REVIEW ARTICLE

JEWS, JEAN RÉGNÉ, AND THE MEDIEVAL CROWN OF ARAGON

LARRY J. SIMON


Jean Régné (1883-1954) was born in Armissan (Aude), and spent most of his life as the archivist for the Département of the Ardèche. His numerous local history publications on “l’ancien pays de Vivarais” may or may not be remembered today, though presumably his many archival inventories and guides are still consulted.¹ His most famous monograph, which originally appeared as a series of articles in the *Revue des Études Juives*, is his *Études sur la condition des Juifs de Narbonne du Vᵉ au XIVᵉ siècle* published in 1912. Writing in 1959 the late Richard W. Emery considered it then to be the “best study we have of a southern French Jewish community”; the work was reprinted as recently as 1981.² Any acclaim accorded his study of Narbonnese Jewry

---

¹ See the partial listing of his works in the *Catalogue Général des livres imprimés de la Bibliothèque Nationale, auteurs*, vol. 118 (Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 1938), 1-7.

pales in comparison, however, to the fame of his frequently consulted and cited 3,456 regesta drawn from the royal registers of four kings of Aragon: Jaume I (1213-76), Pere III (1276-85), Alfons III (1285-1291), and Jaume II (1291-1327). These documentary abstracts appeared over many years in the Revue des Études Juives, and were reprinted under one cover in 1978 by Magnes Press with subject, place, and person indexes by Yom Tov Assis and Adam Gruzman. These abstracts have been used and reused, and—some would also argue—occasionally misused by several generations of scholars. The catalogue is known even among non-Hispanists, who marvel at the wealth of documentary evidence it summarizes.

David Romano, more than forty years ago, discussed Régné's work under the various headings of general vision, method, general errors, and errors of detail. While Romano is far more approving of Régné's work than the work of Joseph Jacobs, discussed in the same article, he argued that "el principal defecto de su trabajo reside en haber tomado como punto de partida el 'Indice de Registros,' en vez de acudir directamente a los registros." This resulted in increased errors with names, dates, and even content; left out registers not covered in the centuries-old, handwritten "Index of Registers" found in the reading room of the Crown of Aragon Archives; and especially "como quiera en el Indice, por tratarse de resúmenes, sólo se da una breve noticia del contenido del documento, omitiéndose muchos detalles, resulta que todos los hebreos que actúan en la administración real, en asuntos que no guardan relación con los judíos en cuanto tales, raramente aparecen citados en los índices." Perhaps because the Jewish functionaries of Pere III is


4 Robert I. Burns, S.J., in "King Jaume's Jews: Problem and Methodology" in his Muslims, Christians, and Jews in the Crusader Kingdom of Valencia: Societies in Symbiosis (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 129, has stated: "The temptation to press catalog information into the service of scholarship on the Jews of King Jaume's Valencia is a general affliction among the few who approach this field at all…. The best of catalogs makes a feeble foundation for research. Their short paraphrases lack context, detail, nuance, the impact of the original language, or the corrective subsidiary information of the full text."

5 David Romano, "Análisis a los repertorios de Jacobs y Régné," Sefard, 14 (1954), 247-64 (259). The "Índices de José Llaris" is in 21 vols. and dates from the late seventeenth century; there is also a 17-vol. "Catálogo de los documentos de los registros," begun by the archivist Jeroni Alterachs y Avillaro and continued by others which abstracts some 112 registers covering the dates 1252 to 1327.