to a critical shortcoming in the policy's design.⁴⁰ Rather than achieving its stated goal of market accessibility, the system inadvertently encouraged avoidance. These developments reveal a deeper contradiction at the heart of the municipal strategy: while framed as a measure for social welfare, the food supply policy increasingly became a mechanism for fiscal

³³ ACA, C., reg. 716, f. 94r (02/03/1364).

³⁴ ACA, C., reg. 1199, f. 492v (20/05/1364).

³⁵ ACA, C., reg. 1199, f. 492v (20/05/1364).

³⁶ MARÍA ROSA MUÑOZ POMER, 'Las Cortes de Cullera-Valencia de 1364', *Saitabi: revista de la Facultat de Geografia i Història* 35 (1985): 87–94.

³⁷ AMV, MC, A-13, m. 3, f. 26–27r (27/07/1358); SANAHUJA FERRER, 'Con el hambre a las puertas'.

³⁸ CRUSELLES GÓMEZ, 'El mercado de harina en la huerta de la Valencia cuatrocentista'.

³⁹ AMV, MC, A-13, m. 3, f. 26–27r (27/07/1358).

⁴⁰ AMV, MC, A-14, m. 1, f. 10v–12r (19/09/1360); SANAHUJA FERRER, 'Con el hambre a las puertas'.

extraction—one that burdened consumers and ultimately undermined its own legitimacy.

Although we lack precise data on black-market prices, the transactions involving the Count of Trastámara between 1364 and 1365 offer valuable insight into real price dynamics—or, at the very least, indicate that official prices were significantly inflated. The count, who had agreed to receive part of his and his troops' wages in kind from the king, refused to accept grain at the official rates or to pay the associated taxes. In July 1364, for example, he offered just forty-eight *solidi* for a *cabiz* of wheat that had been purchased at fifty-four *solidi* by municipal officials. By January 1365, he secured wheat at a price of thirty *solidi* per *cabiz*—a figure well below what royal agents were paying for comparable quantities.⁴¹

One might argue that, even if the city council failed to ensure consistently low prices, it nonetheless succeeded in maintaining food availability during the two Castilian sieges. However, the historical record does not support this interpretation. In both 1363 and 1364, the city's inhabitants suffered serious food shortages, stemming not from the siege itself, but from the failure of the jurors to secure sufficient provisions in advance.⁴² The result was a food crisis that exposed the system's fundamental weakness: despite having the authority and resources to act, the city council was unable to translate its policy framework into effective logistical planning.

The most significant failure of the city's food supply policy occurred in October 1364. Although the king, wary of a potential renewed siege, urged the city to remain well stocked, the jurors faced an unexpected challenge: they were unable to sell the grain stored in the *almodí*, the municipal granary.⁴³ It appears that elevated taxes had driven much of the population toward the black market, where grain could be purchased at lower prices and without the burden of taxation. The jurors had mandated that all grain transactions in the city take place through the public granary, with taxes applied to each sale—effectively inflating prices to fund the import subsidy scheme.⁴⁴ Yet the imported grain represented only a fraction of the total food supply. In practice, the jurors had turned grain commerce into a revenue-generating tool under the pretext of price stabilisation.

In May 1364, following the second siege, the city council dramatically raised taxes on cereals to finance the subsidy programme. By October, however, the strategy had collapsed: residents refused to purchase the now overpriced grain from the granary, which began to spoil in storage. This situation threatened to unravel the entire system, as the jurors relied on grain sales to fund further subsidies. In response, they resorted to coercion, forcing the population to buy between 2,500 and 3,000 *cabices* of

⁴¹ ACA, C., reg. 1199, f. 503v–504r (24/05/1364), 410v (15/07/1364); ACA, C., reg. 1209, f. 16v–17r (15/01/1365); ACA, C., reg. 1210, f. 66r (01/04/1365).

⁴² SANAHUJA FERRER, 'Con el hambre a las puertas'; SANAHUJA FERRER, 'Alimentar la ciudad en tiempos de guerra'.

⁴³ AMV, MC, A-14, m. 6, f. 38–39r (15/10/1364); SANAHUJA FERRER, 'Con el hambre a las puertas'.

⁴⁴ AMV, MC, A-13, m. 3, f. 4–6r (05/06/1358).

grain at official prices—including taxes.⁴⁵ A similar dynamic affected the meat market: by 1361, products such as mutton, goat, and pork were subject to taxes that made up a quarter or more of their final price, undermining affordability and access for the city's inhabitants.⁴⁶

Nevertheless, these contradictions could be interpreted as the unintended consequences of implementing a new system under unprecedented conditions. The primary objective of the supply policies was to maintain social stability—and, in that respect, they were largely successful. There is no evidence of popular uprisings or significant protests in Valencia related to the high cost of food during the war with Castile. However, the implementation of this system did lead to open conflict with two other social groups.

The first of these was the city's butchers, who rebelled in 1361 against the meat market regulations. They argued that rising livestock prices, combined with newly imposed fixed prices and taxes, eliminated their profit margins entirely. Only the threat of royal punishment ultimately compelled them to resume their work.⁴⁷

The second, and more dangerous, source of resistance came from the nobility, both within the city and across the kingdom. In early 1363, Valencian nobles protested the imposition of new taxes on goods, claiming exemptions based on royal privileges. The city council refused to grant such exemptions and insisted on enforcing the taxes. At the same time, the king had called upon these nobles to help defend the realm against the Castilian army. In protest, they threatened to withdraw their support unless their privileges were respected. During this tense standoff, Castilian forces advanced significantly through the Kingdom of Aragon, encountering little resistance. The rebellion was only defused by the king's promise to respect their privileges.⁴⁸

These contradictions raise important questions about the true purpose of Valencia's food supply policy—particularly the subsidy scheme. When the subsidies were established in 1358, the city council justified the decision as being “a be e utilitat de la cosa pública e per tal que major habundància de blats en aquella fos trobada”—for the benefit of the res publica and to ensure a greater abundance of cereals in the city. However, financing the policy quickly became a central issue. The council argued that there was insufficient liquidity in the city to justify either a general loan or a direct tax. Instead, they opted for a twofold strategy: first, they banned all grain sales outside the municipal granary; second, they imposed a tax of 2 solidi on every *cabiz* of wheat sold through the granary.⁴⁹

⁴⁵ SANAHUJA FERRER, 'Con el hambre a las puertas', 348.

⁴⁶ SANAHUJA FERRER, 'Alimentar la ciudad en tiempos de guerra', 363.

⁴⁷ SANAHUJA FERRER, 'Alimentar la ciudad en tiempos de guerra'.

⁴⁸ PABLO SANAHUJA FERRER, 'Estructura y condicionantes del gasto militar directo en la Edad Media. El reino de Valencia y la Guerra de los Dos Pedros como caso de estudio', *Espacio, tiempo y forma. Serie III. Historia Medieval* 36 (2023): 1141–68; SANAHUJA FERRER, 'Un reino asediado', 464–66.

⁴⁹ AMV, MC, A-13, m. 3, f. 4-6r (05/06/1358).

In doing so, the city council used the subsidy policy as a means of expanding its fiscal capacity. By centralising all grain sales within the granary and subjecting them to taxation, they ensured a steady flow of revenue under the guise of maintaining food supply. Although reliable data from this initial period is lacking, it is reasonable to assume that the tax revenue collected from wheat purchases far exceeded the actual cost of the subsidies.

Final Remarks

In conclusion, this paper has examined the intricate interplay between the fiscal and provisioning components of a system that would persist in Valencia for more than four centuries. The contradictions discussed above stem from the inherent tension between the two core elements of this model: indirect taxation and a food supply policy nominally aimed at keeping prices low to ensure social stability. These tensions could be interpreted as the result of exceptional wartime circumstances and the inexperience of the jurors and city council in managing such a complex framework.

However, when viewed from a different perspective, these contradictions appear less accidental. Although initially seeking to serve common good as a measure of solidarity, the food supply system ended up being repurposed to expand the city's fiscal capacity. Faced with growing debt and resistance to direct taxation, the city council adopted an alternative strategy: taxing essential goods, which seemed less harmful to the Valencian population.⁵⁰ This approach made the entire population taxable while presenting the system as a measure to protect the common good and ensure affordable food.

In this light, relevant measures such as the subsidy policy functioned not only as an emergency provisioning measure, but also as a mechanism to legitimise and secure indirect taxation. Over time, this framework would evolve, and both the supply policy and the indirect tax regime would become profitable instruments of financial control and market regulation for Valencia's ruling oligarchy.⁵¹

⁵⁰ GARCÍA MARSILLA, 'La génesis de la fiscalidad', 157.

⁵¹ CRUSELLES GÓMEZ, 'Las sociedades arrendatarias'; NARBONA VIZCAÍNO, 'Finanzas municipales y patriciado urbano'; CRUSELLES GÓMEZ, CRUSELLES GÓMEZ, and NARBONA VIZCAÍNO, 'El sistema de abastecimiento frumentario de la ciudad de Valencia en el siglo XV'; GARCÍA MARSILLA, 'Las empresas del fisco'.